

Potomac Torah Study Center
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NOTE: Devrei Torah presented weekly in Loving Memory of Rabbi Leonard S. Cahan z"l, Rabbi Emeritus of Congregation Har Shalom, who started me on my road to learning almost 50 years ago and was our family Rebbe and close friend until his recent untimely death.

Devrei Torah are now Available for Download (normally by noon on Fridays) from www.PotomacTorah.org. Thanks to Bill Landau for hosting the Devrei Torah.

Mazel-Tov to Meir Kreitman and Sarah Engel and family on their engagement. Mazel-Tov to their parents, Dr. Robert and Janet Kreitman of Potomac and Alan and Rachel Engel of Oakland, CA.

I had some errors in the dates that I reported last week for the three events in this part of the Torah. The correct dates are 22 Sivan for Miriam's tzaraat; 29 Sivan for the departure of the Meraglim; and some time between the two dates for the Korach rebellion. I am attaching (to the E-mail) the pages from the Torah Anthology (13:333-34) that present the derivation of these dates. Since this Shabbat is 28 Sivan, Sunday will mark the anniversary of the departure of the Meraglim on the second year after the Exodus.

As Rabbi David Fohrman observes, several of God's blessings and gifts to B'Nai Yisrael in the Midbar correspond to the plagues on the Egyptians, but in reverse. For example, the first plague, turning the Nile to blood, made the water in Egypt undrinkable. The first gift to the Jews after they crossed the Sea of Reeds was turning sour water sweet. God's plagues destroyed agriculture (source of bread) for the Egyptians, but His blessings gave the Jews manna (God's bread) to eat. An important part of God's agenda in taking the Jews out of Egypt was to provide a vivid class in who God is. Egyptians, who saw their pagan gods as sources of various powers, learned about God as the all powerful director of everything in the world. B'Nai Yisrael's parallel class was to see God's love – so our ancestors saw God taking care of them and asking only that they recognize Him as the source of their blessings. God wants a continued relationship with His people. We should appreciate the gifts that come from Him and keep Him in our lives and thoughts.

When the Meraglim returned from their extended vacation in Israel, they reported that the land is beautiful and productive. However, the majority were afraid to take the land. The first thing they mentioned was that Amalek was in the south. Why did Amalek appear at this point? The message from God was that our ancestors should remember the first time that they encountered Amalek – after crossing the Sea of Reeds. Moshe sent Yehoshua to lead a war against Amalek. The newly freed slaves had no weapons and no military experience or knowledge. They could not defeat Amalek, but God could. Moshe stood on a hill. When Moshe lifted his arms to the heavens, B'Nai Yisrael prevailed. When Moshe's arms were down, Amalek prevailed. The message was that God was intervening, but that B'Nai Yisrael had to participate. When our ancestors looked to heaven (God), they prevailed. When they looked down, Amalek prevailed. The Meraglim were supposed to see Amalek and understand that if they looked to God, they would defeat their enemies and take the land. The ten (majority) Meraglim did not understand or ignored the message of Amalek. Caleb and Yehoshua understood that God was, is, and always would be there to help B'Nai Yisrael. Unfortunately, the people followed the majority report and did not seek God's help. This failure of faith and understanding was the final opportunity for the generation of the Exodus. After this point, God gave up on them and turned His focus to the generation of their children as the ones to enter the land.

Did God or Moshe send the Meraglim? The opening of the parsha states that God spoke to Moshe and told him that he could send out Meraglim. However, in retelling the story in the 40th year, Moshe said that the idea of sending out Meraglim came from the people themselves (Devarim 1:22). The Lubavitch Rebbe (see Chabad Devar below) infers that God let Moshe send them without endorsement. It was the first instance when the people took the initiative to move forward toward the land without God or Moshe's direct command to do so. Moshe should have been more aware of the danger. However, when God and Moshe permitted the Meraglim to go on their own, had they already given up on the generation of the Exodus? The story of the Meraglim chronologically is the last event the Torah discusses of the generation of adults who had been slaves in Egypt. Other than the first chapter of Chukat, the rest of the Torah involves the next generation, those who entered the land with Yehoshua.

Does the story of the Meraglim have a message for us in 5780? Rather than Amalek, we face an invisible enemy, covid-19. As Israel, the United States, and most of the rest of the world return from lockdown to work and a more normal life, can we learn from the Meraglim? The most basic lesson is that God is always with us, through good times and bad. If we do not see God's presence directly, we must look deeper. What message is God trying to give to us? After I struggled with my interpretation, I read Rabbi Yehoshua Singer's profound and coherent discussion in his Shabbas Devar, below.

I see a few important messages. Shutting down entire cities or states may have been appropriate for a short time, but this response has major social and economic costs if continued too long. When governments lift restrictions, we should all work with God to return to life appropriately. Those at greatest risk from infection should minimize any social interaction, carefully maintain social distances, and use masks carefully. Those not at high risk should practice social distancing and use masks – at a minimum to lessen the risk of transmitting disease to those at higher risk.

As the medical community has gained more experience with the disease, treatment has improved. Even as the number of infections has increased in states that have moved to phases one and two, the percentage of infections leading to hospitalizations and death seems to be going down. (The lead editorial in the Wall St. Journal on June 18 has a number of statistics consistent with this interpretation.) Some anti-viral medications shorten the course of the disease, and some medications seem to lower the risk of the overly aggressive immune responses that have had fatal results in numerous early cases. Plasma therapy has been highly successful in curing many hospitalized patients. Dozens of companies in several countries are working on vaccines, and some of them are now in or about to start phase three trials. Some vaccines could obtain FDA approval (or approval in other countries) within the next three to six months. Young and healthy individuals who act responsibly can return to a more or less normal life, but in doing so, they should avoid close contact with high risk individuals, whether in their own homes or elsewhere.

Meanwhile, synagogues in Maryland resumed services this week (during the week beginning on 22 Sivan), with services outdoors, with masks and social distancing. While initially minyans were limited to ten men, the next phase will permit up to 50 individuals at a service. Services outdoors, with masks and social distancing, normally minimize the risk of transmitting disease. Individuals at high risk from covid-19 seem to be staying away and watching services on Zoom. This behavior is responsible – a way in which we can work with God to favor life and to serve God responsibly.

My beloved Rebbe, Rabbi Leonard Cahan, z"l, always acted within the spirit of Caleb and Yehoshua. He loved Israel and traveled there as often as possible. His parents and sister Naomi moved to Israel many years ago. They understood that God always protects Israel and B'Nai Yisrael, even with Hester Panim (with His face hidden from our direct vision). Even with covid-19 in our midst, God's presence is here if we seek Him.

Please daven for a Refuah Shlema for Hershel Tzvi ben Chana, Gedalya ben Sarah, Mordechai ben Chaya, Baruch Yitzhak ben Perl, David Leib HaKohen ben Sheina Reizel, Zev ben Sara Chaya, Uzi Yehuda ben Mirda Behla, HaRav Dovid Meir ben Chaya Tzippa; Eliav Yerachmiel ben Sara Dina, Amoz ben Tzviah, Reuven ben Masha, Moshe David ben Hannah, Meir ben Sara, Yitzhok Tzvi ben Yehudit Miriam, Yaakov Naphtali ben Michal Leah, Rivka Chaya bat Leah, Chaya Tova bat Narges, Zissel Bat Mazal, Chana Bracha bas Rochel Leah, Leah Fruma bat Musa Devorah, Hinda Behla bat Chaya Leah, Nechama bas Tikva Rachel, Miriam Chava bat Yachid, and Ruth bat Sarah, all of whom greatly need our prayers. Note: Beth Sholom has additional names, including coronavirus victims, on a Tehillim list.

Drasha: Shlach: The Lure of Life
by Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky © 1998

[Please remember Mordechai ben Chaya for a Mishebarach!]

Rarely do we find that Hashem's commands assume personal connotations. The commands are meted for the sake of Judaism and the glory of Heaven. Yet, disturbingly, we find the mission of the spies defined with very personal invectives. The Torah begins with Hashem commanding Moshe, "Send for yourself spies to scour the land of Israel." Why is the command tainted with such a personal epithet? Is Moshe sending the spies for himself? In fact, Moshe reviews the entire episode in Deuteronomy, stating how the idea of spies found favor in his eyes. The commentaries are quick to point out that the idea found favor in Moshe's mortal's eyes, but Hashem disapproved. Therefore He told Moshe send the spies for yourself. "As far as I am concerned," Hashem infers, "it is a mistake, but if that is what you desire, then proceed." Thus the words, "send for yourself spies."

Of course, the dire consequences of the mission are well known. The spies returned and maligned the Land of Israel. They were punished along with the entire nation that joined them in their misconceived sorrow, and the next 40 years were spent wandering in the desert.

But we are human, and our intentions are tinged with mortal bias. Isn't every mortal action filled with human bias and mortal partiality.

Adam Parker Glick, President of the Jack Parker Corporation, told me a wonderful story:

A wealthy man decided to take up the sport of fishing. He rented a cottage near a Vermont lake and barreled into the local sport and wildlife shop and demanded to see the manager.

"I want to buy the best of everything: the most expensive rod and tackle, the best hooks, anglers, and even the most exquisite bait!" The store owner, who had seen his share of city-folk, was not impressed. He instructed a young salesman to follow the man around the store and serve as a human shopping cart. The man chose the most exquisite rods and reels; he selected a mahogany tackle box and a refrigerated bait cooler. Money was no object, and the fisherman-to-be selected the finest of all. The enthusiastic young salesman was extremely eager to please and offered him every imaginable fishing item and accessory. The owner, a crusty and seasoned Vermonter just smirked at the naivete of the new-found angler.

As the tycoon approached the checkout counter, he noticed brightly colored, hand-painted fishing lures whose prices were as outlandish as the colors. "Wow!" he exclaimed, as he gathered a bunch into his hand. "These look really wonderful!" Then he turned to the manager and in a voice sounding as well informed as possible, he asked the owner, "do fish really go for these?"

"Don't know," shrugged the old-timer. "I don't sell to fish."

Moshe reluctantly agreed to the whims and premonitions of a nervous and anxious nation. He agreed to their pleading to allow spies to check the land that they would ultimately inherit. But by no means was it a Divine mission. Hashem told Moshe send spies for yourself. He taught Moshe that missions that are fueled by self-fulfillment are doomed.

Often, we stand at the check-out counter of life and choose the impulse items with the view that they are necessary for our success. We marvel at the brightly-colored lures and find it hard to imagine life without them. We rationalize that they are needed for the sake of family, livelihood, and even spirituality. We think we are purchasing them for lofty reasons and negate the fact that perhaps selfishness and insecurity are the driving forces behind the proverbial sale. We buy them thinking that they are the items that will catch the fish, but ultimately, we are the only ones caught!

Moshe was about to send spies on a seemingly sacred mission. The mission may have been falsely justified in hundreds of different ways: the operation would save lives, it would prepare a young nation for a smooth transition and pave a new level of spirituality for the fledgling folk. But those were not the true objectives. There was selfishness involved. And the mission was doomed. For the road to the lowest of places is paved with disingenuous holy-intent.

Therefore Hashem told Moshe that there is only one motivation behind the mission. They are not sending spies for Hashem. The nation is sending spies for its own ego and insurance. "Send them for yourself." G-d does not need scouts, guides, or pathfinders. He does not sell to fish. He just may yield to those who are selfish. And ultimately they get the hook.

Good Shabbos!

Shelach: A Leadership of Faith, Not Fear

by Rabbi Dov Linzer, Rosh HaYeshiva, Yeshivat Chovevei Torah © 2015, 2020

Parashat Shelach is as much a story of leaders as of the people. It is a story of leaders both poor and good. The poor leaders-ten of the twelve spies-saw the challenges that confronted them in the land of Canaan and ran: "We are not able to go up against the people; for they are stronger than we" (Bamidbar, 13:31). The good leaders-Yehoshua and Caleb-saw the same challenges and pushed forward: "Let us go up at once, and possess it; for we are well able to overcome it" (13:30). What accounts for this difference?

The simple answer is fear. When a person is afraid, all he or she can see is the object of his or her fear. Even for those who had seen all the miracles, who have all the reasons to believe in God, faith faltered when they were confronted with fear. The people had seen the hand of God in Egypt, at Har Sinai, and in the Wilderness, and still here, they were unable to believe that God would save them. Their reaction was the same as the people's reaction at the Red Sea. The people prefer to go back and be slaves in Egypt or to stay in the Wilderness rather than confront their fears. Fear is irrational; it paralyzes.

The answer to fear is faith. Where fear sees only obstacles, faith sees opportunities: "We are able to overcome it!" This is what separates good leadership from bad. Leadership based on fear is no leadership at all. Good leadership must be based on faith in God and Torah, faith in others and in one's self. Only leadership of faith could take the people into the Promised Land.

This is one of the things that distinguishes Modern Orthodoxy. Orthodoxy has in many ways become a religion of fear: fear of the outside world, of asking hard questions, of delegitimization, and of being honest with ourselves about our own shortcomings. It is much safer, some say, to reject the outside world, protecting ourselves in a cloistered environment.

There is much to be afraid of in the unknown, outside world. What will happen if we confront postmodernism, archeology, science, history, philosophy, academic Talmud, Biblical criticism, feminism, and homosexuality? What will happen-how might the world judge us-if we confront spousal abuse, rabbinic sexual abuse, alcoholism, and drug abuse? What will happen if we genuinely address the marginalization of single mothers, converts, the developmentally disabled, those suffering from depression, and children with special needs? Many in the Orthodox community have chosen to look at these challenges and say, "We cannot go up, for they are stronger than we!" The response is to put up walls and to remain in the desert.

But there is more than fear of the outside world. There is fear of losing full control, of granting the people a degree of autonomy. It is scary for some to imagine individuals and communities-or even local rabbis-thinking for themselves. For some, the answer to this is to have communal issues decided by a Gadol and his da'as Torah, to say: "Is it not better for us to return to Egypt? Perhaps we were slaves in Egypt, but everything was secure and predictable. In Egypt, someone else did the thinking for us." This is leadership of fear, a yiddishkeit destined to stay in the desert and never go into the Promised Land.

Calev was a different kind of leader with a ruach acheret, a different spirit. He saw the formidable challenges and most certainly experienced fear, but he did not give into it. He responded to his fear by reaffirming his faith, and we must do the same. We must trust in God. We must trust in the Torah and its ability to confront life's challenges. We must trust that it can be taken out of its shell and brought to bear on theological struggles, the economy, and injustice. We need to have

enough faith in the Torah that we can honestly face up to the challenges of agunah, homosexuality, universalism, and particularism. We need to trust that it can help us embrace archeology, science, history, and feminism rather than rejecting them, allowing us to see a larger and deeper truth.

We also need religious leaders who trust in the people as well as the Torah. We need leaders who do not withhold information or misrepresent halakha out of a false belief that the people can't handle the truth, leaders who value the expertise and the voice of every member of the community, respecting them and including their voices in its piskei halakha and its decision-making process.

Leadership and a Torah based on faith, not fear, will be open to hearing other voices, even those in opposition. The natural response is to try to shut these voices down, as even Yehoshua did when Eldad and Meidad were prophesying in the camp: "My master, Moshe, restrain them." It requires a great leader to resist this response, to recognize that we as a people will only be richer and wiser if we can listen to and respect visions that are different from our own. It is a rare leader who has enough faith in himself that he can welcome challenge.

What we most desperately need are religious leaders who have enough faith in the people, whose deepest desire is not to lead the people but to empower them. Such leaders know that they will only truly succeed when they have inspired each individual to find his or her unique vision and follow it, not when everyone conforms to their vision. We need leaders who can say, "Who would give that all the nation of God would be prophets, that God should give God's spirit upon them!" We need leaders who will take us into the Promised Land.

Shilach -- Home Sweet Home

by Rabbi Mordechai Rhine ©2020 Teach 613

The Miraglim (spies) were sent to tour the Promised Land and to report back. Indeed they did. But their report left the people frightened and feeling gyped. Instead of feeling G-d's benevolence and the immediacy of fulfilling an ancient promise, they felt like they had been placed within arms reach of an elusive target that would only bring them woe. "The land is inhabited by strong warriors," and they could not anticipate conquering it by natural means (13: 28,29, 31). In fact, once they were convinced that they could not conquer it, they began to see the bad in the land, and concluded that it wasn't such a good land after all (13:32). By the end of the day, they decided that the prospects were so bad that they would rather die (14:2).

Interestingly, when Yehoshua and Kalev respond to the protest, they state: "The Land is exceedingly good" (14:7). They follow this with, "If G-d wills it, He can bring us to this land." It seems that the two concepts feed into each other. If one is demoralized and feels the goal of conquering Eretz Yisroel (or any goal) is not attainable, then he or she finds reasons why it wasn't a good goal to begin with. Conversely, if one insists that the Land (or other goal) is good, then he or she finds ways to appreciate how G-d can make His word come true (or can make any other goal attainable).

Remarkably, in life, it is possible to see almost any situation as either good or as bad. One can see life through the eyes of blessing, opportunity, and benevolence, or one can see the problems, risks, and limitations. It is said, that if each person would be granted the vision to see their own life-package and everyone else's, that people would choose their own. Perhaps that is what is meant when Yehoshua and Kalev describe the land as being exceedingly good ("Meod, Meod"). Something can be good objectively. But invariably, objectively speaking, there are some considerations and mitigating factors that make it less than perfect. But when something is good in a personal way, then it is exceedingly good, because whatever there is that is less than desirable is irrelevant in judging how good the situation is. Either the problem needs to be overcome or it needs to be ignored. Either way, the situation or relationship, is absolutely appropriate and good.

I recall that when my children were young, one of the favorite gifts that we received from the aunts and uncles was an ever so soft, cuddly blanket for each child. The children adored the blankets, and some even had trouble falling asleep without them. Remarkably, they were able to tell which one was theirs, and would continue to cry until the correct blanket was brought. From my vantage point, I was sure that giving a child the less worn blanket (which in my mind was considered better because it was newer) would satisfy the child. But, I quickly found out that it didn't work that way. "My blanket," is the one that brings comfort and serenity. When one appreciates that, even the worn-out parts add to the cuddliness, because it feels like "Home."

The concept that Yehoshua and Kaleb introduced in response to the Miraglim was simply that this land is ours. As children of Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yakov, having accepted Torah at Sinai, this is our destiny. There may be issues, challenges, and obstacles, but this is ours. And so, their attitude was, With G-d's help, we will succeed."

This concept can be applied to so many areas of life including marriage. The Talmud (borrowing expressions from Biblical verses) says that marriage can either be "I am finding," which is really bad, or it can be "I have found," which is really good. The commentaries explain that when one is in a relationship about which they have many doubts and are still "finding" out if it is right, then obstacles become destructive because they are seen as proof that all is wrong. But if one knows with confidence that this is right – as Yehoshua and Kaleb knew about the Land- then the obstacles become opportunities to work things through, and to become stronger because of them.

This week, in my community, we had the privilege of starting Minyanim again. Arguably, it isn't perfect. We are meeting outdoors, and in small groups, as we comply with the medical advice we were given for our region at the current time. To shorten the service, as we have been advised, we are not yet including Leining (Reading from the Torah) in the service. We are all wearing masks, which quite frankly, are a bit uncomfortable. Indeed, it is less than perfect. But I can say with confidence that it is exceedingly good. It is good to be able to daven with a Minyan, to be able to respond to Chazaras HaShatz and to Kaddish. It is good to see the twinkle in a friend's eyes, even if we can't see his smile behind the mask. It is good to feel welcomed back to the anteroom of G-d's mini-sanctuary, and to yearn for the invite to come in, may it be, hopefully, in the next few days. Are there imperfections? Certainly. But it is good to be back in Minyan. It is good to be home.

With best wishes for a wonderful Shabbos.

Trans-generational Thinking: Thoughts for Parashat Shelah Lekha

By Jonathan Arking, IJII Student Intern*

In the Spring of 2015, Baltimore erupted in protest. Freddie Gray, a 25-year-old African American man, had died due to injuries sustained while in police custody. People took to the streets to protest this injustice, and within days, there were tanks rolling down the streets of downtown Baltimore. People screamed for justice, politicians promised change, and all of us hoped that this time we would finally exorcise the racism still haunting our society once and for all.

It is five years later, and the situation today is eerily similar. After the murder of George Floyd at the hands of the police, protesters have flooded the streets of hundreds of cities to protest police brutality and advocate for criminal justice reform. Once again the National Guard was deployed to patrol the streets of American cities. I can't fail to notice that creeping sense of *deja vu*. Has anything changed? Does racial injustice not endure? How do we go on when there is seemingly no end in sight?

In this week's parasha, Shelah Lekha, following the sin of the spies, the Israelite nation is exiled to wander for 40 years in the desert. The people are told that every member of the current generation (with the exceptions of the two good spies, Joshua and Caleb ben Yefuneh) will die there; it will be their children and grandchildren who enter the land of Israel. How did the people of Israel go on after being told they would never reach their destination? If they were not going to reach the land of Israel themselves, what could they possibly accomplish? Was their journey not the epitome of futility?

This feeling of futility, of struggling against the immovable stream of history, that in the broad scheme of things, we have nothing to contribute, was not lost on the rabbis. In Pirkei Avot (2:16), Rabbi Tarfon states, "It is not your duty to finish the work, but neither are you at liberty to neglect it." Rabbi Tarfon maintains that a validation of the overwhelmingness of the world's problems and the belief that each individual can effect change are not mutually exclusive. Yet while this Mishna encourages individuals to continue to labor to effect change despite its seeming insignificance, when read in light of an earlier passage of Pirkei Avot (2:2), Rabbi Tarfon's statement takes on a deeper, more inspirational meaning. Rabban Gamliel states:

And all who labor with the community, should labor with them for the sake of Heaven, for the merit of their ancestors sustains them, and their (the ancestors') righteousness endures forever.

While the changes we as individuals make may be minimal now, the meaning they take on when placed in the context of history is exponentially greater. It is the efforts of the past that "sustain" the changes of the present, and the changes of the present that grant meaning to the efforts of the past. So too do the efforts we make now sustain the progress of future generations. When the merits of our ancestors before us and our descendants yet to come are seen as one, we realize that our actions matter, that we cannot divorce our own efforts from the narrative being played out through history.

I would suggest that the Israelites wandering in the desert were able to press on because they maintained this view of history. They saw themselves as part of a story that transcended any one generation, recognizing that their role preparing their children to enter the land was vital to the success of their descendants. Intergenerational connectedness ensured that the wandering Israelites would not desist from their work, even with no destination in sight. This is how their "righteousness endures forever."

Similarly, the fight against racism in America has been long and arduous. Many have devoted their lives to civil liberties and equality for African Americans, and yet we have once again been reminded that there is much work to be done. In the words of the great Martin Luther King Jr, "the arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward justice." May we merit to help the arc bend a little bit more.

*Rabbi Marc D. Angel (jewishideas.org) normally writes this column. He invited his grandson and summer intern, Jonathan Arking, to write the column this week. Jonathan's family lives in Baltimore, and his uncle's family are long time members of Beth Shalom.

Parshas Shelach

By Rabbi Yehoshua Singer*

One of the greatest struggles we continue to face during this difficult period is the struggle for faith and trust in G-d. This struggle is perhaps greatest now, as we begin to step back out into the world. We understand we must be cautious, yet there is no clear guideline for that caution. We are constantly left wondering and worrying whether we (or our friends and family) have been cautious enough or perhaps are being too cautious. As we struggle with these new worries, we continue to wonder what the future will bring, how soon this will end, and what the long-term impacts will be. The confusion and worry eat away at our faith and trust. How are we to find within ourselves a sense of faith and internal peace under such stress and unknown?

Rabbeinu Bachye in his introduction to this week's Parsha gives us some insights, which can help us understand how to navigate these turbulent times, and how to begin to find a center of calm within the storm. He quotes a possuk from Mishlei (21:31) "A horse prepared for the day of war and to Hashem is the salvation". When Jews go to battle, we understand that our success and failure is dependent on our connection to Hashem. Our merits will ultimately determine the outcome of the war. "To Hashem is the salvation". This was particularly true in our Parsha. After having experienced the Exodus from Egypt, the Splitting of the Sea, and the Revelation at Sinai, we were preparing to enter the land of Israel. This was to be the fulfillment of G-d's promise to our forefathers. Certainly, we were approaching the land of Israel securely in G-d's hands.

Yet, specifically under those circumstances, we seemingly sought to rely on our own efforts and to send spies to scout the land. Shlomo Hamelech in Mishlei, as well, tells us in this very possuk "A horse prepared for the day of war". Specifically, in discussing war and our understanding that "To Hashem is the salvation" we are told to prepare the horse for war and put in our own natural efforts.

Rabbeinu Bachye explains that Shlomo Hamelech is teaching us the fundamentals of faith in G-d, and how G-d runs the world. The human being was built and created in a setting and system of natural order. It is within this system that G-d wishes us to live. Miracles and the absence of nature are in direct conflict with G-d's intent for human beings and G-d's intent for the world. Though, it is undeniable that G-d does miracles when He deems it necessary and appropriate, miracles are not G-d's preferred method for managing the world.

Therefore, says Rabbeinu Bachye, even when we are fully reliant that we will see G-d's intervention, it is our responsibility to arrange the natural means which He has provided us, for that may be the very means by which He wishes to "intervene". This, he says, is the essence of faith. We need to understand that the natural means we are engaging in are

not effective unto themselves. Rather, the natural means themselves are under G-d's control, and it is His will that we use those natural means to achieve our goals. Once we appreciate this and act on it, G-d will then bring about His will, whether it be through those means, or miraculously beyond what those means could achieve.

From this perspective, developing faith is built upon focusing and understanding G-d's involvement in the natural order of the world. Faith and inner peace come from the understanding that everything we experience is the will of G-d. Complex ecosystems, organized symbiotic relationships, and the inner molecular workings of every creature and every cell, all work and function together because that is what G-d wills. Based on this Rabbeinu Bachye, perhaps it is now easier than ever to work on and develop our faith and trust in G-d. With a tiny virus, G-d has brought the entire world to a halt, seemingly almost overnight. Focusing on this, and the varying and individualized impact of this simple virus, we can easily begin to recognize how G-d's hand is truly behind everything we experience and begin to see that G-d is directly involved in each of our lives.

* Rabbi, Am HaTorah Congregation, Bethesda, MD.

A New Insight From Tevye's Song

By Rabbi Moshe Rube*

We've discussed Mashiach before. Specifically how talks of Mashiach currently and throughout Jewish history always spark up in times of travail. (Don Isaac Abarbanel even predicted that Mashiach would come in 1503 after the Expulsion from Spain in 1492.)

But Mashiach doesn't just mean that sweetness, peace, and light will descend over the whole world. It also means certain elements of Jewish service will come back. Like if you own orange trees in Israel, you can bring the first fruits to the Temple during Shavuos time. And we'll finally get to have some delicious roast lamb for the Passover Seder. But there is one thing that may have come back already. And it has to do with one of Judaism's most ubiquitous symbols. The Tallis.

We all know what a Tallis looks like. A four cornered shawl with eight white strings in each corner tied into special knots. But actually, the original tallis had another color attached to it. A blue string wound around the white ones called the techeles. (See our Parsha this week Numbers Chapter 15 Verse 37) Now it might seem inconsequential but this actually had tremendous political implications. In Korach's rebellion against Moshe he mocked him for saying a completely blue tallit needed a blue string. Sometimes even the driest legal details can become a tool for demagogues.

Why blue? The Talmud gives two possibilities. One that it reminds us of the skies so it keeps our focus heavenward. Rabbi Eliezer had a different explanation that it reminds us of sapphire which according to the Torah was the main structural material in God's heavenly throne. You see how the Israeli flag is blue and white? That's where it comes from. It's like we're waving a beautiful Tallis in the halls of global leadership.

So why don't all of our tallis's have the blue string? Because you can't just manufacture the color in a lab. The dye used to make it has to come from a specific source that has been lost to history. Or so we thought.

Archaeologists some years back discovered an old tallit on Masada that had a blue string. Advanced scientific methods revealed that the dye came from the snail known as the Murex Trunculus. This sparked a debate among Jewish legal scholars. Does Jewish law allow us to reconstruct a tradition based on archaeological evidence? When Tevye sang "Tradition" did he have laboratory testing in mind?

The quick answer is yes. We have at least two Talmudic sources that seem to be clear on the validity of archaeological evidence for Jewish law.

1) The Talmud in Tractate Bava Batra 74a tells a story of an Arab merchant who showed the Talmudic sage Rabba the son of Bar Chanah the bodies of the Jews who died in the forty year sojourn in the desert. When Rabbah returned, his colleagues chided him and called him a fool for not inspecting their tzitzit. There were many disputes about how they should be tied and Rabbah missed an opportunity to provide a definite answer.

2) In Tractate Sukkah 5a, Rabbi Eliezer testifies that the words "Holy to God" can be written on one line on the High Priest's headband because the headband on display in Rome had it on one line. (Many of the lost Temple vessels are rumored to be in the Vatican.)

From these two sources it's clear that archaeological evidence can be trusted. Jewish tradition can be scientific as well as mimetic. (Maybe that's why Tevye sang the word "Tradition" twice. To account for both ways of learning about our tradition.) Many halachic decisors thus endorse this new tchelet.

What's even more exciting is that the uniform that the kohanim use in the Temple requires the techeles. In our day to day, we can fulfill a mitzvah without it, but this new scientific discovery clears away another hurdle in building the Third Temple.

When this pandemic is over, I hope to go somewhere with a large Judaica shop and buy my own "Murex Trunculus dyed" tzitzit. Even if the only benefit is that it keeps our focus heavenward, it's worth it. We need all the help we can get to keep our focus on our common human transcendent soul, our tzelem Elokim in these troubled times.

Shabbat Shalom.

* Rabbi, Knesseth Israel Congregation, Birmingham, AL

Rav Kook Torah Shlach: Repairing the Sin of the Spies

One of the greatest tragedies in the long history of the Jewish people occurred when the spies sent by Moses returned with a frightening report about the Land of Israel. Their dire warnings of fierce giants and a "land that consumes its inhabitants" convinced the people that they would be better off returning to Egypt.

Unlike other incidents in which the Israelites rebelled against God, on this occasion, Moses was unable to annul God's decree. The entire generation died in the desert, never reaching the Promised Land. The best Moses was able to do was delay the punishment for forty years.

Rav Kook wrote that even today we still suffer the consequences of this catastrophic error. The root cause for the exiles and humiliations of the Jewish people, throughout the generations, is due to our failure to correct the sin of the spies.

How can we rectify the sin of the spies?

To repair this national failure, a teshuvat hamishkal is needed, a penance commensurate with the sin which will "balance the scales." The spies defamed the Land of Israel, as it says, "They despised the desirable land" (Psalms 106:24). We must do the opposite and show our unwavering love for the Land.

"[We must] declare to the entire world [the Land's] magnificence and beauty, its holiness and grandeur. If only we could express (with what may appear to us to be greatly exaggerated) even a ten-thousandth of the desirability of the beloved Land, the splendorous light of its Torah, and the superior light of its wisdom and prophecy!"

"The quality of wonderful holiness that Torah scholars seeking holiness may find in the Land of Israel does not exist at all outside the Land. I myself can attest to this unique quality, to a degree commensurate with my meager worth." (Igrot HaRe'iyah, vol. I, pp. 112-113)

For Rav Kook, this recommendation on how to address the sin of the spies was not just a nice homily. Stories abound of his burning love for the Land of Israel and his indefatigable attempts to encourage fellow Jews to move to Eretz Yisrael.

Kissing the Rocks of Acre

The Talmud in Ketubot 112a records that Rabbi Abba would demonstrate his great love for the Land of Israel by kissing the rocks of Acre as he returned to Israel. What was so special about these rocks?

Rav Kook explained that if Rabbi Abba had bent down and kissed the soil of Eretz Yisrael, we would understand that his love for the Land was based on the special mitzvot that are fulfilled with its fruit — tithes, first fruits, the Sabbatical year, and so on. The soil, which produces fruit, signifies the importance and holiness of the Land through the mitzvot hateluyot ba'aretz.

But Rabbi Abba's love for the Land was not dependent on any external factors — not even the Land's special mitzvot (see Avot 5:16; Orot, p. 9). Rabbi Abba cherished the intrinsic holiness of Eretz Yisrael. He recognized that the special qualities of the Land of Israel, such as its receptivity to prophecy and enlightenment, go far beyond those mitzvot connected to agriculture. Therefore, he made a point of kissing its barren rocks and stones.

'God Willing'

During a 1924 fundraising mission in America, Rav Kook tried to convince a wealthy Jew to immigrate to Eretz Yisrael. The man gave various reasons why he could not yet leave America, but concluded, "God willing, I too will soon make Aliyah to Israel."

Rav Kook responded: "God is certainly willing. After all, settling Eretz Yisrael is one of His commandments. But you must also be willing..."

Without Calculations

Once, a Jewish tourist visited Rav Kook in Jerusalem, seeking advice as to the possibility of living in Eretz Yisrael. During the discussion, the visitor calculated the pros and cons of moving to Israel; and in the end, he decided that it was not worthwhile.

Rav Kook told the man:

"Before the Israelites entered the Land in the time of Moses, they first needed to kill Sichon, the king of Heshbon. This teaches us that one should come to the Land of Israel bli heshbon — without making calculations."

(Sapphire from the Land of Israel. Adapted from Malachim Kivnei Adam, pp. 221, 222, 237.)

The Vacuum of Choice

Adapted by Yanki Tauber from the teachings of the Lubavitcher Rebbe © Torah.org 2013

On whose initiative were the spies sent? The way the story is told in Numbers 13, it was by divine command:

G d spoke to Moses, saying: "Send you men, that they may spy out the land of Canaan, which I am giving to the children of Israel. One man, one man per tribe shall you send, each a prince among them . . ." (Numbers 13:1–2)

But when Moses recounts these events 40 years later, he tells the people of Israel,

You all approached me, and said: "Let us send men before us, that they may search out the land and bring us back word regarding the road by which we shall go up and the cities to we shall enter." The thing was favorable in my eyes; and I took twelve men from amongst you, one man per tribe . . . (Deuteronomy 1:22–23)

The commentaries reconcile these two accounts of the sending of the spies by explaining that the initiative indeed came from the people of Israel. "Moses then consulted with G d, who said to him, 'Send you men . . . ,'" to imply: Send them as dictated by your understanding. I am not telling you what to do. Do as you see fit" (Rashi). Thus, the spies' mission, while receiving divine consent, was a human endeavor, born of the desire of the people and dispatched because "the thing was favorable" in Moses' eyes.

The result was a tragic setback in the course of Jewish history. The spies brought back a most demoralizing report, and caused the people to lose faith in G d's promise of the Land of Israel as their eternal heritage. The entire generation was then deemed unfit to inherit the land, and it was decreed that they would live out their lives in the desert. Only 40 years later did Moses' successor, Joshua, lead a new generation across the Jordan River and into the Promised Land. (Joshua and Caleb were the only two spies to speak in favor of conquering the land, and the only two men of that entire generation to enter it.)

Up until that time, G d had imparted specific directives to Moses and the people of Israel virtually every step of the way. The case of the spies was the first instance in which G d said, "I'm not telling you what to do; do as you see fit." Should this not have set off a warning light in the mind of Moses?

Indeed, it did. Our sages tell us that Moses sent off Joshua with the blessing, "May G d deliver you from the conspiracy of the spies" (Rashi to Numbers 13:16). So why did he send them? And if, for whatever reason, he thought it necessary to send them, why did he not at least bless them as he blessed Joshua? Even more amazing is the fact that a generation later, as the Jewish people finally stood at the ready (for the second time) to enter the land, Joshua dispatches spies! This time, it works out fine; but why did he again initiate a process which had ended so tragically in the past?

Obviously, Moses was well aware of the risks involved when embarking on a course of "do as you see fit." For man to strike out on his own, without precise instructions from on high, and with only his finite and subjective judgment as his compass, is to enter a minefield strewn with possibilities for error and failure. Yet Moses also knew that G d was opening a new arena of human potential.

Free Choice

A most crucial element of our mission in life is the element of choice. Were G d to have created man as a creature who cannot do wrong, then He might as well have created a perfect world in the first place, or no world at all. The entire point of G d's desire in creation is that there exists a non-perfected world, and that we choose to perfect it. It is precisely the possibility for error on our part that lends significance to our achievements.

The concept of choice exists on two levels. When G d issues an explicit instruction to us, we still have the choice to defy His command. This, however, is choice in a more limited sense. For, in essence, our soul is literally "a part of G d above" and, deep down, has but a single desire: to fulfill the divine will. In the words of Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi: "A Jew is neither willing, nor is he able, to tear himself away from G d." When it comes down to it, each and every one of us desires only to do good, as defined by the will of G d. The only choice we have is whether to suppress our innate will or to express it in our daily life.

Up until the episode of the spies, this was the only choice offered the Jewish people. G d provided unequivocal guidelines for each and every issue that confronted their lives. They had the choice to disobey, but to do so would run contrary to their deepest instincts.

The second level of choice was introduced with G d's reply to Moses regarding the spies. When Moses heard G d saying, "Do as you see fit," he understood that G d was opening another, even deeper and truer dimension of choice in the life of man. By creating an area in which He, the creator and absolute master of the world, states, "I am not telling you what to do," G d was imparting an even greater significance to human actions. Here, and only here, is the choice truly real; here, and only here, is there nothing to compel us in either direction.

When we enter this arena, the risks are greater: the possibility to err is greater, and the consequences of our error more devastating. But when we succeed in discovering, without instruction and empowerment from above, the optimum manner in which to enter the Holy Land and actualize the divine will, our deed is infinitely more valuable and significant.

The Self of Joshua

This was why Moses dispatched the spies, though fully aware of the hazards of their mission, without so much as a blessing that they be safeguarded from the pitfalls of human endeavor. Were he to have blessed them—to have imparted to them of his own spiritual prowess to succeed in their mission—he would have undermined the uniqueness of the opportunity that G d had granted by consenting that their mission be "by your understanding." The entire point was that

both Moses (in deciding whether to send them) and the spies (in executing their mission) be entirely on their own, guided and empowered solely by their own understanding and humanity.

The only one to receive Moses blessing was Joshua, who was Moses' "faithful servant . . . never budging from [Moses'] tent" (Exodus 33:11). The unique relationship between Moses and Joshua is described by the Talmud by the following metaphor: "Moses face was like the face of the sun; Joshua's face was like the face of the moon." On the most basic level, this expresses the superiority of Moses over Joshua, the latter being but a pale reflector of the former's light; on a deeper level, this alludes to the depth of the bond between the greatest of teachers and the most devoted of disciples. As the moon has no luminance of its own, but receives all of its light from the sun, so had Joshua completely abnegated his self to his master, so that everything he had, and everything he was, derived from Moses.

For Moses to bless Joshua was not to empower Joshua with something that was not himself: Joshua's entire self was Moses. Armed with Moses' blessing, Joshua was truly and fully on his own—this was his essence and self, rather than something imposed on him from without.

Thus it was Joshua, who had successfully negotiated the arena of true and independent choice, who led the people of Israel into the land of Canaan. For the conquest of Canaan and its transformation into a "holy land" represents our entry into a place where there are no clearcut divine directives to distinguish good from evil and right from wrong, and our independent discovery of how to sanctify this environment as a home for G d.1

FOOTNOTES:

1. Based on Sefer HaSichot 5749, vol. 2, pp. 536–540.

Shabbat Shelach*

by Rabbi Moshe Wisnefsky

From the first portion of your dough to G-d, you must give as a raised-offering. As the raised offering of the threshing floor you must donate. (Bemidbar 15:21)

The first of your dough

The commandment of giving challah (a loaf) is very straightforward. A part of the dough is set aside to be holy, to be given to the priests, while the rest remains non-sacred and may be eaten without any particular restrictions.

The Torah's ways "are ways of pleasantness, and all its paths are peace." It would seem that the way to peace is equality, while this commandment, like so many others, emphasizes the differences between us. Creating elitist classes encourages jealousy. The priest is different than a Levite, who is himself distinguished from the average Jew. We are fermenting division within every bowl of dough!

The lesson here, however, is that true unity can only be achieved when clear distinctions are made between those who fulfill the various offices of society. Harmony is possible only when every cog of the machine, every unit of the army, knows its proper place and performs its unique function. If there are no separations and distinctions, the result can only be anarchy. . . .

The Hebrew word for "dough" in this verse can also mean "crib" or "bed." In that context, the verse means that our first thoughts, words, and acts when we wake up in the morning should be "raised as a challah offering," i.e., directed and devoted to G-d.

— Kehot's Chumash Bemidbar

* An insight from the Rebbe

Gut Shabbos,
Rabbi Yosef B. Friedman

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Covenant and Conversation

Rabbi Jonathan Sacks

What is going on?

In March 2020, whilst launching a new book, [1] I took part in a BBC radio programme along with Mervyn King, who had been governor of the Bank of England at the time of the financial crash of 2008. He, together with the economist John Kay, had also brought out a new book, *Radical Uncertainty: decision-making for an unknowable future*.[2]

The coronavirus pandemic was just beginning to make itself felt in Britain, and it had the effect of making both of our books relevant in a way that neither of us could have predicted. Mine is about the precarious balance between the “I” and the “we”: individualism versus the common good. Theirs is about how to make decisions when you cannot tell what the future holds.

The modern response to this latter question has been to hone and refine predictive techniques using mathematical modelling. The trouble is that mathematical models work in a relatively abstract, delimited, quantifiable world and cannot deal with the messy, unpredictable character of reality. They don’t and cannot consider what Donald Rumsfeld called the “unknown unknowns” and Nicholas Taleb termed “black swans” – things that no one expected but that change the environment. We live in a world of radical uncertainty.

Accordingly, they propose a different approach. In any critical situation, ask: “What is happening?” They quote Richard Rumelt: “A great deal of strategy work is trying to figure out what is going on. Not just deciding what to do, but the more fundamental problem of comprehending the situation.”[3] Narrative plays a major role in making good decisions in an uncertain world. We need to ask: of what story is this a part?

Neither Rumelt nor King and Kay quote Amy Chua, but her book *Political Tribes* is a classic account of failing to understand the situation. [4] Chapter by chapter she documents American foreign policy disasters from Vietnam to Iraq because policy-makers did not comprehend tribal societies. You cannot use war to turn them into liberal democracies. Fail to understand this and you will waste many years, trillions of dollars, and tens of thousands of lives.

It might seem odd to suggest that a book by two contemporary economists holds the clue to unravelling the mystery of the spies in our parsha. But it does.

We think we know the story. Moses sent twelve spies to spy out the land. Ten of them came back with a negative report. The land is good, but unconquerable. The people are strong, the cities impregnable, the inhabitants are giants and we are grasshoppers. Only two of the men, Joshua and Caleb, took a different view. We can win. The land is good. God is on our side. With His help, we cannot fail.

On this reading, Joshua and Caleb had faith, courage and confidence, while the other ten did not. But this is hard to understand. The ten – not just Joshua and Caleb – knew that God was with them. He had crushed Egypt. The Israelites had just defeated the Amalekites. How could these ten – leaders, princes – not know that they could defeat the inhabitants of the land?

What if the story were not this at all? What if it was not about faith, confidence, or courage. What if it was about “What is going on?” – understanding the situation and what happens when you don’t. The Torah tells us that this is the correct reading, and it signals it in a most striking way.

Biblical Hebrew has two verbs that mean “to spy”: *lachpor* and *leragel* (from which we get the word *meraglim*, “spies”). Neither of these words appear in our parsha. That is the point. Instead, no less than twelve times, we encounter the rare verb, *la-tur*. It was revived in modern Hebrew and means (and sounds like) “to tour.” *Tayar* is a tourist. There is all the difference in the world between a tourist and a spy.

Malbim explains the difference simply. *Latur* means to seek out the good. That is what tourists do. They go to the beautiful, the majestic, the inspiring. They don’t spend their time trying to find out what is bad. *Lachpor* and *leragel* are the opposite. They are about searching out a place’s weaknesses and vulnerabilities. That is what spying is about. The exclusive use of the verb *latur* in our parsha – repeated twelve times – is there to tell us that the twelve men were not sent to spy. But only two of them understood this.

Almost forty years later, when Moses retells the episode in *Devarim* 1:22-24, he does use the verbs *lachpor* and *leragel*. In *Genesis* 42, when the brothers come before Joseph in Egypt to buy food, he accuses them of being *meraglim*, “spies”, a word that appears seven times in that one chapter. He also defines what it is to be a spy: “You have come to see the nakedness of the land” (i.e. where it is undefended).

The reason ten of the twelve men came back with a negative report is not because they lacked courage or confidence or faith. It was because they completely misunderstood their mission. They thought they had been sent to be spies. But the Torah never uses the word “spy” in our chapter. The ten simply did not understand what was going on.

They believed it was their role to find out the “nakedness” of the land, where it was vulnerable, where its defences could be overcome. They looked and could not find. The people were strong, and the cities impregnable. The bad news about the land was that there was not enough bad news to make it weak and thus conquerable. They thought their task was to be spies and they did their job. They were honest and open. They reported what they had seen. Based on the intelligence they had gathered, they advised the people not to attack – not now, and not from here.

Their mistake was that they were not meant to be spies. They were told *latur*, not *lachpor* or *leragel*. Their job was to tour, explore, travel, see what the land was like and report back. They were to see what was good about the land, not what was bad. So, if they were not meant to be spies, what was the purpose of this mission?

I suggest that the answer is to be found in a passage in the Talmud[5] that states: it is forbidden for a man to marry a woman without seeing her first. The reason? Were he to marry without having seen her first, he might, when he does see her, find he is not attracted to her. Tensions will inevitably arise. Hence the idea: first see, then love.

The same applies to a marriage between a people and its land. The Israelites were travelling to the country promised to their ancestors. But none of them had ever seen it. How then could they be expected to muster the energies necessary to fight the battles involved in conquering the land? They were about to marry a land they had not seen. They had no idea what they were fighting for.

The twelve were sent *latur*: to explore and report on the good things of the land so that the people would know it was worth fighting for. Their task was to tour and explore, not spy and decry. But only two of them, Joshua and Caleb, listened carefully and understood what their

mission was: to be the eyes of the congregation, letting them know the beauty and goodness of what lay ahead, the land that had been their destiny since the days of their ancestor Abraham.

The Israelites at that stage did not need spies. As Moses said many years later: “You did not trust in the Lord your God, who went ahead of you on your journey, in fire by night and in a cloud by day, to search out places for you to camp and to show you the way you should go” (Deut. 1:32-33). God was going to show them where to go and where to attack.

The people needed something else entirely. Moses had told them that the land was good. It was “flowing with milk and honey.” But Moses had never seen the land. Why should they believe him? They needed the independent testimony of eyewitnesses. That was the mission of the twelve. And in fact, all twelve fulfilled that mission. When they returned, the first thing they said was: “We went into the land to which you sent us, and it does flow with milk and honey! Here is its fruit” (Num. 13:27). But because ten of them thought their task was to be spies, they went on to say that the conquest was impossible, and from then on, tragedy was inevitable.

The difference between the ten and Joshua and Caleb is not that the latter had the faith, courage and confidence the former did not. It is that they understood the story; the ten did not.

I find it fascinating that a leading economist and a former Governor of the Bank of England should argue for the importance of narrative when it comes to decision-making under conditions of radical uncertainty. Yet that is the profound truth in our parsha.

Ten of the twelve men thought they were part of a story of espionage. The result was that they looked for the wrong things, came to the wrong conclusion, demoralised the people, destroyed the hope of an entire generation, and will eternally be remembered as responsible for one of the worst failures in Jewish history.

Read Amy Chua’s Political Tribes, mentioned earlier, and you will discover a very similar analysis of America’s devastating failures in Vietnam, Afghanistan and Iraq.^[6]

I write these words while the Coronavirus pandemic is at its height. Has anyone yet identified the narrative of which it and we are a part? I believe that the story we tell affects the decisions we make. Get the story wrong and we can rob an entire generation of their future. Get it right, as did Joshua and Caleb, and we can achieve greatness.

[1] Morality: Restoring the Common Good in Divided Times, Hodder, 2020.
 [2] John Kay and Mervyn King, Radical Uncertainty, Bridge Street, 2020. I referred to this book in Covenant and Conversation Emor.

- [3] Richard Rumelt, Good Strategy/Bad Strategy, Crown Business, 2011, 79.
- [4] Amy Chua, Political Tribes, Penguin, 2018.
- [5] Kiddushin 41a.
- [6] A more positive example would be to contrast the Marshall Plan after World War 2 with the punitive provisions of the Treaty of Versailles after World War 1. These were the result of two different narratives: victors punishing the vanquished, and victors helping both sides to rebuild.

Shabbat Shalom: Rabbi Shlomo Riskin

“And God spoke unto Moses saying, ‘Send out men for yourself to spy out the Land of Canaan, which I give unto the children of Israel; of every tribe of their fathers shall you send a man, everyone a prince among them.’” (Numbers 13:2)

As the portion of Shelach opens, we read how God commands the Israelites to send ahead men to spy out and explore the Land of Israel.

And we know the tragic results of this “spy” mission. The report that emerged from ten out of twelve was a negative and discouraging one, which only served to divert the Israelites from their God-given mission of the conquest of the land of Israel. Hence the agonizing question which this portion evokes is: Why did God command the sending of scouts in the first place? Why risk a rebellion in the ranks by requesting a committee report which may well go against the divine will to conquer and settle Israel?

A totally different perspective, not only as to why God commanded Moses to send out the scouts but much more profoundly as to how God operates in the world and why, is to be found in a remarkable interpretation given by Rabbenu Tzadok HaKohen of Lublin (1823–1900), a great Hasidic master, in his commentary on the Torah, called *Pri Tzaddik*. He points out a striking analogy between the incident of the scouts and the gift of the second tablets which came as a result of the sin of the Golden Calf, both conceptually as well as textually: in both cases the Almighty saw the necessity of involving – even to the extent of establishing a partnership with – the people, the nation of Israel.

In what way were the second tablets an improvement on the first tablets which Moses smashed, and which God congratulated him for smashing (Exodus 34:1, Yevamot 62a)? What was “built into” the second tablets which would be more likely to prevent a fiasco of the proportion of the sin of the Golden Calf, which occurred only forty days after the gift of the first tablets? The fact that the first tablets had been “written with the finger of God” (Exodus 31:18), and were in actuality the very “script of the divine,” whereas the second tablets were “hewn out” by Moses (Exodus 34:1) and thereby were created as a result of human involvement, suggests the difference: the first tablets were the product of divine creativity alone; the second tablets involved human cooperation, setting the stage for rabbinical

Likutei Divrei Torah

interpretation, decrees, and enactments which are such a major portion of what we call the “Oral Law.” The Oral Law not only accepts but requires the direct participation of rabbinical leadership, and even the involvement of the masses of committed Jews (*Pri Tzaddik* on Exodus, *Ki Tisa* 3, and on Numbers, *Shelach* 2).

Of course, we believe that the major principles and salient laws of the Oral Torah were also given by God. However, the sages of each generation must actively interpret the Torah and often plumb from its depths great innovative concepts necessary for the needs of that generation. Indeed, in a stunning Talmudic passage, the rules of rabbinical exegesis can even cause the Almighty Himself to accept a decision of the majority of the sages, causing Him (as it were) to cry out “My children have conquered Me” (*Bava Metzia* 39b). The very words with which God commands Moses to “hew out” the second tablets, “psal lecha” (Exodus 34:1), also contain a nuance: *lecha* – you, Moses, have the authority and the obligation to determine whether an activity or object is *pasul* (improper and invalid). The sages are given the power to add decrees and enactments (*gezerot* and *takkanot*) to the body of the Torah, many of which – such as lighting candles on the eve of the Sabbath and festivals, the kindling of the Chanuka menorah, and the reading of the Purim Megilla – have become major expressions of our Torah commitment and lifestyle (Deut. 17:8–11). Moreover, no such decrees or enactments can become part and parcel of the Torah of Israel without the endorsement of the majority of the committed people who have the right of acceptance or rejection. The masses of committed people, the *hoi polloi* or *hamon ha'am*, have also initiated customs throughout the generations which assume the status of Torah law (*minhag Yisrael din hu*: the customs of Israel are law).

All of this suggests a Torah which is not the product of ossified paternalism – as divinely perfect as such a Torah might be – but is rather the result of a living partnership between God and His people. Apparently, the Almighty believed – after the tragic trauma of the Golden Calf – that only a Torah which would involve the active participation of the Israelites could survive the seductive pitfalls of idolatry and immorality.

Fascinatingly enough the phrase “psal lecha” (Exodus 34:1) parallels the words God uses to command the scouts, “shelach lecha,” send out for yourselves, in the beginning of our portion. God apparently understood that a mission as important as the conquest of Israel could not take place without the enthusiastic approbation and active participation of the people.

Of course opening up the process – be it Torah interpretation or the appointment of a reconnaissance committee – is fraught with danger. But it was a chance that God

understood had to be taken if He desired His nation to be more than marching robots. He didn't want us to receive a Torah on a silver platter or to be brought into the Promised Land on eagles' wings; He realized that despite the inherent risk which came from involving the people, excluding them would be a more likely prescription for disaster. Just as a wise parent and a sagacious educator understand that children/students must be "involved in the process" so that hopefully they will continue the path even after they achieve independence, the Almighty set the stage for our continuous devotion to Torah and our third return to Israel – despite our many setbacks – by insisting on the participation of His people!

The Person in the Parsha **Rabbi Dr. Tzvi Hersh Weinreb**

The Blue Above the White

It may not sound like much of a story to you, but to me it was meaningful at many levels. I've heard the story three times now, each time from a different person. Each of the three went through a remarkably similar experience and shared their story with me. I'd like to share the story with you, but some background will be necessary.

You must already have guessed that the background will derive from this week's Torah portion, Parshat Shelach (Numbers 13:1-15:41). At the very end of the parsha, we read:

"The Lord said to Moses, as follows: Speak to the people of Israel and instruct them to make for themselves fringes on the corners of their garments throughout all their generations; let them attach a cord of blue to the fringe at each corner. That shall be your fringe; look at it and recall all the commandments of the Lord and observe them, so that you do not follow your heart and eyes... Thus you shall be reminded to observe all My commandments and to be holy to your God..." (Numbers 15:37-40).

The Torah's word for "fringes" is tzitzit. This mitzvah is punctiliously kept by observant Jews to this very day, consistent with the verse's insistence that it is a practice mandated for "all their generations." The mitzvah entails affixing strings to four cornered garments, so that the strings hang loose. Jewish men wear these garments, and the stringent view, codified by the Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chaim 8:11), requires that the garment be worn above one's other clothing "so that one will constantly look at the tzitzit and thereby remember the commandments."

More lenient views allow the garment to be worn under one's other clothing, but still encourage the practice of letting the strings themselves protrude from one's clothing so that the wearer can see them, reflect upon them, and call to mind the Almighty's commandments. This is the practice of very many observant Jews nowadays.

Now we come to the story told to me by three young men who had identical experiences with these strings while wearing them in their everyday business settings. To my knowledge, these three men do not know each other and indeed dwell and work in communities geographically distant from each other.

Each of them approached me with his story, convinced that I would be especially interested in what had occurred to them. Each of them was approached, and I should emphasize respectfully approached, by a non-Jew, and each of them was asked if there was any significance to the strings protruding from their sweaters or shirts. Each of them replied that the strings had religious significance and that they wore them in keeping with a biblical command.

Each of them was surprised when the non-Jew immediately understood that this practice traced back to the Bible; in his words, to the Old Testament. Two of them even knew the chapter and verse of the passage in the Bible, quoted above. "Of course," they said, "these strings are the 'fringes' which must be attached to your garments."

All three "storytellers" were similarly taken aback by the expertise shown by their non-Jewish acquaintances and by their familiarity with "our" Bible. But none of the three stories ends quite here.

All of the three non-Jews then persisted to ask, "But where are the blue strings? Doesn't the Bible prescribe that a blue cord be attached at each corner? Where are your blue cords?"

The Torah's word for the "blue cord" is tekhelet. In Biblical times, and for centuries thereafter, one of the cords, and according to some opinions two of them, were dyed blue before being attached to the four-cornered garment. The dye was extracted from a sea creature known as the chilazon. Over the course of Jewish history, this practice was discontinued. It became difficult to procure this specific dye, and eventually the precise identity of this sea creature became unknown.

Two of my "storytellers" were able to share the reason for the absence of the blue cord with their non-Jewish questioners. One had to simply admit that he did not know why he did not keep the precise biblical command in his personal practice.

Permit me now to briefly tell you another story; namely, the story of the discovery of the identity of the sea creature, the recovery of the knowledge necessary to extract the dye from that creature, and the renewed ability to observe this mitzvah exactly as prescribed by the Torah, in the portion we read this Shabbat. The story begins in the late 19th century with the efforts of Rabbi Gershon Henoch Leiner to travel to the museums and aquariums of the Mediterranean coast in search of the chilazon.

Likutei Divrei Torah

He identified the creature as a subspecies of a squid, and his followers to this day derive the blue dye from this creature and color their tzitzit with it. However, rabbinic authorities of that time disagreed with this rabbi's opinion.

Closer to our time, the late Chief Rabbi of Israel, Rabbi Isaac Herzog, wrote his doctoral thesis on the topic of the identification of this sea creature and brilliantly defended his thesis: The chilazon was not a type of squid, but was rather a type of snail, known scientifically as the murex trunculus.

Even closer to our time, barely two decades ago, a group of Israeli scholars found a source in the ocean near Israel for this snail, and through a fascinating process too long to describe here, began to produce the dye and made tzitzit dyed blue available to the public. Nevertheless, a great number of rabbinic scholars remain unimpressed by these discoveries.

For a full description of this entire topic, one should consult the following website: www.tekhelet.com.

What was my response to the three "storytellers" and their tale? I chose not to share with them my own private reflection to the effect that had these three non-Jews met me, they would have found the blue cord of which they were informed by their own biblical study. Rather, I chose to share with the storytellers one of the explanations given for the blue cord.

This explanation is to be found in a book entitled Sefer HaChinuch, written by a medieval rabbi whose identity is uncertain. The book is an enumeration of all 613 Torah commandments, with an explanation given about the "root" of each command. By "root" he means, in contemporary terminology, the symbolic significance of the commandment. Here is what the author writes, in my own admittedly free translation:

"The underlying reason for this mitzvah is apparent. What can be a better reminder of God's commandments than an appendage attached to one's everyday apparel? But more than that, let us analyze the colors of the cords: blue and white. White is symbolic of the body, which our tradition (see Pirkei D'Rabbi Eliezer 3) teaches us was primordially created from the snow, which is white. Note too, that the body in its early embryonic stage resembles intertwined cords or strings (see Tractate Niddah 25b). The blue cord is reminiscent of the blue sky, of heaven, and is symbolic of all that is spiritual about mankind. Therefore, the blue cord is wound around the white to emphasize that ultimately, the soul is above, and the body is below; the soul is primary, and the body but secondary."

For those of us who wear tekhelet nowadays, and I am proud that I am among them, a

powerful image that comes to our mind's eye every time we gaze upon our tzitzit is the image of a blue cord wound around a white one, and it is a constant reminder that our "white body" is best enveloped by our "blue soul," that our earthly selves must be subservient to our heavenly spirit.

Will the beautiful explanation given by the Sefer HaChinuch convince those who do not yet wear tekhelet to begin to do so? Perhaps not. But perhaps you, dear reader, with the addition of so many similar rabbinic passages available on the tekhelet.com website, will be convinced to add this new spiritual dimension to this important everyday mitzvah.

Torah.Org: Rabbi Yissacher Frand

We Know We Are 'Nogeah', but We Won't Let That Influence Us – Famous Last Words

The story of the Meraglim [Spies] is one of the more difficult stories in the Torah to understand. The Torah says, "Send forth for yourself anashim..." [Bamidbar 12:2]. Chazal say that the word anashim indicates that they were tzadikim. So, these people were righteous individuals. Rav Dovid Povarsky, z"l, points out, in a talk about the Meraglim (given in 1987), that not only did these individuals have a reputation of being tzadikim, but their mere act of going on this mission was itself an act of righteousness.

"Spying" is dangerous business. If someone were to fill out a life insurance form and list as his line of employment "CIA; Covert Operations", he will certainly need to pay a premium rate for life insurance. It is a dangerous occupation. Moshe Rabbeinu tells these righteous individuals, in effect, "I am sending you on an extremely dangerous mission." They responded, "Fine, we are ready to go."

Add to that another factor. The Zohar writes that, at the end of the day, the reason they came back with such a bad report was because they knew that even though at this point in time when they were in the Wilderness they occupied positions of leadership, they knew that when Bnei Yisroel enter Eretz Yisrael – for whatever reason it may be – they were no longer going to retain their positions of leadership.

If someone were to ask me to go on a dangerous mission, put myself in danger and – "Guess what? – when you get back, I am going to fire you," I would say "Get somebody else." Most people would say "Why don't you ask the people you are going to appoint to be tribal leaders in Eretz Yisrael? Let them face this dangerous mission!"

The very fact that they went on a dangerous mission, knowing that the result of the mission would be their losing their jobs, is itself justification for giving them the title anashim = tzadikim!

So, the question is – why in fact did they accept the mission? This is a mission that was going to cost them their jobs, their honor, and their whole roles in life! The answer is – and herein lies one of the great truths of life – that they thought: "We will be able to handle it. We know it is a dangerous mission. We know this may cost us our jobs, but we will be able to overcome any personal bias and prejudice that we have, and we will be able to report the truth."

Moshe Rabbeinu had grave doubts whether they would be able to do that. Chazal say that Moshe changed the name of his disciple Hoshea, to Yehoshua to connote, "May G-d (K-ah) save you from the counsel of the spies." Moshe sensed that something amiss may occur. Kaley, Chazal say, went to pray by the gravesite of his ancestors. Why were they so worried? The answer is that Moshe realizes that all these twelve Meraglim are walking a tightrope. They will be going on a dangerous mission, one in which they will be tempted (consciously or subconsciously) to skew the information they are supposed to report. They did it because they said, "We will be able to do it anyway."

This is a lesson for all of us, and this is something that happens all the time. You ask somebody for advice and his answer to you is "I may be 'nogeah' [have a personal interest in the matter], but this is what the truth is anyway..." When you hear those words – forget it! Greater and wiser people have not been able to overcome personal interest and subconscious bias to give sound and accurate advice about matters which affect them negatively. That is exactly what the Meraglim said. "We know we might have an agenda, and we know we might lose our jobs, but we will be able to give a fair and balanced opinion of the situation, and we will not be swayed by our personal interests!" Famous last words!

To me, this is one of the greatest challenges of life. In varying situations, we all have different agendas. We all have our personal biases. How does a person overcome that? Merely recognizing and saying "I am a 'nogeah' but..." is not a defense at all. Whenever you hear those words, run the other way. The only solution I have to this conundrum of life is to ask someone else who is absolutely not 'nogeah' for their opinion on the matter. You cannot trust yourself and you cannot trust anybody else who might have any kind of personal involvement or who might be impacted by the action to be taken as a result of the advice being sought. To delude oneself into thinking, "Yes, I will be able to overcome it" is the mistake that the Meraglim made. This is precisely Moshe Rabbeinu's fear. It is Kaley's fear. The Spies needed to walk a very thin line. At the end of the day, they failed. As the Zohar says, their personal agenda and 'negius' did them in.

Likutei Divrei Torah

The Difference Between the Spies of Moshe and the Spies of Yehoshua bin Nun

Sefer Be'er Mayim Chayim takes note of the dialog that takes place upon the return of the Meraglim. Their report – that the inhabitants of Canaan lived in fortified cities, that they were strong and gigantic individuals, and that the fruit were extraordinarily large – was all true. The Ramban notes this in his Chumash commentary. The question is, when and where did they veer from the truth?

When they gave their report, and they were trying to telegraph a message to the nation that the people were very mighty, suddenly Kaley silenced them. "Be quiet. You are not right! We WILL be able to conquer them. The Ribono shel Olam was with us until now, and He will be with us in the future."

At that point, their story changed. Rather than it being an objective accurate report, they added subjectivity. The subjectivity was "A land that eats up its inhabitants" [Bamidbar 13:32]. That is editorial comment. What happened? Up until now, they reported the truth. The facts were accurate. Those were the "facts on the ground." They did live in fortified cities; they were large and strong; and so forth. As soon as Kaley says: "No. We will be able to conquer the people," then their tune changes. Suddenly, they start speaking ill about the country and they make up facts. Why did that happen?

Here is another great truth of life. The desire to win and to be right is an extremely powerful Yetzer HaRah [urge of the evil inclination]. When Kaley told them "Be quiet. You are wrong!" they immediately needed to counter, "No. We are not wrong!" to the point of fabricating facts – if necessary – to prove that they were right and Kaley was wrong. When someone is challenged, his instinctive reaction is "No! I will show you that I am right." Such is human nature: "I want to win." As soon as Kaley challenged them, it became a personal duel. "Who is right – we or you?" It became a matter of honor. People do not like to lose.

Recently, someone came to me and told me that he went to a Din Torah. The facts of the case are too complicated for me to go into right now, and the details are not really relevant to my point. But to make it simple, the Din Torah centered around who had the right to a piece of property. There was a several-hundred-thousand-dollar issue at stake here. The Beis Din, in effect, ruled in favor of one of the parties, and he had the option of either taking the property or walking away from the property and being nicely compensated for it.

Objectively speaking, the wise thing to do would have been to walk away from the property and accept payment for it. Take the money and run. Let the other guy stick with the property. The person came to me and said "I still cannot believe what I did! I insisted, 'I

want the property.” Now he comes to me a week later and tells me “It was the stupidest thing I ever did. I am saddled with this property; I have to mortgage it; it is financially ruinous to me.” So, I asked him “So, then why did you do it?” He said “It is because I have been fighting with this person for so long over this piece of property that when I had the opportunity to take it, I said ‘I want to win!’ even though here, ‘winning’ was ‘losing.’” Winning the property was financially more costly to him than losing it would have been.

That is the way we are. We want to win. Winning drives so much in life. It drives people in business. It drives people in politics. It drives people in sports. We want to win. Therefore, the Yetzer HaRah to win was so overwhelming that the person made a foolish decision, by his own admission. Shortly afterward, he himself was able to point this out to himself.

That is what happened by the Meraglim as well. Kaleb silenced the people. When he said, in effect, “You’re wrong!” their instinctive reaction was “No. We are not wrong! We are going to be right!” And then their story changed, because it became personal. When it becomes personal – when it becomes a matter of who is going to win – then people pull out all the stops.

There is a beautiful comment from the Chidushei HaRi”m – the Gerrer Rebbe. The Haftorah of Parshas Shelach is a chapter from Sefer Yehoshua. Yehoshua bin Nun also sent out two spies. They happened to be Kaleb and Pinchas. They were his two spies. The pasuk uses the word “Cheres Laimor”. The simple interpretation is that the word Cheres is like Cheresh [mute]. The message was very discreet and quiet. Chazal say, however, that the word Cheres indicates that they took with them earthenware. Their “cover” so that people would not suspect them of being spies, is that they took with them earthenware objects to sell. They claimed they were itinerant earthenware salesmen. They went around Canaan and Yericho spying out the land, but their cover story was that they were pottery salesmen.

Why pottery? Why did they not sell Fuller Brush? (A person must be of a certain age to appreciate that reference.) The Chidushei HaRi”m makes a beautiful observation. Chazal say that an earthenware vessel only transmits impurity internally (mi’tocho). If something touches an earthenware vessel externally, it does not become impure. It only becomes tameh if the source of impurity goes into the internal airspace of the earthenware vessel.

The reason for this is that the value of earthenware vessels is not their material. The material is virtually worthless. The whole value of such a vessel is its function. That is why, whereas a metal utensil contaminates externally (because its material has intrinsic

value), an earthenware vessel only contaminates internally.

The Chidushei HaRi”m writes that these spies (Kaleb and Pinchas) wanted to remind themselves: We are nothing! We have no value! It is not about us! It is about our job, our function – just like an earthenware vessel. The essence of an earthenware vessel is only for the job that it is going to perform. That, too, is our mission, to perform our job, but otherwise to be like we are non-existent. We are pilotless drones. We do not have wisdom. We do not have intellect. We are individuals who have been sent on a mission; but personally, we are like Kley Cheres.

The problem with the previous set of spies was that they became personally involved. Kaleb and Pinchas took heed to not repeat this mistake. They were not going to “need to win”. They were not going to let their egos get involved. The spies sent out by Yehoshua bin Nun were like earthenware vessels – mere unimportant functionaries. Therefore, despite the tragic fate of the previous set of Meraglim, the spies of Yehoshua bin Nun successfully completed their mission.

Dvar Torah Chief Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis

Challah is so much more than just a loaf of bread... Why do we call our loaves of bread ‘challah’?

The term ‘challah’ comes from a root which means ‘weakness’, and therefore ‘machallah’ is an illness and a ‘choleh’ or ‘challah’ is a person who is ill. Also, the same root is used for the Hebrew meaning to ‘appease’. Therefore, the Torah tells us ‘vayachal Moshe’ – Moshe ‘appeased’ Hashem, and that’s because when you appease someone, you are softening their anger, you are weakening the tough stand that they have taken. But what has all this got to do with Challah that we eat?

The Torah mitzvah of Challah is given to us in parashat Shelach Lecha. Immediately afterwards, we are told about the saga of the twelve spies, Hashem instructs us: once the nation has entered into the Holy Land, when baking our bread we should remove a little portion of the dough and send it to the Kohanim so that they have sufficient to eat. That little portion is called ‘Challah’ and the mitzvah is called the ‘mitzvah of challah’.

Sforno suggests that the mitzvah is presented straight after the story of the twelve spies because challah was to be carried out as a sign of appreciation of the yield, the produce, the harvest of the Holy Land – to indicate our love of the land! That was what was absent at the time when the spies went and delivered their irresponsible report – and that would be something we would be celebrating throughout the generations to come.

Likutei Divrei Torah

Challah is a great example of ‘synecdoche’ – that is when the whole is named after one of its parts. For example, we refer to spectacles as being ‘glasses’, or you say you are engaging in a ‘head count’. The fascinating thing about challah is, is that we are naming the whole loaf after a part of it which doesn’t exist anymore. It’s the part that we’ve taken away! It’s the part with which we’ve performed the mitzvah and through which we have shared what we have with others. That’s why I believe the term ‘Challah’ is so significant for us. What it means is that when we sit down at our Shabbos or Yom Tov tables to enjoy all the delicious foods that we have and to bite into our challah, we need to remember two great loves of the Jewish people. First – our love of the land of Israel, and secondly – our love of mitzvot and the privilege we have to share what we have with others.

Dvar Torah: TorahWeb.Org

Rabbi Daniel Stein Organized Religion

At the beginning of Parshas Shelach the Torah lists the names of the meraglim who descended to tour and survey Eretz Yisrael. “These are their names: For the tribe of Reuven, Shama the son of Zakur. For the tribe of Shimon, Shaphat the son of Chori. For the tribe of Yehudah, Calev the son of Yephuneh. For the tribe of Yissachar, Yigal the son of Yoseph. For the tribe of Ephraim, Hoshea the son of Nun etc.” (Bamidbar 13:4-8). The first four tribes that are mentioned, Reuven, Shimon, Yehudah, and Yissachar follow the chronological order of their birth, however, the fifth, Ephraim, breaks the pattern which is not restored subsequently. This inconsistency prompts the Seforim to suggest that the Torah in fact listed the meraglim according to their own age and not according to the chronological birth of their respective shevatim. The Ramban disagrees and argues that the meraglim were not actually recorded according to their age at all but rather according to their degree of wisdom.

However, Rav Yaakov Kamenetsky (Emes Le’Yaakov) suggests that while the list was initially arranged chronologically, the order in which the latter eight shevatim and meraglim are mentioned is entirely haphazard without any compelling rhyme or reason. Rav Yaakov claims that historically, the meraglim approached Moshe chronologically in order to volunteer, however this systematic procession quickly became chaotic when the representative from Ephraim, Hoshea bin Nun, asserted himself ahead of his rightful spot in line. This is supported by the pasuk which states in connection with the meraglim, “And all of you approached me and said, ‘Let us send men ahead of us’” (Devarim 1:22). Rashi explains that the meraglim pounced on Moshe all at once, in a disorganized frenzy, where those who were younger were pushing ahead of those who were older. For this reason, Moshe davened solely for the welfare of Hoshea by adding the letter yud to his name,

since he alone had demonstrated a somewhat volatile disposition which had sparked the pandemonium.

Rav Meir Tzvi Bergman (Shaarei Orah) suggests that a critical component of the tragedy of the meraglim can be attributed to their eventual lack of order and organization. When things are cluttered, out of place, and in disarray, it prevents us from properly organizing our thoughts and priorities, and ultimately obstructs our ability to make thoughtful decisions and good choices. Sanctity and spirituality can only exist within the confines of a stable and systematically structured environment. The Alter from Kelm once traveled to visit his son while he was away at yeshiva. When the Alter arrived, he was unable to immediately locate his son in his dormitory, but when he saw that his bed was crisply set, his clothes creased and folded, and his closet neatly arranged, the Alter concluded that his son must be learning studiously and succeeding since orderliness is the hallmark of productivity and holiness.

The establishment of order and organization might even be one of the reasons Hashem created the world in the first place. The Gemara (Megillah 15b) states, "whoever attributes a statement to its originator has brought redemption to the world." While honesty in assigning credit is certainly praiseworthy, in what sense does this bring redemption to the world? The Maharal (Derech Chaim) explains that initially the world was in a state of muddled confusion, as the pasuk states, "v'ha'aretz hayasa tohu vavohu - the land was in a state of chaos" (Breishis 1:2). It was precisely the process of creation that introduced order to the world by separating between light and darkness, the skies and the earth, the water and the dry land, and the day and the night. In the age of the internet, we can certainly appreciate the pernicious effects of obscurity and anonymity when issuing statements and offering opinions, and the vital need for accountability and responsibility. Therefore, citing sources and ascribing credit restores some semblance of order to the world, and in turn justifies and redeems the purpose for which the world was created.

At the beginning of Sefer Bamidbar the Torah spends an inordinate amount of time detailing the flags, formations, and the manner in which the Jewish people encamped and traveled around the Mishkan in the desert. Similarly, all of the procedures and protocols of the Mishkan itself, while stationary and in transit, were highly regimented and precisely delegated. The Maor Vashemesh, and later Rav Aharon Kotler (Mishnas Rebbi Ahron) suggest that the Torah is stressing that organization and order are indispensable prerequisites for achieving sanctity and cultivating a religiously inspired and productive atmosphere. In fact, the word "seder - order" is the root of the word "siddur" which we use to daven, because without seder

it is impossible to connect with Hashem through tefillah.

Additionally, the night of Pesach, which is saturated with a multitude of mitzvos, revolves around "The Seder - The Order." Ostensibly, this is an unusual way of referring to a night which is punctuated by eating matzah and marror, drinking wine, and retelling the story of our exodus from Egypt. However, perhaps this is another indication and reminder that only through the organized medium of the seder, which is an orchestrated and coordinated effort of transmission from one generation to the next, can we deepen our relationship with Hashem. During the summer many of us will depart from our usual routine and schedule, but we should not allow this to create a disorderly and disorganized culture as it relates to our davening, learning, and performing mitzvos. We must do our best to maintain our flags and formation, and preserve as much as possible our regular sense of seder, which is so critical to our religious growth.

Torah.Org Dvar Torah by Rabbi Label Lam

A Shattering of Their World

HASHEM spoke to Moshe saying, "Send forth men, if you please, and let them spy out the Land of Canaan that I give to the Children of Israel, one man each from his father's tribe shall you send, every- one a leader among men. Moshe sent them forth from the Wilderness of Paran at HASHEM's command; they were distinguished men; heads of the Children of Israel were they. (Bamidbar 13:1-3)

It was with great reluctance that Moshe sent these spies. Why? What went so terribly wrong? These were great people, leaders of the Children of Israel, chosen by Moshe and later they would return with such a discouraging report that the entire nation would lose heart! How is such a thing possible?!

They saw great things in the land but they interpreted them as bad. Everyone knows that image that the Israeli tourist department has coopted as their logo of two people carrying a giant cluster of grapes on stick on their shoulders. They testified about the rich bounty of the land saying it was indeed a land flowing with milk and honey. But somehow that giant cluster of grapes testified about how huge and formidable the inhabitants of the land were. The sad conclusion was that it is too difficult to defeat them.

How could this generation of all generations be lacking in confidence and trust in HASHEM? The question remains, how is such a thing possible? It is compounded by the fact that not only were these spies great people in their own right but they lived through and experienced the most miraculous events ever. Not just onetime happenings but daily miracles. This was the generation that witnessed and experienced the ten plagues in

Likutei Divrei Torah

Egypt. They saw the splitting of the sea and the drowning of the Egyptian army. They stood by Mount Sinai and heard the voice of The Almighty thundering, "I am HASHEM your G-d....". They ate heavenly bread in the form of Manna every day and received a double portion on Friday. They saw it all, heard it all, and experienced it all. How is it possible that this group should be lacking in the proper trust required to conquer the Land of Canaan?

It could be that the answer is embedded in the question. The Talmud says, "Ain somchin al ha-nes; We do not rely on miracles!" (Pesachim 64). Of-course the simple meaning is a piece of practical advice. Look both ways before you cross the street and cross when the light is green. We should not make plans on the assumption that a miracle will happen. We have to live with and within natural boundaries. Miracles are expensive and it is foolish and reckless to rely on their timely arrival. This understanding has application to our case also but maybe only after another approach to that statement.

For sure the generation that left Egypt and lived with constant miracles in the desert had a great advantage in terms of Emunah and Bitachon, - belief and trust in G-d! But it also comes with a distinct disadvantage. Living with miracles makes one reliant upon miracles and again the Sages had said, "Ain somchin al ha-nes; We do not rely on miracles!" Transitioning from the miraculous to the natural isn't easy.

Amongst the many wondrous acts of kindness that HASHEM does the Chovos HaLevavos zeroes in on the blissful unawareness and total lack of knowledge about the world that a child begins his life with. According the Talmud in Tractate Nida, before a child is born, he is living a heavenly existence, and absorbing Torah knowledge beyond any adult comprehension. Suddenly after birthing into this world he is stricken dumb, and says the Chovos HaLevavos, it's a good thing. If a child would realize how absolutely dependent he is on the good will of his parents and everybody else, he would die immediately from fright and worry. Somehow his parents and everyone around him finds him beyond cute and are prepared to help him in exact proportion to how helpless he is. He doesn't know that.

Those spies were like that once brilliant child living a miraculous existence in the womb now peering beyond what he should now know. Trying to understand how to adapt to a world of "natural" qualities where the daily miracles are hidden meant a shattering of their world!

The Sin of the Scouts and the Events that Followed

Rav Yoel Bin Nun

I. The Difference Between the Story of the "Scouts" and the Story of the "Spies" -

In our *parasha*, there is no mention of spies (*meraglim*) or spying (*rigul*). The root *resh-gimmel-lamed* does not appear even once. Moshe sent *tayarim*, "scouts" – "that they may scout out (*la-tur*) the land of Canaan" (*Bemidbar* 13:17). "So they went up and scouted out (*va-yaturu*) the land" (*ibid.* 13:21), "And they returned from scouting out (*mi-tur*) the land" (*ibid.* 13:25), and they reported about "the land which we passed through to scout it out (*la-tur*)" (*ibid.* 13:32). Spying is mentioned only in the parallel account in *Parashat Devarim* (1:24): "And they spied (*va-yeraglu*) it out."

How did *Parashat Shelach* become transformed in Jewish consciousness from a story about "scouts" to a story about "spies"? Why is the story presented in this manner in *shiurim* and in discussions throughout the Torah world? Is there a significant difference between these two terms? And furthermore, why were the "scouts" sent, and who asked to send them?

There are profound differences – to the point of outright disagreement – between the account in the book of *Bemidbar* and the account in *Devarim*.¹ In *Parashat Shelach*, God commands Moshe to send "scouts," twelve representatives of the tribes, "the heads of the children of Israel" (*Bemidbar* 13:3); in the account in the book of *Devarim*, Moshe speaks of the idea of sending the spies as the people's initiative:

And you came near unto me every one of you, and said: "Let us send men before us, that they may search the land for us and bring us back word of the way by which we must go up and the cities to which we shall come." (*Devarim* 1:22)

According to the book of *Devarim*, twelve representatives of the tribes were sent – but not to scout, but rather to search the land and spy it out. We must therefore ask:

1. "Send you" or "Let us send"?
2. Did God command, or did the people request?
3. "Scouts" or "spies"?

One who is prepared to delve more deeply and see in these two different accounts in the Torah not two versions, but two aspects or perspectives of the same story, is invited to consider the following proposal.²

II. The People's Goal: Scouting the Land and

Remaining in Kadesh Barnea

The crises described in the previous *shiur* (the ark going out to war, the murmurers, the meat cravers, and Miryam) created anxiety and mistrust among the people regarding the plan to continue on to the Land of Israel. The doubts crystallized into a request to first check "the way" that they were ultimately to take.

It should be noted that sending spies to ascertain the best route to take and the most strategic place from which to start the war is both correct and legitimate. But it cannot be the subject of public discussion, nor of public protest. For the purpose of espionage, a small number of professional spies should have been sent out in secret – not an official and well-known delegation. This is indeed what was done in the following examples:

And Moshe sent to spy out Yazer, and they took the towns thereof. (*Bemidbar* 21:32)

And Yehoshua the son of Nun sent out of Shitim two spies secretly. (*Yehoshua* 2:1)

Thus, the public request for a spy mission conducted by representatives of "all of you" was merely a cover for the real question that troubled them:

And what is the land... whether it is good or bad? And what cities... whether in camps, or in strongholds? (*Bemidbar* 13:19)

God's command to Moshe exposed what was hidden in the people's hearts and put them to the test. At the same time, it completely ignored their clever request. They did not really want to send "spies" in order to obtain vital military information, but rather "scouts" in order to check whether the land was indeed good and appropriate for them or not. Moshe (in *Devarim*) mentions the initial request of the people in order to emphasize the responsibility of the communal leaders for the crisis and for the decree to remain forty years in the wilderness. The account in our *parasha* opens with the truth that was exposed by God's words to Moshe.

The people's request, however, had another, narrower, short-term goal – to rest in Kadesh-Barnea from the hardships of the difficult journey in the wilderness and the difficult crises that they experienced. Forty days of rest!

Many years ago (Chanuka 5742), on a visit to the eastern portion of the Sinai Peninsula, I reached this conclusion that Kadesh-Barnea was an ideal place to rest. We set out from Eilat to Kontila and to the great desert oasis in Wadi Kodiraat,³ which is identified with Kadesh-Barnea.⁴ This is the site of one of the most abundant springs in the Sinai (about 40 cubic

Likutei Divrei Torah

meters of water per hour), which flows into the oasis along kilometers of plants and trees and alongside irrigated orchards.

The moment I saw this amazing landscape, I remembered the gaping difference in the Torah between "the wilderness of Tzin, which is Kadesh" (*Bemidbar* 33:36 and elsewhere) and Kadesh-Barnea in the wilderness of Paran (*Bemidbar* 12:16 and elsewhere). In the wilderness of Tzin, there was no "water for the congregation," and the scarcity of water gave rise to the events of Mei Meriva, whereas regarding Kadesh-Barnea, no mention is ever made of a water shortage; it was possible to remain there "many days, according to the days that you abide there."

I took out a *Tanakh* from my knapsack and reread the verses to verify that no water problem had ever arisen in Kadesh-Barnea, and I immediately understood the people's desire to rest in the shade of the trees with the running water and to send scouts to check whether it was at all worthwhile to leave this wonderful desert oasis. Anyone who has not seen this place with his own two eyes will indeed have difficulty understanding this.

III. The Ma'apilim – "The Generation, Even the Men of War"

The only way to enter the land from the south was by way of a great surprise, just as the exodus from Egypt could only have happened all at once, over one night and one day. However, thirty days at Kivrot Ha-Ta'ava and another forty days for the scouts' mission greatly reduced the chances of success, because "the Amalekites and the Canaanites" had in the meantime organized themselves to block the entry of the Israelites by way of the central highlands. The fall of morale and the weeping put an end to any chance of entering the Land of Israel from the south. Even at the end of their forty years of wandering in the wilderness, the Israelites would not have succeeded in penetrating from the south. What was needed was a difficult journey and a surprise outflanking from the south to the east, to the eastern bank of the Jordan (*Bemidbar* 21:1-20).

There were, however, many among the people who did not accept this decree, and they tried to resist it:

We have sinned against the Lord; we will go up and fight, according to all that the Lord our God commanded us. (*Devarim* 1:41)

But they presumed to go up to the top of the mountain. (*Bemidbar* 14:44)

They failed and suffered defeat: "And they smote

¹ One of the most important differences relates to the name of the land. In our *parasha*, the people are sent "to scout out the land of Canaan," whereas in the words of Moshe in the book of *Devarim* there is no mention at all of the "land of Canaan." See my article, "Ha-Aretz ve-Eretz Canaan Ba-Torah," in my book, *Pirkei Ha-Avot Be-Sefer Bereishit* (Alon Shevut, 2003) and on my [website](#).

² A clear example of this phenomenon is found in the section describing the flood in the book of *Bereishit* (chapters 6-8), even more so than in the section dealing with the creation. See *Shitat Ha-Bechinot shel Ha-Rav Mordechai Breuer* (Alon Shevut, 2005), and see my article, "Al Kefel Ha-Mashma'ut shel Ha-Meraglim," in *Sefer Zakhor Ve-Shamor – Teva Ve-Historiya Nifgashim Be-Shabbat U-Be-Lu'ach Ha-Chagim* (Alon Shevut, 2015) and on my [website](#).

³ In my opinion, the name Kodiraat preserves the name Chatzerot/Chatzar Adar, the station before the Paran wilderness/Kadesh-Barnea in the book of *Bemidbar* (12:16). The oasis extends west until another great spring named Katzima, which has been identified with Atzman on the southern border of "the land of Canaan": "Southward of Kadesh-Barnea; and it shall go forth to Chatzar-Adar, and pass along to Atzman" (*Bemidbar* 34:4-5).

⁴ The Ramban in his commentary (*Bemidbar* 20:1) similarly distinguishes between Kadesh-Barnea in the wilderness of Paran (in the second year) and "the wilderness of Tzin, which is Kadesh" (in the fortieth year). Most scholars do not make this distinction (see, for example, Y. Aharoni, *Encyclopedia Mikra'it*), and they maintain that the name of Kadesh was preserved in the small, southern spring. But the two Israelite citadels from the days of the kingdom – the large citadel at the large oasis of Kodiraat (see Rudolf Cohen, *Ha-Encyclopedia He-Chadasha Le-Chafiot Be-Eretz Yisrael*) and the second and smaller citadel over Ein-al-Kadis – prove that the Ramban was correct. These are two separate places.

them and beat them down, even unto Chorma." God did not save them, and "the ark of the covenant and Moshe departed not out of the camp" (*Bemidbar* 14:44-45).

In my opinion, the fighters of the generation of the wilderness did not give up, but rather attempted to go up time and time again. It was about them that Moshe said:

And the days in which we came from Kadesh-Barnea until we were come over the brook Zered were thirty and eight years; until all the generation, even the men of war, were consumed from the midst of the camp... Moreover, the hand of the Lord was against them, to discomfit them from the midst of the camp, until they were consumed. (*Devarim* 2:14-16).

It is clear to me that "the men of war" died in their desperate attempts to penetrate the land from the south.

The Torah only alludes to the wars fought by the *Ma'apilim*. The journey southward "into the wilderness by way of the Sea of Suf" (*Bemidbar* 14:25; *Devarim* 2:1, 8) was meant to distance the people from the front opened by the *Ma'apilim*, in order to get them to stop "banging their heads against the wall." When they returned at the beginning of the fortieth year on their journey northward, the great desert oasis was already in the hands of the Amalekites, and it was impossible to return there. It was as if God said to the people of Israel that He will not test them again with this indulgence regarding which they had already failed.

In Kadesh in the wilderness of Tzin, another water crisis erupted and they could not stay there. In that same tour of East Sinai years ago, I also saw Ein Al-Kadis, which is located very close to the Israeli border (on the slopes of "the mountain of the south," which is called in the Torah "the wilderness of Tzin"). There I saw a small spring dripping into a pool. I immediately understood the precision in the Torah's account and the enormous gap between "Kadesh-Barnea," with its abundant water in "the wilderness of Paran," and "the wilderness of Tzin, which is Kadesh," which has little water. This is despite the fact that the distance between the two is no more than 12 kilometers as the crow flies.

After the death of Aharon and after the destruction carried out against "the Canaanite, the king of Arad," the people of Israel were forced

"to compass the land of Edom" (*Bemidbar* 21:1-4) in order to enter the land from the east.

IV. The *Ma'apilim* and Zionism - In my opinion, much of the Charedi opposition to Zionism, including the Israeli army, is based on the story of the *Ma'apilim*. Even though they spoke the language of believers, the *Ma'apilim* were not led by the ark of God.

Many Zionists also thought of "*ha'apala*" because they wanted to sever themselves from rabbinic leadership and take the land by force, even if this appeared dangerous or impossible. This is a song that they sang:

To the top of the mountain, to the top of the mountain – who will block the road to those redeemed from captivity?...

Go up, go up, go up to the top of the mountain.¹

Only one figure in the entire Torah world, R. Tzadok Ha-Kohen of Lublin, suggests that the *Ma'apilim*, despite their chutzpa, were right in their refusal to give up on going up to the Land of Israel. It was only that the time was not right for this, and therefore Moshe said: "It shall not succeed" (*Bemidbar* 14:41). R. Tzadok writes:

But at a different time it will succeed... This is in our time, when we are on the heels of the *Mashiach* [when chutzpa will actually increase and succeed, as *Chazal* say in *Sota* 48b]. (*Tzidkat Ha-Tzadik* 46)

The Zionist *ha'apala* has indeed succeeded with God's help, and the prophecy of R. Tzadok Ha-Kohen has been proven true!

V. The Chapter Dealing with Eretz Yisrael that Follows the Sin of the "Scouts" - The chapter of *mitzvot* that immediately follows – *mitzvot* that depend upon entry into *Eretz Yisrael*, the sin-offering of a congregation that sins inadvertently, and the prohibition not to go about after one's own heart and one's own eyes – is connected to the story of the sin of the "scouts." Therefore, it begins with *mitzvot* that depend on entering the Land of Israel (libations that accompany offerings, *challa*), and it concludes with the prohibition connected to *tzitzit*: And that you go not (*taturu*) about after your own heart and your own eyes. (*Bemidbar* 15:39).

In other words, you shall not ask about the land, "whether it is good [for me] or bad." This question, the question of those sent to "scout" ("*ha-tarim*") the land" (*Bemidbar* 14:6) and of those who sent them, is what brought about the

Likutei Divrei Torah

crisis in the generation of the wilderness.

Opening the chapter with *mitzvot* that depend on entry into the Land of Israel has far-reaching significance. Immediately after it was finally decided that the Land of Israel is blocked, that there was no longer any chance that the generation of those who left Egypt would go there, and that anyone who insists on trying nonetheless would be beaten "until destruction," the verse opens with the announcement:

When you are come into the land of your habitations, which I give to you... (*Bemidbar* 15:2)

It is clearly promised that the people of Israel will indeed come to the Land of Israel – if not in this generation, then in the next.

In order to understand the deeper meaning, consider for a moment the opposite approach of the Jews living in the exile after the destruction of the First and Second Temples. These Jews invested all their efforts in adapting to the new reality, in building Jewish life in the exile, and even in establishing a "wall" against those wishing to "stir up love, until it please" (*Shir Ha-Shirim* 3:5).²

In contrast, the Torah here immediately prevents any attempt to build a "wilderness" ideology. In the midst of deep despair, it reestablishes the one and only goal: the land of the forefathers as "the land of your habitations"!

It is also interesting to note that the section dealing with the meal-offerings and libations turns the entire sacrificial service into *mitzvot* that depend on the land, because the meal-offering and libations must come from the wheat, grapes, and olives growing in "the land of your habitations."

Even more interesting is the *mitzva* of *challa*: Of the bread of the land... of the first of your dough you shall give to the Lord a portion for a gift. (*Bemidbar* 15:17-21)

The Torah declares this *mitzva* as obligatory already "when you come into ("be-vo'achem") the land where I bring you" – that is, immediately, without waiting for "when you are come into ("ki tavo'u")," which requires time and the process of settlement.³ Why does the *mitzva* of *challa* apply immediately?

The *mitzvot* that "depend on the land" are *mitzvot* relating to the produce of the fields of the Land of Israel, and they will be in the hands of

¹ Composed by Levin Kipnis.

² Like R. Yehuda, *Ketubot* 110b-111a; for an extended discussion, see *Responsa Avnei Nezer*, *Yoreh De'ah* 454.

³ So explained *Chazal*; see *Sifrei* 110; *Rashi*.

the people of Israel only after the process of settlement. But *challah* is set aside from the dough that is kneaded in the house, and so immediately, "when you come into the land," you can knead dough "of the bread of the land" in your tents.

The end of the chapter is the most shocking part. Who among all those who wear *tzitzit* (and wrap themselves in a *tallit*) thinks and has in mind that it is a garment of faith in the Land of Israel, that this is a garment that expresses faith in the Land of Israel as a promise of God to the people of Israel?

Those who observe the *mitzva* understand its purpose – "and that you not go about astray after your own heart and your own eyes, after which you use to go astray" – as a warning against following the lusting of one's heart and eyes, against attraction to sins in general.¹ Only Rashi alludes to the clear connection to those who returned from "scouting out the land" and caused an entire generation to die in the wilderness.²

VI. The Section Dealing With a Sin Offering

In the middle of the chapter, there is a section dealing with a sin-offering, a section that ostensibly belongs to the book of *Vayikra*. The Ramban in his commentary explains the connection to our *parasha*: We are dealing with a general removal of the yoke of "all that the Lord has commanded you" (*Bemidbar* 15:22-23), as the wailers wished to do when they said: "Let us make a captain [a different leader], and let us return to Egypt" (*Bemidbar* 14:4).

According to the Ramban, if, God forbid, a large faction in Israel decides to forsake the Torah, it is "a congregation that has sinned inadvertently."³ Only an individual can be considered as having acted "with a high hand" (*Bemidbar* 15:30). The Torah recognizes among those who have left the Torah in its entirety "a congregation that has sinned inadvertently," "an individual who has sinned inadvertently," and an individual who has sinned "with a high hand" – but there is no such thing as a congregation that has sinned deliberately!

It is clear from the context that the threat to strike the entire nation with plague on account of the sin of the scouts is a threat directed to a congregation that has sinned deliberately, but Moshe's prayer removed this threat for all generations.

In this way, the verses of forgiveness in the story of the scouts connect with the verses of

forgiveness in the section of the *mitzvot*, and together they stand at the foundation of our Yom Kippur prayers. We find this in Moshe's prayer and in God's words of pardon:

Pardon, I pray You, the iniquity of this people according to the greatness of Your lovingkindness, and according as You have forgiven this people, from Egypt until now. (*Bemidbar* 14:19)

I have pardoned according to your word. (ibid. 14:20)

This is similarly true of the passage dealing with inadvertent sinning in future generations: And all the congregation of the children of Israel shall be forgiven, and the stranger that sojourns among them; for in respect of all the people it was done in error. (*Bemidbar* 15:26). *Translated by David Strauss*

¹ See *Sifrei* 115 and the commentaries of Ibn Ezra, Ramban, Seorno, Chizkuni, and others.

² In fact, there was an important Torah scholar in recent generations who understood "*ve-lo taturu*" in the context of returning to the Land of Israel and rebuilding it, but astonishingly, he interpreted it in precisely the opposite sense: One who goes to the Land of Israel in the framework of the Zionist movement violates an explicit Torah prohibition. I am referring to the Admor of Munkacs, R. Chayim Elazar Shapira (author of *Minchat Elazar*), who led the opponents of Zionism. My father-in-law, Tzadok Raab, was a rescue activist in Hungary during the years of the Holocaust (as a Bnei Akiva counselor). He reported to me as follows (and so I heard also from many others):

When I visited Munkacs, I was told in the name of the Rav: "And you shall not go about after you own heart" – this is Herzl! "And after your own eyes" – this is [Rav] Kook. They were unwilling to hear about rescue efforts.

This ruling invalidated not only the political Zionism advocated by Herzl, but also the vision of the rebirth of R. Kook. Is it possible that a great Torah authority like the *Minchat Elazar* did not consider a Torah prohibition directed against the "scouts" and against rejecting the Land of Israel because of questions and concerns? I have no doubt that the Rebbe of Munkacs read the Torah correctly; rather, he understood Zionism as a movement of "*ha'apala*" without the Ark of the Covenant of God and without Moshe, and he was convinced that this is forbidden "*ha'apala*." In his opinion, the prohibition to go after one's heart and one's eyes included also the "*ma'apilim*" after the decree was issued not to go up.

The Rebbe died on the night of 2 Sivan 5697 (1937). Exactly seven years later, the community of Munkacs was led to extermination on the night of 2 Sivan 5704 (1944)!

³ See my article, "Kahal Shogeg," on my [website](#).

Weekly Parsha Shlach 5780

Rabbi Berel Wein's Weekly Blog

The Land of Israel has always been a challenge to the People of Israel. There are many reasons for this, both obvious and subtle. The Land of Israel plays a central role in Judaism, in Jewish life, within its laws and world view. Yet, for a great part of Jewish history, the Jewish People itself was absent from the Land of Israel. Because of this absence, the Land of Israel was not a reality in Jewish everyday life. It became a goal, a spiritual value, an imaginary place of perfection and holiness. It adopted a utopian character, a place well nigh impossible to translate into reality.

Though, over the past century the Land of Israel and the People of Israel again began to be joined one to another in actuality, it became difficult for many Jews to accept the reality of the Land and the People as opposed to the imaginary dream that had existed for millennia.

This I think helps explain the attitude of certain sections of Jewish society, interestingly enough both very secular and very religiously observant, that somehow finds it difficult to adjust to the miraculous and unforeseen reunification of the Land and the People that has occurred in our time. Expecting perfection or purely holy behavior, the existing reality is therefore frustrating and even disappointing to them and they reject this miracle of Jewish rebirth and of the great process of the rebuilding of the Jewish People in the Land of Israel in our time.

When the spies that Moshe sent rejected the Land of Israel thousands of years ago, they also did it out of ill perceived but relatively high motives. They saw the dangers inherent in the creation of any national entity and of the potential divisions that would necessarily arise within Jewish society. They realized that they would have to fight wars against strong enemies and work to till the land and develop an economy and a way of life. They realized that all of this somehow had to be compatible with the intrinsic holiness of the Land and of its special qualities.

They were nervous that “the eyes of the Lord their God would be fixed upon them and the Land from the beginning of the year till its conclusion.” They would have to combine the sword, the plow and holy learning in their personal and national lives. This was and is an enormous challenge that the generation of the desert shrank from. It is much easier to retain and be loyal to an image of the imaginary Land of Israel than to the nitty gritty of the actual Land of Israel.

Calev and Yehoshua said “aloh na’aleh” we will be worthy to elevate ourselves to meet that challenge. Our generation is in the midst of the third attempt of the Jewish People to realize its physical and spiritual ambitions in the Land of Israel. It is a difficult process but one that we cannot or should not shirk from attempting to succeed and thereby justify all that has happened to us in our past history.

Shabbat Shalom.

Rabbi Berel Wein

In My Opinion My Orchid Plant Revisited

Rabbi Wein's Weekly Blog

Some time ago I wrote a short essay about my orchid plant and its wondrous ability to revive itself and flower after months of being dormant. Recently when I was in house quarantine upon returning to Jerusalem, I again noticed that the orchid plant in my kitchen rejuvenated – I believe for the third time- and was flowering beautifully. When one is confined for fourteen days, one notices such events and gives them a little more thought since there is little else to occupy one’s mind.

I am no longer able to read, so I am thrilled beyond words to be distracted. And the newly bloomed orchid plant proved to be such a pleasant distraction. I examined the plant closely and, in wonder, admired the subtlety of color that its flowers contained. I thought immediately of a poem from my childhood that stated: “Poems are made by fools like you and me but only God can make a tree.” So, it is with orchid plants as well.

The combination of beauty and apparent fragility, with tenacious resilience to bloom again after shedding its original flowers is worthy of human contemplation and even emulation.

There is much to be learned from the natural world that we inhabit. The Lord has made all things with a purpose, and wisdom is necessary to appreciate this. It is why we are instructed to make a blessing of thanksgiving to the Creator when we see and appreciate the wonders of His world in which we live.

I understand more deeply than I did before the anguish of the prophet Yonah when the plant that afforded him such pleasure and beauty was suddenly taken away from him. He utters a bitter lament toward Heaven at the disappearance. And Heaven replies to him, in essence, saying that one must see all events in this world in relative perspective.

One cannot care more for a plant, no matter how wondrous it may be, than for the lives of the human beings who lived in the city of Nineveh. And plants, like my orchid, rejuvenate themselves after being dormant temporarily do not preclude being verdant and productive in the future. We have all been pretty much dormant over the past few months, and I will be the first to admit that such a state of being allows muscles to atrophy and spirits to sag. Vitality once lost is often difficult to regain. It is simply because of this known danger that lurks ever so menacingly, that my rejuvenated orchid plant brought me such assurance and hope.

If plants can and do rejuvenate, so too can human beings. It is within our make-up to be able to do if we attempt it. We have been through a very harrowing time, emotionally, physically, and spiritually. But the hallmark of the Jewish people throughout the ages has been our resilience, optimism, and renewed productivity. This trait will not fail us in this hour of challenge and rejuvenation.

Shabbat shalom

Berel Wein

What is going on? (Shelach Lecha 5780)

Rabbi Jonathan Sacks

In March 2020, whilst launching a new book,[1] I took part in a BBC radio programme along with Mervyn King, who had been governor of the Bank of England at the time of the financial crash of 2008. He, together with the economist John Kay, had also brought out a new book, Radical Uncertainty: decision-making for an unknowable future.[2] The coronavirus pandemic was just beginning to make itself felt in Britain, and it had the effect of making both of our books relevant in a way that neither of us could have predicted. Mine is about the precarious balance between the “I” and the “we”: individualism versus the common good. Theirs is about how to make decisions when you cannot tell what the future holds.

The modern response to this latter question has been to hone and refine predictive techniques using mathematical modelling. The trouble is that mathematical models work in a relatively abstract, delimited, quantifiable world and cannot deal with the messy, unpredictable character of reality. They don’t and cannot consider what Donald Rumsfeld called the “unknown unknowns” and Nicholas Taleb termed “black swans” – things that no one expected but that change the environment. We live in a world of radical uncertainty.

Accordingly, they propose a different approach. In any critical situation, ask: “What is happening?” They quote Richard Rumelt: “A great deal of strategy work is trying to figure out what is going on. Not just deciding what to do, but the more fundamental problem of comprehending the situation.”[3] Narrative plays a major role in making good decisions in an uncertain world. We need to ask: of what story is this a part?

Neither Rumelt nor King and Kay quote Amy Chua, but her book Political Tribes is a classic account of failing to understand the situation.[4] Chapter by chapter she documents American foreign policy disasters from Vietnam to Iraq because policy-makers did not comprehend tribal societies. You cannot use war to turn them into liberal

democracies. Fail to understand this and you will waste many years, trillions of dollars, and tens of thousands of lives.

It might seem odd to suggest that a book by two contemporary economists holds the clue to unravelling the mystery of the spies in our parsha. But it does.

We think we know the story. Moses sent twelve spies to spy out the land. Ten of them came back with a negative report. The land is good, but unconquerable. The people are strong, the cities impregnable, the inhabitants are giants and we are grasshoppers. Only two of the men, Joshua and Caleb, took a different view. We can win. The land is good. God is on our side. With His help, we cannot fail.

On this reading, Joshua and Caleb had faith, courage and confidence, while the other ten did not. But this is hard to understand. The ten – not just Joshua and Caleb – knew that God was with them. He had crushed Egypt. The Israelites had just defeated the Amalekites. How could these ten – leaders, princes – not know that they could defeat the inhabitants of the land?

What if the story were not this at all? What if it was not about faith, confidence, or courage. What if it was about “What is going on?” – understanding the situation and what happens when you don’t. The Torah tells us that this is the correct reading, and it signals it in a most striking way.

Biblical Hebrew has two verbs that mean “to spy”: lachpor and leragel (from which we get the word meraglim, “spies”). Neither of these words appear in our parsha. That is the point. Instead, no less than twelve times, we encounter the rare verb, la-tur. It was revived in modern Hebrew and means (and sounds like) “to tour.” Tayar is a tourist. There is all the difference in the world between a tourist and a spy.

Malbim explains the difference simply. Latur means to seek out the good. That is what tourists do. They go to the beautiful, the majestic, the inspiring. They don’t spend their time trying to find out what is bad. Lachpor and leragel are the opposite. They are about searching out a place’s weaknesses and vulnerabilities. That is what spying is about. The exclusive use of the verb latur in our parsha – repeated twelve times – is there to tell us that the twelve men were not sent to spy. But only two of them understood this.

Almost forty years later, when Moses retells the episode in Devarim 1:22-24, he does use the verbs lachpor and leragel. In Genesis 42, when the brothers come before Joseph in Egypt to buy food, he accuses them of being meraglim, “spies”, a word that appears seven times in that one chapter. He also defines what it is to be a spy: “You have come to see the nakedness of the land” (i.e. where it is undefended).

The reason ten of the twelve men came back with a negative report is not because they lacked courage or confidence or faith. It was because they completely misunderstood their mission. They thought they had been sent to be spies. But the Torah never uses the word “spy” in our chapter. The ten simply did not understand what was going on.

They believed it was their role to find out the “nakedness” of the land, where it was vulnerable, where its defences could be overcome. They looked and could not find. The people were strong, and the cities impregnable. The bad news about the land was that there was not enough bad news to make it weak and thus conquerable. They thought their task was to be spies and they did their job. They were honest and open. They reported what they had seen. Based on the intelligence they had gathered, they advised the people not to attack – not now, and not from here.

Their mistake was that they were not meant to be spies. They were told latur, not lachpor or leragel. Their job was to tour, explore, travel, see what the land was like and report back. They were to see what was good about the land, not what was bad. So, if they were not meant to be spies, what was the purpose of this mission?

I suggest that the answer is to be found in a passage in the Talmud[5] that states: it is forbidden for a man to marry a woman without seeing her first. The reason? Were he to marry without having seen her first, he might, when he does see her, find he is not attracted to her. Tensions will inevitably arise. Hence the idea: first see, then love.

The same applies to a marriage between a people and its land. The Israelites were travelling to the country promised to their ancestors. But none of them had ever seen it. How then could they be expected to muster the energies necessary to fight the battles involved in conquering the land? They were about to marry a land they had not seen. They had no idea what they were fighting for.

The twelve were sent later: to explore and report on the good things of the land so that the people would know it was worth fighting for. Their task was to tour and explore, not spy and decry. But only two of them, Joshua and Caleb, listened carefully and understood what their mission was: to be the eyes of the congregation, letting them know the beauty and goodness of what lay ahead, the land that had been their destiny since the days of their ancestor Abraham.

The Israelites at that stage did not need spies. As Moses said many years later: “You did not trust in the Lord your God, who went ahead of you on your journey, in fire by night and in a cloud by day, to search out places for you to camp and to show you the way you should go” (Deut. 1:32-33). God was going to show them where to go and where to attack. The people needed something else entirely. Moses had told them that the land was good. It was “flowing with milk and honey.” But Moses had never seen the land. Why should they believe him? They needed the independent testimony of eyewitnesses. That was the mission of the twelve. And in fact, all twelve fulfilled that mission. When they returned, the first thing they said was: “We went into the land to which you sent us, and it does flow with milk and honey! Here is its fruit” (Num. 13:27). But because ten of them thought their task was to be spies, they went on to say that the conquest was impossible, and from then on, tragedy was inevitable.

The difference between the ten and Joshua and Caleb is not that the latter had the faith, courage and confidence the former did not. It is that they understood the story; the ten did not.

I find it fascinating that a leading economist and a former Governor of the Bank of England should argue for the importance of narrative when it comes to decision-making under conditions of radical uncertainty. Yet that is the profound truth in our parsha.

Ten of the twelve men thought they were part of a story of espionage. The result was that they looked for the wrong things, came to the wrong conclusion, demoralised the people, destroyed the hope of an entire generation, and will eternally be remembered as responsible for one of the worst failures in Jewish history.

Read Amy Chua’s Political Tribes, mentioned earlier, and you will discover a very similar analysis of America’s devastating failures in Vietnam, Afghanistan and Iraq.[6]

I write these words while the Coronavirus pandemic is at its height. Has anyone yet identified the narrative of which it and we are a part? I believe that the story we tell affects the decisions we make. Get the story wrong and we can rob an entire generation of their future. Get it right, as did Joshua and Caleb, and we can achieve greatness.

Shabbat Shalom

Shabbat Shalom: Shelach Lecha (Numbers 13:1-15:41)

By Rabbi Shlomo Riskin

Efrat, Israel – “We should go up at once and possess it [the land] for we are well able to overcome it” (Numbers 13:30)

The tragedy of the desert generation is the refusal of the Israelites to conquer the Land of Israel and to realize the main objective for their freedom from Egypt. The scouts give their report, show the luscious fruit with which they have returned and concede that Israel is a land flowing with milk and honey. But they continue to describe a land filled with aggressive giants, and well-fortified cities, concluding that; “we cannot go forward against those people... they are too strong for us.” One individual, Caleb, speaks out mightily on behalf of the land: “We must go forth and occupy the land.... We can do it.” We will be able to conquer it because we must conquer it; without a homeland, we cannot be a nation. Caleb, however, loses the argument. The nation silences his plea; their desire is either to return to Egypt or to remain homeless in the

desert forever. What was the point of this second view which won the day—at least for the desert generation?

I believe the difference between Caleb and the more vocal and convincing scouts is how to define the people Israel. Are we a religion or are we a nation? In more modern language, are we Israelis or are we Jews?

You will remember from previous commentaries that the Kotzker Rebbe referred to Korah as “the holy grandfather.” Korah was deeply religious and he wanted more than anything else to be a kohen-priest and serve God. He didn’t want to go to Israel, to get involved in a difficult war, to get his hands dirtied by the politics and arguments about nation-building. He believed, as the majority of scouts apparently believed, that the Hebrews could remain in the desert, focused on the portable sanctuary, pray to God and live off the manna from heaven. If the people of Israel is first and foremost a religion, then he was right. After all, life in the desert is an eternal Kollel with God taking care of you and no responsibilities to the outside world.

Moses, Caleb and Joshua—most importantly, God Himself—saw it differently. Yes, a very important part of Israel is our religion, which was given to us at our covenant at Sinai. But prior to that was the Abrahamic covenant “between the pieces,” the covenant in which we are promised eternal life as the seed of Abraham and a national homeland. From the beginning of our history, God elects Abraham with a promise that “I shall make you a great nation... and all the families of the earth will be blessed through you” (Gen. 12:2-3). And even before we received the Revelation at Sinai, we were charged with being a “kingdom of priest-teachers [to all of humanity] and a holy nation” (Ex.19:6). God determined that our mission is to influence the other nations to accept a philosophy of compassionate righteousness and moral justice; God also understood that we could never hope to influence other nations unless we were also a nation-state, subject to the same challenges as other countries. A religion only bears responsibility towards God; the Jewish religion is meant to be expressed within a nation-state with responsibility to the entire world.

This analysis has critical ramifications for our attitudes concerning conversion, especially in Israel where there are approximately 300,000 Israeli citizens from the former Soviet Union who are not yet halachic Jews. Ruth is undoubtedly the most famous convert in Jewish history aside from Abraham our Patriarch. Her formula of conversion begins with her statement to Naomi, her Hebrew mother-in-law: “Wherever you go, I shall go... your nation shall be my nation and your God shall be my God...” (Ruth 1:16). For Ruth, the very first obligation of the convert is to live in the Land of Israel, the land of the Jewish nation; hence, her most important act of conversion is following her mother-in-law to the Land of Israel. When she defines what it means to convert to Judaism, she begins with national terms (your nation shall be my nation) then religious terms (your God shall be my God). She understands that whatever Judaism is, it includes a national as well as a religious aspect. When one studies the Talmudic discussion of conversion (B.T. Yevamot 45-47) and even the Codes of Jewish Law, we see that our sages never insisted on total performance of commandments before one could become a Jew. They did insist that the convert be tutored in several of the more stringent and several of the more lenient commandments and accept Judaism as a system of commandments. They also insisted upon ritual immersion (rebirth into the Jewish nation) and circumcision for males (the symbol of the Abrahamic covenant “between the pieces”).

Citizens of Israel from the former Soviet Union, who themselves or whose children serve in the IDF, are performing the most stringent of our national commands in this generation. This must be taken into account by our conversion judges in addition to everything else these new immigrants will learn about the Sabbath, the festivals and our rituals. Living in Israel is not a sufficient criteria for Conversion, but it is an important aspect of the general criteria of “Acceptance of the Commandments – Your nation will be my nation”, to the extent that one will educate his/her children to serve in the IDF!

Shabbat Shalom!

Insights Parshas Shelach :: Sivan 5780

Yeshiva Beis Moshe Chaim/Talmudic University

Based on the Torah of our Rosh HaYeshiva HaRav Yochanan Zweig

This week's Insights is dedicated in loving memory of Yisroel ben Aryeh Lieb, HaLevi, Stanley Schwartz. "May his Neshama have an Aliya!"

Mob Mentality

These are the names of the men whom Moshe sent to spy out the land. And Moshe called Hoshea son of Nun "Yehoshua" (13:16).

This week's parsha opens with the infamous incident of the twelve spies who were sent to explore Eretz Yisroel. The spies conspired to convey a very grim interpretation of what they observed during their forty day journey. This led to Bnei Yisroel questioning whether or not going into Eretz Yisroel was a good idea, which inexorably ended with Hashem's decreeing that Bnei Yisroel should wander the desert for forty years. This incident also led to the ninth day of Av being marked as a day of tragedy for all future generations.

Only two of the original twelve spies refused to participate in the conspiracy of the others. Rashi cites the Gemara (Sotah 34b), which explains that Calev ben Yefunah traveled to Chevron to pray at the tombs of the patriarchs that he would not be ensnared in the plot of the others. Rava (ad loc) says that Moshe added a letter to Hoshea's name (a letter "yud" making his name Yehoshua, and creating Hashem's name with the first two letters) so that his name could be understood as meaning "Hashem should save you from the scheme of the spies."

Why did Moshe only see fit to pray for Yehoshua? At the very least he could have also prayed for Calev, the other spy who didn't participate in the plot.

This very same question seems to be bothering Targum Yonasan ben Uziel. The Targum comments on this very verse (13:16); "When Moshe saw his humility, he changed his name from Hoshea to Yehoshua."

Yehoshua was a on a very high level and clearly was the greatest of all the heads of the tribes. He shadowed Moshe and was permitted to go on Mount Sinai where others were not. He also eventually succeeded Moshe Rabbeinu as leader of Bnei Yisroel, and as Rashi points out (Devarim 31:29), as long as Yehoshua was alive Moshe felt as if he himself was alive. Yet, Moshe saw Yehoshua's humility as a potential problem. Why? As we saw in last week's parsha (12:3), Moshe himself was the most humble person on the face of the earth! What was the problem with Yehoshua's humility?

Moshe was concerned that Yehoshua's humility would prevent him from taking a stand against the other spies. The principal character trait of someone being modest and humble is the understanding that other people see things that he doesn't and that their perspective has some validity. Moshe was concerned that Yehoshua would be complicit with the other spies because his humility would prevent him from condemning them outright.

Moshe himself had been vested with the responsibility of leading the Jewish people. Leadership requires making decisions that you feel are proper regardless of what others may think or say. Therefore, his responsibility to act in the best interest of Bnei Yisroel superseded his humility and it was thus not detrimental to his leadership ability.

On the other hand, Yehoshua had not yet been chosen to be the leader of the Jewish people. Hence, his humility could possibly prevent him from taking a stand against them, so Moshe felt compelled to daven for Yehoshua.

WYSIWYG

Speak to Bnei Yisroel and say to them that they shall make themselves tzitzis on the corners of their garments...And they shall place upon the tzitzis of each corner a thread of turquoise. It shall then constitute tzitzis for you and shall see it and you shall remember all the commandments of Hashem... (15:38-39)

This week's parsha ends with the instructions to make tzitzis on our garments. This mitzvah is so precious and significant that all five verses have been incorporated as the final paragraph of the shema, which is said twice daily. Rashi (ad loc) says that the mitzvah of tzitzis reminds us of all the mitzvos in the Torah because the numerical value of the

word tzitzis is 600 and there are 8 strings and 5 knots on every corner, equaling 613 - the number of mitzvos that Bnei Yisroel have to perform. Tosfos (Menachos 39a) points out, that in actuality, the Torah spells the word tzitzis without the second "yud." This renders the numerical value of the word tzitzis as 590 - not 600 as Rashi claims. Incredibly, Tosfos goes on to explain that the third instance of the word tzitzis has the letter "lamed" in front of it; if one divides the numerical value of 30 into the occurrences of the word tzitzis then we have an extra ten for each and we are back at Rashi's calculation of 600 as the numerical value of tzitzis. This Tosfos seems almost surreal; Tosfos doesn't usually give us far fetched explanations that sound like something made up by a school child. What does Tosfos mean?

Remarkably, for something that is repeated twice every day of our lives, most of us fail to see that the simple translation of these verses do not seem to make sense: "they shall make themselves tzitzis on the corners of their garments...And they shall place upon the tzitzis of each corner a thread of turquoise. It shall then constitute tzitzis." What does the Torah mean they shall make tzitzis on the corners of their garments, then add a turquoise thread on the corner, and only then it shall constitute tzitzis? We already made it tzitzis in the first part of the verse! What does the Torah mean that after we add the techeles then it shall be tzitzis?

Rashi (15:38) says that the word tzitzis has two meanings; the first meaning is tassels. By adding threads to the corner we now have tassels on each corner. The second explanation of tzitzis is to peer; as tzitzis are something to look at, as the possuk says; "and you shall look at it" (15:39). Rashi is giving us an incredible clue on how these pesukim are to be read: You should put tzitzis on each corner of your garment. Now you have tassels on each corner known as tzitzis.

But that isn't enough. When you add the blue thread you are changing the essence of the tzitzis from merely tassels on a garment to something that you gaze at. As the Talmud (Menachos 43b) teaches, "The color blue is similar to the sea, which is like the clear blue sky, which is the color of the God's heavenly throne." In other words, gazing at the techeles reminds us of Hashem and, presumably, our obligation to keep all His mitzvos. Adding the techeles changes the very essence of the tzitzis.

This is what Tosfos is telling us. The third occurrence of the word tzitzis, which follows adding the techeles to each corner, refers to the change of the very essence of the tzitzis from tassels to something to gaze at to remind us of all the mitzvos. That's why the "lamed" that precedes it is divided with the other two to give each one a value of 600. Coupled with each one's 8 strings at 5 knots gives us 613 which, as the possuk so clearly states; "you will see them and be reminded of all the mitzvos of Hashem."

Did You Know...

In this week's parsha, the meraglim scout Eretz Yisroel, return with some huge fruit, and give a terribly slanderous report of the terrors that awaited Bnei Yisroel in Eretz Yisroel. Exactly how big were the fruit that they brought back?

The Gemara (Sotah 34a) and the Me'em Lo'ez (Shlach 1 13:23) cite Sefer Yehoshua (4:2), that men had to carry a stone that weighed 40 se'ah each (even though those weren't the same men, they're assuming all men could lift that). The Me'em Lo'ez (Shlach 1, 13:23) explains that since a se'ah is about 17 pounds, each of the meraglim was able to lift about 680 pounds. In any case, the fact that one man was strong enough to carry this tremendous burden shows the great strength the Jews of time possessed (Tosfos Chadashim, pe'eh 6:6).

In the Gemara (Sotah 34a) it explains that we can calculate how heavy the cluster of grapes were since we know eight people carried it. Additionally, we have a rule that a person can lift three times more than he can lift by himself when he's carrying it with other people. Therefore, the Me'em Lo'ez (ibid) explains that each person was able to carry over 2,000 pounds, which makes that one cluster a grand total of over 16,000 pounds, or 8 tons. To understand the enormity of this, the average car weighs around a measly 4,000 pounds.

The Me'em Lo'ez continues and explains that this is why the place they cut them was called "the river of the cluster." The amount of wine that came from these grapes literally made a river.

Besides the eight people who carried these grapes, one person carried a pomegranate and another a fig. Yehoshua and Calev refused to carry anything as they realized it would be used to slander Eretz Yisroel.

When the giants saw them picking fruit, Talmi (one of the giants) roared at them, making them fall down unconscious out of terror. The giants woke them up gently and told them not to be afraid, as the "God of the Jews owns everything." The giants let them leave in peace, and were rewarded with long life until the destruction of the second Beis Hamikdash.

The Me'em Lo'ez cites another opinion, which says that the spies didn't want to take the fruit back, but Calev drew his sword and threatened to kill them if they didn't bring back the fruit to show how blessedly luxuriant they were (Tanchuma, Yalkut Shemoni).

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Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair - www.seasonsofthemoon.com

Parsha Insights

Double Bluff

"Hashem spoke to Moshe, saying, 'Send forth men, if you please, and let them spy out the Land of Canaan that I give to the Children of Israel.'" (13:1, 2)

Amateur psychologists are a dangerous breed. The intricacies of assessing motive and counter-motive can often lead to completely wrong conclusion.

In this week's Torah portion, Hashem tells Moshe that despite His previous promises about the Land of Israel, the Jewish People may, if they choose, send spies to assure themselves that it is a wonderful place. It has always intrigued me why the people's desire to check out the Land should not have immediately been the cause of Divine displeasure. It's a bit like saying, "Okay, Hashem, we know that You're the Creator of the World and all that, but we just want to take a little peek ourselves to make sure that Your standards are as high as ours." Maybe by letting them send spies, Hashem wanted the people to understand the challenges of the Land and yet still follow Him. In this way, their entry into the Land would have been on a higher level of trust.

But, clearly, Moshe was hoping that they wouldn't take him up on the offer. Our Rabbis offer a parable to why Moshe let them explore the Land: Someone wants to buy a donkey, but he tells the seller that he has to give it a 'test drive.' The seller says, "Sure!" The buyer says, "Okay... Can I take it up the mountain and into the valley as well?" "Sure! You take it up hill and down dale!" The seller is certain that because he shows total confidence in his animal that the buyer will forgo the test. This is where the amateur psychology comes in: Say the Jewish People to themselves" "Aha! He's only sounding so confident so we won't check for ourselves. But precisely because he wants us to go, we're going to go!"

The rabbit warrens of bluff and counter-bluff go very deep. Suspicion never rests from increasingly complex scenarios of betrayal. The only way through life is, "You shall be straight and open with Hashem." (Devarim 18:13) Follow the way of Hashem whether it leads up the hill or down the dale!

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Rabbi Dr. Tzvi Hersh Weinreb - Parshat Shelach

Two Types of People

For the past several months, we have all been struggling with the terrible COVID-19 pandemic. We have heard our share of sad and tragic stories, and many have had to cope with very frightening events. But, on more

than one occasion, we have also read about, and sometimes even witnessed, uplifting and inspiring episodes that have helped us cope with the situation constructively.

One such episode was particularly meaningful to me. I first read about it in a news release originating in Italy, a country which was particularly hard hit by the novel coronavirus. It soon became the "story of the day" for much of the media. Like many such stories, it soon evaporated from public consciousness. But I simply cannot forget this story and its powerful lesson.

There is an elderly gentleman in one of Italy's northern cities who contracted the virus and suffered greatly. His treatment involved the use of a ventilator, to which he was attached for quite some time. Eventually, he was removed from the ventilator and, soon afterwards, was pronounced healthy and was discharged from the hospital. As he was checking out of the hospital, he was presented with a bill for the use of the ventilator. The bill came to several thousand euros.

He stared at the bill and began to cry. The hospital worker was moved by his tears and assured him that some type of arrangement could be made to reduce the exorbitant fee. However, the old man responded, "I'm not concerned about paying so much money. I can afford it." "Then why are you crying?" asked the worker. The old man replied, "I have been breathing on my own for over eighty years. I never paid a penny for those breaths. Now I am asked to pay for the use of the ventilator which restored my breath to me. If I owe the hospital so much money for a few days of breathing, how much more do I owe the Creator of the Universe for allowing me to breathe all these many years!"

This anecdote affected me so that I remember it upon awakening every morning. Like every observant Jew, the first words out of my mouth each morning are words of thanksgiving to the King of Kings for having compassionately restored my soul to me, *shehechezarta bi nishmati bechemla*. Since hearing this story, I've "edited" the prayer, and I thank the Almighty for having compassionately restored "nishmati u'neshimati"—not just "my soul" but "my soul and my breath."

The old Italian gentleman left us all with a lesson: We must be grateful each morning that we can breathe effortlessly.

This anecdote motivated me to supplement the old adage that there are "two types of people in the world: those who view the cup as half-full versus those who view it as half-empty." In other words, some people are optimists and some are pessimists.

But the old Italian gentleman went beyond merely saying that the "cup was half-full." He insisted that the cup was entirely full, "half with water and half with air." He helped us to realize that even what appears to be of no value—emptiness—is, in reality, of life-giving significance.

In this week's Torah portion, Parshat Shelach (Numbers 13:1-15:41), we read of two such very different types of people. We read of the twelve men who were sent out from the wilderness on an espionage mission to spy out the land of Canaan. Upon their return, we discover that ten of them are, to say the least, pessimists. They report that the land is "a land that devours its inhabitants" and that it is occupied by giants who cannot possibly be conquered.

But two of them, Joshua and Caleb, have a different message. They optimistically report that "the land is very, very good" and that "if we but desist from rebelling against the Lord," we need not fear, and can easily even defeat, the giants.

The nineteenth-century commentator Rabbi Jacob Mecklenburg, whose work *HaK'tav VeHaKabbalah* typically unveils hidden nuances in the Hebrew language of the biblical text, points out that our sacred language provides two different verbs to describe these two different types of people, optimists and pessimists.

Two different verbs are used in the Chumash for the term "spy." One is *latur* and the other is *leragel*. Rabbi Mecklenburg demonstrates that *latur* is best translated not as "to spy" but as "to explore," or perhaps as "to wander", or even as "to tour." On the other hand, *leragel* is best translated as "to seek fault," or "to find weaknesses".

One who engages in *leragel* is the classic pessimist. He seeks the negative in every situation and invariably finds it. But one whose

mission is *latur* seeks the positive in his explorations and discovers, to use our metaphor, that the cup is not only half-full but entirely full. Categorizing all of humanity into just two types of people is an overly simplistic approach and is, therefore, not always helpful. However, toward the end of this week's Torah portion, I discovered another use of the "two types of people" categorization that is extremely insightful and very instructive.

Here I draw upon another of the great nineteenth-century commentators, namely Rabbi Naphtali Tzvi Yehuda Berlin, known as the Netziv.

Towards the end of this week's parsha, we read about the mitzvah of *tzitzit*, of wearing strings upon the fringes of our four cornered garments. We are instructed that, in addition to the uncolored or white strings, there must be one or two strings dyed blue, called *tekhelet*.

The Netziv suggests, in a homiletic tour de force, that the white/uncolored strings and the blue dyed strings represent two types of people—more specifically, two types of devout religious people. He argues that there are those Jews whose piety is exemplary but who also engage in mundane matters. They attend synagogue regularly, keep the various festivals and ritual activities, study Torah, and contribute to charity. But they have other concerns, whether in the world of commerce, with the arts and sciences, or with political affairs.

Then there is another type of Jew, the person who is exclusively preoccupied with heavenly matters and has room in his life for only purely spiritual concerns. He has a mystical bent and prefers to avoid the material world.

The white strings represent the first type of Jew, suggests the Netziv, whereas the blue *tekhelet* strings represent the second type.

The Netziv points out that the passage contains two imperatives, two commands, to gaze at the *tzitzit* and thereby come to "remember the mitzvot and perform them." In verse 15:39, we read, "... and remember all of the Lord's mitzvot and perform them and do not be led astray by your heart and by your eyes". And in verse 40, we read again, "... so that you will remember and perform all of my mitzvot and thereby become holy to the Almighty."

"Are not these two verses repetitive?", asks the Netziv. He answers, and this is his tour de force, that the first verse is directed to the "whites," to those who observe the religious basics but who can be led astray by their other interests and activities. They are told to be sure to observe the tradition and not to be seduced by the ideologies that their "hearts" encounter and by the attractions that their "eyes" observe.

The second verse, continues the Netziv, is addressed in the religious purists, the "blues," who wish to "cleave to the Lord." They must be reminded that they too must observe all the mitzvot, even those that require intense involvement in everyday affairs, in the needs of the community, and in the establishment of a just society. Only thereby will they become "holy to the Almighty."

How relevant are the Netziv's words to all of us today. The "whites" among us have chosen a path that has its moral and ethical temptations. They must creatively and energetically resist those temptations. They must know their boundaries.

The "blues" among us must realize that they cannot remain "in the heavens," in the proverbial "ivory tower." They must bring their spiritual gifts to bear upon the imperfect world in which we all live.

We need both types of people, the "blues" and the "whites."

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Chief Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis

Dvar Torah : Shelach Lecha

When did an entire nation suffer from low self-esteem?

Parshat Shelach-Lecha tells us how the *meraglim*, the 12 spies, returned from the land of Canaan. Ten of them delivered a highly irresponsible and misleading report to the nation. They told them that Canaan was inhabited by giants. And how did they feel in their midst? They said:

" – and we felt as if we were like grasshoppers and that is exactly the perception they had of us". The Torah here highlights for us the direct

link between the perception we have of ourselves and the perception others have of us as a result.

If we think of ourselves as nothing, useless nobodies – that will be the perception that some others might have of us. On the other hand, if we exude confidence, it will inspire others to place their confidence in us.

The great medieval commentator Rav Avraham ibn Ezra explains that the entire nation of Israel carried with them through the wilderness a slave mentality – they couldn't shake off the inferiority complex they had gained in the land of Egypt. Consequently, Hashem determined that they would not be the ones to conquer the land of Canaan and indeed their mindset was reflected in the report of the spies.

Rather a new generation, to be born in the wilderness, would be the ones with the confidence, the courage and the conviction to conquer the land.

Another biblical character who suffered from low self-esteem was King Saul. So much so that the prophet Shmuel came to him and said “ even though you are so small in your eyes – nevertheless you are the head of the tribes of the people of Israel”

Shmuel's message to Shaul was not just for him – it is a message to all of us. Shmuel was telling us if ever we think that we are no better than grasshoppers we need to realise that, in reality, we are all giants. This message was encapsulated by Hillel who, in Pirkei Avot, taught “ **מִן אָנָּי לִי, מֵאֶתְּנָי?** If I am not for myself, who will ever be for me?” If I do not show that I am confident in my ability, how can others have confidence in me? However, Hillel gave a word of warning. Do not take it too far. Never become arrogant “**אָנָּי לִבְנֵי, מֵה אָנָּי?**” Because if you're only for yourself and your ego takes over. The question is not only ‘who am I’ but ‘what am I?’ I stop being a mensch. I become a mere object in the world. I am of no value to society. And then Hillel concluded – when it comes to the importance of self-esteem and confidence in ourselves – we must never delay: “**אָמֵן עַכְשִׁין, אִימְנִין?** – if not now, then when?”

Shabbat Shalom Rabbi Mirvis is the Chief Rabbi of the United Kingdom. He was formerly Chief Rabbi of Ireland.

Rav Kook Torah

Shlach: Garments of the Soul

“*Speak to the Israelites and tell them to make tassels (tzitzit) on the corners of their garments for all generations. They shall include a thread of sky-blue [wool] in the corner tassels.*” (Num. 15:38)

Three Levels of the Soul

How is the human soul recognizable to the outside world? We may speak of a hierarchy of three levels:

The soul itself.

Its character traits - compassion, generosity, tolerance, humility, and so on.

Its actions and conduct.

The innermost level, the soul itself, is hidden from the outside world. The soul can only be observed through the outer two levels, its traits and actions. Character traits are like the soul's “clothing.” Through its distinctive characteristics, the soul reveals itself to the outside world. This is similar to the way we present ourselves to others through our garments. We are judged by the style and quality of our clothes. Yet, we are not our clothes; we may change them at will. So too, we are judged by our character traits, but they are external to the soul itself, and may be changed.

The Symbolism of Tzitzit

The ultimate manifestation of the soul in the outside world is in its day-to-day deportment. If our character traits constitute a metaphoric garment that clothes the soul, then our deeds are tassels that emanate from the corners of the garment. Each trait of the soul is revealed in a variety of actions, since different situations require specific responses.

These varied actions are like the many tzitziot (tassels), extending naturally from the corners of the garment.

To summarize the metaphor:

The inner soul is represented by the body.

Personality traits are clothes covering the body.

Actions are the tassels extending from the garment.

The Thread of Techelet

We are accustomed to the tassels being white, but the actual Halachic requirement is that they be the same color as the garment. Sharing the same color indicates that our actions derive their power and direction from the garment, i.e., our character traits.

One thread, however, is not the color of the garment. The Torah instructs us to tie an additional thread, dyed sky-blue techelet. This color reminds us of hidden, sublime matters: the sea, the sky, and God's Holy Throne (Sotah 17a). Sky-blue is the background color of the universe. The techelet thread connects us to the very Source of life, from whom all forces flow. Together with the other threads, which correspond to the color of the garment and represent the diverse range of human activity, the techelet thread complements and completes the function of the tassels.

The Torah teaches that the mitzvah of wearing tzitzit corresponds to all 613 mitzvot: “When you see [the tassels], you will remember all of God's commandments and you will observe them” (Num. 15:39). By wearing a garment with these special tassels, we envelop our souls in the Torah's magnificent fabric of values and deeds.

(Gold from the Land of Israel (now available in paperback), pp. 246-248. Adapted from Olat Re'iyah vol. I, pp. 4-5)

See also: Shlach: The Grape Harvest

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Rabbi Mordechai Willig

Faith in Hashem: Then and Now

I

After the death sentence handed down to all males above twenty (Bamidbar 14:29) in the aftermath of their complaints (27) and weeping (1) over the negative report of the ten spies (13:31-33), there is an abrupt transition. The laws of meal offerings and wine libations are stated, followed by the laws of challa (15:1-21). The Da'as Z'keinim (15:2) explains this juxtaposition. When Am Yisroel heard Hashem's decree, they feared that if they will sin there will be another decree and an endless sojourn in the desert. Hashem therefore said that after forty years you will certainly keep these laws when you enter Eretz Yisroel. The Ramban (15:2) adds that Hashem consoled the children by commanding laws observed only in Eretz Yisroel to assure them that they will enter the land.

The Ohr Hachaim refines this idea, explaining that Hashem saw that they were broken-hearted over the decree to wander forty years in the desert, far from Eretz Yisroel. He sustained their heart with the mitzvos which depend upon the land in order to strengthen their spirit by assuring them that they would ascend and conquer their land. Despite the forty-year wait, the end result was guaranteed.

This consolation is based upon the younger generation's faith in Hashem and His omnipotence. Their parents did not have faith in Hashem (14:11), and the spies even denied His omnipotence (Rashi 13:31). By correcting the sin of their elders and the spies, by reestablishing the faith of their parents which enabled their redemption from Egyptian slavery (Shemos 4:31; 14:31), they were no longer broken-hearted. Their spirits were lifted and they deserved Hashem's guarantee to enter Eretz Yisroel notwithstanding future sins.

II

“Go, my people, enter your rooms and close your doors behind you. Hide for a brief moment until the anger has passed” (Yeshaya 26:20). Many of us remain behind closed doors, hiding until the terrible plague will pass. What should we be doing while in hiding? Rashi interprets “your rooms” as your shuls and yeshivos. In our current situation, however, shuls and yeshivos were all closed for months, and for many of us they remain off limits.

Rashi then cites the non-literal interpretation of the first two phrases in the pasuk found in the Medrash Tanchuma: contemplate your deeds in the chambers (rooms) of your heart. Introspection and teshuva can and must take place even in quarantine. Close the doors of your mouth, and don't question Hashem's attribute of strict justice. We must bow our heads in the face of tragedy and state, “Perfect is His work, for all His ways are just” (Devarim 32:4), even when we cannot comprehend. Rashi

also cites the Targum, which explains that we should do good deeds which will protect you in a time of crisis. Exhibit patience in stressful situations, spend more time in positive interactions with spouses, children and parents, contact others who are in solitary isolation, learn more Torah, give more tzedaka, and daven with more kavana.

Many of us have returned to shuls, some even to yeshivos. The laws of social distancing, masks and limited participants must be followed. Medical experts warn us that Covid 19 remains very dangerous. Halacha demands that we avoid danger by appropriate precautionary measures, even beyond legal requirements.

The "brief moment" of hiding has lasted, for some totally and for some, now, partially, for over three months. This presents spiritual dangers as well. Many have exhibited signs of stress, impatience, restlessness and even depression. People ask "When will it end? How will it end? Will it end?" The proper Torah response is expressed in a popular song. We have talked the talk when we danced at weddings. We must walk the walk during our present crisis. "Yisroel, trust in Hashem. Their help and protection is He" (Tehillim 115:9). We are believers and sons of believers, and we have no one upon whom to rely except for our Father in Heaven".

The belief of our fathers enabled the Exodus from Egypt. Its resumption after the sin of the spies sustained us for forty years in the desert. Our belief in Hashem's promise to bring us to Eretz Yisroel was the self-fulfilling guarantee that we would enter and conquer it, notwithstanding powerful armies and future sins.

We do not know when or how the pandemic will end. We hope and pray for a swift end, by a vaccine, a mutation, or otherwise. But we must be patient and reinforce our belief in Hashem and His omnipotence to end this crisis when and how He pleases. May our faith be rewarded by Hashem answering our prayers for a complete and speedy return to a totally safe "old normal" to serve Him with joy.

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Equalizing the Elite (Shelach)

Ben-Tzion Spitz

Each honest calling, each walk of life, has its own elite, its own aristocracy based on excellence of performance. - James B. Connant

By both biblical and rabbinic accounts, Moses is likely the greatest man who ever lived. He confronted Pharaoh, brought the plagues upon Egypt, and took the Jewish nation out of its slavery. He split the sea, spoke to God like no person ever has or will. He received the Torah and relayed it to the People of Israel. The Torah also declares that he was the humblest of men and the greatest of prophets. We can't even imagine the type of person he was, his caliber, his sanctity, his righteousness, his wisdom, or his nobility.

Yet according to the Meshech Chochma on Numbers 15:37, God puts Moses on an equal footing with every Jew when he presents the commandment of Tzitzit.

Tzitzit are the ritual fringes that every Jewish male is meant to wear on an item of clothing that has four corners. From a young age, boys usually wear the Tzitzit under their shirts, some with the fringes sticking out, others with the fringes tucked in. From Bar-Mitzvah age, and at the latest, once a man is married, there is the related custom to wear a Talit, the prayer shawl, an outer garment with the fringes on the four corners, for morning prayers, or if someone is serving as the Chazan, the leader of the prayer service.

The passage regarding the commandment of Tzitzit is so important, that it was incorporated as the third section of the twice-daily reading of Shema, which we recite in our prayers.

What is interesting about the passage, the Meshech Chochma points out, is that it gives part of the rationale for the commandment of Tzitzit: "so that you shall not go after your hearts and after your eyes." It is a warning, a reminder, even protection, against inappropriate thoughts and intentions.

It would be reasonable to assume, that those of a high moral character, the spiritual leaders of the generation, those with little to no presumption of sin or even inappropriate thoughts, would be exempt from the need for Tzitzit. Why would a great sage whose thoughts are constantly dwelling on the holy and sacred need a coarse physical reminder of the Tzitzit to "not go after your hearts and after your eyes?"

The Meshech Chochma explains that God is saying that not only do "the great" need to wear Tzitzit but even the singular Moses, the greatest prophet, the one whose mind was as close to regular communion with God as possible, even Moses needed to wear Tzitzit.

May we appreciate the depth of the many commandments God has bequeathed to us, whether we are among the elite or not.

Dedication - On the marriage of Yakira and AJ Baumol. Mazal Tov!

Shabbat Shalom

Ben-Tzion Spitz is a former Chief Rabbi of Uruguay. He is the author of three books of Biblical Fiction and over 600 articles and stories dealing with biblical themes.

Rabbi Shmuel Rabinowitz

Bs"d Shelach 5780

Reality and Tzitzit

Rabbi Shmuel Rabinowitz, Rabbi of the Western Wall and Holy Sites the long story about the "meraglim" (Hebrew for "spies") – twelve representatives of the nation who were sent to scout out the land, ten of whom returned with a terrible and frightening report – we get to the commandment of "tzitzit": the commandment to tie fringes to a garment that has four corners.

This commandment is one of the special commandments in the Torah whose purpose is clearly written in a manner that cannot be ignored: "This shall be fringes for you, and when you see it, you will remember all the commandments of the Lord to perform them, and you shall not wander after your hearts and after your eyes after which you are going astray. So that you shall remember and perform all My commandments and you shall be holy to your G-d." (Numbers 15, 39-40)

The purpose, then, is to remember the commandments and perform them. The tzitzit acts as a constant reminder to live a Jewish lifestyle and does not allow us to forget our commitment to act, as individuals and as a nation, in a manner that befits Jewish values.

Let's look at the words of one of the spiritual leaders of the Jewish community of Eastern Europe at the beginning of the 20th century, Rabbi Meir Simcha HaKohen (Lithuania 1843 – Latvia 1926). In his commentary on the Torah, Meshech Chochma, there are profound concepts. One of those appears in our Torah portion, Shelach, in relation to the commandment of tzitzit.

What is the meaning of the purpose "and you shall be holy to your G-d"? The author of the Meshech Chochma explains: Everything we as humans can say about G-d, the Creator of the Universe, is that He is absolute and perfect. We might have expected, then, that the reality He created would be perfect as well. But when we look around us, or at ourselves, we discover that reality is far from perfect. Human reality is also composed of impurity and sin, injustice and mistakes. The gap between the Creator of the Universe and the world He created can be explained based on the verse from Psalms (115, 16): "The heavens are heavens of the Lord, but the earth He gave to the children of men". G-d created a reality that is not perfect because He gave it to humans to control and to determine whether or not it would reflect Divine values and thus become perfect, or, heaven forbid, the opposite.

The way man is called upon to reflect eternal values within reality, emphasizes the Meshech Chochma, is not by disconnecting, by withdrawing from the world to focus solely on spirituality. To the contrary. If man lives his life properly within reality, reality itself becomes holier and blessed.

This description of reality in relation to the Creator is like a garment that hides and covers the body. When we look at nature, it is hiding and covering the existence of G-d. The orientation of Judaism is to direct man how to discover and reveal G-d within reality, by living a life of values and commandments.

It is no coincidence that the constant reminder to live a Jewish life is an item of clothing – the tzitzit, whose fringed strings are not sewn along with the garment. This is a tangible illustration of the imperfect reality, one in which we are demanded to repair – “you shall be holy to your God”!

The clear linguistic connections, between the section about tzitzit and the one about the spies, hint at the fact that the spies failed in this respect. They saw the problems in Canaan (the ancient name of Israel), but rather than understand that these issues were a call for repair and that the challenges they were going to face were the gate to a repaired and blessed reality, they were overcome by despair and desistance. The commandment to wear tzitzit reminds us not to make this mistake, but to remember that the role of repairing reality rests on our shoulders.

The writer is rabbi of the Western Wall and Holy Sites.

Shema Yisrael Torah Network

Peninim on the Torah - Parshas Shelach

פרשת שלח תש"פ

שליח לך אנשיים ויתרו את הארץ ננשען

Send forth men and let them spy out the land of Canaan. (13:2)

Moshe Rabbeinu relayed to Hashem the nation's request for spies to reconnoiter *Eretz Yisrael*. Hashem told Moshe to send them. If the nation insisted on sending spies, it was best that Moshe be involved in the decision concerning whom to send. For if the nation were to act on its own, without direction from its spiritual leadership, it would be tantamount to rebellion. Furthermore, a nation without leadership is more like 600,000 leaders, each with his own opinion, acting independently of the other. Obviously, they were deficient in their *emunah*, faith, in Hashem. He had promised to lead them into the Land, after making good on his previous commitments to them. The redemption that they had experienced was buttressed by many miracles, including the Splitting of the Sea and the *manna* from Heaven. The experience of these events should have been sufficient proof to believe in Hashem. The people thought otherwise. They were using mortal minds to determine a war that was to be fought with supernatural capabilities. Why did they act this way? They could not “see” success. One cannot perceive success using his limited human vision. This is the definition of faith. Their suggestion was founded in faithlessness. The fruit that it bore was rebellion against Hashem.

Horav Yisrael Lau, Shlita, relates the story of the daughter of a *rav* who had assimilated and given birth to a child that was the product of her liaison with a non-Jew. She gave the child up to a Catholic Monastery. She added to her act of apostasy by cutting herself off from Judaism. A young rabbi who knew her from childhood, when he would spend hours studying with her father, attempted to dissuade her. He visited her to find out what had happened to her father. When she saw who he was, she proceeded to slam the door in his face. He was relentless, and she finally deferred to him and opened the door. After pleading with her to tell him what had happened to her father, she finally broke down and told him.

Apparently, the Nazi murderers had entered his house, pushed her aside, and entered the study where her father was sitting ensconced in *Tallis* and *Tefillin*, bent over a *Gemorah*, learning. He looked up at them and innocently asked, “What do you want from me?” The Nazi took his rifle that was slung over his shoulder and pounded in the *Rav*’s head with its butt. The butt of the rifle drove the *Tefillin Shel Rosh* into his skull, killing him. The blood poured out of the wound, soaking his beautiful white beard and the *Gemorah* upon which his head fell.

“Do you now understand why I am bitter, why I have no faith? That is how they took my father from me. How can I continue believing?” The young rabbi broke down, and, together with his *rebbe*’s daughter, he wept bitterly for their loss.

“I, too, have questions which no mortal can answer. No human being can answer such questions. Our function is to believe. This is what Jews have done throughout the millennia. This is what your father, my saintly mentor, taught – by lecture and by example. Your child’s grandfather has only one grandchild. If he continues on the present trajectory which

you have chosen for him, you will be handing your father’s murderers their victory. This is what they wanted – to extinguish the fire of faith in the Almighty. If your child follows in his grandfather’s -- your father’s -- path, then your father has won. What will it be: the Nazis or your father?”

With these closing words, the rabbi walked to the door and down the steps of the house. The young woman came running after him and got into his car: “We are going to pick up my son. You can have him on the condition that you will raise him.” He agreed only if she would assist in the process. Otherwise, it would be too traumatic for the boy. “You draw him near to you, and, through you, I will draw near to him,” he proposed.

Today this child is a *Rosh Yeshivah* in Yerushalayim, the only living descendant of the old man in Warsaw.

I conclude with the words of a distinguished *Chassidische Rav* (quoted by *Horav Aharon Lopiansky, Shlita*), “People turn to me with all manner of questions, to many of which I do not have a readily available answer. Answers are not the solution; learning how to live with an unanswered question is the solution. As one sees the *emes*, truth, of the big picture, all it takes is patience and study, and understanding will someday follow.”

ריש בנה עץ אם אין

Are there trees in it or not? (13:20)

Was Moshe Rabbeinu interested in the land’s vegetation? *Rashi* explains that Moshe’s inquiry concerning a tree was an allusion to a *tzaddik*. He wanted the spies to discern whether a righteous man was in the Land, in whose merit its inhabitants would be spared. The righteous activities of *tzaddikim* are undisputed. If one were asked to paint a portrait of a *tzaddik*, he would probably depict a man with a saintly countenance, bent over a pile of *sefarim*, Torah volumes. Some *tzaddikim* are ordinary people, but have earned *tzaddik* status because they are *mezakei ha’rabim*, bring merit upon many people. Among them are individuals who have sacrificed their own perfection for the sake of perfecting others. Such a person has the added benefit of earning reward as a result of those whom he was instrumental in bringing to perfection.

Chazal teach that one who brings merit upon many people – *ein cheit ba al yado*, sin will not come through him. He will not be the cause of a sin for others – and certainly not himself. Many attempt to reach out to those in need of perfection, but, due to their own lack of perfection, they do so prematurely; and not only do these individuals not succeed in their mission, but they also hurt themselves in the process. *Horav Avigdor Miller, zl*, was wont to say that when young men who are yet unripe, not yet having themselves achieved the learning necessary to teach others, go out into the world and attempt to teach others, they may fail and, in the process, hurt themselves. They are like unripe fruit which can spoil easily. They must have a message to convey to the world, and a manner in which to communicate that message effectively. This process involves time and patience, as the would-be-mentor matures spiritually.

Horav Sholom Schwadron, zl, would relate the following story concerning the extraordinary impact of *zikui ha’rabim*. The story occurred during one of his trips to London during *Chanukah*. He visited a distinguished businessman, himself a Holocaust survivor, who manifested unusual respect and love for Torah scholars who disseminated Torah. Indeed, anyone who promoted Torah study and *mitzvah* observance was very special in his eyes. *Rav Sholom* wondered what in his life had catalyzed such refreshing admiration. The man noticed the look of incredulity on his face and said, “*Rebbe!* My attitude toward *talmidei chachamim*, Torah scholars, is all because of my father.” A minute passed, and the man saw that *Rav Sholom* was expecting an explanation for the explanation. He said, “Let me share my story with the *Rebbe*.

“In the city where we lived, there was a tailor who was aptly called *Moshe the tailor (der shneider)*. Unfortunately, he was a *maskil*, member of the Enlightenment, a secular Jew who observed absolutely nothing. His father became ill and passed away. *Moshe* sat *shivah*, observed the seven-days of mourning. (Apparently, in Europe circa pre-

World War II, this was one of the traditions to which *maskillim* still adhered.) Sadly, due to his alienation from Torah, the majority of the community (which was observant) did not make the effort to visit him during his period of mourning. My father's attitude was, 'He is a Jew and, as such, he deserves to be visited.' My father proceeded to go over to his house and spend time with him.

"When Moshe saw my father at his doorstep, he could not believe his eyes. My father broke the ice with warm comforting words. After a short conversation, my father said, 'Moshe, you are obligated to provide your father's soul with the ability to rest in peace. It would be appropriate for you to attend services in a *shul* where you could recite *Kaddish Yasom*, orphan's *Kaddish*. This would be a tremendous *illui neshamah*, perpetuation of your father's soul.' Surprisingly, Moshe immediately agreed and followed through on his commitment. After services, he remained in *shul* to attend a *shiur*, Torah class, and, in due time, he became a fully-observant Jew who adhered to all *mitzvos*.

"When I was thirteen, the Nazis ravaged our city and murdered the entire community – my family and Moshe the tailor included. I was saved and sent to a concentration camp where I was interred for five years. I was befriended by a young man who was quite distant from the Torah way. He attempted to convince me that to turn my back on Torah, to assimilate and emulate the lifestyle he had chosen for himself. Unfortunately, he was able to sway and convince me to 'alter' my religious commitment. I drew the line, however, at *Shabbos*. I would not be *mechallel*, desecrate, *Shabbos*.

"With the advent of the American liberation, we were both sent to a Displaced Persons camp where we were slowly introduced to a normal way of life. It took some time before we were able to eat regularly. Our bodies were unable to digest real food and certainly could not handle regular sized meals. To consume too much too fast was to invite illness and even death. We were nursed back to normal eating habits.

"One *Shabbos*, following a hearty dinner, my friend pulled out a cigarette and said, 'After eating such a filling meal, I must smoke a cigarette,' which he promptly did right in front of my face. He offered one to me, and, knowing that I had never smoked on *Shabbos*, put it into my mouth. All this was despite his awareness that I drew the line at *Shabbos*. My *yetzer hora*, evil inclination, burned within me: What damage can one cigarette make? I thought to myself that after all I had undergone these last five years, I was entitled to one cigarette. The *yetzer hora* knew that once he gets you into the *techum ha'heter*, boundary of permissiveness, he has you. Now, once I smoked, the *yetzer hora* had little resistance in convincing me to take the train into town – which we did.

"The city was packed with people rushing all over, and whom do I meet? None other than Moshe the tailor. I could not believe my eyes. Moshe had died at the hands of the Nazis. What was he doing here? He was certainly some sort of apparition. But why? It had to be some sort of subconscious vision. Moshe was no longer alive. Nonetheless, I was too shaken up to continue with my friend. I returned to my room and began to cry incessantly. I had just desecrated *Shabbos*. What had gotten into me?

"I drifted off to sleep and began to dream. In my dream I saw Moshe laughing at me, 'Your father was the reason I became observant. I could not "live" with the notion of you – his son – desecrating *Shabbos*. I asked permission to descend one time to save you from falling into the eternal abyss.' That day forever changed my life. My father's love of Torah caused him to reach out to an unaffiliated Jew. In turn, that Jew saved me. Those who devote themselves to *zikui ha'rabitim* are, therefore, my heroes."

ונָהִי בְּעַיִנְנוּ כַּחֲבָרִים וּכְהִינּוּ בְּעַיִנְהָם

We were like grasshoppers in our eyes and so were we in their eyes. (13:33)

When the *meraglim*, spies, returned from their mission, the nation debated their negative report. They ruminated back and forth: Could they triumph over the giant Canaanites or would they be defeated? The *meraglim* were emphatic that they had no hope for

success. The people listened to them, and they began their *bechiyah shel chinam*, unwarranted weeping – a weeping for which we have been punished with a *bechiyah l'doros*, weeping for generations. As a consequence, that night, which was the Ninth of Av, became the precursor of our national day of mourning. What did the *meraglim* fear? What was it that compelled them to return with such negativity? The *Kotzker Rebbe*, z.l., in what has become a well-known, often repeated explanation, says that our above *pasuk* presents the crux of their problem, the root of the sin which led to their turning their collective backs on Hashem: "We were in our eyes as grasshoppers." Why? Because the giants referred to them as grasshoppers. In other words, the *meraglim*'s identity was defined by the Canaanite's opinion of them. Their self-image was predicated on what the giants thought of them.

A negative self-esteem is not a sin, but it invariably leads to – and is at the root of – most sin. One who feels good about himself, who is not filled with despair, cares about himself. Such a person will not easily fall prey to the wiles of the *yetzer hora*. Does negative self-esteem bespeak one who is wicked? No, but one who has a low self-esteem is an enemy of – himself. He is wicked to himself. He will ultimately become wicked to Hashem. The *Baal Shem Tov* once told his *talmid*, student, "You lack *emunah*, faith." The student was taken aback. "Rebbe, I spend hours daily engrossed in faith and in improving my relationship with Hashem." "You have faith in Hashem," said the *Baal Shem Tov*, "but you lack faith in yourself. One who has no faith in himself will eventually renege on his faith in Hashem."

We all encounter situations that create ambiguity in our lives. For some, it is a physical/economic/emotional challenge. For others, it is the demons within, products of depression, which, for the most part, is self-imposed. It is specifically during such moments that it would serve us well to reflect upon Hashem and the role He plays in our lives. This provides us with the comfort of knowing that we are not in this alone. We should, thus, be encouraged and empowered to go forward with confidence, to transform despair into hope.

This is how we should act. How many of us, however, can say that they conform to this line of thinking? How many, instead, defer to depression and fall into despair? When someone does not believe himself capable or suitable for a mission, it will adversely affect his spiritual standing. The *Chiddushei HaRim* implies this concept in an incredible commentary to *Devarim* 25:18 concerning Amalek's evil attack against our people. The Torah admonishes us to remember Amalek's ambush of the fledgling Jewish nation following our exodus from Egypt: "That he happened upon you on the way, and he struck those of you who were hindmost" – *necheshlim acharecha* – those who were hindmost, the back of the line, alone, without protection. This is Amalek. He preys on the weak, the least affiliated, those who do not have the community's protection.

The *Midrash Tanchuma* identifies those who were the *necheshlim*, who traveled at the back of the line: *Shevet Dan*, who were eschewed by the *Anan*, Pillar of Cloud, that protected the nation, because they were *ovdei avodah zarah*, idol worshippers! This statement is mindboggling. To assert that a Jewish tribe was guilty of idol worship so soon after *yetzias Mitzrayim*, exodus from Egypt, is unnerving. Yet, the *Midrash* clearly makes this statement. Furthermore, as the *Chidushei HaRim* points out, we know that the Jewish nation traveled in groups, with one of every four tribes carrying the group's *degel*, banner/flag, of distinction. The chosen tribe was the one which was the most worthy, most distinguished. *Shevet Dan* carried a *degel*! How do we reconcile their *avodah zarah* with being singled out to carry a *degel*?

The *Gerrer Rebbe* explains that the Tribe of *Dan* was very much like its name, which implies judgment – without compromise. Thus, since they felt that they were undeserving of accolades or honor, they refused to accept it. While some people would do anything for the opportunity to receive attention, *Shevet Dan* eschewed the limelight – especially if they perceived themselves to be unworthy of the recognition. Is this such a terrible attribute to have? It depends. If *Hashem Yisborach* selects a *Shevet*, this means that the Almighty considers the *Shevet* worthy of the position. Who is to argue with

Hashem? Indeed, this is why Hashem chose them for distinction – specifically because of their inordinate humility. Such a person/*Shevet* shall carry the Banner of the Tribe! Nonetheless, if they felt so low that they would refuse Hashem's Divine mandate, they were taking the issue of self-esteem too far. Even if one feels himself unworthy, he accepts the position if Hashem commands. Likewise, if one's *rebbe* believes in him, he should, in turn, believe in himself. If he does not, if he takes the negative self-image too far, he is a *rasha* – to himself! A *rasha* to himself is still a *rasha*!

I think this idea is behind the concept of the *rasha* of “four sons” fame. I was always bothered by this “errant” son who, despite having issues with the religion in which he was raised and for which his parents and grandparents before him had sacrificed, joins with his family at the *Seder* table. If he is so estranged with the religion that he has no problem deriding it publicly at his family's *Seder* table, why does he bother to attend? If he is a *rasha*, let him stay away. Applying the above thought, we have a new understanding of the *rasha*. The son who comes to the *Seder* is wicked – to himself. His absolute negative self-image has distorted his entire outlook on Judaism. He thinks/believes that if he is inadequate, the entire religion must be failing him. His only way out is to denigrate what others consider holy, because the alternative means focusing on himself and his self-imposed/perceived shortcomings. He is not a bad son in the wicked sense of the word. He is a son whose negative image of himself, and concomitant low self-esteem, have so distorted his perspective on everything around him that is truly positive that he must whittle away at it in order to preserve his own distorted outlook of himself. The harm this *rasha* causes is primarily to himself.

An individual's attitude under difficult circumstances not only often defines his character, but it also portrays his true spiritual commitment. It will determine if said commitment will endure the test of time. Yosef and Dovid originally met in Auschwitz where they were both interred in the same block and worked together on the same work detail. They both suffered traumatically, losing their entire families to the Nazi murderers. Their relationship was concretized when they spent a year as displaced persons in Bergen Belsen following the war. Having to emigrate to *Eretz Yisrael*, they, like so many others, were forced to suffer the pain of having insult added to injury when the British Mandate, which was then the governing power of Palestine, set a quota on how many Jews were allowed to come “home.” They set their sights on America, as did so many others.

By the time they arrived in America, they had married and started families. Being devout men, they both did everything possible to maintain their religious commitment in a country where Torah Judaism was an anomaly. Their greatest difficulty was on the economic front. Earning a living to support their families was becoming increasingly difficult, since *Shabbos*, our day of rest, was a regular workday. It was not uncommon for an observant Jew to hold down his job all summer, only to lose it the first Friday of the winter, after the clock was changed. To leave work early meant being fired, which was the case for many *frum*, observant Jews – Yosef and David were no different.

On one Friday afternoon, both Yosef and David were fired from their respective jobs. While it came as no surprise, it did not alleviate the fact that neither one even had food for *Shabbos*. Nonetheless, they accepted their lot as a faithful Jew would. It was their individual responses that distinguished one from the other. Yosef went home, informed his wife and children that it was going to be a rough *Shabbos* without food, and they proceeded to celebrate *Tishah B'Av* on *Shabbos*. The entire family sat there depressed, weeping, the pangs of hunger coursing through them. They lamented their sorry lot in life. David also came home and informed his family of their troubles. He, however, took a different attitude. They were going to celebrate *Shabbos Kodesh* with everything but food. His wife set the table, placed the *challah* cover -- sans *challah* -- in its appropriate place. She lit candles and wept through her usual prayer. When the children began to complain about their bitter lot in life, David began to sing *zemirots*, the *Shabbos* songs. Within a few minutes, everyone was singing like never before. Indeed, on that *Shabbos*, when they thought they had nothing – they

actually had everything. It was their greatest, most inspiring *Shabbos*, which they would remember for the rest of their lives. In fact, it was that *Shabbos* and how they celebrated it, which determined the spiritual trajectory of the individual children of Yosef and David.

Yosef's children never forgot the misery and travail, the bitterness and emptiness of the *Shabbos* when they went hungry. Later in life, they decided that a religion that demands that one starve was one which they could do without. They reneged the religion which their father had tried so hard to keep. On the other hand, David's children never forgot the inspiration they had experienced during that uplifting *Shabbos*, when they learned that religion was not about food, but rather, about one's relationship with Hashem. The glass is either half full or half empty. A positive outlook on life begins with a positive outlook on oneself. Negativity begets negativity, while positivity breeds positivity.

Va'an Tefillah

-nodeh לך ונספר תהלהך – *Nodeh Lecha u'nisapeir Tehillasecha*. We thank You and relate Your praise.

We all know the importance of paying gratitude, saying “thank you” for favors rendered. Do we ever stop to think, however, how far this obligation extends? I am sitting at my desk *Erev Pesach* during the insidious plague that is attacking the world, and I stop to think how much we owe Hashem – not just for the great, obvious gifts, but for every moment, literally every breath.

Horav Alexander Ziskind, zl, author of the *Yesod u'Shoresh Ha'Avodah* (quoted by *Horav Avraham Chaim Feuer, Shlita*), wrote a lengthy *tzavaah*, ethical will, to his children, in which he demonstrates in great detail how he never forgot any kindness which Hashem bestowed upon him. He explained how every line of *Shemoneh Esrai* speaks to him, awakening within him memories of Divine kindnesses going back to his earliest years. As a result, he devoted himself to reiterating Hashem's kindness and relating His Praises to others.

The *Rav* reminds his children to thank Hashem for even the most mundane, almost insignificant favor. He writes: “Thank Hashem purposely every time you need the simplest utensil and you find it – a knife, a spoon, a pen. Thank Hashem for giving you a table and chair. Thank G-d for a small pinch of snuff. Nothing is too insignificant to warrant thanking Hashem.” If I may add: it is not the favor, but the Benefactor. We must realize and teach our children that Hashem bestows everything upon us. Without Him, we have nothing. Indeed, without Him – we are nothing!

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*In loving memory of our grandparents Phillip and Lillian Finger
who were long-time friends and family of the Hebrew Academy.*

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Ohr Somayach :: Insights into Halacha

For the week ending 20 June 2020 / 28 Sivan 5780

Parasha Permutations 5780/2020

by Rabbi Yehuda Spitz

Which Week Is Which?

This time of year is an interesting one. Right after most of Klal Yisrael's return to shuls before Shavuos, at least in some format (many due to US President Trump's declaring ‘Houses of Worship’ as at least as essential as liquor stores, as in these trying times of Covid-19, “we need more prayer, not less”), and many figuring out if / how to catch up on all the parshiyos missed b’tzibbur,[1] [2] Klal Yisrael entered another parasha-based dilemma.

For five weeks (six Shabbosos), already starting right after Shavuos, and lasting until the Three Weeks, the Jewish world will not be aligned. No, I am not referring to constellations, but rather to the weekly parasha. A simple innocuous question of “What's this week's parasha?” will elicit a different response depending on where in the world the question is being asked. This is because the parasha will not be the same regularly scheduled one in Chutz La'aretz as it is in Eretz Yisrael.

Truthfully, this type of dichotomy actually happens not so infrequently, as it essentially occurs whenever the last day of a Yom Tov falls on Shabbos. In Chutz La'aretz where Yom Tov Sheini is halachically mandated,[3] a Yom Tov Krias HaTorah is publicly leined, yet, in Eretz Yisrael (unless by specific Chutznik minyanim)[4][5] the Krias HaTorah of the next scheduled Parasha is read. This puts Eretz Yisrael a Parasha ahead until the rest of the world soon ‘catches up’,

by an upcoming potential double-Parasha, which each would be read separately in Eretz Yisrael.

The reason for this current interesting phenomenon is that this year 5780 / 2020, the second day of Shavuos, observed only outside Eretz Yisrael, fell out on a Shabbos. On that Shabbos / Yom Tov the communities of the Diaspora leined the Yom Tov reading of 'Asser Te'asser' (Devarim, Parashas Re'eh, Ch. 14: 22), whereas in Eretz Yisrael, communities read Parashas Naso, the next parasha in the cycle, as Shavuos had already ended for them.[6]

Parasha Background

The background for this uncanny occurrence is as follows: It is well known that the Torah is divided into 54 parshiyos, ensuring there are enough parshiyos for every Shabbos of the yearly cycle, which begins and ends on Simchas Torah. Since most (non-leap) years require less than 54 parshiyos, we combine certain parshiyos. This means that two consecutive parshiyos are read on one Shabbos as if they are one long parsha, to make sure that we complete the Torah reading for the year on Simchas Torah.

As detailed by the Abudraham, there are seven potential occurrences when we read "double parshiyos". These seven are:

Vayakheil / Pekudei, the last two parshiyos of Sefer Shemos.

Tazria / Metzora, in Sefer Vayikra.

Acharei Mos / Kedoshim, in Sefer Vayikra.

Behar / Bechukosai, in Sefer Vayikra.

Chukas / Balak, in Sefer Bamidbar.

Matos / Masei, the last two parshiyos of Sefer Bamidbar.

Netzavim / Vayeileich, towards the end of Sefer Devarim.[7]

However, there are several possible instances in which certain parshiyos are combined in Chutz La'aretz, yet are read on separate weeks in Eretz Yisrael. This is one of them, with those parshiyos being Chukas / Balak.

Calendarical Conundrum

Although, as mentioned previously, this calendarical conundrum occurs not infrequently, this year's split seems to contrast greatly with last year's - 5779 / 2019 - when the odd alignment with Eretz Yisrael being a week ahead continued with a divergence of over three months (!) with Eretz Yisrael out of sync with the rest of the world, and only realigning by Matos / Masei - around Rosh Chodesh Av.

On the other hand, this year, the split will be much shorter, ending right before the Three Weeks, with Chukas and Balak being read separately in Eretz Yisrael and together as a double parsha in the rest of the world.

However, this gives rise to an important question: Many ask, why last year did we not catch up by Chukas / Balak if it fine for us to do so this year? In layman's terms, why did we wait so long for the whole world to be realigned last year and this year we get to take a shortcut? Or, to paraphrase the Haggada, "Mah nishtana hashana hazos"?

Although this year, with lockdowns due to coronavirus, this issue may not appear to have much practical ramifications, as (of this writing) the Israeli Interior Ministry just re-shut the borders, even to yeshiva bochurim sporting student visas, and even those allowed in to Israel are mandated a 14-day quarantine period, nonetheless, there are important klalim for us to learn.

Although some cite alternate minhagim,[8] nevertheless, it is important to note that nowadays this Parasha split is indeed Minhag Yisrael, as codified by the Gr'a and Mishnah Berurah.[9] [10] We should also realize that back then travel to and from Eretz Yisrael was far less of an issue, as since undertaking the trip would take several months, missing one Parasha would be the least of one's worries. But to properly understand the 'whys' of this fascinating dual dichotomy, one must first gain an understanding of the Parasha rules and setup. In fact, this is not a new question, as several early Acharonim, including the Maharit, Rav Yosef Tirani, citing Rav Yissachar ben Sussan, one of the foremost experts on intercalation of the Jewish calendar and its minhagim, in his renowned sefer Tikkun Yissachar (written in 1538 / 5298), addressed this issue almost 500 years ago.[11]

Managing Mnemonics

While it is true that technically Eretz Yisrael does not, nor should not, have to take Chutz La'aretz into account, to slow down or join parshiyos together due to their independent luchas (or to be grammatically correct, 'luchos') and cycles, as Eretz Yisrael's is indeed deemed the ikar kriah,[12] nevertheless, there is more to the story.

The Tur, when codifying the halacha, sets four necessary sign-posts in relation to parshiyos, time of year, and various Yomim Tovim. He also offers special codes, mnemonics, as to remember the proper order of parshiyos. In a regular year, he writes, 'Pikdu U'Pischu'. This refers to Parashas Tzav being Shabbos Hagadol directly before Pesach,[13] 'Minu V'Atzru', Parashas Bamidbar is directly prior to Shavuos, 'Tzumu V'Tzalu', the fast of Tisha B'Av is directly before Parashas Va'eschanan (also meaning that Parashas Devarim is always Shabbos Chazon and Va'eschanan always Shabbos Nachamu), and 'Kumu V'Tik'u', that Parashas Netzavim is before Rosh Hashanah.[14] These mnemonics, denoting the four specific rules, or more accurately, necessary points of parsha alignment (or

realignment) during the year, are accepted lemaaseh as halachah pesukah by all later authorities.[15] [16]

So now that we have the necessary background, let's get back to our question. Last year, as per the halacha pesukah,[17] the world only re-synchronized after 3 months by Matos / Masei, skipping over the potential combo of Chukas / Balak. Yet, this year, we specifically realign by Chukas / Balak. Why? What could the difference be?

Pondering the Pearls of Parashas Pinchas

The Bnei Yisaschar[18] cites an interesting reason. He explains that whenever possible, we attempt to ensure the public reading of Chalukas Ha'aretz, the apportioning of Eretz Yisrael, during the period of communal mourning known as Bein Hametzarim,[19] colloquially called 'The Three Weeks'. This period commemorates the heralding of the beginning of the tragedies that took place prior to the destruction of both Batei Hamikdash, from the breaching of the walls of ancient Yerushalayim on the 17th of Tamuz, until the actual destruction of the Beis Hamikdash on the Tisha B'Av.

The reason for these readings, which are found in the parshiyos of Pinchas, Matos, and Masei, to be leined specifically then, is to remind us of Hashem's promise, that although we are currently in gulos, exile, nevertheless, 'le'eileh techalek ha'aretz,' we will still inherit Eretz Yisrael.

A similar assessment is given by the Minchas Yitzchak,[20] albeit regarding Korbanos, especially the Korban Tamid, which is also detailed in Parashas Pinchas. He explains that the Korban Tamid protected Klal Yisrael from sinning with Avodah Zarah.[21] When the Korban Tamid was no longer offered, it enabled the Yetzer Hora of Avodah Zarah to strengthen; and it was due to this sinning that eventually led to the Beis Hamikdash's destruction.

As such, and since we no longer have Korbanos, but at least we still have their recital, in the vein of 'v'neshalmah parim sifoseinu', that our tefillos are their current replacement,[22] the leining of the Korbanos is specifically read during the Three Weeks, when we are mourning the destruction of the Beis Hamikdash. This serves to embolden and enable us to fight the reasons and causes for its destruction, and allow its rebuilding.

An additional point the Bnei Yisaschar raises is that Parashas Pinchas contains the Parashas HaMoadim, the reading detailing all the Yomim Tovim and their observances. He explains that this is also an apropos reading for the Three Weeks, to comfort us in our time of mourning. This is as the Navi Zechariah (Ch. 8: 19) prophesized that when the Geulah comes, this period will be turned into one of great rejoicing ('l'sasson u'lsimcha ul'moadim tovim').

For all of the above-mentioned reasons, last year, (5779 / 2019) it was simply not worthwhile for Chutz La'aretz to make Chukas and Balak into a double Parasha merely to catch up to Eretz Yisrael, since if it would have, then Parashas Pinchas will not have fallen out in the Three Weeks. Therefore, it was proper for Chutz La'aretz to wait and not catch up to Eretz Yisrael until Matos / Masei, thus ensuring that Parashas Pinchas be leined during Bein Hametzarim, and enabling us to glean and appreciate its veiled significance and promises for the future.

Yet, this year, the opposite holds true. In 2020, the fast of Shiva Asar B'Tamuz, and hence, the start of the Three Weeks, occurs on Thursday, as does its climax, Tisha B'Av, three weeks later. According to our mnemonic rule cited previously, Parashas Devarim has to be Shabbos Chazon, and the following parasha, Va'eschanan, is always Shabbos Nachamu, directly following Tisha B'Av. This means that the preceding week has to already be the double parasha of Matos / Masei, in order for Parashas Pinchas to be recited during the Three Weeks. If we would wait until Matos / Masei to realign, as we did last year, then for most of the world Parashas Pinchas would not be leined during the Three Weeks, but rather preceding it. Hence, the need to correct the calendar before Shiva Asar B'Tamuz, in order for Pinchas to be leined by all of Klal Yisrael in the correct time – during the Three Weeks.[23]

The Code for Consolation

The Maharit continues that the reason why Matos and Masei are generally combined is to a similar, yet reverse, reason to Bamidbar. As the Tur wrote, the code for this time of year is 'Tzumu V'Tzalu', the fast of Tisha B'Av is directly before Va'eschanan. This is not merely by chance.

Parashas Va'eschanan contains the pesukim of 'Ki Soleed Banim U'veni Vanim V'noshantem Ba'aretz'.[24] which, although not a pleasant reading, as it is a tochachah (rebuke),[25] nevertheless, Chazal[26] glean that there is a hidden message of redemption buried within. V'noshantem in Gematria equals 852, letting us know that after 852 years of living in Eretz Yisrael, the Galus would start. Yet, we find that the Galus actually started two years early, after 850 years. This is because Hashem did not want us to have to destroy us,[27] and therefore, as a kindness, brought the Exile two years early, to ensure Klal Yisrael's survival.

Therefore, explains the Maharit, we commonly join up Matos and Masei to make certain that Parashas Va'eschanan is always immediately following Tisha B'Av as Shabbos Nachamu, thus offering us a message of consolation even amidst the destruction.

In conclusion, although it may seem complicated and confusing, on the contrary, each calendrical calculation is clearly consistent with the clarion call of our Chazal - Parsha combination and separation, synchronized to showcase hope and consolation when we need it most, as well as serve as a buffer from condemnation.

The author wishes to thank Rabbi Dovid Heber of the Star-K, author of Shaarei Zmanim, for his assistance with this article.

For any questions, comments or for the full March Mekomos / sources, please email the author: yspitz@ohr.edu.

[1] Although whether *Krias HaTorah* is considered a 'Chovas Yachid' or 'Chovas Tzibbur' is a famous 'chakirah' of Rav Chaim Soloveitchik of Brisk (cited in *Birchas Shmuel*, *Yevamos* 21; see also *Einayim Bracha*, *Krias HaTorah* 3), as well as a seeming machlokes Ran and Ramban in the beginning of *Maseches Megillah* (3a in the Rif's pagination; see also *Biur Halacha* 143:1 citing the *Chaye Adam* vol. 1, 31: 11), nonetheless, the consensus of contemporary poskim is that *Krias HaTorah* is indeed a *Chovas HaTzibbur*. See *Peulas Sachin* on the *Maaseh Rav* (175), *Shu't Igros Moshe* (Orach Chaim vol. 1: 28), *Shu't Tzitz Eliezer* (vol. 18: 5), *Mikraei Kodesh* (Purim 7), *Orchos Rabbeinu* (vol. 1, *Hosafos* pg. 10), *Halichos Shlomo* (Moadim vol. 2, *Pesach* Ch. 10: 22), *Shu't Yabia Omer* (vol. 9, *Orach Chaim* 28), *Yalkut Yosef* (Kitzur Shulchan Aruch, *Orach Chaim* 135; 5), and *Yom Tov Sheini Kehilchoso* (Ch. 9: 13 - 17) at length, quoting Rav Moshe Feinstein, Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach, Rav Elazar Menachem Mann Shach, and Rav Yosef Shalom Elyashiv. Although *Tosefes Maaseh Rav* (34) relates that when the *Viilna Gaon* was released from jail, he read all four of the *parshiyos* he missed at one time, on the other hand, when someone pointed this *Maaseh Rav* out to Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach, after telling a questioner that he is not obligated to find a double-parasha-ed minyan as *leining* is a *Chovas HaTzibbur*, Rav Shlomo Zalman retorted rhetorically, "do you truly believe that you are on the *Viilna Gaon's* level to perform all of the *Minhagei HaGr"az*?" (Halichos Shlomo, ad loc. footnote 90). On the other hand, it is important to note that the *Rema* (*Orach Chaim* 135: 2; citing the *Ohr Zarua*, vol. 2, *Halichos Shabbos* 45) rules regarding if an entire *tzibbur* did not lein one week, that they would be required to make it up the next week along with the current *Parasha*. In a related *sheilah*, Rav Ovadia Yosef (*Shu't Yabia Omer*, *ibid*; see also *Yalkut Yosef*, *Kitzur Shulchan Aruch*, *Orach Chaim*, 143: 6), who relates a historical precedent (as cited in *sefer Birchos Hamayin* *Orach Chaim* 135, and *Shu't Mekor Yisrael* 105) from a severe snowstorm in *Yerushalayim* in 1787, that lasted from Wednesday through *Shabbos* - when the entire city was blanketed with so much snow that it was impossible for anyone to have possibly attended, except for one *shul* that managed to open. The *psak* given was that the *tzibbur* should lein a double *parasha* the next week. See also Rav Yechiel Michel Tukachinsky's authoritative *Luach Eretz Yisrael* (5775: *Minhagei Hashanah*, *Nissan*; footnote 6). Although there is some debate [see *Magen Avraham* (135:4 citing the *Shu't Maharam Mintz* 85) that a *tzibbur* can only go back one *parasha*, and the *Olas Tamid* (*Orach Chaim* 282) and *Knesses Hagedolah* (*Hagahos HaTzur ad loc.*) ruling that way as well; however the *Elyah Rabba* (282:2), citing the *Hagahos Minhagim* (*Shabbos*, *Shacharis*, 41) arguing that a *tzibbur* should make up as many *parshiyos* as were missed, and the *Magen Gibborim* (*Elef Hamagen ad loc.* 4), *Chida* (*Shu't Chaim Sha'al* vol. 1:71, 5), *Maharam Schick* (*Shu't Orach Chaim* 335; also citing the *Chasam Sofer* and *Rav Nosson Adler*), *Maharsham* (*Duas Torah ad loc.*), and *Aruch Hashulchan* (*ad loc.* 6) explicitly ruling like the *Elyah Rabba*; the *Mishnah Berurah* (*ad loc.* 7 and *Kaf Hachaim* (*ad loc.* 5) cite both sides of this debate with no clear-cut *hachra'ah*, but seem to imply they favor the latter opinion as well] as to how many *parshiyos* a *tzibbur* can be expected or allowed to "make-up" in one go, nonetheless many contemporary poskim have ruled that in our specific case when of *coronavirus*, when the vast majority of the world did not have access to *minyanim* for several months, when the *tzibbur* is able to get back together, it is preferable that they should lein all the missing *parshiyos* together. These poskim include *Rav Moshe Sternbuch* (in his weekly *Parasha Sheet Shavuot* 5780); he writes that there is a "Ma'aleh" to do so), *Rav Yitzchak* and *Rav David Yosef* (in *Rav Yitzchak Yosef's* *teshuva* dated 28 *Nissan* 5780); *Rav David* cosigned on it, adding "Mitzvah rabba lefarsim"), and *Rav Moshe Heinemann* (in a *shu"t* given soon after *Purim* 5780; available on the *Star-K* website). [On the other hand, *Rav Asher Weiss* (*Minchas Asher B'Tekufas HaCorona*, *Tinyana* 34) wrote that in his opinion, it is preferable for the *tzibbur* not to catch up on all the *parshiyos*, as aside for the *Acharonim* who held that a *tzibbur* shouldn't make up more than one *parasha*, there are others who may hold that in this situation the *tzibbur* may actually be *patur*. That along with the extended risk of people not keeping to the medical guidelines during this extensive *Kriya*, is reason enough for the *tzibbur* to *davka* not catch up on all the missing *Kriyos*. In fact, in my neighborhood, on *Parashas Bamidbar*, there was a special *minyan leining* all of *Toras Kohanim* - the whole *Sefer Vayikra* and *Parashas Bamidbar* for the *tzibbur* that missed all the *Kriyos*.

[2] It is worthwhile knowing that the *Rema* himself, in his youth, wrote his famous *peirush* on *Megillah Esther*, titled "Mechir Yayin," while in quarantine, to present it to his father as *Mishloach Manos* (somewhat akin to *Rav Shlomo Alkabtz's* famous "Manos Halevi" – see his commentary to *Esther* Ch. 9:17; decidedly not like the *Terumas Hadeshen*, vol. 1:11, who rules that one is not *yorzei Mishloach Manos* with anything but food and drink; although it seems that one may differentiate, as the *Rema* writes in the introduction that as they were on the run and forced to flee *Cracow* for the village of *Shidlov*, there was no money for a *Purim Seudah* or even wine to drink, so perhaps his *sefer* as *Mishloach Manos* is not proof of his disagreeing with the *Terumas Hadeshen*). The *Chida* as well, wrote his famous "Shem Gedolim" when in quarantine, as attested to in his *Maagel Tov* (20 *lyar*). In fact, several *seforim* that he addressed in his *Machzik Bracha* (*Orach Chaim* 55:1; cited in *Shaarei Teshuva* *ad loc.* 15), that suddenly became germane for us during *coronavirus*, such as whether one can be *metzatref* for a *minyan Yidden* in several different rooms that can see and hear each other; were his own personal *hannagos* and *psakim* due to his being in quarantine in a *lazaretto* outside *Livorno*, *Italy* in 1774. See *Rabbi Yochanan Hershkowitz's* fascinating related article in *Hamodia's Inyan Magazine* (May 13, 2020; "Roll Up Your Sleeves and Get Writing").

[3] As addressed at length in previous articles titled "Rosh Hashanah: The Universal Two Day *Yom Tov*, (and why *Yom Kippur* is Not) and 'One Day or Two? What is a *Chutznik* in Eretz Yisrael to Do?'

[4] Although the famed *Chacham Tzvi* (*Shu't* 167), and later the *Shulchan Aruch Harav* (*Orach Chaim* 496, 11; although he also cites that "yesh cholkim", nonetheless, according to the common consensus, this first opinion is *ikar* - see also vol. 1, *Mahadura Tinyana* 68) ruled that even one merely visiting *Eretz Yisrael* over *Yom Tov* should keep only one day of *Yom Tov* like the natives (to paraphrase: 'when in Israel, do as the *Israelis* do'), nevertheless, the vast majority of halachic authorities, including the codifier of the *Shulchan Aruch* himself (*Shu't Avkas Rochel* 26) and even the *Chacham Tzvi*'s own son, *Rav Yaakov Emden* (*Shu't Sheilas Yaavetz* vol. 1: 168), maintained that visitors' status is dependant on whether or not their intention is to stay and live in *Eretz Yisrael*, or to return to *Chutz La'aretz*, known as "im da'atam lachzor" (see next footnote at length). We do however find that the one-day *shittah* is defended by the *Aderes* (*Sefer Shevach Haaretz*, 35) and *Shoel U'Meishiv* (*Shu't Mahadura Teliyah* vol. 2: 28), and heavily implied by the *Avnei Nezer* (*Shu't Orach Chaim* 242: 27 and 33; 539: *Hashmatos* to *Hilchos Yom Tov*, 48 - end; he maintains that "da'atam lachzor" should not apply even for visitors from *Eretz Yisrael* who are staying in *Chutz La'aretz* over *Yom Tov*). This *shittah* has also found support in certain *Rishonim*, including *Rabbeinu Chananel*'s understanding of *Rav Safraya*'s opinion (*Pesachim* 51b - 52a), and the *Ra'avan* (*Pesachim* 162: 2; see *Even Shlomo*'s commentary 37). Although, as shown later on, most contemporary authorities do not rule this way, nonetheless, *Chabad Chassidim* generally follow the *shittah* of their *Alter Rebbe*, the *Shulchan Aruch Harav*, and only keep one day in *Eretz Yisrael*, no matter how long they intend on staying. [However, there are those who cite different *minhagim* as prevalent in *Chabad* *psak* for this *inyan*. See, for example, *Rav Levi Yitzchak Raskin's* extensive *Kuntress Yom Tov Sheini*, printed in his *sefer Nisivim B'sdei HaShlichus* vol. 1. Thanks are due to *R' Nochum Shmaryahu Zajac* for pointing this out.] *Rav Yechiel Michel Tukachinsky* (*Ir HaKodesh V'Hamikdash* vol. 3, Ch. 19: 8 and 11) reports that his grandfather-in-law, the *Av Beis Din* of *Yerushalayim* for the latter part of the nineteenth century, *Rav Shmuel Salant*, was noted to this *shittah* as well. However, since he did not want to argue on his *Rabbinei*, including the *Pe'as Hashulchan* (see next footnote), who mandated visitors keeping *Yom Tov Sheini*, *Rav Salant* ruled that a *Ben Chutz La'aretz* should keep *Yom Tov Sheini lechumrah*, a *shittah* nowadays commonly referred to as 'A Day

and a *Half*'. This refers to being *makpid* on not doing any *Melachah De'oraysa* on the second day, but also not doing the unique *Yom Tov Mitzvos*, i.e. making *Kiddush* etc. *Rav Avraham Yitzchak HaKohen Kook* (*Shu't Orach Mishpat*, *Orach Chaim* 125; thanks are due to *R. Moshe Simon-Shoshan* for pointing out this important source) and *Rav Yosef Dov* (*YD*) *Soloveitchik* (as cited in *Nefesh HaRav* pg. 84) were also known to be proponents of this *shittah*, reporting that this was also the preferred *shittah* of the *Rav's* grandfather, *Rav Chaim Soloveitchik* of *Brisk*. [However, in this author's opinion, the misnomer for this *shittah*, 'A Day and a Half' is somewhat troublesome. Anecdotally, years ago, I met an older relative here in *Eretz Yisrael* on *Yom Tov Sheini* and noticed that she was performing *Melachah*. When I asked her about it, she innocently replied that her *Rabbi* told her to keep 'A Day and a Half'... and it was already after noon...]. For more on *Rav Shmuel Salant*'s *shittah*, see the annual *Tukachinsky Luach Eretz Yisrael* (*Chot Hamoed Sukkos*, footnote), *Shu't Lehoros Nossos* (vol. 1: 26), *Torah Rabbeinu Shmuel Salant* (pg. 120), and *Aderes Shmuel* (*Piskei Rav Shmuel Salant* 21'; *Hilchos Yom Tov* 129, and in footnotes at length, pg. 131-135).

[5] Although there are those who want to prove that the *Shulchan Aruch* meant to rule that a visitor to *Eretz Yisrael* should only keep one day, as in the *Shulchan Aruch* (*Orach Chaim* 496) he only mentions visitors from *Eretz Yisrael* in *Chutz La'aretz*, who need to keep a two-day *Yom Tov* like the locals [see, for example, *Ir HaKodesh V'Hamikdash* vol. 3, Ch. 19: 11, in the parenthesis, as an additional *sevara* of *Rav Shmuel Salant*'s "lbo amar lo esfah" ...]. nevertheless, he personally put that notion to rest in his *Shu'Avikas Rochel* (26), where *Rav Karo* explicitly ruled that the *Yom Tov* observance of visitors to *Eretz Yisrael* is dependant on whether they are planning on staying or not. [Indeed, in *Ir HaKodesh V'Hamikdash* Ch. 19: 8, *Rav Tukachinsky* himself strongly disavows the aforementioned notion.] Other poskim who rule this way include the *Rav Yaakov Emden* (*Shu't Sheilas Yaavetz* vol. 1: 168), the *Pe'as Hashulchan* (*Hilchos Eretz Yisrael* 2: 15, 21), the *Chida* (*Shu't Chaim Sha'al* vol. 1: 55, and *Birkei Yosef*, *Orach Chaim* 496: 7), *Mahar'i Chagiz* (*Shu't Halachos Ketanos* vol. 1: 4; however, his son argues quite extensively, including *psakim* from his grandfather, *Rav Moshe Galanti*, and *Rabbanei Tzfas*), that *Bochurim* should certainly only keep one day, the *Pri Ha'adamah* (vol. 3, pg. 17b, and in *Mizbach Adamah*, *Orach Chaim* 468: 4 s.v. 'l'uyan'; citing 'kol Rabbanei Yerushalayim' regarding a *Bochur* who plans on returning to *Chutz La'aretz*), *Shaarei Teshuva* (*Orach Chaim* 496: 3, in the parenthesis, and end 5; he makes a *sikum* of the *shittos*), *Chaye Adam* (vol. 2, 103; 4), *Aruch Hashulchan* (*Orach Chaim* 496: end 5), *Mishnah Berurah* (*ad loc.* 13), *Kaf Hachaim* (*ad loc.* 38), and *Rav Yechiel Michel Tukachinsky* (*Ir HaKodesh V'Hamikdash* vol. 3, Ch. 19: 8 and 11, and in his annual *Luach Eretz Yisrael* ibid); although he does seem to give equal credence to his grandfather-in-law, *Rav Shmuel Salant*'s "Day and a Half" *psak*). The vast majority of contemporary poskim rule this way as well. See *Shu't Igros Moshe* (*Orach Chaim* vol. 3: 73 and 74 and vol. 4: 101), *Orchos Rabbeinu* (new print - 5775 edition, vol. 2, Ch. "Yom Tov Sheini"; citing the *Chazon Ish* and *Steipler Gaon*), *Shu't Seridei Aish* (new edition; vol. 1, *Orach Chaim* 51: 1), *Shu't Minchas Yitzchak* (vol. 4: 1 - 4), *Yom Tov Sheini Kehilchoso* (pg. 108, footnote 5; citing many *Rabbanim* including the *Tchebiner Rav*, *Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach*, *Rav Yosef Shalom Elyashiv*, and *Rav Chaim Pinchas Scheinberg*, whose *tshuvah* is printed in the back of the *sefer*), *Shulchan Shevi'i Halevi* (vol. 5: 64), *Shu't Mishnah Halachos* (vol. 4: 83), *Shu't Tzitz Eliezer* (vol. 9: 30), *Halichos Even Yisrael* (*Moadim* vol. 1, pg. 287 - 288), *Shu't Yaskil Avdi* (vol. 4, *Orach Chaim* 26), *Shu't B'etzil Hachochmah* (vol. 1: 60), *Shu't Yabea Omer* (vol. 6, *Orach Chaim* 40: 1 - 3), *Shu't Ohr L'Tzion* (vol. 3: Ch. 23: 5), *Shu't Knei Bosem* (vol. 1: 28), *Chazon Ovadia* (*Yom Tov*, pg. 133: 12), and *Yalkut Yosef* (*Moadim*, pg. 460).

[6] Even though the messengers of *Tishrei* and *Nissan* would certainly have reached even far flung places by *Shavuot*, nevertheless, *Chazal* still established a *Yom Tov Sheini* for *Shavuot*, in order not to make a distinction between the *Yomim Tovim*. See *Rambam* (*Hilchos Kiddush HaChodesh* Ch. 3: 12), *Shu't Chasam Sofer* (*Orach Chaim* 146 and *Yoreh De'ah* 252), *Shu't Sho'el U'Meishiv* (*Mahadura Tinyana* vol. 2: 85 s.v. *v'hinei t'faniyus daati*) and *Shu't Machazek Avraham* (*Orach Chaim* 121). See also *Chiddushai Maran R'z HaLevi* at *HaTorah* (*Parashas Emor*); the *Brisker Ravnotov* that the exact date of *Shavuot* is always already set from the beginning of *Nisan*, as the *pasuk* states regarding *Shavuot* (*Parashas Emor* Ch. 23: 21) that it is observed "b'etzen hayom hazeh", hence keeping it as a two day *Yom Tov* is also considered a *Takanah* of sorts. Moreover, according to *Rema M'Fano* (*Asarah Maamaros*), as cited by the *Magen Avraham* (beg. *Orach Chaim* 494), according to the *shittah* of *Rav Yosi* in *Gemara Shabbos* (86b-88a), that *Mattan Torah* actually occurred on *7 Sivan*, as well as perhaps the 51st day of *Sefira*, there is an allusion to *Yom Tov Sheini* (at least for *Shavuot*) *Min HaTorah*. For alternate approaches, see *Maharsha* (*Chiddushai Aggados*, *Avodah Zarah* 3a, on *Tosafos* s.v. *yom hashishi*), *Chok Yaakov* (494:1, citing the *Shu't Rivash* 96; see also 430:2), and *Ba'er Heitiv* (*ad loc.* 1; at length).

[7] *Abudraham* (*Seder HaParshiyos*). See also *Birur HaGr"a* (*Orach Chaim* 428: 4 s.v. *l'olam*) and *Biur Halacha* (*ad loc.* s.v. *B'midbar Sinai*).

[8] For example, the *Abudraham* (*Seder HaParshiyos* s.v. *eilu*) mentions *Shlach* and *Korach* are combined as regular double-*Parshiyos*; which to the extent of this authors' knowledge is not currently practiced. In a similar vein the *Tikkun Yissachar* mentions a certain *Chacham*, *Harav Saadya Dayan Tzova* (presumably a *Dayan* in *Aram Tzova* - *Aleppo*, *Syria*), who combined *Korach* and *Chukas*, an interesting combination that, as the *Tikkun Yissachar* notes, the rest of the world never combines. However, my esteemed father-in-law, *Rabbi Yaakov Tzvi Lieberman*, informed me based on his years of learning in *Kollel* there, that the *Chalev* (*Syrian*) community in *Mexico City* still follows (or, at least did several decades ago) this unusual combination of *Korach* and *Chukas*.

[9] *Birur HaGr"a* and *Mishnah Berurah* (*ibid*).

[10] In an interesting side point, the *Gemara* (*Megillah* 29b) mentions an alternate *minhag*, that of the *Bnei Maarava* (*Eretz Yisrael*), "D maski L'De'oraysa B'tlas Shnun," that they only complete the *Torah* every three years, as opposed to our common *minhag* of doing so every year. Lest one thinks that this *minhag* was only extant during *Talmudic* times as the *Rambam* (*Hilchos Tefilla* Ch. 13: 1) already wrote in the 1100s that it is not the *minhag pashut*, on the other hand, we find that famed traveler *Binayamin of Tudela* (*Masa'os Rabi Binayamin* 5'Tudela; *Adler* / *London* edition pg. 63) related that in the early 1170s, in *Egypt* there were two different co-existing *Kehilos*, that of the mainstream community finishing the *Torah* annually, and that of the *Bnei Eretz Yisrael*, splitting each *parasha* into three and only concluding the *Torah* every three years. Indeed, we do find differing views of the *parshiyos* and their *keivuvin* in the *works* of several *Rishonim*. For example, the *Chida*, at the end of his *Shu't Chaim Sha'al*, quotes *Kitzur Teshuvos HaRosh* as cited from *sefer Chazkei Hatenufa* (54), that the main point is to ensure that the *Torah* is completed every year. Hence, it is within the rights of *Chacham B'Iro* to decide where to stop, as in his opinion, our *parasha* setup is not *halacha kavua*, but rather *minhag*. The *Ohr Zarua* (vol. 2, *Halichos Shabbos* 45 s.v. *maaseh*) seems to concur with this assessment as well, stating that there is no *keivuvin* which *parasha* must specifically be *leined* on which *Shabbos*. Yet, it must be stressed that this is not the *normative halacha*. Thanks are due to *Rabbi Moshe Taub* for pointing out several of these important sources.

[11] *Shu't Maharit* (vol. 2, *Orach Chaim* 4), also quoting the *Tikkun Yissachar* (pg. 38 a -b), based on *Tosafos* (*Megillah* 31b s.v. *ktlos*) and the *Levush* (*Orach Chaim* 428: 4).

[12] The *Tikkun Yissachar* (pg. 32b) explains that as *Eretz Yisrael* observes *Pesach* for seven days, exactly as prescribed in the *Torah*, as opposed to *Chutz La'aretz*, which observes an eight-day *Pesach* due to *Rabbinic* decree (as detailed at length in previous articles titled: 'Rosh Hashana: The Universal Two-Day *Yom Tov* (and Why *Yom Kippur* is Not) and 'One Day or Two? What is a *Chutznik* in Eretz Yisrael to Do?'), which in turn pushes off the *calendar*, the *Eretz Yisrael* *Luach* is deemed the *ikar* one and 'Bnei Ha'Ikar' in' certainly do not have to be concerned with the *calendar* of 'Bnei HaMinhag'. Indeed, regarding a year with similar calendrical structure, but not a leap year [so the 'split' occurred with earlier *parshiyos* and concluded much earlier; this was addressed in a previous article titled 'Parasha Permutations 5778'], the *Tikkun Yissachar* (*ad loc.* s.v. *hagahah*) relates that the *Sefardic Chachamim* of *Tzfas* to separate *Tazria* and *Metzora* to be on par with the rest of the world. However, the response of the *Rabbanim* from the rest of *Eretz Yisrael* was not long in coming. They utterly rejected the idea, and demanded that they only catch up at *Beitar* / *Bechukosai*, as that was already the established *minhag* for generations. The exact quote of the sharply worded rejoinder of the *Rabbanim* is "Zehu Minhag Avoseinu U'Kadmoneinu B'Yadeinu Mei'Olam V'Shanim Kadmoniyos".

[13] According to the *Abudraham* (pg. 372), *Seder HaParshiyos*, and *Tikkun Yissachar* (pg. 38a), and cited *lemaaseh* by the *Levush* (*Orach Chaim* 428: 4), *Knesses Hagedolah* (*ibid.* s.v. *shittah* 44), and *Elyah Rabbah* (*ad loc.* 5), the reason why *Parashas Tzav* generally falls out on *Shabbos Hagadol*, the *Shabbos* immediately

preceding Pesach, is that it mentions the halachos of Kashering Keilim (Vayikra Ch. 6: 21), albeit regarding the Korban Chata'as, as 'haga'as keilim chometz lamud m'Korbanos'. Although in a leap year Parshas Metzora is usually read directly before Pesach, it is also in sync, as it mentions 'kli cheres yishaver', which is quite apropos for Pesach as well.

[14] According to the main commentaries on the Tur and Shulchan Aruch, 'Pikdu' means 'commanded', hence it is referring to Parshas Tzav, which also means 'command'. 'Pischu' is referring to Pesach. 'Minu', 'count', refers to Parshas Bamidbar, which deals mainly with the counting of Bnei Yisrael. 'Atrzu', 'stop', refers to Shavuos, by referring to its name that it is called by in the Torah, 'Atzeres'. 'Tzumu', 'fast', refers to the fast of Tisha B'Av. 'Tzulu', 'daven', refers to Parshas Va'eschanan, as it starts with Moshe Rabbeinu's entreaties to Hashem. 'Kumu', 'stand', refers to Parshas Nitzavim, literally 'standing'. And 'Tik'u', 'blow' refers to Rosh Hashanah, when the Mitzva Hayom is to blow the Shofar.

[15] These mnemonics are cited and accepted lemaaseh by all later authorities as well, including the Shulchan Aruch, Levush, and Aruch Hashulchan (Orach Chaim 428: 4).

[16] Tosafos (Megillah 31b s.v. kulos), and later seconded by the Levush (Orach Chaim 428: 4), explains why Bamidbar must be prior to Shavuos. Since Parshas Bechukosai contains tochachah (rebuke), there must be a noticeable "buffer week" [practically, Parshas Bamidbar] between its reading and Shavuos. This is because we pray that a year and its curses should end, in order to usher in a new year with its blessings - 'Tichlech shana u'klosheha, tachel shana u'birchoseha' (see Gemara Megillah 31b).

This is apropos for Shavuos as it is Rosh Hashanah for Peiros Ha'Ilan, tree fruits (see Gemara Rosh Hashanah 16a). Therefore, Bamidbar must be the stand-alone "buffer week" before Shavuos, in order to emphasize that we are getting Bechukosai in just before Shavuos.

[17] Knesses Hagedolah (Orach Chaim 428, Haggos on Tur s.v. kishe'ira), Magen Avraham (ad loc. end 6; citing the precedent and rulings of the Mahari Tiktuk Yissachar; see following footnotes), and Mishnah Berurah (ad loc. end 10).

[18] Bnei Yissachar (vol. 1, Maamarei Chodshei Tamuz - Av, Maamar 2: 2).

[19] This three-week season is referred to as such by the Midrash Rabbah (cited by Rashi in his commentary to Eichah Ch. 1, verse 3).

[20] Minchas Yitzchak al HaTorah (newer edition, vol. 2 pg. 185, Parshas Pinchas s.v. uvazeh).

[21] He proves this from different maamarei Chazal from Taanis (26a), Yoma (62b), Sanhedrin (56b), as well as the Kli Yakar (Pinchas Ch. 28: 4). His actual maamara was explaining why the fact that Battu HaTamid on Shiva Asur B'Tamuz is reason enough for fasting.

[22] Hoshea (Ch. 14: 3). See also Gemara Taanis (27b), Megillah (31b), and Yoma (86b).

[23] As pointed out by R' Mordechai Wainman, there is another, albeit technical reason why Chutz La'aretz catches up by Chukas/Balak. As Parshas Devorim has to be Shabbos Chazon, the way our calendar is set up this year there simply aren't enough weeks between Shavuos and Shabbos Chazon to allow Chukas and Balak to be split in Chutz La'aretz - anyway Mattos and Masei are read together this year - even in Eretz Israel - due to weekly limitations. So by default, the only other option to catch up by ends up being Chukas/Balak (which would otherwise not be combined), irrespective of the benefits of ensuring Pinchas is read during the Three Weeks.

[24] Devarim (Ch. 4: 25).

[25] In fact, it is also the Kriah for Shacharis on Tisha B'Av itself [see Rema (Orach Chaim 559: 4)], thus making it read twice in the same week, perhaps to let its hidden message sink in.

[26] Gemara Sanhedrin (38a), cited by Rashi on the pasuk. See also Sifsei Chachamim (ad loc.).

[27] Devarim (Ch. 4: 26).

Disclaimer: This is not a comprehensive guide, rather a brief summary to raise awareness of the issues. In any real case one should ask a competent Halachic authority.

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L'iluy Nishmas the Rosh HaYeshiva - Rav Chonoh Menachem Mendel ben R' Yechezkel Shraga, Rav Yaakov Yeshaya ben R' Boruch Yehuda

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Ed. Note: very relevant to daf yomi learners !!

Writing on Shabbos

Rabbi Yirmiyohu Kaganoff

Question #1: Writing with my mouth!?

Is writing with a pen in my mouth considered writing?

Question #2: Disappearing ink

May I use disappearing ink on Shabbos?

Introduction:

Writing was one of the 39 melachos performed in the construction of the mishkan. According to most opinions, writing was performed when the boards of the mishkan were marked (see Shabbos 103a,b; Rashi 73a). The Mishnah (103a) mentions that the boards were marked in order to remember exactly in which location each board was placed.

Why mark?

The question is: Since the mishkan's boards were identical, what difference should it make where each board is placed? This question is already raised by the Talmud Yerushalmi (Shabbos 12:3), which explains that there is halachic importance that each board be in the exact same place whenever the mishkan was reassembled.

Recordkeeping

There is a minority opinion that contends that the melacha of writing is derived from the recordkeeping performed for the mishkan (see Shu't Avnei Neizer, Orach Chayim 199:10). Since the Mishnah already mentions the marking of the boards as a source for the melacha, how and why can any commentary suggest a different reason?

The answer is that this approach was suggested in order to resolve a conundrum. There are rishonim who clearly did not use the Mishnah's example of marking the mishkan boards as the source of the melacha of writing. The acharonim who discuss this question note the following:

When the Mishnah states that the melacha of writing is derived from the labeling of the boards, it is explaining the opinion of a minority tanna, Rabbi Yosi, who holds that there is a melacha called rosheim, or marking. The Avnei Neizer demonstrates that there are rishonim who definitely hold that the tanna kamma

who disagrees with Rabbi Yosi did not derive the melacha of writing from the boards; therefore, these rishonim must have another option from which the melacha of writing is derived. The Avnei Neizer suggests that the melacha was derived from the necessity of keeping good records regarding the contributions donated to the construction of the mishkan.

Minimum shiur

In general, there are two levels for violating any of the melachos of Shabbos. There is a greater degree of violation, called chayov, which includes performing a melacha with the minimum amount necessary, called the shiur. There is also a lesser degree of violation, called patur, which includes performing the melacha activity but in a quantitatively smaller way, called pachus mi'keshiur, literally, less than the minimal amount. Patur also includes activities that are forbidden to perform because of rabbinic injunction.

What difference does it make whether something is chayov, punishable, or patur, non-punishable? There are several halachic differences that result. Here are three:

1. At the time that the Sanhedrin existed, a special beis din, composed of 23 judges, would take forceful legal action against someone who desecrated Shabbos in a punishable way, but they would not take action if the act was non-punishable.
2. Is someone who violates Shabbos negligently required to offer a korban chatos as atonement? If the act is chayov, the perpetrator is obligated to offer a korban chatos. If not, it did not cross the threshold required to offer a korban chatos, notwithstanding that it violated a Torah law.
3. Under certain circumstances, it might be permitted to ask a gentile to perform the act.

Two letters

Regarding the melacha of writing, the violation of the higher degree is when someone writes two letters of the alphabet. Someone who writes only one letter has performed a non-punishable offense, unless his one letter completed a work, such as it was the last letter of a sefer Torah (Shabbos 104b).

Someone who writes one letter is not chayov for violating the melacha even when it is an abbreviation of a word. For example, in the time of the Mishnah, someone might mark a bin containing maaser produce with a single letter mem ו. Despite the fact that everyone seeing this single ו on a bin will realize that this is a code for an entire word, someone who marked the bin with a letter ו is not chayov for Shabbos desecration, but is guilty of a lesser prohibition, that of writing pachus mi'keshiur.

Notwithstanding that writing less than the shiur is deemed non-punishable, it is forbidden, and its violation should not be treated lightly.

Writing with my mouth!?

At this point, we can discuss our opening question: Is writing with a pen in my mouth considered writing?

The Mishnah (Shabbos 103b) mentions other instances in which the act is not chayov; for example, someone wrote two letters in different places in a way that they cannot be read together, or he wrote in a way that people usually do not write, such as by holding the pen in his mouth.

Writing with your mouth

We have all heard of extremely talented artists who succeed in doing things that we would consider well-nigh impossible, such as drawing paintings with their toes or with a quill held between their teeth.

Actually, this incredible skill is not new. In the days of the Rama of Fanu, an early- seventeenth century Italian gadol, mekubal, and posek, there was a scribe who wrote sifrei Torah, tefillin and mezuzos by holding the quill in his mouth. He wrote gorgeous sifrei Torah, tefillin and mezuzos, but the halachic question was whether they were kosher. Some background to the issue is necessary:

Write right

The Mishnah (103b) lists many cases that are not prohibited min haTorah, including writing by holding the pen between the toes, with one's mouth, by holding it in the joint between his forearm and upper arm (the opposite side of the elbow), or by holding a pen upside-down (thus, writing by twisting your arm backwards – don't try it, it is a rather uncomfortable way to write). The Gemara adds that someone who writes with his weaker hand, such as a right-handed person who writes with his left hand, is patur from performing a punishable melacha.

Our opening question is now clearer. The poskim rule that just as writing in an unusual fashion does not qualify as an act of writing to desecrate Shabbos (min haTorah), sifrei Torah, tefillin and mezuzos written this way are not written correctly and are invalid. Similarly, the Rama of Fanu ruled that the beautiful sifrei Torah, tefillin and mezuzos written by holding the quill in the sofer's mouth are not kosher.

Can you write by erasing?

There are circumstances in which a letter is created by erasing. For example, the Hebrew letter reish needs to be written, and at the moment its place is taken by a dalet or a tav. If you erase the extra piece and thus create a reish, have you desecrated Shabbos?

Let me explain this question in more detail: There is a principle germane to the laws of sifrei Torah, tefillin and mezuzos that the letters must be written and

cannot be scraped into existence. This case shows a perfect example: someone wrote a dalet where a reish is required, then scraped off the extension and point of the dalet to construct a reish. This is referred to as chok tochos and, unfortunately, sifrei Torah, tefillin and mezuzos so made are invalid.

The question is: Does the creation of a letter on Shabbos by chok tochos constitute writing germane to the laws of Shabbos, or does it constitute only a rabbinic violation?

The answer:

Several authorities, both rishonim and acharonim, rule that a letter written by erasing violates the melacha of writing on Shabbos min haTorah (Ran, Or Zarua, Shu't Avnei Neizer, Orach Chayim #207).

How were the boards marked?

I mentioned above the Mishnah that teaches that the boards were marked to be able to tell where each board should be placed when the mishkan was reassembled.

There is an interesting dispute between Rashi and the Rambam regarding how the boards of the mishkan were marked. According to Rashi (Shabbos 73a), each board was marked with a letter or symbol, with the two boards that were to be inserted into the same silver socket carrying the same symbol. The melacha is derived from the juxtaposition of two letters providing knowledge how to place the two boards.

The Rambam's opinion is that the boards were numbered consecutively, using the same system we would use today to write numbers using Hebrew letters. Thus the eleventh board was mark נ and the nineteenth ו (Commentary to Mishnah Shabbos 12:3). He does not explain why we cannot derive that writing even one letter is chayov, since the first ten boards were identified with only one letter. It seems that, in his opinion, Chazal understood that one letter, which does not form a word in Hebrew, cannot be enough writing to be chayov. According to Rashi, the requirement to write two letters to be chayov is itself derived from the construction of the mishkan.

Writing other than Hebrew

Some rishonim contend that the prohibition against writing on Shabbos is violated min haTorah only when using Hebrew characters (Rabbeinu Yael Halevi, quoted by Or Zarua, Hilchos Shabbos #76, and Hagahos Maimoniyyos, Hilchos Sefer Torah 7:40 and Hilchos Tefillin, 1:70). According to these rishonim, writing in other alphabets is prohibited only because of a rabbinic injunction. Although most rishonim, including both Rashi (Shabbos 103a) and the Rambam (Hilchos Shabbos 11:10), clearly dispute this, contending that writing in any alphabet is prohibited min haTorah, the Rema (Orach Chayim 306:11) rules according to the Or Zarua that writing in other alphabets is prohibited only because of a rabbinic injunction (cf. Beis Shmuel 126:1 and Magen Avraham 340:10). Upon this basis, some later poskim permit having a non-Jew use a western alphabet on Shabbos for the benefit of a Jew (See Shu't Noda Biyehudah, Orach Chayim 2:29).

Permanence

A requirement of most melachos is that the act involved must have a lasting result. For example, tying a knot that can last for only a matter of hours is not prohibited on Shabbos.

Germane to the melacha of writing, the Mishnah (Shabbos 104b) discusses this topic:

Someone who writes with ink, with a paint pigment, with sikra (a red dye), with tree-exudate gum, or with ferrous sulfate, or anything else that makes a permanent impression (is chayov).

The Tosefta (Shabbos 12:6) and other authorities add several other instances that are considered permanent: writing with pencil, coal, paint, shoe polish, tree sap, pomegranate peels, or congealed blood. (It is perhaps significant that the Rambam omits the case of congealed blood, a point raised by the Biur Halacha [340:4 s. v. bamashkin]. Biur Halacha leaves this issue unresolved.)

Temporary writing:

On the other hand, the Mishnah also mentions several types of writing that are deemed temporary and therefore only rabbinic violations of Shabbos. The Mishnah (103b) records the following instances of writing that qualify as temporary: "Someone who wrote with liquids (Rashi explains this to mean a berry juice with a black color), with fruit juices, with mud (or, alternatively, he used his finger to mark lettering in dust [Rashi]), with the residue left in an inkwell, or with any other substance that does not last is patur."

How permanent?

Two great recent authorities apparently were involved in debating this exact question. Sometime in 1977, Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach paid a house visit to the posek of the eidah hachareidis, Rav Yitzchak Yaakov Weiss, and the two great authorities began discussing the question concerning how long a period of time must writing last to be considered permanent. Notwithstanding that both great leaders viewed one another with utmost respect, they disagreed very strongly over the halachic conclusions to be drawn from the evidence.

In a previous article discussing the laws of dyeing, we discussed how permanent you must color something to violate the laws of Shabbos min haTorah. Most authorities contend that violating the law min haTorah requires that the color last only to the end of Shabbos. Germane to the laws of writing, many authorities rule that the definition of permanent is the same: Any writing that will last until Shabbos is over is prohibited (see Shu't Minchas Yitzchok 7:13-15). However, other authorities rule that writing is more lenient than dyeing, which means that the length of time that a written message needs to last to violate a Torah prohibition is longer than the length of time required for a dye (Minchas Shlomoh 1:91:11; Rashba, Shabbos 115b; Biur Halacha, 340:4 s. v. Bemashkin).

Why should writing require a longer amount of time to be prohibited min haTorah than dyeing?

In writing, the goal is to provide communication, either to yourself as a reminder, or to someone else. If a person is writing a reminder, he probably needs the information to last for a few days, and therefore writing in a way that will not last this long does not violate the Torah prohibition.

The Shab-eit

I have in my possession a pen called a Shab-eit. This product was manufactured to assist security or medical personnel who are required to write on Shabbos because of pikuach nefesh situations. The instructions on the pen quote the words of the Mishnah, "Someone who wrote with liquids, with fruit juices, with mud, with the residue left in an inkwell, or with any other substance that does not last is patur," with the notation that usage of the Shab-eit is prohibited miderabban on Shabbos. The package insert explains that state that anything written with the pen will become hard to read and will completely disappear within a few days, depending on the type of paper on which it is written. They note that, based on the company's experience, the writing will remain on regular writing paper for about three days, and therefore use of the Shab-eit is advised for medical and security personnel required to write things on Shabbos because of life-threatening emergencies. The recommendations are to write on Shabbos in as limited a way as one can using this marker, and after Shabbos to rewrite or photograph what was written. They also suggest checking before Shabbos to see how long it lasts on the type of paper that will be used. As I discovered, on some types of paper this ink will disappear within hours, potentially rendering it useless.

The package includes a note that using this pen on Shabbos in the above-mentioned circumstances is based on piskei halacha of Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach and Rav Mordechai Eliyahu, whose responsa on the subject they reference.

Prickly writer

The Mishnah (104b) teaches: "Someone who writes on his own skin is chayov. Someone who scratches on his skin: Rabbi Eliezer rules that he is chayov, whereas the Sages rule that he is patur."

What is the dispute between Rabbi Eliezer and the Sages?

According to most opinions (Rashi on Rif, Ran, Reshash), they are discussing someone who took a pin or thorn and "wrote" by scratching some letters or a brief message into his skin. Rabbi Eliezer considers this to be an act of writing, whereas the Sages rule that he is exempt from a Torah violation for writing since this is not considered a normal way to write (Rambam, Ran). The halacha follows the Sages that he is exempt from a Torah violation (Rambam), although this is prohibited on Shabbos as a rabbinic injunction. It is also a valid question why this is not chayov for the Shabbos violation of drawing blood. I hope to answer this question in a future article.

Conclusion

The Torah commanded us concerning the halachos of Shabbos by giving us the basic categories that are prohibited. Shabbos is a day that we refrain from altering the world for our own purposes, but instead allow Hashem's rule to be the focus of creation by refraining from our own creative acts (Rav Shamshon Raphael Hirsch's Commentary to Shemos 20:10). By demonstrating Hashem's rule even over non-exertive activities such as writing, we demonstrate and acknowledge the true Creator of the world and all it contains.

לע"נ
שרה משא בת ר' יעקב אליעזר ע"ה
בילא בת (אריה) ליב ע"ה

PORTION OF SH'LACH

We shall now discuss the Portion of *Sh'lach*. In the Torah, this Portion consists of ten chapters.

NUMBERS 13

CHAPTER I

13:1,2

ଭାବିଦ୍ୟା ଏବଂ କର୍ତ୍ତାଙ୍କ ଦ୍ୱାରା
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God spoke to Moses, saying: "Send out men for yourself to explore the Canaanite territory that I am about to give the Israelites. Send out one man for each patriarchal tribe. Each one shall be a person of high rank.

The three episodes: Miriam's punishment, Korach, and the spies, took place one after the other.

The episode concerning Miriam occurred while the Israelites were still in Chatzeroth, on the 22nd day of the month of Sivan, in the second year after the Exodus from Egypt. Thus, on the 20th of Iyyar, the Cloud set out from Horeb; this was followed by a three-day journey, at the end of which they camped at Kivroth HaTaavah on the 22nd of Iyyar. There they made their demand for meat, of which they partook for an entire month, as was explained in the previous portion. This came to an end on 22 Sivan, and on that day they left for Chatzeroth.

Now if we take into account that the spies were away for 40 days, completing their mission on the 9th of Av, it follows that they were dis-

patched on the 29th of Sivan from the Paran Desert ("Moses sent them from the Paran Desert at God's bidding"). In other words, the Israelites remained in Chatzeroth only seven days, during which both the episode involving Miriam and the episode involving Korach took place. Thus, immediately after the conclusion of Miriam's seven days of quarantine at Chatzeroth, they left for Paran, where the scouts were sent out.¹

This tells us that the episode of Miriam occurred first, followed by that of Korach. The question may naturally be asked, why then has the Torah put the story of the spies after that of Miriam, rather than after the story of Korach, which happened earlier? Why does the Portion of Korach not appear here instead, followed by the Portion of Sh'lach?

The answer is that, by deliberately recording the story of the spies after the episode of Miriam, the Torah underscores the evil of what they had done. They had witnessed the punishment that was meted out to Miriam for maligning Moses: despite the purity of her motives, she was stricken by leprosy and alienated from God for seven days. But they did not learn, from her fate, to desist from maligning the land, despite the short interval of time that separated the two events.²

"Send out men for yourselves to explore the Canaanite territory that I am about to give the Israelites." In the second year after the Exodus from Egypt the Israelites approached the land of Israel, and were within eleven days of entering it, had they not sinned. Moses then said to them, "See! God has placed the land before you. Head north and occupy it." But the Israelites answered, "Let us instead send out men to explore the territory for us."

"But what need is there for such scouting of the land?" asked Moses. "God promised us," they replied, "that immediately upon entering the land we would enjoy every benefit and have abundant possessions, saying, "[You will also have] houses filled with all good things that you did not put there, finished cisterns that you did not quarry, and vineyards and olive-trees that you did not plant" (Deuteronomy 6:11). However, when the Canaanites hear of our coming to take possession of the land, they will excavate pits and hidden bunkers under the earth where they will hide all their possessions. So when we finally enter the land we shall find nothing, and God's promise will have become null and void. Let us, therefore, dispatch spies to find all those hidden places, and they will know where all the concealed treasures are to be dug up."

This then is the intent of the words, "Send men ahead of us to

explore (*chafor*, חָפַר) the land." That is, "Let us send men who will observe the excavations (*chafiroth*, חָפִירֹת) and the hiding places constructed by the Canaanites for the purpose of concealing their possessions. Our desire to send spies ahead is not prompted by doubt about the quality of the land."³

When Moses heard these arguments, he concluded that the idea to dispatch scouts was not without merit. It even appealed to him, as revealed in the Portion of Devarim: "I approved and appointed twelve men, one for each tribe" (Deuteronomy 1:23). Still, he hesitated to send them solely on the basis of his own judgment. So he said, "I will go and consult God to see if He agrees with me."

When Moses went to consult the Shekhinah, God said to him, "They are capable of misleading you, for you are flesh and blood and do not fathom the hidden recesses of their hearts. They tell you that the scouts should be sent for the purpose of locating the places of hoarding. But I, who test the inner parts of men, know that what prompts them is a lack of faith in Me. Although I have already told them that it is a good land, they wish to know the quality of that land. Nor is this the first time that they betray a lack of faith in My words; already in Egypt they had begun to offend Me in this manner. I will say nothing more to you about this matter. If you wish, send them."

God's answer is indicated in the words, "Send out men for yourself."

The words, "for yourself," are an allusion to what God said to Moses, "Sending them will be your decision—an expression of what you want. Nothing at all will I command you regarding this matter."⁴

Another interpretation regards the words "for yourself" as informing us that God said to Moses, "Even if they have already decided to send out spies, the final decision to send them will be yours; otherwise, it will constitute an insurrection against you—and woe to the generation where everyone is a leader. You will be the one to dispatch whomever you wish. But because they had no faith in Me, they will not be privileged to see the land when the time comes for Me to bequeath it."

One may think of this as follows. A king had arranged the marriage of his son to a woman possessed of every virtue in clothes, wealth, and family. But the son said, "I wish to see her, for I do not believe what you tell me."

The father became very angry at his son's lack of trust, but he knew that if he did not show the woman, the son would conclude that she

Parshas Shelach: A Weeping for Generations: The Spies and Tish'a B'Av

By Rabbi Yitzchak Etshalom

I. TWO VERSIONS

As the Rishonim point out at the beginning of our Parashah, there are two different stories about the “spies” sent by Mosheh. The bulk of our Parashah (Chapters 13-14) is devoted to one story, whereas Mosheh’s “version”, at the end of the first chapter of D’varim, tells a different story:

Compare:

Send men to search out the land of K’na’an, which I am giving to the Israelites; from each of their ancestral tribes you shall send a man, every one a leader among them.” So Mosheh sent them from the wilderness of Paran, according to the command of YHVH, all of them leading men among the B’nei Yisra’el. (Bamidbar 13:2-3)

With:

All of you came to me and said, “Let us send men ahead of us to explore the land for us and bring back a report to us regarding the route by which we should go up and the cities we will come to.” (D’varim 1:22)

In D’varim, the idea of sending spies to check out the land was the people’s – acceded to by Mosheh. In our Parashah, it is a direct command of God.

In the D’varim version, the nation requests “men” to spy out the land. It would be reasonable to assume two or three men, since the goal was to “explore (spy out) the Land”; it would not be productive to send a stately entourage to accomplish this goal. God’s command, on the other hand, includes twelve “leading men”, one from each tribe (except Levi).

Another difference, one which helps us reconcile some of the others, is the verb used to describe the mission. In D’varim, the people want men to “explore” (*lach’por*) the Land. The implication is one of a military reconnaissance mission. In our Parashah, the verb used is *latur* (to visit/look over) – which implies much more of a “diplomatic mission” than an undercover job.

Indeed, if the sole purpose of this mission – as is commonly assumed – was to spy out the land in preparation for military action, there are a few components in Mosheh’s charge to the twelve princes that are unclear:

Mosheh sent them to spy out the land of K’na’an, and said to them, “Go up there into the Negev, and go up into the hill country, and see what the land is like, and whether the people who live in it are strong or weak, whether they are few or many, and whether the land they live in is good or bad, and whether the towns that they live in are unwalled or fortified, and whether the land is rich or poor, and whether there are trees in it or not. Be bold, and bring some of the fruit of the land.” Now it was the season of the first ripe grapes. So they went up and spied out the land from the wilderness of Zin to R’hob, near L’vo-hamath. (Bamidbar 13:17-21)

Why would they need to walk the length and breadth of the Land? (L’vo Hamath is in the north – far from their planned entry point into the Land). Why would they need to describe the Land – besides in military terms (e.g. “whether the land they live in is good or bad”) and why would they have to bring back fruit?

These questions become strengthened against the backdrop of Yehoshua’s spy mission into Yericho (Yehoshua Ch. 2 – this week’s Haftarah). He sent two men, who stealthily entered and exited Yericho, hid in the hills for three days and then returned with their report. The text does not identify them as “leaders”, they are not sent to walk the Land and to bring back fruit – and there are only two of them! What then do we make of this odd spy mission, described in our Parashah and in Parashat D’varim?

II. TWO MISSIONS

In a beautiful essay (Megadim 10 pp. 21-37), R. Ya’akov Meidan explains the two versions of the story as follows:

There are two independent missions presented here. In Parashat D’varim, Mosheh recounts that the people were motivated (probably by fear) to send spies – and, as the text there indicates – they were concerned only with identifying the best military tactic for taking the first city in the Land (akin to Yericho 38 and a half years later).

In our Parashah, on the other hand, God sends princes in order to stake a first claim to the Land – or, perhaps (as R. Meidan suggests) to begin dividing up each tribe’s portion of the Land (thus explaining why Levi, who received no land, sent no representative). R. Meidan suggests that the flow of the four chapters leading up to our Parashah [the celebration of the Pesach (9:1-14), the descriptions of the Cloud of Glory (9:15-23), the description of their travels (10:1-28), the interaction with Yitro/Hovev (10:29-34), the mention of Mahn and quail (11:1-15), the introduction of support for Mosheh’s leadership (11:16-35) and the ultimate statement about the singularity of Mosheh’s prophecy (12:1-16)] suggest a strong parallel to the sections in Sh’mot leading up to the stand at Sinai. As such, he suggests, the forty days of the Divine mission to the Land parallel the forty days during which Mosheh was atop Sinai (perhaps the clearest parallel is the grievous sin of the people at the end of the forty days, followed by Mosheh’s plea for forgiveness). Just as Mosheh stood atop Sinai for forty days in order to bring the Torah to the people, similarly, these princes went up to Eretz Yisra’el for forty days in order to bring the Land back to the people (thus explaining their bringing representative clusters of fruit).

R. Meidan goes on to explain that Mosheh combined these two missions (which, he suggests, may have been the reason that God disallowed him from entering the Land – see D’varim 1:37). As such, the twelve princes were sent to walk the length and breadth of the Land, to stake our claim to the Land and to each tribe’s portion and to report back about the beauty of the Land. At the same time, they were to check out the defenses of the first route of military conquest and the first city they would conquer.

This explains Kaleb’s role in the mission – since he was the representative of Yehudah, he was the only one with any business in Hevron from the perspective of the Divine mission. All of the other spies went to Hevron in order to check out its defenses, as it was the first fortified city to be conquered – but Kaleb went there in order to fulfill the mission of claiming it for the tribe.

[This is, of course, just a thumbnail sketch of the main points in his essay; R. Mordecai Breuer (Pirkei Mo’adot II pp. 409-456) adopts the

same general approach, but develops the story and themes in a different manner]

III. THE “MA’PILIM”

Picking up on R. Meidan’s thread, I would like to raise another issue. The reaction of the people is hard to understand; indeed, they seem somewhat fickle.

When the spies/travelers reported the strength of the local inhabitants, the people wept, complained (again) about having left Egypt – and then utter words they had never before said: “...let us appoint a captain and return to Egypt.” (14:4). Their fear and despondency led them to consider a plan to return to the slavery of Egypt (which, as R. Meidan points out, is a total rejection of “I am YHVH your God who took you out of the land of Egypt”). In other words, even though God had promised them this good land, they rejected it out of fear of the military conflict. Yet, when Mosheh recounts their punishment to them (14:28-35), they react in the opposite manner: “Let us go up to the place of which YHVH has spoken, for we have sinned” (14:40). This failed attempt on the part of the “Ma’pilim” is hard to decipher – when God commanded them to conquer, they ran away in fear; yet, when God decreed 40 years of desert-wandering, they suddenly became courageous and prepared to fight!?

In order to understand this, we have to go back to last week’s Parashah and address a seemingly unrelated issue.

IV. THE ‘ANAN

In Parashat B’ha’alot’kha, we are given a detailed description of the Cloud of Glory that rested on the Mishkan:

On the day the Mishkan was set up, the cloud covered the Mishkan, the tent of the covenant; and from evening until morning it was over the Mishkan, having the appearance of fire. It was always so: the cloud covered it by day and the appearance of fire by night. Whenever the cloud lifted from over the tent, then the B’nei Yisra’el would set out; and in the place where the cloud settled down, there the B’nei Yisra’el would camp. At the command of YHVH the B’nei Yisra’el would set out, and at the command of YHVH they would camp. As long as the cloud rested over the Mishkan, they would remain in camp. Even when the cloud continued over the Mishkan many days, the B’nei Yisra’el would keep the charge of YHVH, and would not set out. Sometimes the cloud would remain a few days over the Mishkan, and according to the command of YHVH they would remain in camp; then according to the command of YHVH they would set out. Sometimes the cloud would remain from evening until morning; and when the cloud lifted in the morning, they would set out, or if it continued for a day and a night, when the cloud lifted they would set out. Whether it was two days, or a month, or a year, that the cloud continued over the Mishkan, resting upon it, the B’nei Yisra’el would remain in camp and would not set out; but when it lifted they would set out. At the command of YHVH they would camp, and at the command of YHVH they would set out. They kept the charge of YHVH, at the command of YHVH by Mosheh. (Bamidbar 9:15-23)

In this description, we are told about the Cloud resting at one place “...for two days, or a month or a year...”. Note, however, that this description is presented not only before the story of the spies and the consequent decree of forty years’ wandering – it is also presented before the “Mit’onenim” and “Mit’avim” (beginning of Ch. 11). Up until that point, as is clear from the Torah’s description of our travels (see Rashi on Bamidbar 10:33), the Divine plan was to bring us directly from Sinai into the Land – without stopping, resting or setting up camp. Why does the Torah describe setting up/breaking down the camp and the Mishkan – and why does it describe resting in one place for as long as a year?

V. THE ORIGINAL PLAN – FROM SINAI TO K’NA’AN

Our question is predicated on an assumption which is borne out of the evolution of events in our history – but was not necessarily the original Divine intent.

According to the original Divine plan, as can be seen from our Parashah, the B’nei Yisra’el were to enter the Land directly through the Negev. Instead, as a result of the decree recounted in our Parashah, they were to wander for forty years. Ultimately, they crossed into the Land through the Jordan river. This crossing is clearly symmetrical to the crossing of the Reed Sea – where the “Anan” (Cloud) first showed up. In other words, by dint of our entering the Land via the Jordan, the “Desert Experience” was bookended by these two “crossings-on-dry-land”, such that the “Anan”, which guided us to the Sea and through the desert, no longer led us once we entered the Land.

This was, however, not the original plan. The Torah tells us that: “the Ark of the covenant of YHVH traveled before them, three days’ journey, to scout out “Menuchah” (a resting place); and the “Anan” of YHVH was over them by day as they traveled from the camp.” (Bamidbar 10:33-34). The Ark and ‘Anan worked in tandem; the Ark being carried ahead of the camp, followed by the ‘Anan – all to find “Menuchah”. What is the meaning of “Menuchah”? As the Gemara in Zevahim (119a) explains, Menuchah refers either to Shiloh (the first place where the Mishkan was set up in a quasi-permanent fashion) or Yerushalayim. In other words, the ‘Anan was not originally intended to lead us only into the Land; rather, it was to lead us while we encamped in the Land while fighting for conquest, which would certainly entail encamping at one place or another for longer than a few days.

This explanation of the “downturn” in our fortunes demands clarification.

VI. THREE LEVELS OF SHEKHINAH-INTENSITY

When the Mishkan was dedicated, we entered into a relationship of intensity and intimacy with the Divine Presence (“Shekhinah”) that evoked that experienced in the Garden of Eden: Just as God is described as “walking in the Garden” (B’resheet 3:8), similarly, God promises that “I will Place My Presence/Sanctuary among you...And I will walk among you...” (Vayyikra 26:11-12). In other words, the promise of the Mishkan is a return to the close relationship which we enjoyed with God in Edenic times. We will refer to this promise as “B’rit Mishkan” – “They will make for Me a Sanctuary and I will dwell among them” (Sh’mot 25:8).

A second, less intense relationship, is implied by the covenant of Sinai. The covenant involves more than fulfilling Mitzvot and avoiding prohibitions – it involves a unique relationship, as described by the introduction at Sinai:

Now therefore, if you obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession out of all the peoples. Indeed, the whole earth is mine, but you shall be for me a priestly kingdom and a holy nation. These are the words that you shall speak to the B’nei Yisra’el.” (Sh’mot 19:5-6). This is known as “B’rit Sinai”.

A final, much less intense relationship between the B'nei Yisra'el and haKadosh Barukh Hu is known as *B'rit Avot* (the covenant with the patriarchs). The covenants which God made with Avraham, Yitzchak and Ya'akov are binding for all time and give us the Land and a populous people.

VII. B'KHIYAH L'DOROT

STEP ONE: B'RIT MISHKAN

Until we actually moved from Sinai, there was every reason for us to be able to live up to the B'rit Mishkan – for the 'Anan to be more than a guide, it would also be our protection in war. There was no reason for us to have to fight; just like when the 'Anan first protected us at the Reed Sea: "YHVH will fight for you..." (Sh'mot 14:14). This would have been the ideal completion of Sinai and the Mishkan – for us to march directly into the Land, with the Ark and 'Anan dispersing our enemies as we moved towards settlement.

This is the intent of the phrase, said by Mosheh when the Aron was taken out to war:

...Arise, YHVH, let Your enemies be dispersed, let those who despise You flee from Your Presence." (Bamidbar 10:35). This phrase (and the next verse), however, is marked off by an upside-down Nun before and after – where do these symbols come from?

STEP TWO: B'RIT SINAI

The next verse tells us about the Mit'oNeNim, whose name includes two Nuns in a row. These complainers weren't really complaining – they were *K'Mit'onenim* – "like complainers". In other words, they had nothing concrete about which to complain; rather, they were looking for things to critique and fault about Mosheh's leadership.

How were they punished? "The fire of God burned against them" (11:1). What was "the fire of God"? – it was the Cloud! (see 9:16). In other words, as a result of the complaints of these people who could not stand the great proximity and intimacy with the Divine, the "power" of the Ark and 'Anan was turned against them – and, instead of the 'Anan remaining at the front of a war which we would not have to fight, it turned against us and could no longer provide protection. That is why the section of *Vay'hi bin'soa' ha'Aron* is marked off with upside-down Nuns – those are the Nuns from the *Mit'onenim* who turned the 'Anan (again, two Nuns!) from our "warrior" into our punisher.

Once this level of intensity – the B'rit Mishkan – was lost, we moved back to B'rit Sinai – where we are promised victory over our enemies and perpetual settlement in the Land (if we don't violate its sanctity too broadly), but we will have to fight for it ourselves. Coming into the Land on these terms would have been the completion of the Sinaiitic experience. In order to "match" the stand at Sinai, the first enemy (as indicated in our Parashah) would have been Amalek, whose destruction would have meant the introduction of the Messianic era:

He said, "A hand upon the Throne of YH! YHVH will have war with Amalek from generation to generation." (Sh'mot 17:16).

Commenting on this verse, R. Levi says in the name of R. Aha:

The Name is not complete, neither is the Throne complete, until the memory of Amalek is destroyed, as it says: *Ki Yad al Keis YH* (A hand upon the Throne of YH); it should have said *Ki Yad al Kisei YHVH* – but once the memory of Amalek is wiped out, the Throne and the Name are complete. (Midrash T'hillim 9:10)

In other words, had we but maintained the level of B'rit Sinai, we would have entered the Land through the south, defeated Amalek and ushered in the era when "on that day, YHVH will be One and His Name One" (Z'khariah 14:9). The Messianic era would have followed immediately from Sinai.

This is why Mosheh sent the "scouts" on the Divine mission for forty days – to approximate the stand at Sinai.

STEP THREE: B'RIT AVOT

Now let's reexamine the people's odd reactions, opting for Egypt when God wants them to conquer the Land, then turning around and storming the Emorite mountain when God tells them to go into the desert.

What was the phrase with which the scouts introduced the negative part of their report? – *Ephes Ki Az ha'Am* – the word *Ephes*, which may mean "nonetheless", is not easily translated. The sense of the word – and the entire report and the subsequent reaction – is one of choice: Shall we go up to this Land or shan't we? The feeling that there was a choice was what directed the reaction of the people. This is often the cause of the success of outmanned and poorly armed fighters against more powerful enemies. When you are fighting with your back to the wall, and there is no choice (as the old Israeli slogan – "Ein B'reirah" (there is no choice) is our most powerful tool" attests), your fighting ability is greatly enhanced. On the other hand, when the fighting force feels that they don't need to win this war, defend this land, take this hill – they can be defeated (witness Vietnam).

When the scouts said *Ephes*, the people still thought there was a choice – to go back to Egypt and return to slavery there. What they (perhaps) didn't realize was that going back to Egypt was also a direct reversal of B'rit Sinai – of "I am YHVH your God who took you out of the land of Egypt". It was only when Mosheh told them of their punishment – that they would wander the desert for forty years etc. and that a return to Egypt was not an option, that they opted to take the Land. If their only choices were (certain) ignoble death in the desert or (possible) heroic death on the battlefield, they chose the (seemingly) heroic path.

They had already rejected the B'rit Mishkan of "walking with God" as evidenced by the Divine reaction to the Mit'onenim. Now they rejected the B'rit Sinai by expressing a willingness to return to Egypt. (This would explain an interesting textual difference between Mosheh's prayer here and the original of that statement in the aftermath of the sin of the Golden Calf.

Compare:

YHVH passed before him, and proclaimed, YHVH, YHVH, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and truth, keeping steadfast love for the thousandth generation, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, yet by no means clearing the guilty, but visiting the iniquity of the parents upon the children and the children's children, to the third and the fourth generation. (Sh'mot 34:6-7) With:

And now, therefore, let the power of YHVH be great in the way that you promised when you spoke, saying, 'YHVH is slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love, forgiving iniquity and transgression, but by no means clearing the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the parents upon the children to the third and the fourth generation.' Forgive the iniquity of this people according to the greatness of your steadfast love, just as you have pardoned this people, from Egypt even until now. (Bamidbar 14:17-19)

Note that when God forgave the people at Sinai, He declared that He is **Rav Hessed v'Emet** (abounding in steadfast love and truth); when Mosheh "reminded" Him of this commitment, he said: **Rav Hessed** (abounding in steadfast love), but **Emet** (truth) was left out. Truth is the mark of Sinai, of the Torah which was given there. **Since the people had rejected B'rít Sinai, Mosheh could only point to **Hessed** as a Divine attribute which would save the people.**

Now that they had rejected B'rít Sinai – all that they had left was B'rít Avot. They had, effectively, returned to a pre-Exodus mode of Divine promise. This explains the forty years of wandering – a micro-version of the 400 years of exile promised to Avraham (B'resheet 15:13). This also explains how their reaction to the scouts' reports, how their weeping on that night, introduced the possibilities of future exile into the national destiny.

From the Mishkan, we were to "move" the Edenic reality to the Land. From Sinai, we were to (at least) usher in the Messianic era with the immediate destruction of Amalek. Both of these were lost. Once we go back to the model of B'rít Avot, we aren't encountering the permanence of settlement in the Land, rather the cycle of exile and return which was begun by Avraham (Haran, Israel, Egypt, Israel) and continued by Ya'akov (Israel, Aram, Israel, Egypt) and his children (Aram, Israel, Egypt). Once the people reverted to B'rít Avot, they allowed for the possibility that this upcoming entrance into the Land would not have the permanence promised at Sinai – but that the cycles of exile and return would remain our destiny until the final redeemer would come.

Then all the congregation raised a loud cry, and the people wept that night. Rabbah said in the name of R. Yohanan: That night was Tish'a b'Av; haKadosh Barukh Hu said: They cried for naught, I will establish for them [this night as] a weeping for generations. (BT Sotah 35a)

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Parshat Shelach Lecha

by Rabbi Eitan Mayer

Parashat Shelah reports the well-known, tragic story of the meraglim, the scouts sent by Bnei Yisrael to gather information (and fruit) from the Land of Cana'an. We will not deal with all of the questions below, but they are all worthy of attention.

1. Since Hashem has promised Bnei Yisrael that He will help them defeat the powerful Cana'anites, why do they need to send scouts at all? What difference does it make whether the Cana'anites are "strong or weak," or whether the cities are "encampments or fortifications," since no matter what the obstacle, Hashem will help them overcome it?
2. Furthermore, since Hashem has described Cana'an to these people as a land "flowing with milk and honey," why does Moshe, in his instructions to the scouts, entertain the possibility that the Land is "ra'a," "bad," or "raza," "poor" or "thin"?
3. When Moshe gives the scouts their marching orders, he places a strange emphasis on one particular element. What is this element, and why does he keep repeating it?
4. On their return, most of the scouts report that the Land is unconquerable despite Hashem's assurances. In what will become a dreaded refrain as we move through Sefer BeMidbar and its many crises, Hashem becomes infuriated and threatens to destroy Bnei Yisrael and replace them as His nation with Moshe and his descendants. Moshe urgently pleads for mercy. Of course, we have seen this before: when the people worship the Egel (golden calf), Hashem threatens to kill them and replace them with Moshe's descendants, but Moshe defends the people. But there are important differences between these two events.
 - a. Here, **Moshe leaves out some of the key arguments he offers to Hashem after the Egel. What are those missing arguments, and why are they missing?**
 - b. Back in Shemot, Moshe first 'convinces' Hashem to spare the lives of the people, and then daringly and stubbornly engages Hashem in a campaign to achieve complete forgiveness for the people. But here in **Shelah, Moshe seems to give up after securing merely the people's survival. Why not go for complete forgiveness?**
5. **Moshe and Aharon react dramatically to the evil report delivered by the majority of the scouts. What do they do -- and what do they *not* do? Why?**
6. **Analyze Hashem's decree of the people's fate carefully. It seems highly repetitive. What are the different points Hashem is making in each of the similar phrases He uses?**
7. After Hashem's punishment is announced, the people realize they have made a mistake. They try to restore the situation to what it was before, but Hashem rejects their efforts and does not accompany them as they try to break into Eretz Cana'an. Without His help, they are beaten back by the Cana'anite nations. Why does Hashem reject their repentance? Isn't teshuva a fundamental concept in the Torah's theology?
8. **Just after the defeat of the people who attempt to enter the land, Hashem delivers to Moshe a series of mitzvot. Several of these mitzvot begin with introductions like, "When you come to the land that I have promised to give to you . . ." How are we to understand what these mitzvot are doing here, especially with this sort of introduction, in light of the fact that the people being addressed have just been told that they will die in the desert and never see "the land that I have promised to give to you"?**
9. **What is the mitzvah of tzitzit doing at the end of the parasha?**
10. **As is the case with many stories told in Sefer BeMidbar, this story is repeated by Moshe several decades later, in Sefer Devarim. And, as is often the case, there are crucial discrepancies between the two accounts. What are the discrepancies, and how would you explain them? (This last question includes two questions: first, what really happened, and second, why does each sefer tell the story the way it does?)**

PARASHAT SHELAH:

Sefer BeMidbar is the sefer of lost opportunity. The sefer opens up with great promise, as the nation's infrastructure begins to take shape in concrete ways:

1. Its needs for defense and aspirations for conquest are embodied in its army, supported by Hashem.
2. Its need for authority is supplied by Moshe, Aharon, the tribal leaders, the Elders, and the judges who share judicial authority with

Moshe.

3. Its need for religious focus is answered by the Mishkan, and its need for a 'professional' religious class is answered by the Kohanim and Leviyyim.

4. Finally, the nation's *raison de etre* is the Torah and the destiny it promises the nation.

But all of this promise is soon disappointed. Moshe urges the people to "aim high" and actualize the transcendent goals of "mamleket kohanim ve-goy kadosh" ("a kingdom of priests and a holy/dedicated nation") -- the slaves are to transform themselves, looking above mundane matters and dedicating themselves to moral and spiritual goals. But the people see another set of goals for themselves: they do not trust the invisible God as Moshe does, and they do not trust the miraculous environment which supports them. For example:

1. The Revelation of the Torah at Sinai certainly impresses and frightens the people, but the impression it creates is ephemeral. Forty days later, the people violate the commandments they have heard by crafting an idol and worshipping it.

2. The people do not want the miraculous "manna" -- they want regular, natural food: meat, fish, the vegetables they remember from Mitzrayim. The supernatural bread adds to the unfamiliarity of their environment, compounding their feeling of insecurity.

3. They are relieved, even awed, when the sea splits and drowns their enemies, but they do not process this event on the deepest intellectual and psychological levels. It does not convince them that they can depend on this Benevolent Power and believe in His promises. So when the "mon" indeed comes, they violate Hashem's instructions and gather more than they need for that day -- because they are not truly certain that the food will be there tomorrow.

4. The people are happy to have an authority structure, but they see this structure in pedestrian terms and its representatives as pedestrian in their motivations and ambitions. **Moshe, in their eyes, is not the Adon Ha-Nevi'im, the Master of Prophets, the Divinely appointed leader; in the eyes of many of the people (as we will see in Parashat Korah), he is a power-hungry egotist who has seized the reins of control for his own benefit! Similarly, Aharon is not the holiest of the holy, he is the simply the one who has successfully promoted himself by riding the idea of a holy class, an idea endorsed by his brother.**

Moshe, as we discussed last week, is beginning to understand where the people stand. The incident in which the people demand meat -- and begin to cry for it like babies -- leads Moshe directly to the image he later uses to describe the people, that of the "yonek," the infant sucking. In this posture, Moshe is sympathetic to the people's needs not because he sees their demands as reasonable, but because he sees the people as deeply immature. You wouldn't explain to a suckling why crying for food is inappropriate, and Moshe doesn't try.

But as time goes on and the people begin to turn against Moshe himself, Moshe becomes bitter; his sympathy dissolves and his patience turns to angry frustration. It is at this point, we will see, that Hashem tells him that he is no longer fit to lead the people into the land of Cana'an.

THE SPIES:

Let us briefly summarize the parasha's account of the story of the spies:

1. Hashem tells Moshe to send spies to the Land.
2. Moshe chooses spies and gives them instructions.
3. The spies return and make their report, convincing the nation that conquest of Cana'an is impossible. Yehoshua and Kalev attempt to counteract the effect of this report, but they are unsuccessful.
4. The people conclude that they cannot conquer the Cana'anite nations and begin making plans to return to Egypt.
5. Hashem threatens to kill the people for their rejection of His promises, but Moshe saves their lives.
6. Hashem decrees that all of the people of military age will die in the desert.
7. The people realize their error, try to enter the land, and are beaten back.

VERSION 2:

Let us now briefly compare this account to the story in Devarim (chap. 1), noting only those points which are discrepant with the

account in Shelah:

1. The people -- not Hashem -- propose sending spies, and Moshe agrees.
2. There is an explicit rationale to the mission: to find the best way to go up to the Land and the right cities to attack.
3. The spies themselves report only that the land is good, and seem to commit no crime. Instead, the people are blamed for rebelling against Hashem. The spies' report of the strong cities and giant people appears only in the complaining words of the people.
4. Moshe himself responds to the people's rejection of Hashem's guarantees, scolding them for their lack of trust in Hashem and offering examples of situations in which Hashem has supported them.

The fact that there are discrepancies suggests two questions: What really happened? And why does the Torah tell the story one way in one place and another way in another place? How does the way the Torah tells each story reflect the theme of each book? For now, we will hold these questions.

COMPARE TO THE CALF:

If we go back to the story of the Golden Calf, we notice a striking contrast between Moshe's behavior in that story and in our story.

When Hashem threatened to kill all of the people after their worship of the Egel, Moshe responded with three arguments (you might also read this as two arguments).

1. Relationship: he emphasized that Hashem had already established a relationship with these people by saving them from Egypt and performing miracles for them.
2. Reputation: he **asked rhetorically what the "public relations" effect on God's reputation would be if He destroyed the people** He had identified as His. Part of the goal of the Exodus was not just to save this particular nation, but also to introduce Hashem to the world and communicate His omnipotence and benevolence. His failure to successfully lead His own nation to freedom would throw His power (and goodness) into question in the mind of the nations.
3. **Commitments: Moshe focused on the promises Hashem had made to the Avot, Avraham, Yitzhak, and Ya'akov. Even if the present people deserved nothing, a commitment had been made to their predecessors to give their descendants the land of Israel; if God killed their children here, that promise would remain unfulfilled.**

In contrast, Moshe here (in the aftermath of the spies' debacle) employs only one argument -- the public relations angle. Why does he leave out the argument from relationship and the argument based on the promises? For now, we will hold this question as well.

THE WHOLE NINE YARDS:

Another question is also relevant here: **Why does Moshe go only so far as to convince Hashem to spare the people's lives, and not attempt to convince Him to forgive them completely?** A few months ago, when we discussed the aftermath of the Egel, we spent a lot of time looking at the extended and contentious conversation between Hashem and Moshe; Hashem would offer some sort of compromise to Moshe, and Moshe would refuse to accept anything less than Hashem's complete forgiveness of the people. In the final scene, Moshe is successful: Hashem agrees to completely forgive the people. As far as Moshe is concerned, continuing the journey through the desert was meaningless unless Hashem accompanied them on the way; until He agreed to this, Moshe stood his ground.

On the other hand, in our story, once he saves the people's lives, Moshe makes no further effort. He seems to have no response to Hashem's decree that the entire generation of fighting men who compose the current army will die in the desert and never see the land promised to their fathers. Is this the same Moshe we know from Sefer Shemot? Where is the stubborn defender of the people, the implacable Moshe?

PLAY IT AGAIN, MOSES:

Another issue also seems troubling in our parasha. When Hashem announces His decree against the people who have chosen to believe the scouts' evaluation over His own promises to help them conquer the land, there seems to be much too much text!

BEMIDBAR 14:21-35 --

"However, as I live, and as the glory of Hashem fills all the earth, indeed, all the men who have seen My glory and My signs that I did in Egypt and in the wilderness, and have tested me these ten times, by not hearkening to My voice: if they shall see the land about which I swore to their fathers! All that have scorned me shall not see it! But as for my servant, Calev, because there was another spirit in him

and he followed Me fully, so I will bring him into the land that he is about to enter, and his seed shall possess it. Now, the Amalekite and the Canaanite are settled in the lowlands; tomorrow, face about and march into the wilderness, by the Reed Sea Road."

Hashem spoke to Moshe and Aharon, saying: "Until when for this evil community, that they stir up grumbling against Me?! The grumblings of the children of Israel that they grumble against Me -- I have heard! Say to them: 'As I live' -- says Hashem -- 'if not as you have spoken in My ears, thus I do to you! In this wilderness shall your corpses fall, all those of you counted, including all your number, from the age of twenty and upward, that have grumbled against me. If you shall enter the land over which I lifted My hand to have you dwell in it! Except for Caleb son of Yefunneh and Yehoshua son of Nun. Your little ones, whom you said would become plunder -- I will let them enter; they shall come to know the land that you have spurned. But your corpses, yours, shall fall in this wilderness, and your children shall wander in the wilderness for 40 years; thus shall they bear your unfaithfulness, until your corpses come to an end in the wilderness. According to the number of days that you scouted out the land, 40 days -- for each day a year, each day a year, you are to bear your iniquities, forty years. Thus you will come to know my hostility! I am Hashem, I have spoken: if I do not do this to this whole evil community that has come together against Me! In this wilderness they shall come to an end, there they shall die."

(Whew!)

Now, **exactly how many times does Hashem have to tell Moshe that the people will never make it to the land?** That their "corpses" will "fall in this desert"? That their children will wander for forty years? **Hashem's speech seems highly repetitive.** Doesn't Moshe get the message after just one or two times? Won't the people understand without a half-dozen repetitions of their fate? Let us now take a closer look at these pesukim.

First, just after telling Moshe that he has forgiven the people and has agreed not to destroy them, Hashem makes an important caveat: none of those who left Egypt and saw all of His miracles -- and yet chose to test Him and refused to place their trust in Him -- will live to see the land. But Moshe, it seems, has no comment.

Then, as if he has not just told Moshe all of this, Hashem seems to repeat the entire story: the Torah introduces Hashem's statement with another, "And Hashem spoke . . .", as if He had not already been speaking! Hashem then tells Moshe to tell the people that indeed, their fate will match their own predictions: they will die in this desert. And their children, on the contrary, will not die with them, and instead will take their places as the heirs of the land. Again, Moshe seems to have no comment.

Then Hashem repeats again that the people's bodies will fall "in this desert." And Moshe has no comment.

Hashem then repeats that their children will wander in the desert for forty years, until "All of your corpses are finished in the desert." Moshe has no response.

Then Hashem actually does the math for us, telling Moshe first the formula -- that they will wander one year for each day of spying -- and then giving him the grand total: forty years. Moshe has no response.

Hashem seals this decree with the final-sounding, "I am God, I have spoken," and then, for good measure, repeats once again (!!!) that their bodies will drop "in this desert" and that they will all perish here. Moshe, finally, has no response.

Why so silent, Moshe? Why does Moshe ignore all of Hashem's hints for him to take the role of defender as he used to?

PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER:

It seems to me that all of our questions so far point to the convergence of several phenomena in one tragic incident, exemplified by the snapshot of Hashem's conversation with Moshe.

After the Egel, Moshe faced Hashem as the bold defender, adacious and daring in defending his people, refusing to accept Hashem's proposal that he separate himself from them, obstinate and implacable in his single-minded insistence that Hashem forgive the people and return His presence to them (centered in the Mishkan). At that time, Moshe's energy was high and the people were relatively innocent newcomers to freedom and to monotheism. Moshe was sure that the people had the potential to make the jump from their current weakness to the lofty goals they had been called upon to meet; their idolatry was a moment of understandable weakness, a temporary lapse.

But by now, the situation is different.

Moshe has lost his bold edge, beaten down by the people's repeated demonstrations of pettiness. Moshe no longer believes in them as fully as he did at Sinai. He is no longer confident that this people can form themselves into Hashem's special nation, that it can successfully shoulder all of the responsibilities such a task implies. He has not yet written them off, but the doubts are beginning to nag at him, as he witnesses their persistent concern for such lofty matters as "Give us meat! We're

bored of just manna!" and their apparent blindness to the transcendent goals before them.

We know that before this sefer comes to a close, Moshe will have become so frustrated with these people that he will begin to call them names -- "rebels" -- and that his anger at them will so overtake his judgment that he will disobey Hashem and strike the rock. It is this incident in particular which leads to Moshe's replacement as leader by Yehoshua; it is not, as one might understand, simply because he disobeys Hashem that he loses the right to enter Eretz Yisrael at the head of the nation, but because his act reveals just how alienated from and frustrated with the people he will have become by then. Moshe could no longer lead the people because he had lost his faith in them; he had written them off in bitter disappointment, never understanding why their dedication did not equal his, why they could not trust Hashem as he did.

In our parasha, Moshe does not defend the people beyond saving their lives, does not insist that Hashem allow them to continue their journey to the land, because he has lost a great deal of faith in their potential to meet the spiritual rigors of this mission. He could defend the people only when he believed in them, but once his faith had weakened, it was all he could do to save their lives.

Moshe had indeed agreed to the people's request to send spies, especially after receiving Hashem's approval, because he saw it as an opportunity to increase the people's excitement about the land. If we look back to Moshe's instructions to the spies, he repeats one element again and again: "U-ma ha-aretz," "How is the land"; in truth, Moshe only gestures at real concern with the nature of the people inhabiting the land, the strength of their cities. He really wants to hear glowing reports about the land flowing with milk and honey, and for this reason he commands that the spies bring back with them some of the land's fruit. Although the people's motivation in sending the spies is military, Moshe sees only "The land." "Tell us about the land, about how wonderful it is! Bring back reports which will build our excitement and anticipation, which will reinforce our gratitude to Hashem!" Unsuspecting, he gives his nod to the plan to send spies, and appoints representatives of each tribe. The parasha begins in classic Sefer BeMidbar style, with a list: the list, in precise administrative order, of the names of the spies and the tribes they each represent.

Moshe is completely blown away by the spies' report: he never imagined that events could take such a wrong turn. But his silence in response to their defamation of the land is not simply a manifestation of shock, but an indication of his utter disappointment in the people. **Moshe falls on his face, the Torah tells us, and he has nothing at all to say.** Calev momentarily quiets the despondent, panicking crowd and directs its attention towards Moshe, but Moshe remains silent; Calev himself must deliver the pep talk he expected Moshe would deliver: "Let us go up, for we can certainly be victorious!" Moshe remains silent.

Moshe musters the strength to bestir himself and speak out when Hashem threatens to destroy the people, but this is all he can manage. Of course, the reason Hashem tells Moshe about His plans is so that Moshe can intervene and "dissuade" Him from carrying them out. But Moshe plays the game only for its first round. When Hashem delivers the harsh decree, stating that all members of this army who rejected his promises will die in the desert, Moshe does not take the "bait." Hashem begins again, repeating the entire story -- several times, as we saw above. But, in just another instance of the lost opportunities of this book, Moshe lets all of these invitations slip by. That he does not invoke the promises made to the Forefathers is no surprise, both because the promise will be fulfilled through the next generation, and because Moshe can hardly attempt to hold Hashem to the promise of giving the land to the very people who have rejected it. A look at the account in Devarim shows that Moshe does indeed respond, after a fashion, to the spies' evil report: he says, "Do not fear them," do not fear the powerful nations. But Sefer BeMidbar leaves this out completely, for it is such a feeble attempt to strengthen the people that it is as if unsaid. Instead, the Torah makes it sound as if Moshe maintains silence, and the only voice heard is that of Calev, who offers powerful encouragement, if in vain.

One of the things the Torah teaches us here is a critical lesson about leadership, especially religious leadership: no one can be a leader if he or she does not believe in the people being led. Moshe falters here, and eventually stumbles in the story of the hitting of the rock, because his faith in the people crumbles and his patience runs out. Moshe no longer believes that this people can achieve the mission assigned to them, so he can no longer insist that Hashem allow them to continue their journey. As we will see, Hashem's decree that Moshe will not lead the people into the land is not so much a punishment for his misbehavior as it is a recognition of a state of affairs: at that point, Moshe could no longer effectively lead, and there was no other alternative than to retire him. (The same, you may recall, happens to Eliyahu/Elijah: once his frustration with the people reaches the point where he considers himself the only one left who is faithful to Hashem, Hashem "retires" him and instructs him to appoint Elisha in his place as the next prophet. There, too, Hashem offers Eliyahu an opportunity to reconsider, just as Hashem offers Moshe opportunities here, but neither of them is able to take those opportunities and rejuvenate their leadership. Both are forced to retire and eventually appoint successors.)

May we merit to have leaders of faith and patience, faith in our potential to meet the challenges facing us and patience with us when we stumble; and may we be worthy of their faith in us.

Shabbat Shalom

PARSHAT SHLACH

What was so terrible about the sin of the "meraglim"? After all, they were instructed to report the facts, and that's exactly what they did! Furthermore, even if we consider their report as deliberately slanted, why was the entire nation punished so harshly for being misled by a small group?

Finally, even if the people's initial reaction was improper, immediately afterward they repent by declaring their willingness to take the challenge of conquering the Land! Shouldn't this repentance have been accepted?

Why then is "dor ha'midbar" [the generation of the desert] punished so severely? Why must Am Yisrael wander for forty years until they perish! This week's shiur examines this tragic event in an attempt to understand why.

INTRODUCTION

Before we begin our study, an important point of nomenclature. Although this event is commonly referred to as "chet ha'meraglim" - the sin of the SPIES, in Parshat Shlach they are NEVER referred to as such! Nevertheless, for the sake of convenience, our shiur will continue to refer to them as the "meraglim", even though their mission (as we will show) involved much more than just 'spying out the land'.

To understand the 'sin of the spies', we must first ascertain what their mission was. Therefore, our shiur begins with an attempt to identify its precise purpose by noting how the Torah describes this mission.

TOURISTS OR SPIES

In describing the mission of the meraglim, the Torah uses the verb "la'tur" (see 13:2,17 & 25). This verb can be translated as 'to tour' or 'to scout'. However, to arrive at a more precise understanding of what they were supposed to do, we must take a closer look at the psukim that describe their mission:

"And Moshe instructed them saying:

And you shall see the LAND, WHAT IT IS -

Are the people who live in STRONG or WEAK, FEW or MANY?

Is the Land GOOD or BAD?

Are the towns OPEN or FORTIFIED?

Is the SOIL RICH or POOR? Are there TREES?

[if so,] bring back samples of the fruit.. (13:17-20)

Clearly, these instructions entail more than a spy mission. Note as well that we find TWO categories of questions that the meraglim must answer:

1) Concerning the NATURE OF THE LAND -

i.e. to find out whether the Land is good or bad, the soil rich or poor, the trees fruitful, etc.

2) Concerning the FEASIBILITY OF CONQUEST -

i.e. to find out if the enemy is strong or weak, if the cities are fortified or open, etc.

These two categories show how this mission entails much more than the collection of military information. In fact, these questions seem to be describing a 'fact finding mission', much more than a 'spy mission'. Let's explain why:

A 'spy mission' is initiated when a military commander needs to acquire information (to prepare a battle plan). When doing so, usually a small group of men are sent secretly, and hence report back only to the military commanders (and certainly not to the entire nation).

Clearly, the mission of the meraglim in Parshat Shelach is quite different. These twelve men (a representative from each tribe) are sent publicly, by the political leadership to gather information for the entire nation. This information will help Bnei

Yisrael plan not only the conquest of the land, but also how to establish Eretz Canaan as their homeland.

[To support this point, simply compare Bamidbar 13:1-17 with 34:16-29, noting the textual similarities!]

REALISTIC NEEDS

To better appreciate the necessity of this mission, let's consider the realities that face Bnei Yisrael at this time.

Recall that the nation numbers over two million individuals. [This approximation is based on the extrapolation of the census figure of 600,000 men above age 20 (see Bamidbar chapter 26).] This nation, living in camp formation for the last year and a half, has been able to survive the difficult desert conditions only with God's providence, i.e. His miraculous daily supply of food and water. However, these special conditions were only temporary.

Even though God had promised to bring them to a land 'flowing with milk and honey', their existence in this 'promised land' will no longer be supported by God's daily miracles. Instead, they will have to till the soil and work the land for their food. [See Devarim 8:1-10, re: the purpose of the manna!]

Similarly, when Bnei Yisrael will enter the land, they will have to fight their battles through natural means. Surely, God will assist them; but they will now have to undertake their own initiatives. [See Devarim 11:22-25.]

Therefore, at this time, Bnei Yisrael must not only prepare themselves to conquer that land, but they must also make the necessary preparations for all aspects of the establishment of their new national homeland.

Taking this into consideration, it only makes sense that it would be necessary to send a 'national fact finding' mission to help plan not only how to conquer the land, but also how to establish its borders and partition, as well as its economy and agriculture etc. Hence, the meraglim are instructed to scout the land to determine not only the feasibility of its conquest, but also how to prepare the land for its two million new inhabitants!

To support this explanation, note how the Torah describes a similar 'appointment of officers' (forty years later, when the next generation prepares to enter the land):

"And God spoke to Moshe: These are the names of the men through whom the land shall be apportioned - Elazar the Kohen and Yehoshua bin Nun. And one NASI, one NASI from each tribe... and these are their names..." (see Bamidbar 34:16-29, note obvious parallels with 13:1-16)

UNDERSTANDING THE MISSION

Based on this introduction, we can better understand the opening pasuk of the Parsha:

"And God spoke to Moshe... send one man from EVERY TRIBE, each one a chieftain among them... all the men being LEADERS of Bnei Yisrael." (13:1-3)

Due to the nature of this mission, it is necessary to send a senior representative from each "shevet" (tribe). Similarly, this explains why the meraglim report back not only to Moshe, but to the entire public. [See 13:26.]

Had they been military spies, they would report ONLY to Moshe (or to the military commander), but definitely NOT to the entire nation! Furthermore, had they been military spies, there would be no reason to publicize their names, and certainly no reason to send tribal leaders. Quite the opposite! It is because they comprise a FACT FINDING MISSION - specifically a group of national leaders are sent, who later report back to the entire nation (see 13:26).

A PROOF FROM SEFER YEHOSHUA

To clarify this distinction between 'spies' and a 'commission of inquiry' it is helpful to compare these meraglim to the meraglim sent by Yehoshua [see this week's Haftarah]:

"And Yehoshua bin Nun SECRETLY sent two SPIES from Shittim saying: Go scout out the land and the area of Yericho..." (Yehoshua 2:1)

"... and the two men returned... and they told YEHOSHUA concerning what happened to them." (2:24)

Note that in Sefer Yehoshua the spies are actually referred to as MERAGLIM. These meraglim are sent SECRETLY (we are not told their names) to SPY out the city and report back ONLY to Yehoshua. Clearly, their mission was purely military.

To highlight this contrast, the following table summarizes the differences between these two missions:

| sent by Moshe | sent by Yehoshua |
|----------------------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| ===== | ===== |
| 12 men | 2 men |
| Tribal leaders | unnamed |
| publicly | secretly |
| "la'tur" (to tour) | "I'ragel" (to spy) |
| the type of land, [its fruit, its cities etc..] | only military information |

Yehoshua's meraglim serve as military spies to help him plan HOW to conquer Yericho. Moshe's meraglim serve as an inquiry commission, sent to provide the people with information to help them plan the establishment of an entire nation with all its institutions.

ONE REPORT / TWO OPINIONS

Now that we have clarified the nature of the mission of Moshe's meraglim, we are ready to evaluate their report in order to determine what they did wrong.

Note that when the meraglim return, their report correlates perfectly with the double nature of their mission:

"and they returned to Moshe & Aharon and the ENTIRE NATION... and showed them the fruits of the land saying... it is indeed a LAND FLOWING WITH MILK & HONEY. Alas, for the people who live in that land are MIGHTY, and the cities are FORTIFIED... the Amalekites guard the south, the Chittites and Emorites control the mountain range, and the Canaanites command the planes..." (13:26-29)

Based on their findings, in regard to (1) the nature of the land, - the meraglim conclude that the land is SUPERB:

"and they showed them the fruits of the land saying... it is indeed a land flowing with milk and honey..." (13:26-27);

However, in regard to (2) the feasibility of its conquest, the meraglim conclude that conquering the people of Canaan appears to be almost impossible:

"Alas, for the people who live in that land are MIGHTY, and the cities are FORTIFIED... the Amalekites guard the south, the Chittites and Emorites control the mountain range, and the Canaanites command the planes..." (13:28-29).

These conclusions reflected the commission's MAJORITY opinion. However, Kalev and Yehoshua presented an opposite conclusion. Based on the same findings, they conclude that conquest of the Land is possible: "it is indeed FEASIBLE to conquer the Land..." (13:30)

Up until this point, it appears as though this commission is quite objective; they report the facts as perceived. All twelve members concur that the land is good, yet the enemy formidable. However, two opinions exist in regard to the feasibility of its conquest: The majority opinion concludes that it is futile to even attempt to conquer the land (see 13:31), while the dissenting opinion, presented by Kalev, argues that conquest is achievable (see 13:30).

The majority opinion appears to be logical and quite realistic. Why then is God so angered?

It is usually understood that the meraglim's sin stems from their lack of belief in God. After all, had they believed in Hashem, they would have arrived at the same conclusion as Kalev and Yehoshua. However, this understanding may be overly simplistic. Is it possible that ten out of the twelve tribal leaders, after witnessing the miracles of the Exodus and their journey through the desert, do not believe in God and His ability to assist His nation in battle?

NO FAITH IN WHOM?

There can be no doubt that the tribal leaders and the entire nation as well, believe in God and the possibility of Divine assistance. Unfortunately, they are also well aware of the possibility of Divine punishment. Let's explain why:

Throughout their journey, not only had God intervened numerous times to help them; He had also intervened numerous times to PUNISH them. However, the meraglim are also aware that to be worthy of Divine assistance Bnei Yisrael must remain obedient at all times. This precise warning had already been raised at the conclusion of Parshat Mishpatim:

"Behold I am sending a 'malach' to lead into the Land... Be careful and listen to his voice, do not rebel against him, FOR HE WILL NOT PARDON YOUR SINS, for My Name is with him. For IF you will listen... and do everything that I command you, THEN I will help you DEFEAT and conquer your enemies..." (Shmot 23:20-25)

This warning clearly states that God's assistance is totally dependent on Bnei Yisrael's behavior. Should they not listen, they will fall before their enemies.

[Note how the story of Achan in Yehoshua 7:1-26 proves this assumption. There we find that the mere sin of one individual led to the defeat of the entire nation in battle.]

One could suggest that the conclusion of the meraglim is based on their assessment that Bnei Yisrael are not capable of retaining the spiritual level necessary to be worthy of miracles while conquering the Land. Realizing that the conquest would only be feasible with Divine assistance, they concur that conquest is impossible. In other words, the meraglim are not doubting God's ability to assist them in battle, RATHER they are doubting their own ability to be WORTHY of that assistance.

So what's so terrible? Is it not the job of leadership to realistically evaluate all of the relevant factors?

DIBAH - THE CHET OF THE MERAGLIM

It is precisely in this type of situation where leadership is critical! Ideal leadership should have challenged the nation to raise their spiritual level - to become worthy of Divine assistance - to rise to that challenge! The meraglim take a very different approach. Instead of rallying the nation to fulfill its destiny, the meraglim hide their spiritual cowardice behind a wall of hyperbole!

To support this point, note their reaction to Kalev's 'dissenting opinion' (in 13:30), for it sheds light on their true character:

"But the people who went up with him said: We cannot attack that people for it is stronger than we. And they spread DIBAT HA'ARETZ among Bnei Yisrael saying: The land which we visited is one that DEVOURS ITS INHABITANTS, ALL the people who we saw there are GIANT... we looked like GRASSHOPPERS to ourselves, and that is HOW THEY SAW US." (13:31-33)

These are not the objective statements of a 'fact finding mission'! Rather, they comprise a presentation of hysterical exaggerations made in a desperate attempt to shape public opinion. A land does not 'devour' its inhabitants, nor is it likely that the Canaanites perceived them as 'grasshoppers'! It is precisely this rebuttal that the Torah refers to as "dibah" - SLANDER. Let's explain why.

Instead of confessing their true fear and lack of confidence in the nation's ability, they over-exaggerate the seriousness of the situation. Rather than encourage the people to prepare themselves for the task, they prefer to utilize populist politics and create fear in the camp.

Finally, note how the word "dibah" is central when the Torah summarizes their punishment:

"And those men - MOTZIEY DIBAT HA'ARETZ RA'AH - died in a plague before God." (see 14:37)

In contrast, Kalev and Yehoshua exhibit proper leadership, as exemplified in their rebuttal of this argument. Note once again

how the entire argument hinges on Am Yisrael's special relationship with God:

"im chafetz banu Hashem" - If God truly wants us [to be His nation], surely He will bring us into the land... only YOU MUST NOT REBEL against God, and you should not FEAR the people of the land for they are our prey... for GOD WILL BE WITH US - [hence] do not fear them." (14:8-9)

Unfortunately, the argument of the meraglim was more convincing, and the people concluded that attacking Eretz Canaan at this time would be suicidal (see 14:1-4). Considering that staying in the desert was no better of a long-term option, the nation concludes that their only 'realistic' option is to return to Egypt (see 14:3-5). The attempt of Yehoshua and Kaleb to convince the people otherwise was futile (see 14:6-9). Bnei Yisrael prefer returning to Egypt instead of taking the challenge of becoming God's special nation in Eretz Canaan.

Based on our explanation thus far, only the meraglim should have been punished, for it was they who led the people astray. Why does God punish the entire nation as well?

To answer this question, we must return once again to an overall theme in Chumash that we have discussed in our shiurim on Sefer Shmot (see TSC shiurim on Va'era and Beshalach) and in last week's shiur on Parshat Bhaalotcha.

THE LAST STRAW

One could suggest that the people's preference of adopting the conclusion of the meraglim reflected their own spiritual weakness as well. Undoubtedly, the slanted report presented by the meraglim had influenced their decision. However, since the time of the Exodus and throughout their desert journey, the people had consistently shown a lack of idealism. (Review once again Yechezkel 20:1-11 and our shiur on Parshat Va'era.)

Had the Land of Israel been offered to them on a silver platter, Bnei Yisrael most likely would have been delighted to accept it. However, once they realize that conquering the Promised Land requires commitment and dedication, the nation declines. This entire incident only strengthened God's earlier conclusion that Bnei Yisrael were not yet capable of fulfilling their destiny.

To support this point, note how the Torah describes God's decision to punish the nation in both 14:11-12 and 14:21-24:

"And God spoke to Moshe - 'ad ana y'naatzuni ha'am ha'zeh...' - How long will this people continue to defy Me, and how long will they have no faith in Me, despite all the signs (miracles) that I performed in their midst..." (14:11-13)

And several psukim later:

"For all those men who saw My Glory and My signs in Egypt and in the desert, and they have tested my TEN TIMES, yet they did not listen to My voice. If they will see the land that I promised to their forefathers... [However] My servant Kaleb will see the land, for he had a different spirit..." (see 14:21-24, read carefully)

Clearly, Bnei Yisrael's punishment is not based solely on this specific sin of the meraglim, but rather on their overall behavior since the time they left Egypt.

This also explains the obvious parallel between Moshe's prayer in the aftermath of this event and his prayer in the aftermath of "chet ha'egel". Then as well, God wished to destroy the entire nation, opting to make a nation out of Moshe instead; but Moshe petitioned God to invoke His "midot ha'rachamim" (attributes of mercy). This time as well, Moshe beseeches God in a similar manner; however the sin of the "meraglim" was more severe, and hence it is impossible to reverse the "gzar din" (verdict). Instead, it could only be delayed over forty years so not to create a "chillul Hashem".

Due to "chet ha'meraglim", God is convinced that "dor ha'midbar" would never be capable of meeting the challenges of conquering and establishing a 'holy nation' in the Promised Land. They are to perish slowly in the desert, while a new generation will grow up and become properly educated.

Based on this interpretation, we can explain why God was not willing to accept the repentance of the "ma'apilim" (see 14:39-45). Even though their declaration of: "we are prepared to go up and conquer the place that God has spoken of, FOR WE WERE WRONG" (see 14:40) may reflect a change of heart, it was too late. Had this been Bnei Yisrael's only sin, then most likely their repentance would have sufficed. However, "dor ha'midbar" had suffered from an attitude problem since the time of the Exodus (see Tehilim 95:8-11, Shmot 6:9-12, and Yechezkel 20:5-9).

Even after they received the Torah and built the Mishkan, their continuous complaining was inexcusable. "Chet ha'meraglim" was not an isolated sin; rather it became the 'straw that broke the camel's back'.

Bnei Yisrael may have been more than happy to accept the privileges of becoming an "am segula", yet they were not prepared to accept its responsibilities. God decided that it was necessary to educate a new generation instead.

It is not often in Jewish History when the opportunity arises for Am Yisrael to inherit (or return) to its homeland. The implication of such an opportunity is far greater than simply the fulfillment of "mitzvat yishuv ha'aretz" (the commandment to settle the Land), for it relates to the entire character and destiny of the Jewish people. When such opportunities arise, spiritual weakness should not be allowed to hide behind subjective pessimism. Rather, Jewish leadership must gather strength and assess the realities objectively while rising to the challenges idealistically.

shabbat shalom,
menachem

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FOR FURTHER IYUN

1. Note the parallel account of this event in Sefer Dvarim (1:22-24). There, they are called "meraglim" and only the military aspect of their mission is detailed. Relate this to the purpose of Moshe's speech in the 40th year and the fact that Bnei Yisrael are about to cross the Yarden and begin conquest of the Land. See also Ramban (Bamidbar 13:1), note how he attempts to combine both accounts.

2. All said and done, the obvious question remains, why does God command Bnei Yisrael to undertake a mission which may fail?

One could suggest that even though God has promised the land to Bnei Yisrael, He prefers that its conquest follows a natural sequence of events. Even though Yisrael enjoyed a supernatural existence in the desert, as they prepare for entering the land, they must begin to behave in a natural manner, as this will be the mode of life once they conquer the land. Now there is value in the fact that Bnei Yisrael participate actively in the process of "kibush ha'aretz", and begin to live like any normal nation by making decisions on their own.

This could be compared to a 'first step' towards national maturity. Just like a child's needs are first taken care of by his parents, and slowly he must begin to take on his own responsibilities, so too Bnei Yisrael at this stage. Unfortunately, it seems that this 'weaning' process began a bit too soon. Bnei Yisrael were as yet not ready.

3. Recall from last week's shiur that in the overall structure of Sefer Bamidbar, parshiot of mitzvot which would appear to belong in Sefer Vayikra often 'interrupt' the ongoing narrative 'challenging' us to find a connection. Review the mitzvot in 15:1-41 and try to find a thematic connection to the story of the meraglim.

- 1) The mitzvah of "minchat n'sachim" to be brought with korbanot Olah or Shlamim;
- 2) The mitzvah of taking challah;
Note that both these mitzvot begin with the phrase "ki tavou el ha'aretz" (when you come in the Land);
- 3) Avodah Zara of the tzibur and the necessary korban chatat (should entire nation sin);
- 4) Chilul Shabbat and its punishment;
- 5) Mitzvat Tzitzit

- a. Attempt to relate these parshiot to chet ha'meraglim?
(Compare both thematically and linguistically.)
- b. Where in Sefer Vayikra does each mitzvah belong?
- c. Recall the various mitzvot which chazal equate with keeping the entire Torah:
 - 1) Eretz Yisrael
 - 2) Avodah Zarah
 - 3) Shabbat
 - 4) Tzizit

Could you conclude that Chazal based these Midrashim on the special structure of Sefer Bamidbar?

4. Note 15:22-23. Why is this pasuk referring to the transgression of all the mitzvot of Torah, while the chazal explain that it refers specifically to avoda zarah.

(Relate your answer to the previous question.)

How is chet ha'meraglim thematically similar?