

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 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.

As I am preparing my packet of Devrei Torah for this Shabbat, we are in the midst of the anniversaries of Miriam's tzaraat (22 Sivan), the departure of the Meraglim (29 Sivan), and Korach's rebellion subject of the parsha for next week, some time during Miriam's week outside the camp before being cured). To see the analysis that proves these dates, look in the Torah Anthology, vol. 13, pp. 333-334.

The Torah's presentation of the story of the Meraglim is almost entirely flashbacks to earlier stories in the Torah, along with a well known "flash forward" to coming events. For example, when the Meraglim return from their forty day tour of Israel, the majority report is that the land is beautiful, but that the residents are giants compared to whom B'Nai Yisrael seemed like grasshoppers. The people hear this lashon horah, start weeping, and look back at Egypt as a promised land that they had stupidly left. The people display classic signs of depression – similar to the depression that Moshe felt in Behaalotecha when the people left the base of Har Sinai and started complaining, looking for any reason to kvetch and return to Egypt.

Although the most recent incident of helpless depression came from Moshe (11:11-15), the Torah has many others (Rabbi David Fohrman and Beth Lesch explore several in depth). Hagar expressed similar helpless depression when Sarah made her leave and Hagar ran out of water for Yishmael. Esav cried in depression when Yitzhak told him that he had given Esav's blessing of wealth and power to Yaakov. Even Yaakov felt helpless depression when he sensed that he would never be able to spend his married life with Rachel.

Rabbi Yehoshua Singer remarked that a Midrash relating to Purim gives another example. The Jews in Shushan felt helpless and thought that Hashem may have abandoned them. They thought they were following Yaakov. However, they were so mistaken and wrong in feeling helplessness that they deserved to be destroyed completely because of their lack of faith in G-d. Yet, they had one merit that was so significant and so powerful that it saved them. They were trying to follow Yaakov's example. The Midrash says that because of the merit of trying to follow Yaakov, G-d did not permit them to be destroyed, and because of that merit we are still here today. However, the Midrash explains that Yaakov was different from Hagar in that he never felt helpless in his sadness and anguish. His sadness always spurred him to act and improve himself.

After reviewing these examples, I understand why so many Jews have a problem coping with depression. As Rabbi Fohrman explains, adults must learn to control their emotions when facing difficult (even depressing) times. The generation of the Exodus never learned to see God's hand in their lives. They needed to see that God was there for them every day – with manna (a miracle food) from the sky; water that followed them as they traveled through a desert; snakes and other dangerous animals that never came close to the camp; and clothes that never wore out, cleaned themselves as needed, and grew to fit them when they grew. What God wanted from B'Nai Yisrael was to have faith in Him, engage with God in their lives, and participate by working positively with God to meet any challenges that arose. Israel was to be God's special gift to B'Nai Yisrael. When the people rejected this great gift and wanted to return to Egypt, God became furious and gave up on the generation of the Exodus (other than Caleb and Yehoshua). The generation of the Exodus, barely two years after suddenly obtaining their freedom, had not yet processed God's great love for them and his constant

presence behind the scenes protecting them from all dangers. Their children, never having experienced slavery, were to understand this lesson and merit living in the land.

We see another flash forward in the Haftorah for this Shabbat. Sending a dozen prominent leaders of society on a long tour of the country and permitting them to report back to the entire camp was clearly a mistake. The Meraglim had an incentive to protect their positions as leaders of the camp – positions that they would give up once leaving the hostile desert and entering a rich, beautiful land. The Meraglim were interested in sightseeing, not in devising a plan to attack and conquer the country. Yehoshua learned from Moshe's mistakes. As we read in the Haftorah, Yehoshua sent two anonymous men to enter the land secretly, scope out the mood of the inhabitants, and devise a plan to conquer the area. These anonymous men were to report back only to Yehoshua. (Rashi in commenting on Yehoshua 2:4 identifies the two men as Pinchas and Caleb, two of the greatest leaders of their generation -- but the Torah implies that their identity was anonymous to the rest of the people.) The rest of the people probably did not even know that anyone was spying on the land and reporting back. With their role and report private, the men had nothing to lose by giving an honest report. Since they reported only to Yehoshua, the reactions of others were irrelevant. Yehoshua could take the report and use the information as he considered best. Yehoshua organized a careful, well crafted, true spy mission – not a very visible sightseeing tour. The differences explain why Yehoshua's campaign was successful and Moshe's was not.

I well remember how clearly my beloved Rebbe, Rabbi Leonard Cahan, z"l, explained many of these insights year ago, when I missed nearly all the insights and lessons in my own reading. Sound analysis from a skilled Rebbe helps us uncover some of the seventy layers of meaning in the Torah. Small insights can lead to new connections. For one example, when I read Rabbi Moshe Rube's title, "The Teshuvah that Almost Happened," and his opening paragraph, I thought that he was about to relate the parsha to the news that political parties in Israel are about to change the Prime Minister. His message was actually very different (see his Dvar Torah below). However, I wrote back and suggested that he might wish to extend his analysis to connecting the parsha to current events in Israel. I wish I could be in Birmingham, AL this Shabbat to see if he makes that connection.

Shabbat Shalom,

Hannah & Alan

Much of the inspiration for my weekly Dvar Torah message comes from the insights of Rabbi David Fohrman and his team of scholars at www.alephbeta.org. Please join me in supporting this wonderful organization, which has increased its scholarly work during the pandemic, despite many of its supporters having to cut back on their donations.

Please daven for a Refuah Shlema for Menachem Mendel ben Chana, Eli ben Hanina, Yoram HaKohen ben Shoshana, 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 Tziviah, Reuven ben Masha, Meir ben Sara, Yitzhok Tzvi ben Yehudit Miriam, Yaakov Naphtali ben Michal Leah, Ramesh bat Heshmat, Rivka Chaya bat Leah, 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.

Hannah & Alan

Drasha: Shlach: Piece of Cake

by Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky © 2018

[Please remember Mordechai ben Chaya for a Mishebarach!]

It was not a good scenario. The twelve spies returned from their forty-day sojourn to the Land of Canaan and ten of them were not happy campers.

They left as an enthusiastic and united crew, selected by Moshe for what should have been an easy mission of assurance — confirming what they were already told by their forebears, as well as the Almighty — Eretz Yisrael is a beautiful land that flows with milk and honey. Instead, the only two who had anything positive to say about the land of Israel, were Calev and Yehoshua. The rest of the spies claimed that the land was not good and that there were dangerous giants living there who would crush them. And now, in the face of the derogatory, inflammatory and frightening remarks that disparaged the Promised Land, Calev and Yehoshua were left to defend it.

It was too late. The ten evil spies had stirred up the negative passions of a disheartened nation. The people wanted to return to Egypt. But the two righteous men, Yehoshua and Calev, tried to persuade them otherwise.

The first and most difficult task facing them was to get the Children of Israel to listen to them. The Torah tells us: "They spoke to the entire assembly of the Children of Israel, saying, "The Land that we passed through, to spy it out — the Land is very, very good.

If Hashem desires us, He will bring us to this Land and give it to us, a Land that flows with milk and honey. But do not rebel against Hashem! You should not fear the people of the Land, for they are our bread. Their protection has departed from them; Hashem is with us. Do not fear them!" (Numbers 14:7-9).

What did they mean by saying that the giants were "our bread"? Did they mean that the children of Israel will eat them like bread? Why bread of all things?

A story that circulated during the 1930s told of Yankel, a Jewish immigrant from the Ukraine who made his livelihood selling rolls on a corner in lower Manhattan. He was not an educated man. With poor eyesight and a hearing problem, he never read a newspaper or listened to the radio. He would daven, say Tehillim, learn a bit of Chumash, and bake his rolls. Then he would stand on the side of the road and sell his fresh-baked delicious smelling rolls.

"Buy a roll, mister?" he would ask passersby, the majority of them would gladly oblige with a generous purchase. Despite his simple approach, Yankel did well. He ordered a larger oven and increased his flour and yeast orders. He brought his son home from college to help him out. Then something happened. His son asked him, "Pa, haven't you heard about the situation with the world markets? There are going to be great problems soon. We are in the midst of a depression!" The father figured that his son's economic forecast was surely right. After all, his son went to college whereas he himself did not even read the papers. He canceled the order for the new oven and held off for more flour, took down his signs and waited. Sure enough with no advertisement and no inventory, his sales fell overnight. And soon enough Yankel said to his son. "You are right. We are in the middle of a great depression."

Bread is the staple of life, but it also is the parable of faith. Our attitude toward our bread represent our attitude toward every challenge of faith. If one lives life with emunah p'shutah, simple faith, then his bread will be sufficient to sustain him. The customers will come and he will enjoy success. It is when we aggrandize the bleakness of the situation through the eyes of the economic forecasters, the political pundits, or the nay sayers who believe in the power of their predictions and give up hope based on their mortal weaknesses, then one might as well close shop.

Yehosua and Calev told the people that these giants are no more of a challenge than the demands of our daily fare. They are our bread. And as with our daily fare, our situation is dependent totally on our faith.

If we listen to the predictions of the forecasters and spies, we lose faith in the Almighty and place our faith in the powerless. However, by realizing that the seemingly greatest challenges are the same challenges of our daily fare — our bread — the defeat of even the largest giants will be a piece of cake.

Good Shabbos

Where's our Mesirat Nefesh?

by Rabbi Dov Linzer, Rosh HaYeshiva, Yeshivat Chovevei Torah © 2021

As Modern Orthodox Jews, we espouse both serious Torah study and the pursuit of secular knowledge, all in the service of God. We have both feet firmly planted in the world of tradition and we are full members of broader American society. This fusion of worlds ideally enables us to live deeply religious lives while contributing to and gaining from general society.

But, we must ask ourselves, do we as Modern Orthodox Jews have a sense of mesirat nefesh, of self-sacrifice? Have we ever even used the term? Do we ever transcend our own needs in order to serve God, in order to serve our community?

At some level, the answer is a clear “yes.” We send our children to Jewish day schools, at great expense; we spend a not insignificant amount of time and money in order to live a religiously committed life. And yet, all of those are part of the norms and expectations of our community, and something that, in many ways, is part of our own needs to live this kind of life.

But do we embrace a concept of self-sacrifice? Of—at least on certain occasions—pushing ourselves beyond our current norms to give ourselves fully to God and the Jewish people? I believe that this is a value with which our community struggles.

In this week's parsha, Shelach, God commands Moses to send forth 12 scouts to survey the Land of Israel in anticipation of its conquest. However, in Devarim, when Moses later recounts this episode to the next generation of Israelites as they are on the cusp of entering the land (Deuteronomy 1:23), he states that it is the people who requested to dispatch the spies. The Sefat Emet offers a novel approach to this apparent discrepancy. At first, the people approached Moses out of their own initiative. Only then did God affirm their plan through a divine command.

The Sefat Emet then asks: Why did God support the people's decision? After all, the mission was destined to end in abject failure. He posits that with only the desire of the people to take on this mission, it would have failed. Yet with God also commanding them, there was a possibility of success. The question they had to answer is: Would they follow Parshat Devarim or Parshat Shelach?

The spies could now choose to enter the land because it was something that they desired or because it was a mission they were sent on from God. If they could do the latter and set aside their own interests, if they could see themselves as God's agents and as the vessel through which God's will could be fulfilled, the mission would have succeeded.

As Sefat Emet writes:

Now that they had a command from God, they needed to give up (li'msor) and nullify their own desires, and act only in order to do what God desires, and had they done this, they would have succeeded... And so it is in every mitzvah—if a person is able to truly nullify all of her personal desires... just to do God's will, she is deemed to be a person that gives her very soul (nefesh) for this mission. For one who attaches to this mitzvah her own desire is not truly a messenger [of the one who sent her].

The Sefat Emet here evokes the theme of mesirat nefesh. For him, this is our ongoing challenge when we do mitzvot. When we perform the very things we were commanded to do, do we bring to them our own desires, or do we see them purely as a way to serve God and do God's will?

If this is how we approach mitzvot, it is also how we will approach various opportunities in our lives. If we orient ourselves to giving ourselves over to God when we do what God has explicitly directed, then under certain circumstances when the

need is great and when we can truly make a difference, we will be able to hear God's voice—less explicit, but no less real—sending us on a Divine mission, calling on us to make the self-sacrifice that is necessary to respond to this call.

For us Modern Orthodox Jews, orienting our lives around this principle is a profound challenge. We are active citizens in a country in which individualism and self-actualization are central values. We need to find those precious opportunities through which we can put aside our own interests and perform mesirat nefesh, to serve God and to serve the community. A recent newspaper editorial lamented the fact that our country lacks any type of mandatory national service. The citizenry does not cherish the value of communal service, of a sense of duty to the country and its citizens. It suggests that young Americans should put aside their own interests, even for only a year, in service of something broader than themselves. In a word, the op-ed proposed mesirat nefesh. We Modern Orthodox Jews must also learn to find ways in which we can rise above our individualism, and devote ourselves with mesirat nefesh to serving God and community. Each one of us must listen for the Divine call that is unique to us and answer it with the fullness of oneself.

Shabbat Shalom.

<https://library.yctorah.org/2021/06/wheres-our-mesirat-nefesh/>

Mistakes

by Rabbi Mordechai Rhine* © 2021 Teach 613

It was many years ago, but the memory remains with me like it was yesterday. I was in the home of the kindest family one can imagine. They were hosting my cousin who was visiting from Eretz Yisroel, so we made up that I could meet him in their home.

As we were sitting around chatting, the host started showing off some of his albums. Each one was a treasure trove of pictures of places he and his wife had visited. Some even had pictures of him with celebrities of both the Torah and philanthropic worlds. But I noticed something odd. In a few places in the album there were damaged pictures. As I paid closer attention, I noticed that these pictures had intentionally been defaced. Apparently, the host, using a razor blade, had cut out the faces of people whom he used to get along with, but no longer did.

The image of the crudely cut pictures played well on my fertile imagination. I could only imagine the intense pain that my host must have experienced from these people that would cause him to choose to eradicate them from his life. Indeed, seeing what I did of my host—a kindly, soft spoken, generous person—it was hard to imagine why anyone would want to hurt him so grievously as to cause him to cut their picture out of his album. Yet, I wondered, if there might be another way to deal with the pain, other than cutting people's pictures out of an album.

In this week's Parsha, we read of a grievous sin committed by the spies. After being told repeatedly that they would be taken to the Promised Land, a good place filled with wonderful blessing, the spies were sent to bring back a report. Certainly, they were expected to highlight the blessing and see the good. Instead, they highlighted the bad. In doing so they drove a wedge between Hashem and His people. Instead of rejoicing about their imminent entrance to the Promised Land and Hashem's precious gifts, the people were plunged into mourning because of the way the spies presented their report.

Yet, the very next passage after the story of the spies is about a Mitzva that will be applicable, "When you come to the Land." Rashi explains that Hashem wished to affirm that despite the mistake of the spies and the people, He would still bring them into the Land.

We find this theme as well in our daily reading of Shema. After describing the great bounty and blessing of the Land, the Torah describes the fallout if we do not obey Torah. "The anger of Hashem will be against you... and you will be sent away from the land." Yet, the very next passage declares that we shall still observe Torah, wear Tefillin, and affix Mezuzos on our doorposts. The Torah is telling us that even in the place of grievous wrongdoing, generational consequences, and awesome pain of betrayal, it is still possible to carry on. There is acknowledgement that it is indeed possible for humans to make mistakes.

When I say that it is possible for human beings to make mistakes, I do not mean to say, "So it is no big deal." I am not describing the attitudes of "turn the other cheek," "let bygones be bygones," and "what is past is past." Those may or may not apply in any given situation. "Human beings make mistakes" means that a person may have been grievously hurt, sometimes in a moment of someone's foolish bravado or self-righteousness. Still, the awareness that humans do make mistakes enables us to live on, to move forward, and not need to eradicate such people from our lives.

The story of the spies is tragic. Instead of proceeding joyously into the Land, the Jewish people got sidetracked by negativity. But in the way the Torah presents the story, there is remarkable guidance as to how to deal with human failing. A mistake does not mean that we must eradicate a person from our lives. After the story of the spies there would still be an entry to the Land. Likewise, after exile from the Land, we will still have the relationship of Mitzvos. Mistakes are real. Mistakes are part of the human condition. It would be a big mistake to forget that.

With heartfelt blessings for a wonderful Shabbos!

*** Mazel-Tov to Rabbi Mordechai and Yittie Rhine on their simcha – their daughter Rochel is a Kallah to Avraham Mordechai Segall of Lakewood.**

* Rav of Southeast Hebrew Congregation, White Oak (Silver Spring), MD and Director of Teach 613. RMRhine@Teach613.org. Teach613, 10604 Woodsdale Dr., Silver Spring, MD 20901. 908-770-9072. **Donations welcome to help with Torah outreach. www.teach613.org.**

Pessimism, Optimism and Realism --Thoughts on Parashat Shelah Lekha by Rabbi Marc D. Angel *

An old joke has it that a pessimist says the glass is half empty; the optimist says the glass is half full; and the realist says – you're using the wrong size glass!

In this week's Torah portion, we read of the twelve spies who were sent to scout the land of Israel. Ten of them were pessimists. They told the Israelites that the land was inhabited by giants. "We are not able to go up against the people, for they are stronger than we."

Caleb and Joshua were optimists. They reported that the land was wonderful, and that the enemies would be easily defeated. "Do not fear the people of the land, for they are bread for us; their defense is removed from over them and the Lord is with us."

While the ten spies were alarmists and defeatists, the two spies presented a rosy picture totally at odds with the report of their colleagues. The masses of people believed the pessimists; they slipped quickly into despair and mourning. As a result, the Israelites were condemned to wander forty years in the wilderness before the next generation would be allowed to enter the Promised Land.

Where were the realists when they were so very much needed? In the Torah's narrative of this episode, we don't hear their voices.

How might this story have turned out happier? When the spies returned from their mission, they should have reported their findings to Moses in a closed meeting. The pessimists and the optimists could have made their cases. Moses could have been the realist who fashioned the report in such a way that it reflected the concerns of the pessimists while also expressing the confidence of the optimists. The entire group could have presented the people with a balanced report, honest about the dangers ahead but confident that God would bring them victory.

When people face a crisis, they need to be told the truth about the challenges ahead. But they also need to be given a realistic plan of action. It is destructive to create alarm and panic; it is irresponsible to ignore genuine threats.

The story of the twelve spies demonstrates the serious flaws of going public without first having serious private consultations that are grounded in realism. This is true for government officials, for journalists, for opinion makers – for

everyone. Responsible leadership entails careful analysis, concern for how one's words and deeds will affect the public, an honest and realistic plan of action that can gain public support and confidence.

In Israel's War of Independence in 1948, David Ben Gurion called a meeting of his military experts to address a serious crisis. Reinforcements were desperately needed in the north, but there seemed to be no way to get the troops there. The experts told Ben Gurion that it was impossible to move troops to the north, since the enemies' positions were too strong. Ben Gurion replied: "We do not need experts to tell us that something is impossible. Anyone can say this. We need experts who can tell us how to accomplish the impossible!" Upon further deliberation, the experts came up with a plan – and they succeeded in doing the "impossible." They found a way of getting the needed troops to the north, and ensuring a victory for Israel in the battles there.

In the many crises which face us – individually as well as communally – it is tempting to give in to pessimism and judge things to be hopeless or impossible. It is also sometimes tempting to ignore the real dangers before us, and to be unrealistically optimistic about chances of success. It is vital, though, that we maintain clear-sighted realism – facing problems honestly, being neither fearful nor foolhardy. If we consider things from different perspectives, we often can gain clarity on how to move forward.

It is the realists who are best suited to achieve the "impossible."

* Founder and Director, Institute for Jewish Ideas and Ideals, <https://www.jewishideas.org/pessimism-optimism-and-realism-thoughts-parashat-shelah-lekha> **The Institute for Jewish Ideas and Ideals has experienced a significant drop in donations during the pandemic. The Institute needs our help to maintain and strengthen our Institute. Each gift, large or small, is a vote for an intellectually vibrant, compassionate, inclusive Orthodox Judaism. You may contribute on our website [jewishideas.org](https://www.jewishideas.org) or you may send your check to Institute for Jewish Ideas and Ideals, 2 West 70th Street, New York, NY 10023. Ed.: Please join me in helping the Institute for Jewish Ideas and Ideals at this time.**

When Jews Undermine the Jewish State and the Jewish People

by Rabbi Marc D. Angel *

Some years ago, I read about a German Jew who established a "Jewish Nazi Society" during the 1930s. While Jews throughout Germany (and Europe in general) were facing horrible anti-Jewish persecutions, this Jewish man internalized the vicious anti-Semitic propaganda to such an extent that he also became a Jew-hater. Perhaps he thought that by identifying as a Nazi, he would be spared personally from the anti-Jewish persecutions. He wanted to be considered as "a good Jew" in the eyes of the Nazis, rather than be accounted among the "bad" Jews whom the Nazis were tormenting.

I don't know what ultimately happened to the members of the "Jewish Nazi Society", but I doubt that they were spared by the Nazi hate machine. The Nazis hated Jews for having Jewish blood, regardless of their beliefs or political leanings. Jewish Nazis were just as despicable to Nazis as any other Jews. The Jewish Nazis were despised by Jews for their treachery; and despised by Nazis for their Jewishness.

These thoughts came to mind as I contemplated the phenomenon of Jews in our time who struggle to undermine Israel, and who identify themselves with those who strive to destroy the Jewish State. These individuals seem to suffer from the same psychological problems as members of the "Jewish Nazi Society" in Germany. Israel is constantly barraged by its enemies--through terrorism, economic boycotts, political isolation, anti-Israel propaganda, threats of war and nuclear destruction. To the enemies of Israel, the Jewish State is the object of blind, unmitigated hatred. The enemies use every possible forum to malign Israel and deny its legitimacy. This unceasing war against Israel is resisted courageously by the Jewish State, by Jewish supporters of Israel, by millions of non-Jewish supporters of Israel.

It is bizarre and morally repugnant that the one tiny Jewish country in the world has to suffer so much abuse. It is a matter of honor to stand up for Israel and to remind the world of the right of the Jews to their own homeland. We need to counter the attacks against Israel in every forum. We need to speak truth to combat the unceasing stream of lies heaped up against Israel.

Does this mean that we must agree with and condone everything that Israel does? Of course not. Israelis themselves are vocal in their criticisms of aspects of Israeli life and government policies. As long as criticisms are voiced with love, they should be welcome. They help shake the status quo and move things in a better direction. But criticism must be balanced with an appreciation of the amazingly impressive positive aspects of the Jewish State.

While fair and loving critics are vital to Israel's welfare, haters are destructive. Haters do not seek to improve Israel--they seek to destroy it. Their goal is not to encourage a vibrant, flourishing Jewish State--their goal is to eliminate the Jewish State. The hatred is so blind and so intense, that it is oblivious to facts and figures. For haters, Israel is guilty just by existing. It is particularly regrettable when people of Jewish ancestry align themselves with the haters. In some perverse way, they may think this separates them from the fate of Israel and the Jewish people--they think they will be viewed as "the good Jews" in contrast with the Zionists who are viewed as "the bad Jews". But such Jews are despised by Jews as traitors, and are despised (or mocked) by the haters of Israel--because after all, these hating Jews are still Jews! The enemies are happy to use such people for propaganda purposes; but if they were ever to succeed in their wicked designs, these hating Jews would not fare well. Their treachery to Israel and their fellow Jews would not make them beloved by the enemies of Jews and Israel.

We have read recently of Jewish haters/self-haters who have participated in-- and even spearheaded-- anti-Israel boycotts. We have read of Israeli professors/left wing intellectuals who have participated in anti-Israel programs on college campuses throughout the world. We have read columns by Jewish journalists that are so blatantly unfair to Israel that it makes us shudder. We have learned of Jewish groups and individuals who blame Israel for every ill suffered by Palestinians, even when most of the blame rests with the Palestinian leadership. We have heard Jewish voices decrying Israel's defense of its border with Gaza, even though the stated intent of Hamas is to murder and kidnap as many Israelis as possible...and ultimately to wipe Israel off the map.

For some critics, everyone in the world seems to have rights...except Jews. Every nation in the world has the right to defend its citizens...except Israel. These are positions which must be repudiated by all fair-minded people. These are positions which most surely should be repudiated by the victims of such views...the Jews themselves.

* Founder and Director, Institute for Jewish Ideas and Ideals, <https://www.jewishideas.org/article/when-jews-undermine-jewish-state-and-jewish-people>

The Farhud – Remembering a Tragic Time for Iraqi Jews

By Dr. Edy Cohen *

On June 1, 1941, on the holiday of Shavuot, the Farhud took place in Iraq -- a pogrom against the Jews carried out by an incited, raging Muslim majority that was the result of the Third Reich's Nazi propaganda. Hundreds of Jews were murdered in Baghdad and elsewhere, and thousands more were injured. Jewish property was looted, and many homes were burned down. The Iraqi government established an investigation committee to look into the riots, and the findings revealed that Jerusalem Grand Mufti Haj Amin al-Husseini and the Nazi Arabic-language propaganda broadcast on the radio from Berlin were the main causes behind the massacre.

The mufti's followers were the ones who carried out the pogrom due to the failure of the coup he helped to orchestrate after fleeing Palestine. That is why the frustrated mufti decided to settle the score with Iraq's Jews. In his memoirs, he even justified the Farhud, writing, "The Fifth Column had a great influence on the failure of the Iraqi movement, and was comprised of many elements, most importantly, the Jews of Iraq."

During the fighting, [Lebanese diplomat] George Antonius told me that Jews employed in the telephone department were recording important and official telephone conversations and passing them to the British embassy in Baghdad. Jewish workers in the post and telegram departments acted in a similar fashion, forwarding the messages and letters they received to the embassy."

Thus Husseini decided to punish the Jews for allegedly cooperating with the British and causing his revolt to fail.

Later, when the survivors of the Farhud immigrated to Israel, Israeli authorities flatly refused to recognize them as victims of Nazism. Even today, anyone who tries to expose the injustice done to Jews from Arab lands is blamed for attempting to provoke ethnic clashes. And so, for many years, they managed to silence anyone who attempted to bring the issue to light, and the culture, leaders, authors, poets and spiritual life of Jews from Arab countries were not integrated into the

school curriculum (in contrast to the history of European Jews). In this context, one must also recall the Yemenite Children Affair (in which hundreds of Yemenite babies were kidnapped upon their families' arrival in Israel and given to Ashkenazi families), which is a part of history that is still mainly untold and unknown.

The Farhud is inseparable from the Nazi atrocities. It was carried out by Arabs who were directly incited by Joseph Goebbels' Nazi propaganda -- according to Iraq's own investigation. Despite this, Israel "cleansed" the Nazis of these crimes over a period of several years. A lot of money was invested and paid to senior academics to determine that the Farhud was an "Arab" incident. Throughout history, there is no incident similar to the Farhud, which was carried out to harm Jews in an Arab state. There is no doubt that the Nazi propaganda is what incited and caused the murder of Jews.

Today, the situation is beginning to change -- justice has finally won, if a bit late. Finance Minister Moshe Kahlon made the administrative decision to end the injustice, stating that anyone born in Iraq up until the Farhud would be eligible to receive an annual grant, among other benefits. Additionally, thousands of Jews of Iraqi heritage have been fighting for compensation for years, with the help of attorney David Yadid, in a suit that is awaiting a ruling shortly.

The benefits and efforts to correct the injustice done to Jews from Arab countries will not be determined solely by the court's ruling. Education Minister Naftali Bennett has established a committee led by poet and Israel Prize laureate Erez Biton, to review efforts for the further integration of content about the Jewish communities from Arab countries into the curriculum, out of a desire to expose Israeli students of all ages to the cultural, social and historical wealth of these communities.

We must remember that Jews from Arab countries and their descendants are not a minority, rather, they now make up more than 50% of Israel's Jewish population.

* Research fellow at Bar-Ilan University

<https://www.jewishideas.org/article/farhud-remembering-tragic-time-iraqi-jews>

Shelach – Tried and True Trust

by Rabbi Yehoshua Singer *

This week's parsha tells of the tragic downfall of the generation which left Egypt and received the Torah at Sinai. As they left Sinai and prepared to enter the land of Canaan, they sent spies to scout the land. Most of the spies brought back a report of powerful nations and fortified cities, leaving the nation terrified. Only two of the spies, Yehoshua and Caleiv, maintained their faith in G-d and encouraged the nation to do the same. The nation, swayed by the ten spies, cried that night over their concern for their future and thought to return to Egypt. As a result of losing faith, it was decreed that this generation would die in the desert, and their descendants would be the ones to enter the land of Canaan. The ten spies who spoke negatively were punished by G-d and died.

The Haftorah tells of a contrasting story, when Yehoshua has become the leader of the nation and is preparing to lead the next generation into Israel. After telling the nation that they should prepare to cross into Canaan in a few days time, he sends two spies into the land. This time, though, the spies come back with a simple report that the people are afraid of the Jewish nation, encouraging the nation to enter the land. Although Yehoshua's spies succeeded, one can't help but wonder why he chose to send spies again. Yehoshua himself was one of the spies from the first failed mission. After wandering in the desert for forty years, why would he even risk the possibility of history repeating itself and spies bringing back a negative report?

The Ralba"g raises this issue, and adds another question. The simple reading of the verses in the Navi state that Yehoshua first told the nation that they would soon be entering and only then sent the spies. If Yehoshua was sending spies before entering the land, shouldn't he have waited for their report, before finalizing his plans to enter the land? Why did he tell people when they would enter before he had even sent the spies into the land?

The Ralba"g explains with a fascinating lesson in our approach to faith and trust in G-d. Hashem had already told Yehoshua that the nations of Canaan would flee from them, and they were ready to enter Canaan. They did not need the spies report before preparing. The purpose of sending the spies was to strengthen their trust and faith in G-d. When

Yehoshua and the would hear that Hashem was already working miracles on their behalf and the nations were already scared of them, they would feel an even greater sense of reliance on G-d.

The Ralba"g gives another example of this concept from Gideon. (Shoftim Chapter 7) Gideon was secure in his faith in G-d, and at G-d's command had sent away the vast majority of his army, leaving only three hundred soldiers. The night before the battle G-d told him to spy on the Midianite camp, to hear the talk of the soldiers and see that G-d had given them into his hand.

When we analyze both Yehoshua and Gideon, it seems that they did not need to strengthen their faith and trust in G-d. In both cases, they were ready to act and go into battle. G-d had also promised both of them that they would succeed in battle. Why did they need any strengthening of their faith at this point?

It appears that the purpose of strengthening their faith and trust in G-d was for its own sake. Faith and trust, knowing that another is there for you and cares for you is the foundation of any real relationship. G-d was not asking Yehoshua and Gideon to rely on Him. They already were. G-d was asking them to take the opportunity to see how much G-d is there for them and to experience a deeper sense of reliance on G-d.

Faith and trust in G-d is a critical tool which can help with the vicissitudes of life. However, we see from this Ralba"g that trust in G-d can serve an even greater purpose. The more we learn to trust in G-d, the deeper and more profound is our relationship with Him. The more we know G-d is with us, the closer we can feel Him.

* Rabbi, Am HaTorah Congregation, Bethesda, MD.

The Teshuva that Almost Happened

by Rabbi Moshe Rube*

After two years of wandering through the Israeli "election desert," we read this week the parsha of Shelach, where the Jews brought forty years of wandering on themselves by listening to the slanderous report about Israel from the spies.

But there's an oft overlooked episode the Torah records in Numbers 14:40. The Jews regret what they have done and decide to repent by going up to the land and doing battle. Moshe tells them not to but they go anyway. They lose, and many Jews die.

But why? Doesn't the Torah preach about the value of repentance? Why didn't Hashem accept their teshuvah?

The Baal Shem Tov points out that if you look closely at the aforementioned verse, the Jews say they will eagerly go to do battle to get the land of Israel "for God has spoken. We have sinned." The "God has spoken" part could be a description of Israel, the land that God told them about, and then they exclaim that they've sinned. However, the meaning of the verse could be that the Jews exclaim as their repentance "For God says we have sinned."

And that's not an apology. If someone wrongs you and then says, "I don't think I did anything wrong, but you say I did, so in respect for that, I will apologize," would you accept it? Has your relationship with this person been repaired? I would say not.

And our relationship with Hashem works the same way.

* Rabbi, Knesseth Israel Congregation, Birmingham, AL.

Rav Kook Torah

Shlach/Pinchas: The Sin of Tzelofchad

"Our father died in the desert... He died because of his own sin, and he had no sons." (Num. 27:3)

So begins the request of the daughters of Tzelofchad. Since there were no sons in the family, the daughters wanted to know: may we inherit his portion in the Land of Israel? Their question stumped Moses, and was referred to God Himself.

The Torah doesn't tell us, but we are curious nonetheless: what was the sin for which Tzelofchad deserved to die? The text seems to imply that his transgression was an unusual one: "He died because of his own sin."

In the reading of Shelach it says:

"The Israelites were in the desert, and they found a man collecting wood on the Sabbath." (Num. 15:32)

Interesting. Again, we find the phrase, "in the desert." (And quite superfluous, considering that the entire book takes place in the desert.) Once again, Moses is stumped, and needs to ask God what is the appropriate punishment. Who was this unidentified man, the wood-gatherer who desecrated the Sabbath?

It was Rabbi Akiva who made the connection between the man with the unknown sin, and the sin of the unknown man. Tzelofchad was the Sabbath wood-gatherer. That was his personal transgression, for which he was punished (Shabbat 96b).

Is there a connection between Tzelofchad's desecration of the Sabbath, and the fact that he died without sons, thus jeopardizing his inheritance in the Land of Israel? Also, why does the Torah emphasize that his sin took place "in the desert"?

Trapped in the Desert

The desert represents transience. A desert is not a place that can be settled and cultivated. We only pass through the desert as we make our way to a permanent location, to our true destination. Life in the desert is transient; it is only a preparation and a means towards a desired objective.

Even the holiness in the desert was temporary. Mount Sinai was sanctified solely for the sake of the Torah's revelation; afterwards, the mountain reverted to its previous state. Permanent holiness only exists in the Land of Israel and the city of Jerusalem.

Sanctity within the dimension of time — as in space — may also have varying degrees of permanence. The most eternal holiness in time is the holiness of the Sabbath. "The Israelites will observe the Sabbath, making it a day of rest for all generations, an eternal covenant" (Ex. 31:16).

Unlike the Sabbath, which falls out every seventh day, the holidays are dependent upon the calendar, as set by the high court. The sanctity of the holidays is thus of a less eternal nature. Additionally, the holidays relate to historical events: the Exodus from Egypt, the journey in the desert, the Revelation of the Torah. The Sabbath, on the other hand, transcends the realm of mankind. It celebrates the very essence of creation.

Tzelofchad's sin took place in the desert, and he died in the desert. When Tzelofchad desecrated the eternal sanctity of the Sabbath, he transformed the desert from a passageway into a dead-end. He became disconnected from eternal holiness, both in time and space. He lacked permanence and continuity in the dimension of time - the Sabbath day — and in the dimension of space — his inheritance in the Land of Israel.

We should learn from Tzelofchad's mistake, and avoid being locked within the temporal realm of the desert. We need to stay focused on that which is enduring and eternal, and not confuse the way-station for the final destination.

(Gold from the Land of Israel, pp. 243-245. Adapted from Ein Eyah vol. IV, p.238.)

<http://www.ravkooktorah.org/SHLACH61.htm>

Seeing What Isn't There (Shelach Lecha 5778)

By Lord Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, z"l, Former Chief Rabbi of the U.K.*

In Philadelphia there lives a gentle, gracious, grey-haired man, by now in his late-90s, whom Elaine and I have had the pleasure of meeting several times and who is one of the most lovely people we have ever known. Many people have reason to be thankful to him, because his work has transformed many lives, rescuing people from depression and other debilitating psychological states.

His name is Aaron T. Beck and he is the founder of one of the most effective forms of psychotherapy yet devised: Cognitive Behavioural Therapy. He discovered it through his work at the depression research clinic he founded in the University of Pennsylvania. He began to detect a pattern among his patients. It had to do with the way they interpreted events. They did so in negative ways that were damaging to their self-respect, and fatalistic. It was as if they had thought themselves into a condition that one of Beck's most brilliant disciples, Martin Seligman, was later to call "learned helplessness." Essentially they kept telling themselves, "I am a failure. Nothing I try ever succeeds. I am useless. Things will never change."

They had these thoughts automatically. They were their default reaction to anything that went wrong in their lives. But Beck found that if they became conscious of these thoughts, saw how unjustified they were, and developed different and more realistic thought patterns, they could, in effect, cure themselves. This also turns out to be a revelatory way of understanding the key episode of our parsha, namely the story of the spies.

Recall what happened. Moses sent twelve men to spy out the land. The men were leaders, princes of their tribes, people of distinction. Yet ten of them came back with a demoralising report. The land, they said, is indeed good. It does flow with milk and honey. But the people are strong. The cities are large and well fortified. Caleb tried to calm the people. "We can do it." But the ten said that it could not be done. The people are stronger than we are. They are giants. We are grasshoppers.

And so the terrible event happened. The people lost heart. "If only," they said, "we had died in Egypt. Let us choose a leader and go back." God became angry. Moses pleaded for mercy. God relented, but insisted that none of that generation, with the sole exceptions of the two dissenting spies, Caleb and Joshua, would live to enter the land. The people would stay in the wilderness for forty years, and there they would die. Their children would eventually inherit what might have been theirs had they only had faith.

Essential to understanding this passage is the fact that the report of the ten spies was utterly unfounded. Only much later, in the book of Joshua, when Joshua himself sent spies, did they learn from the woman who sheltered them, Rahab, what actually happened when the inhabitants of the land heard that the Israelites were coming:

"I know that the Lord has given you the land, and that dread of you has fallen on us, and that all the inhabitants of the land melt in fear before you ... As soon as we heard it, our hearts melted, and there was no courage left in any of us because of you." (Josh. 2:9-11)

The spies were terrified of the Canaanites, and entirely failed to realise that the Canaanites were terrified of them. How could they make such a profound mistake? For this we turn to Cognitive Behavioural Therapy, and to some of the types of distorted thinking identified by Beck's student, David Burns.

One is all-or-nothing thinking. Everything is either black or white, good or bad, easy or impossible. That was the spies' verdict on the possibility of conquest. It couldn't be done. There was no room for shading, nuance, complexity. They could have said, "It will be difficult, we will need courage and skill, but with God's help we will prevail." But they did not. Their thinking was a polarised either/or.

Another is negative filtering. We discount the positives as being insignificant, and focus almost exclusively on the negatives. The spies began by noting the positives: "The land is good. Look at its fruit." Then came the "but": the long string of negatives, drowning out the good news and leaving an overwhelmingly negative impression.

A third is catastrophising, expecting disaster to strike, no matter what. That is what the people did when they said, "Why is the Lord bringing us to this land only to let us die by the sword? Our wives and children will be taken as plunder."

A fourth is mind-reading. We assume we know what other people are thinking, when usually we are completely wrong because we are jumping to conclusions about them based on our own feelings, not theirs. That is what the spies did when they said, "We seemed like grasshoppers in our own eyes, and so we seemed to them." They had no way of knowing how they appeared to the people of the land, but they attributed to them, mistakenly, a sentiment based on their own subjective fears.

A fifth is inability to disconfirm. You reject any evidence or argument that might contradict your negative thoughts. The spies heard the counter-argument of Caleb but dismissed it. They had decided that any attempt to conquer the land would fail, and they were simply not open to any other interpretation of the facts.

A sixth is emotional reasoning: letting your feelings, rather than careful deliberation, dictate your thinking. A key example is the interpretation the spies placed on the fact that the cities were "fortified and very large" (Num. 13:28), or "with walls up to the sky" (Deut. 1:28). They did not stop to think that people who need high city walls to protect them are in fact fearful. Had they stopped to think, they might have realised that the Canaanites were not confident, not giants, not invulnerable. But they let their emotions substitute for thought.

A seventh is blame. We accuse someone else of being responsible for our predicament instead of accepting responsibility ourselves. This is what the people did in the wake of the spies' report. "They grumbled against Moses and Aaron" (Num. 14:1), as if to say, "It is all your fault. If only you had let us stay in Egypt!" People who blame others have already begun down the road to "learned helplessness." They see themselves as powerless to change. They are the passive victims of forces beyond their control.

Applying cognitive behavioural therapy to the story of the spies lets us see how that ancient event might be relevant to us, here, now. It is very easy to fall into these and other forms of cognitive distortion, and the result can be depression and despair –dangerous states of mind that need immediate medical or therapeutic attention.

What I find profoundly moving is the therapy the Torah itself prescribes. I have pointed out elsewhere that the end of the parsha – the paragraph dealing with tzitzit – is connected to the episode of the spies by two keywords, ure-item, "you shall see" (Num. 13:18; 15:39), and the verb latur, (Num. 13:2, 16, 17, 25, 32; 15:39). The key sentence is the one that says about the thread of blue in the tzitzit, that "when you see it, you will remember all the commandments of the Lord and do them, and not follow after your own heart and your own eyes" (Num. 15:39).

Note the strange order of the parts of the body. Normally we would expect it to be the other way around: as Rashi says in his commentary to the verse, "The eye sees and the heart desires." First we see, then we feel. But in fact the Torah reverses the order, thus anticipating the very point Cognitive Behavioural Therapy makes, which is that often our feelings distort our perception. We see what we fear – and often what we think we see is not there at all. Hence Roosevelt's famous words in his first Inaugural Address – stunningly relevant to the story of the spies: "the only thing we have to fear is...fear itself — nameless, unreasoning, unjustified terror which paralyses needed efforts to convert retreat into advance."

The blue thread in the tzitzit, says the Talmud (Sotah 17a), is there to remind us of the sea, the sky, and God's throne of glory. Techelet, the blue itself, was in the ancient world the mark of royalty. Thus the tzitzit as itself a form of cognitive behavioural therapy, saying: "Do not be afraid. God is with you. And do not give way to your emotions, because you are royalty: you are children of the King."

Hence the life-changing idea: never let negative emotions distort your perceptions. You are not a grasshopper. Those who oppose you are not giants. To see the world as it is, not as you are afraid it might be, let faith banish fear.

Shabbat shalom.

* Note: because Likutei Torah and the Internet Parsha Sheet, both attached by E-mail, normally include the two most recent Devrei Torah by Rabbi Sacks, I have selected an earlier Dvar. See

<https://rabbisacks.org/seeing-shelach-lecha-5778/>

Spying the Land: Fearing the "Real World"

By Chaya Mushka and Nechama Krimmer* © Chabad 2021

This week's Parsha, Parshas Shelach, opens with the Jewish people ready to enter Eretz Cannan in order to conquer the land promised to them by Hashem. Prior to their entry, however, Hashem commanded Moshe to send meraglim, spies, into the land. Moshe instructed the spies to scout out and report back on both the terrain and the inhabitants of the land. The spies were "rashai b'nai yisroel," heads of the Jewish people, men of distinction, one leader from each of the twelve tribes [Bamidbar 13:3].

Along with observing the terrain of the land and its people, Moshe also instructed the meraglim to determine the safest and most opportune route for the Jewish people to traverse the land. Moshe sent the spies off with the reminder that Hashem would be with them on this most important expedition.

The spies scouted the land for forty days and then returned to the safety of the encampment in the desert with wild tales of their travels.

Their reports, however, were not the glowing accolades that one would expect coming from the Promised Land. The spies fearfully reported that the descendants of Giants inhabited the land, along with the Amalekites, the sworn enemies of the Jewish people. The spies were convinced that the Jewish people would be decimated by the fortified and powerful nations living in the land.

Yehoshua bin Nun and Calev, leaders of the tribes of Ephraim and Yehudah, respectively, did not share the fear and apprehension of the other spies. Although they recognized that the spies accurately described the inhabitants of the land, Yehoshua and Calev believed the Jewish people could, and would, easily conquer these nations. They had bitachon, trust, that Hashem would protect, guide, and fight alongside them. With Hashem's help, how could they not overcome all obstacles? How could they not succeed?

The Jewish people, however, were frightened by the spies' suggestion that they would enter Eretz Cannan only to be slaughtered by these powerful nations. Together, they cried out, "Why, then, is the Eternal bringing us to this land to fall by the sword? Our wives and children will be left for plunder... Let us appoint a new leader, and return to Egypt" [Bamidbar 14: 3-4].

The desert was a sanctuary for the Jewish people. They were guarded by the Clouds of Glory at all times, which shielded them from the arrows of warring nations as well as protecting them from scorpions, snakes, and dangerous creatures. The Jews were provided daily with manna from heaven, which could taste like any food or dish they desired at the time, and pure water from Miriam's well. The clothes the Jews wore were washed and pressed even as they were wearing them. Food. Shelter. Clothing. Security. All of their needs were miraculously provided for them.

The Jewish people did not want to leave this paradise for a place where they would be forced to dirty their hands with work to provide for their own needs. Moreso, the words of the spies echoed in their minds as they envisioned the blood that might be shed as they fought to establish themselves in the land. They were terrified of leaving the spiritual protection of the desert for the harsh world of physical reality.

Hashem, however, did not create a purely spiritual world where, overwhelmed by His light, created beings would have no independent will. Hashem was not satisfied by the creation of the angels in their holy realms, who solely exist to praise Him and carry out His will.

Hashem desired a physical world, where His presence could be concealed, in order that humans, through their free will, and manifested through their thoughts, speech, and actions, would be able to reveal Him.

On the precipice of their sojourn into the Promised Land, the Jewish people forgot the all-encompassing truth that Hashem's presence, His blessings, and His protection would not end when they left the sanctity of the desert. They forgot what was taught to them on Mount Sinai, that it would be up to them to reveal Hashem's presence, in the midst of their physical hardships, struggles, joys, and triumphs, through the study of Torah and performance of Mitzvos, an eternal truth which penetrated the hearts of Yehoshua ben Nun and Calev.

And because of their bitachon, their trust in Hashem, Yehoshua and Calev were rewarded by being the only two of their generation who merited to enter the Promised Land.

Now, in a period of history where we are currently facing a global pandemic, a marked rise in antisemitism around the world, and tensions in the Promised Land, we must learn from the mistakes of our ancestors that Hashem's presence, although hidden, is always with us.

Let us individually strive to increase the revelation of Hashem here, in our time, in our place, and in our very city, by setting aside time for Torah study, even a few minutes a day, and the daily performance of Mitzvos. And through our increased endeavors, may we merit to see the full revelation of the blessings of Hashem as we usher in the Messianic Era together. The world is waiting.

https://www.chabaddayton.com/templates/articlecco_cdo/aid/5151669/jewish/Shelach.htm

How Did the Mission of the Twelve Spies Go So Wrong?

By Yossi Ives * © Chabad 2021

Here is the basic story of the spies with some help from Rashi: A group of Israelites approached Moses suggesting that a delegation be sent to scope out the Land of Canaan ahead of their planned entry. Moses was skeptical, given that he had been explicitly told that they were heading to "a land of milk and honey." Moses felt that the Israelites had no reason to fear the inhabitants, as they had all seen the great miracles wrought against the much more powerful Egyptians.

But, fearing that his people would think he had something to hide, Moses agreed to organize the mission despite his misgivings. He picked 12 distinguished leaders and instructed them to bring back a detailed report about the land. Moses felt the undertaking was in excellent hands, although he still had his concerns. Those concerns proved justified when 10 of the delegates returned with pessimistic reports, suggesting that the Israelites had only a slim chance of defeating the land's powerful inhabitants. This led to a revolt by a good number of the people against going forward to the Promised Land and caused a prolonged stay in the desert.

There are some significant questions about this story; two particularly pressing ones. First, why did Moses allow the mission to proceed if he had misgivings? Second, how did the members of such a prestigious delegation become corrupted?

Let us examine each question in turn.

The Hebrew word the Torah uses to describe the leaders Moses selected is "anashim,"¹ often used to denote men of distinction. Rashi, therefore, states that "at that point in time they were fitting (literally 'kosher')." From this comment we get the impression that Moses was confident about the mission because he had entrusted it to outstanding individuals.

This impression is significantly dented by Rashi's explanation for why Moses' changed Joshua's name from Hoshea to Yehoshua: "He [Moses] prayed for him: may G d save you from the plan of the spies (Yehoshua means "G d save")."² Why would Moses pray for Joshua's salvation if all was well?

If something had changed in the very short duration from the men's selection to their actual departure – which seems unlikely in itself – why didn't Moses abort the operation? Rashi later comments on the Biblical words, "They went and they came to Moses,"³ that their going on the mission and their return were of the same kind: "As their coming was with an evil plan, so their going was with an evil plan." So why did Moses allow them to depart?

It is true that from the outset Moses was aware that the Almighty was unhappy with the whole idea. As Rashi explains elsewhere, when Moses first presented the idea to G d, he was asked, "Why do they need to inspect the land? Is it not enough that I told them that the land is good?"⁴ The reason Moses did not veto the idea is also provided by Rashi in some detail: Moses was calling their bluff. He hoped that by agreeing to send a group to check out the land, they would see that he had nothing to hide and would drop the idea. When they did not drop their demand, Moses felt he had to follow through to prove all was fine.

But we have evidence that Moses was specifically worried about the fate of the mission, so how did he allow it to proceed?

It is also difficult to understand how outstanding men, carefully chosen by Moses because of their suitability for the role, could have been so quickly and easily corrupted. They not only deviated from their mission, but ended up advocating for the complete opposite agenda, declaring the prospect of entering the land unviable. What can explain such a dramatic transformation?

These are core questions that critically undermine our understanding of the story.

The Rebbe characteristically suggests that the reason we have these questions is because we are missing something fundamental.

We are accustomed to calling this group “the 12 spies.” Every child learns about “the 12 spies” in school. No one would think to question this. But the Rebbe does – dramatically so. “Where,” the Rebbe asks, “are they called spies?”

Astonishingly, the answer is: not once. The Torah never refers to them as spies! Rather, they are repeatedly called “tourists,” visitors. Moses never sent spies; he sent tourists!

Spies and tourists are not only different; they are complete opposites. The tourist is an innocent visitor who is just trying to have a good time. The spy is a sinister figure who comes with devious intent. A tourist has nothing to hide, while the spy conceals a devious plot. Tourists go to see the nicest and most impressive parts of the place. Spies do the opposite – they are looking to see all the unsavory aspects, searching for every weakness. Moses told them to go on a tour and return with impressions of their travel. He did not send them to spy and scheme.

What happened was that members of the delegation felt their talents were not being put to full use. “If we are going to visit the land anyway,” they contemplated, “why not do some helpful spying while we are there?” So, the idea began to develop that they would throw in a little spying for good measure. This is what is known as “mission creep.”

When Moses prayed for Joshua, his request was that he be spared their “plan.” Rashi says that Caleb, the only other member of the delegation that stuck to the mission, prayed at the graves of the forefathers that he not be persuaded to “join his colleagues’ plan.”⁵ The word “plan” seems an odd choice here. It is a highly neutral term that does not imply any wrongdoing. Would it not have been better to use the term “plot” to describe their scheme? But “plot” would be the wrong term, because they never hatched any plot. All they had was a plan – a little extra spying on the side – and that seemed pretty innocent to start with. These were highly suitable people, let us remember. Moses trusted them and their abilities. But that “plan” of theirs was not the intention of the mission, and it ended up derailing it entirely.

Moses was sufficiently concerned to pray that Joshua not join their plan to become spies, but he did not expect things to go so badly wrong that it would justify canceling the trip. Pulling out would have been highly controversial, and there was nothing of substance to point to for aborting it. Of course, in hindsight, we can see that it had the makings of an “evil plan” from the outset, even though to start with there really was no devious intent. By flipping from tourists to spies they fundamentally changed mode and became ripe for steep deterioration and a sharp turn towards a corrupted mission.

We have all been recruited by G d for a mission, which is to study Torah and observe its mitzvot. Just as those spies did, it may be tempting at times to add our own ideas for the mission – purely to enhance the mission, of course. For example, one may think that as we are commanded to put a mezuzah on our doorposts, that perhaps we should put one on both sides of the door, to make them even more visible. But that is how things get derailed. We need to stick to the designated goal, so that we do not lose our way and find ourselves losing track of our mission.

Footnotes:

1. Number 13:3.
2. Numbers 13:16.
3. Numbers 13:26.
4. Deuteronomy 1:22.

5. Number 12:22.

Adapted from *Likkutei Sichot, Vol. 33, Parshat Shelach I.*

* Rabbi of Cong. Ahavas Yisrael of Pomona, N.Y and founder/Chief Executive of Tag International Development, a charitable organization that focuses on sharing Israeli expertise with developing countries.

https://www.chabad.org/parshah/article_cdo/aid/5142767/jewish/How-Did-the-Mission-of-the-Twelve-Spies-Go-So-Wrong.htm

Shelach: What is Your Morning Affirmation?

by Rabbi Yosef Y. Alperowitz *

"I offer thanks to You, living and eternal King, for You have mercifully restored my soul within me; Your faithfulness is great." — Modeh Ani prayer recited upon awakening

In this week's parsha, we read about the mitzvah of challah, separating the first portion from a batch of dough, as the verse says: "Of the first of your dough you shall give a portion (challah) to G-d."

During the times of the Temple, this portion of bread was given to the priest. Nowadays, the dough is simply set aside and burnt. Nevertheless, the lessons of this mitzvah still apply today.

The word the Torah uses for "dough" is "arisa," which also means "bed." Thus, the original verse can also be translated as: "Of the first of your beds you shall give a portion to G-d."

As such, the verse can be understood as a mitzvah to give the first "portion" of our day to G-d: to acknowledge Him the moment we awake. For the manner in which we begin our day, affects the entire day. Indeed in the Modeh Ani prayer we accept G-d as the "living and eternal King." What we are saying is that G-d is in charge, and we will follow his orders all day long.

Furthermore, we are required to thank G-d for every pleasure we have, and, appreciating kindness at the very first opportunity, is basic protocol among all mankind. For this reason, the Modeh Ani, which thanks G-d for restoring life, is recited while still on our beds, immediately upon awaking—even prior to the ritual washing of the hands.

This emphasizes that nothing—not even impurity—can defile the "Modeh Ani of a Jew." Our essence, the neshama, remains intact despite any external impurities.

— from *Pearls For The Shabbos Table*

Rabbi Yosef B. Friedman
Kehot Publication Society
291 Kingston Ave., Brooklyn, NY 11213

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Covenant and Conversation

Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, z"l

Confidence - It was perhaps the single greatest collective failure of leadership in the Torah. Ten of the spies whom Moses had sent to spy out the land came back with a report calculated to demoralise the nation.

"We came to the land to which you sent us. It flows with milk and honey, and this is its fruit. However, the people who dwell in the land are strong, and the cities are fortified and very large... We are not able to go up against the people, for they are stronger than we are... The land, through which we have gone to spy it out, is a land that devours its inhabitants, and all the people that we saw in it are of great height... We seemed to ourselves like grasshoppers, and so we seemed to them." (Num. 13:27-33)

This was nonsense, and they should have known it. They had left Egypt, the greatest empire of the ancient world, after a series of plagues that brought that great country to its knees. They had crossed the seemingly impenetrable barrier of the Red Sea. They had fought and defeated the Amalekites, a ferocious warrior nation. They had even sung, along with their fellow Israelites, a song at the sea that contained the words:

The peoples have heard; they tremble;
Pangs have seized the inhabitants of
Philistia.

Now are the chiefs of Edom dismayed;
Trembling seizes the leaders of Moab;
All the inhabitants of Canaan have melted
away. (Ex. 15:14-15)

They should have known that the people of the land were afraid of them, not the other way round. And so it was, as Rahab told the spies sent by Joshua forty years later:

I know that the Lord has given you the land, and that the fear of you has fallen upon us, and that all the inhabitants of the land melt away before you. For we have heard how the Lord dried up the water of the Red Sea before you when you came out of Egypt, and what you did to the two Kings of the Amorites who were beyond the Jordan, to Sihon and Og, whom you devoted to destruction. And as soon as we heard it, our hearts melted, and there was no spirit left in any man because of you, for the Lord your God, He is God in the heavens

Sponsored by Elaine Millen
on the occasion of the yahrzeits of
her parents, Rose Gottlieb, z"l, (21 Sivan) and
Sam Gottlieb, z"l, (29 Sivan)

above and on the earth beneath. (Joshua 2:9-11)

Only Joshua and Caleb among the twelve showed leadership. They told the people that the conquest of the land was eminently achievable because God was with them. The people did not listen. But the two leaders received their reward. They alone of their generation lived to enter the land. More than that: their defiant statement of faith and their refusal to be afraid shines as brightly now as it did thirty-three centuries ago. They are eternal heroes of faith.

One of the fundamental tasks of any leader, from president to parent, is to give people a sense of confidence: in themselves, in the group of which they are a part, and in the mission itself. A leader must have faith in the people they lead, and inspire that faith in them. As Rosabeth Moss Kanter of the Harvard Business School writes in her book Confidence, "Leadership is not about the leader, it is about how he or she builds the confidence of everyone else." [1] Confidence, by the way, is Latin for "having faith together."

The truth is that in no small measure a law of self-fulfilling prophecy applies in the human arena. Those who say, "We cannot do it" are probably right, as are those who say, "We can." If you lack confidence you will lose. If you have it – solid, justified confidence based on preparation and past performance – you will win. Not always, but often enough to triumph over setbacks and failures. That, as mentioned in our study of parshat Beshallach, is what the story of Moses' hands is about, during the battle against the Amalekites. When the Israelites look up, they win. When they look down they start to lose.

That is why the negative definition of Jewish identity that has so often prevailed in modern times (Jews are the people who are hated, Israel is the nation that is isolated, to be Jewish is to refuse to grant Hitler a posthumous victory) is so misconceived, and why one in two Jews who have been brought up on this doctrine choose to marry out and discontinue the Jewish journey. [2]

Harvard economic historian David Landes, in his The Wealth and Poverty of Nations, explores the question of why some countries fail to grow economically while others succeed spectacularly. After more than 500 pages of close analysis, he reaches this conclusion: In this world, the optimists have it, not because they are always right, but because they are positive. Even when wrong, they are

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Mynda Kate Barenholtz, A"H,
whose 20th Yahrzeit is this coming Wednesday, 29 Sivan

positive, and that is the way of achievement, correction, improvement, and success. Educated, eyes-open optimism pays; pessimism can only offer the empty consolation of being right. [3]

I prefer the word "hope" to "optimism." Optimism is the belief that things will get better; hope is the belief that together we can make things better. No Jew, knowing Jewish history, can be an optimist, but no Jew worthy of the name abandons hope. The most pessimistic of the Prophets, from Amos to Jeremiah, were still voices of hope. By their defeatism, the spies failed as leaders and as Jews. To be a Jew is to be an agent of hope.

The most remarkable by far of all the commentators on the episode of the spies was the Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson. He raised the obvious question. The Torah emphasises that the spies were all leaders, princes, heads of tribes. They knew that God was with them, and that with His help there was nothing they could not do. They knew that God would not have promised them a land they could not conquer. Why then did they come back with a negative report?

His answer turns the conventional understanding of the spies upside-down. They were, he said, not afraid of defeat. They were afraid of victory. What they said to the people was one thing, but what led them to say it was another entirely.

What was their situation now, in the wilderness? They lived in close and continuous proximity to God. They drank water from a rock. They ate manna from heaven. They were surrounded by the Clouds of Glory. Miracles accompanied them along the way.

What would be their situation in the land? They would have to fight wars, plough the land, plant seed, gather harvests, create and sustain an army, an economy and a welfare system. They would have to do what every other nation does: live in the real world of empirical space. What would become of their relationship with God? Yes, He would still be present in the rain that made crops grow, in the blessings of field and town, and in the Temple in Jerusalem that they would visit three times a year, but not visibly, intimately, miraculously, as He was in the desert. This is what the spies feared: not failure but success.

By Robert & Angie Liberman
on the occasion of the yahrzeit of
Samuel Liberman z"l

This, said the Rebbe, was a noble sin but still a sin. God wants us to live in the real world of nations, economies and armies. God wants us, as He put it, to create “a dwelling place in the lower world.” He wants us to bring the Shechinah, the Divine Presence, into everyday life. It is easy to find God in total seclusion and escape from responsibility. It is hard to find God in the office, in business, in farms and fields and factories and finance. But it is that hard challenge to which we are summoned: to create a space for God in the midst of this physical world that He created and seven times pronounced good. That is what ten of the spies failed to understand, and it was a spiritual failure that condemned an entire generation to forty years of futile wandering.

The Rebbe’s words ring true today even more loudly than they did when he first spoke them. They are a profound statement of the Jewish task. They are also a fine exposition of a concept that entered psychology only relatively recently – fear of success.^[4] We are all familiar with the idea of fear of failure. It is what keeps many of us from taking risks, preferring instead to stay within our comfort zone.

No less real, though, is fear of success. We want to succeed: so we tell ourselves and others. But often unconsciously we fear what success may bring: new responsibilities, expectations on the part of others that we may find hard to fulfil, and so on. So we fail to become what we might have become had someone given us faith in ourselves.

The antidote to fear, both of failure and success, lies in the passage with which the parsha ends: the command of tzitzit (Num. 15:38-41). We are commanded to place fringes on our garments, among them a thread of blue. Blue is the colour of the sky and of heaven. Blue is the colour we see when we look up (at least in Israel; in Britain, more often than not we see clouds). When we learn to look up, we overcome our fears. Leaders give people confidence by teaching them to look up. We are not grasshoppers unless we think we are. [1] Rosabeth Moss Kanter, *Confidence*, Random House, 2005, 325.

[2] National Jewish Population Survey 1990: A Portrait of Jewish Americans, Pew Research Center, October 1, 2013.

[3] David Landes, *The Wealth and Poverty of Nations*, London, Little, Brown, 1998, 524.

[4] Sometimes called the “Jonah complex” after the Prophet. See Abraham Maslow, *The Farther Reaches of Human Nature*, Harmondsworth, Penguin Books, 1977, 35-40.

Shabbat Shalom: Rabbi Shlomo Riskin

“Send, for yourselves, men, who will seek out [vayaturu] the Land of Canaan that I am giving to the People of Israel” [Num. 13:2].

Of the sins that the People of Israel commit in the Bible, the most serious of all takes place in

our portion of Shelach. The spies’ severe report directly causes the death of the desert generation. However, it is difficult to understand that the suggestion to establish such an ill-fated reconnaissance team came directly from the Almighty. What did God want the spies to actually report?

Rabbi Elchanan Samet suggests that the answer lies in the verb form used in the charge given by the Almighty: “Send, for yourselves, men who will seek out [vayaturu] the land...” Crucially, the verb tur appears no less than twelve times in this sequence, the very number of the members of the delegation itself.

Further analysis reveals that, in other Biblical contexts, the verb form tur is used similarly to the way it is used in our Biblical portion, as in, “the Lord God who walks before you, He will do battle for you...to seek out [latur] for you a place in which you may settle your encampment” (*ibid.*, 1:23).

Even the prophet Ezekiel declares that “on that day I shall raise my hand for them to bring them out of the Land of Egypt to the land which I have sought out [tarti] for them. A land flowing with milk and honey, a most precious land for them among all the other lands” [20:6].

In contrast, in Moses’ retelling of the story [Deut. 1:22, 24], the people say: “Let us send men before us that they may check out [vayachp’ru] the land...and spy [va’yerag’lu] it out,” using two verb forms very different from the vayaturu used by God in our portion.

The power of the specific verb form tur used by God is even more clearly expressed in the very conclusion of this Torah reading, where we encounter that same verb form in a totally different but most revealing context.

The commandment to wear tzitzit [fringes] on the corners of our four-cornered garments includes a rationale: “...so that you not seek out or lust [taturu] after your heart and after your eyes which lead you to commit acts of illicit lust [zonim] after them” [Num. 15:39].

And when punishing the People of Israel, God once again makes reference to the sin of the spies as having been an act of illicit lust (z’nut), “and your children shall be shepherds in the desert for forty years, thereby bearing [the sin] of your illicit lust [z’nutekhem]” [*ibid.* 14:33].

God was not interested in a reconnaissance mission to scout out the land—or even in an intelligence delegation to assess the military practicability of engaging in an act of conquest. Perhaps that was what the people had in mind when they asked Moses to send men before them to check out the land, which probably meant to see by which routes it would be best to enter and which cities ought to be attacked first [Deut. 1:22-23].

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The Almighty had a very different design in mind. God wanted to impress upon them the uniqueness, the chosenness of the land that He had picked for them, the land that would be their ultimate resting place, the land that was very good, which produced luscious fruits and full-bodied animals, the land whose produce developed strong and capable people. God wanted them to conquer the land with great anticipation and overwhelming desire [Num. 13:1-2, Nahmanides *ad loc.*].

The Bible refers to both the Torah of Israel and the Land of Israel as a *morasha*, [heritage] (Ex. 6:8; Deut. 33:4), which our sages linked to *me’orasa*, “betrothed” and “beloved”. According to Rabbi Soloveitchik, the conquest of the Torah of Israel as well as of the Land of Israel by the People of Israel require strong feelings of love for each.

And just as the rabbis of the Talmud command us not to marry a woman unless we first see her and know that we love her [Babylonian Talmud, Kiddushin 41a], so did God ask Moses to send a group who would give the kind of visual description of the Land of Israel to the People of Israel that would inspire them to love the land and even lust after it, in the best sense of the word.

God understood that such an emotional attachment was absolutely crucial if the People of Israel were to overcome the many obstacles involved in conquering the land, settling it, and forging within it a holy nation and kingdom of priests.

Alas, the people—especially the spies—did not understand the Divine command. Their sin was in misunderstanding the purpose of their journey; they took it to be a scouting enterprise rather than an inspirational foretaste of what waited in store for them after their conquest, a reconnaissance mission rather than an observer’s picture of a beautiful and luscious patrimony worthy of their love and sacrifice.

Our generation—so similar to the one that went from the darkness of Egypt to the light of freedom and stood at the entrance to the Promised Land—must do whatever is necessary to recapture and strengthen the love of the Land of Israel if we are to succeed in properly settling it and developing it into our haven of world redemption.

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

Of Grasshoppers and Jewish Pride

Just as there were six million victims, so were there at least six million stories. One of those stories seems to have occurred many times, because I’ve heard it told by quite a few survivors. It is the story of two or more Jews, witnessing the sadistic and murderous scenes around them, but momentarily spared from being victims themselves.

In the midst of that horror, one Jew turns to the other and says, "Yankel, you are always urging us to be thankful to God for what we have. What do we have to thank Him for now? Our brothers and sisters and children are being tortured and butchered in front of our eyes, and, in all likelihood, these Nazis will come after us next!"

To which Yankel replies, "We can be thankful that we are Jews and not Nazis. Not only can we be thankful, but we can be proud. We can be proud that we are Jews and have retained our humanity, and not become the beasts that these Nazis have become. We can be proud that we can still claim to have been created *b'tzelem Elokim*, in the image of God. Our tormentors have forever relinquished that claim."

There are numerous other stories told with similar motifs, indicating that Jews were able to retain their Jewish pride even in the unspeakably horrible conditions of the Holocaust.

Thankfully, Jewish pride has also been amply manifested in much happier circumstances. The encouraging cheers which echoed across the world as Jews from behind the Iron Curtain heroically struggled for their freedom, and the celebratory cheers which resounded when they finally achieved that freedom, expressed that pride dramatically. "Am Yisrael Chai, the Jewish nation lives," were the words chosen to express that pride.

Jewish pride is sometimes even evidenced in American culture, such as in the boasting one hears about the Hank Greenbergs and Sandy Koufax who whose Jewish identities were apparent even to the baseball fans of yesteryear.

In more significant areas of human accomplishment, have we not all occasionally gloated over the disproportionately numerous Jewish Nobel Prize winners in science and literature? Do not the lifesaving medical discoveries of generations of Jewish physicians stir Jewish pride in our hearts?

Most important, of course, are the contributions that Jewish leaders have made, from the times of Abraham to this very day, to human religious development and to the advancement of ethics and morality for all mankind.

It is sad, therefore, and some would say tragic, that Jewish pride seems to be on the decline in recent times. The consequences of such a decline are poignantly illustrated in this week's Torah portion, Parshat Shelach (Numbers 13:1-15:41).

We read this week of the adventures, better misadventures, of the spies. They spent forty days scouting out the Promised Land and discovered much that was very good. But in

their report back to "Moses and Aaron and the whole Israelite community," they chose to emphasize that "the people who inhabit the country are powerful and the cities are fortified and very large."

When Caleb, the very embodiment of Jewish pride, confidently assured the people that "we shall surely overcome it," they shouted words of rebuttal, culminating in this assertion: "... we saw giants there, and we looked like grasshoppers to ourselves, and so we must have looked to them." (Numbers 13:33).

Grasshoppers! No more, no less.

An individual with such a puny self image is doomed to a life of mediocrity, if not failure and frustration. A nation which perceives itself as grasshoppers, which lacks proper pride in itself, has already fallen victim to God's curse: "And I will break your proud glory..." (Leviticus 26:19) Such a nation cannot live up to its mission.

There are those who would object and insist that the Almighty wants us to be humble and that pride is a negative value. To those, we must object that just as there is a "false pride," which is really nothing but arrogance, there is also "false humility," which leads one to shirk responsibility and to eschew greatness.

I have at least once before referred in this column to some of my classmates in high school and college and yeshiva who were voted "most likely to succeed" but who by no means succeeded. Many of them suffered from this very "false humility," and it resulted in their failure to use the talents and skills with which they were blessed in a properly prideful manner. That was their loss, and a loss to the world.

The Jewish people, as a nation, can easily fall prey to this "false humility." As a nation, despite our faults and shortcomings, we have much to be proud of. We have much to teach the world spiritually because of our rich biblical and rabbinic heritage. And we continue to contribute to mankind's material welfare in countless ways.

We would do well to heed the pithy counsel of an early 20th century Chassidic sage, Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak of Lubavitch, who said, "Man must be proud, but he must grow higher and higher, and not wider and wider." What he meant to say is that if we use our pride to grow wider, we are bound to infringe upon another person's space. That is selfish arrogance, and not proper pride.

But if our pride motivates us not to grow wider, but to grow ever higher and higher, we displace no one. Instead, we draw closer to the Almighty and do what He demands of us.

Jewish pride takes us higher and higher. Am Yisrael Chai.

Likutei Divrei Torah

Torah.Org: Rabbi Yissocher Frand

Kiddush HaShem: Plan B

In Parshas Shlach, the Almighty was prepared to destroy the Jewish people because of the negative report of the Spies and the ready acceptance by the nation of that slanderous report regarding Eretz Yisrael. Moshe Rabbeinu pleaded on their behalf arguing that the Egyptians would say "Because Hashem lacked the ability to bring this people to the Land that He had sworn to give them He slaughtered them in the wilderness."

[Bamidbar 14:16] Moshe then invokes the Thirteen Attributes of Mercy, culminating with the prayer "Forgive now the iniquity of this people according to the greatness of Your kindness and as You have forgiven this people from Egypt until now." The conclusion is: "And Hashem said, 'I have forgiven in accordance with your words (salachti k'dverecha)." [Bamidbar 14:18-20]

What do the words salachti k'dverecha mean? Moshe Rabbeinu had offered two arguments why the people should be forgiven. First, he invoked the Thirteen Attributes of Mercy and then he argued that if they were to be killed out all at once in a plague it would cause a desecration of G-d's Name as the nations would say "because G-d was not able..." The implication of "I have forgiven in accordance with your words" is that this time even the Thirteen Attributes of Mercy were not sufficient for receiving forgiveness. It required Moshe's extra argument — lest the Egyptians say that G-d was not able to fulfill His promise — to win forgiveness.

The next pasuk [verse] continues "But as I live — and the glory of Hashem shall fill the entire world." [Bamidbar 14:21] This is a difficult pasuk to explain. Rashi gives one explanation, which I am not going to discuss, but the Netziv [1816-1893] in his Chumash commentary (HaEmek Davar) says that even though this pasuk is somewhat ambiguous, King Dovid in Psalms fills in for us the blanks in terms of understanding the pasuk. What is not so clear in Sefer Bamidbar, Dovid HaMelech clarifies in Sefer Tehillim.

We read in Tehillim: "Then He lifted up His hand [in an oath] against them, to cast them down in the wilderness, and to cast down their descendants among the nations, and to scatter them among the lands." [Chapter 106:26-27] The Netziv writes when the pasuk in Parshas Shlach says "and the glory of HaShem shall fill the entire world" — G-d promises "I will make a Kiddush HaShem." How will this Kiddush HaShem occur? Dovid HaMelech tells us: "...and to scatter them among the lands." The Kiddush HaShem will be implemented by spreading out the Jewish people throughout all the nations of the world.

What does this mean? The Almighty wished to sanctify His Name. He wished to show the entire world how He took Klal Yisrael out of

Egypt, how He cared for them in the wilderness, and how He brought them into Eretz Yisrael. Had the sin of the Spies not occurred, they would have gone into the Land of Israel with miracles and wonders to the extent that all the nations of the world would recognize that “G-d is the L-rd” (Hashem hu Elokim).

But what did happen? The nation got cold feet. They did not trust in the Ribono shel Olam. After all that they saw in Egypt and in the Wilderness, they still lacked faith. Therefore, the Almighty said “Okay. If that is the way you want it, you will not go into Eretz Yisrael with miracles and wonders. The Kiddush HaShem which could have been created will not be created. You will enter the Land and conquer it through natural means and the Kiddush HaShem will be delayed. How and where will the Kiddush Hashem occur? It will occur throughout the course of history because I will scatter you to the four corners of the globe and a miraculous thing will happen: You will survive as a nation.”

This is something that history has never seen before. A nation spending so much of its existence in exile — more time in the history of the nation outside of its homeland than inside of it — is nothing less than a revealed miracle. This is what constituted the Kiddush HaShem testifying to Divine Providence guiding the fate of His Chosen People.

L’Havdil [distinguishing between sacred and profane matters], the Dalai Lama, who is trying to preserve the Tibetan people so that they should not be swallowed up by the Chinese, is trying to use the Jewish people as a paradigm. “If we emulate what the Jews did and maintain our identity in our diaspora as the Jews did, then we can preserve our nation as well.” What he fails to realize is that the Tibetan people do not have a Torah and they do not have the relationship that we have with the Ribono shel Olam. Maintaining a national identity through thousands of years of exile from a homeland requires nothing less than a nisqleh [an open miracle].

Rav Yakov Emden (Yavet”z) [1697-1776] writes in the introduction to his Siddur, “Will any philosopher be able to argue that this (the preservation of Jewish identity in exile throughout history) is just a natural occurrence? This surpasses in my mind all the miracles and wonders the Almighty did for our ancestors in Egypt. The longer the exile continues, the greater the miracle becomes.”

This reminds me of a sentence I read in a very interesting book called Reb Chatzkel [Art Scroll; 2007] about Rav Yechezkel Levenstein [1895-1974], the mashgiach ruchani of the Mir Yeshiva in Poland, Shanghai, and America who was later affiliated with the Ponovezh Yeshiva in Bnei Brak. The book in great part is a story of the Mir Yeshiva and its sojourn from Mir to Vilna to Kobe Japan to Shanghai

China and eventually — after the war — to America and to Eretz Yisrael.

Rav Chatzkel makes a statement that is truly mind-boggling. He says the miracle of the salvation of the Mir Yeshiva is greater than the miracle of Purim. In spite of the fact that all the factors that went into the salvation of the Jewish people in the days of Mordechai and Esther were clearly Divine Providence, the nes of the hatzalah of the Mir Yeshiva was greater. If one reads all those chapters about the miracles that went on in Shanghai:

How so many times they thought that “this was it” and how time after time they were miraculously saved

How the Russians let them take the train across Siberia and how they thought the KGB were going to kill them at any time

How they escaped from Kobe to Shanghai and how they had to travel on this rickety unseaworthy old boat which had to make three trips across a wide body of water to transport the entire Yeshiva (the boat sank on the return trip after dropping off the last load of Yeshiva students)

It is impossible to escape the conclusion that the Hand of G-d was visibly present throughout their miraculous escape from the horrors of the Holocaust. Towards the end of the war, when Shanghai was bombed, none of the Yeshiva students were killed. It was all miraculous!

This is exactly what Rav Yakov Emden wrote: The existence of Klal Yisrael in the Galus is a bigger nes than Yetzias Mitzrayim. It is an open miracle. This is what is alluded to by the pasuk in our Parsha (as explained by Dovid HaMelech in Tehillim) — “the glory of Hashem shall fill the entire world.”

The Kiddush HaShem that was supposed to occur with the grand entrance of the Jewish people into Eretz Yisrael in the days of Moshe had to be accomplished by other means — Plan B to achieve Sanctification of the Divine Name. Plan B, unfortunately, triggered all the exiles that we have had to endure. However, it must be acknowledged that survival in the face of such a torturous exile is clear testimony to the Hand of G-d that miraculously guarantees the survival of the Jewish people against all odds.

Why The Mitzvah of Tzitzis Is Voluntarily As Opposed To Obligatory

Rav Asher Weiss in his Minchas Asher on Chumash asks a very interesting question. The Gemara says that the mitzvah of Tzitzis is equal to all other mitzvos in the Torah [Nedarim 25a]. This is a very easy mitzvah to perform. All a person needs to do is to go to a Judaica store, buy himself a Tallis Katan for twenty dollars and wear them in order to fulfill the mitzvah of Tzitzis.

The irony of the fact is — and many people do not know this — that a person is not required

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to wear Tzitzis at all. The technical requirement of the mitzvah of Tzitzis is that someone who wears a four-cornered garment must attach Tzitzis to the corners of the garment. If a person does not wear a four-cornered garment — and technically speaking all the clothes that we wear today do not have “four corners” — he does not need to wear Tzitzis. Even someone who wears a long Lithuanian style frock (as is common among many Roshei Yeshiva) which has a slit in the back, giving the appearance of a “four cornered” garment is not required to attach fringes to the frock. This is because one of the corners is always rounded — check it out next time you see one who wears such a frock.

Technically speaking, then, a person does not need to put on Tzitzis. Of course, the Tur writes that any person who has brains in his head will avail himself of this special mitzvah because of the guarantee that “you will glance upon them and you will remember all the commandments of the L-rd”. There is a special segulah and reward that comes from wearing Tzitzis so anyone with any sense of spirituality and desire for closeness to the Almighty and His mitzvos will buy himself a special four-cornered garment to fulfill this wondrous commandment. However, technically speaking that is not required.

The Minchas Asher asks — if this is such a special mitzvah why didn’t the Torah make it obligatory? We do not say “If you have a pair of Tefillin, put them on in the morning.” No. You must put on Tefillin in the morning. Failing to put on Tefillin makes you in violation of neglecting a positive commandment. Someone who does not recite Krias Shma is in violation of neglecting a positive commandment. If someone does not hear Shofar on Rosh Hashanah, he is in violation of neglecting a positive commandment. Why then, if on does not put on Tzitzis is everything is fine and dandy. How could this be the case when we are talking about a mitzvah that is “equal in weight to all other mitzvos”? It is a paradox. It is an anomaly.

Rav Asher Weiss addresses this issue by quoting a Gemara in Menachos [43b] — Rabbi Meir used to say: “Greater is the punishment (for not wearing) the white (threads) than the punishment (for not wearing) the techeles (threads).” The Torah requires that the fringes we place on the corners of our garment contain both white threads and blue-like, techeles, threads. Many people say we do not have techeles today so all we have are the white threads. Techeles was always much more expensive and much harder to come by. They need to be made from the dye of a chilazon aquatic creature. Therefore, the Gemara says that if a person fails to put Techeles on his Tzitzis, the punishment is not that bad. However, a person who fails to put on the white threads, which are easy to come by, then

the Almighty has a significant complaint against him.

Rabbi Meir backs up his statement with an analogy: "This can be compared to an earthly king who gave instruction to two servants. He asked one servant to bring back a seal made out of clay and he asked the second servant to bring back a seal made out of gold. Both were negligent and did not do what they were asked. Who will receive the greater punishment? Clearly, the servant charged with bringing back the clay seal, which is readily available, is deserving of greater punishment than the servant charged with bringing back the hard to acquire gold seal."

The analogy of the Gemara refers to Tzitzis as a "seal of clay". Tosfos there explains that seals of clay were typically attached to the bodies of slaves to show they belonged to a particular owner. Likewise, Tosfos writes, our Tzitzis is our "seal" indicating that we too our slaves. Even though the word "slave" (eved) or even "servant" offends the ear and the sensibility of modern man, in Judaism that is not the case. We take pride in the fact that "avadei hem" (they are My slaves) [Bamidbar 25:42; 25:55]. We are "servants of the L-rd."

How do we demonstrate that we are servants to the Almighty? This, explains Tosfos in Menachos [43b; D.H. "Chosam shel Tit"], is by wearing our "clay seal". What is our "clay seal?" It is our Tzitzis!

If that is the case, says the Michas Asher, it is a much bigger statement when someone volunteers to be the "slave" of the Almighty than when someone is forced into wearing that mark of slavery. This is why Tzitzis is not an obligatory mitzvah. Tefillin? Yes. Shofar? Yes. Matzah? Yes. However, the whole purpose of Tzitzis is a statement, a demonstration of "I am Your slave. I accept You as my Master." If a person is forced to put them on, the statement is not as loud. It is not as clear. When I go out and voluntarily buy that pair of Tzitzis, I am declaring, "Almighty, I want to be your slave."

Dvar Torah: Chief Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis

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 Cana'an. Ten of them delivered a highly irresponsible and misleading report to the nation. They told them that Cana'an 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 Cana'an 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 "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. 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: "if not now, then when?"

OTS Dvar Torah

Optical Illusion - Rabbi Baron Dasberg

This is one of the central pedagogical questions we grapple with – how do we forge our children (and ourselves) into people of faith?

We once thought that we could achieve anything through reason. If we would only use logical reasoning to explain our faith, we could demonstrate, beyond a shadow of a doubt, that the principles of our faith are true, and then, any wise and sensible person would have to accept our faith. Beyond the dispute over whether the principles of faith can be proven, it turns out that a person's way of life can't be redirected through cognitive reasoning alone (like the health care professionals who continue smoking, even though they are completely cognizant of how harmful smoking is). So, we can influence others through emotion, with the warm embrace and peace of

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mind that our faith instills in us. We can fortify a person's will and strengthen their inner energy and commitment to achieving their goal. We can draw people nearer using psychological and sociological tools, as well as other tools.

However, our Parasha suggests a completely different direction to take – to draw closer to Hashem and the observance of His mitzvot by looking at the blue fringes of our tzizit – "and you shall look at it and recall all the commandments of Hashem and observe them, so that you do not follow your heart and eyes in your lustful urge."

So how does it work? How can a person connect to a deeply-felt faith and the constant performance of the mitzvot simply by looking at something?

To answer that question, the Midrash uses another magnificent power that we have – the power of imagination. The Midrash explains as follows: "Techelet resembles the grass, and the grass resembles the sea, and the sea resembles the firmament, and the firmament resembles the rainbow, and the rainbow resembles the cloud, and the cloud resembles the throne [of Hashem], and the throne resembles the splendor [of Hashem]" (Midrash Rabbah Bamidbar, 14:3)

Indeed, you'd need to be very imaginative to be able to like techelet to the grass, the grass to the sea, or a cloud to the Throne of Splendor. Clearly, this extended simile is indeed a very challenging concept to grasp. Will gazing at the tassel of techelet fill my imagination with images and carry me off to lofty concepts like Hashem's splendor?

Seemingly, the entire midrash has now entered the realm of optical illusion, a realm that blends reality with how we perceive it, as our imaginations challenge the "objectiveness" of our reason. The grass in the midrash is individual objects, individual blades blowing in the wind, but when they all move together, they begin to resemble the rolling waves of the sea. The sea isn't truly blue – it's just a reflection of the sky. The sky itself isn't blue, either. What we are actually seeing in the sky are the waves, high above, that are scattered as sunlight is broken apart. If we see the range of frequencies from the shattered sunrays, we'll see a spectrum of colors reminiscent of a rainbow. But that isn't the true color of the light, either. It's just the illusion we see when looking at it from our vantage point. The clouds are responsible for breaking apart the sunlight, and those clouds change into many shapes through a set of optical illusions. The realms of the mind and the imagination coalesce.

The same goes for how we perceive the ways of Hashem in our world. Sometimes, we analyze an isolated phenomenon (like a blade of grass), but isolated phenomena don't truly

reflect Hashem's true workings in this world, and only a wider lens can truly reveal His ways to us. Sometimes, what we are seeing is just a reflection of what He's really done, like the sea. We can't truly appreciate His immense light, rather merely various manifestations of it that we can sense through vision. Some are simple sights to behold (such as the blue color of the sky), some are more complex (such as a rainbow), and others yet can only be perceived as the breaking point of light and benevolence (like the appearance of the clouds). All the things we physically sense aren't Hashem Himself, but only His "throne", or His "splendor".

The tassel of techelet catapults us into the realms of our imaginations. It reminds us that imagination can evoke fears that paralyze an entire nation and bar its way to the Promised Land, but imagination can also connect us with the Higher Worlds, places our reasoning could never reach.

When we set out on our journey into our imaginations, we must remember that we won't be packing our suitcases with skepticism and the tools of criticism. Instead, we'll be taking along our will, our adherence, our connection, our reverence and our love. Our minds will follow.

It would have been more appropriate to send women as spies

Rabbanit Renana Birnbaum

The spies understood their roles differently than what Moses had intended. What was the goal of their mission, and was it even necessary? What are the benefits of female leadership?

Parshat Shelach is a tragic story. Moses sent spies to the land of Canaan before the planned conquest by the people of Israel. Ultimately, this escapade ended in disaster, and doomed the nation of Israel to wandering in the desert for forty years. The entire generation of the desert never merited to enter the land of Israel.

Several questions emerge from this story. Why were the spies dispatched to begin with? Was all of this truly necessary? What was their mission, and what fell by the wayside? What kind of mission was it? Was it just an intelligence-gathering mission or a purely military operation? Or did it envision something entirely different?

As soon as we begin reading this story, we see that Moses' intention, in dispatching the spies, was at odds with the state of affairs within the nation. Both sides were well-intentioned, but they were misaligned.

Moses wanted to dispatch the spies in order to forge a connection between the nation and the land, as echoed in the words of our sages: "A man must not sanctify a woman before having seen her." Moses wanted to cause the spies to feel love for the land, and to find it appealing.

That would become a driving force for the future conquest. The princes of the tribes regarded the land as a commodity. They didn't feel they needed to work hard to acquire it, as one would need to toil to win over the heart of a woman. Moses' goal was to evoke a feeling of love for the land and bolster the faith of the princes in the land.

This faith needed to be created. The people of Israel, through their desert sojourns, had become habituated to a miraculous existence. Once they enter the land of Israel, Moses wants to re-educate the people to live a natural life. There, they would need to work and create, faithful that when Hashem's intervention was necessary, He would be there. They would lead normal, natural lives, infused with faith in Hashem. Surprisingly, the princes, who had experienced Hashem's wonders, had little faith. "We cannot attack that people, for it is stronger than we," they concluded.

Some people interpret the word *meraglim*, spies, as being connected to the word *margaliyot*, pearls; *meraglim* would recognize the pearls they would find along the way. Moses sent these tribal princes on an internal mission of reflection, meant to connect them with his thoughts. Moses thought that before they would enter the land, they would need to face danger, temptations, and challenges, and use their free choice to complete their mission. The deeper meaning of their mission was the faith entrusted in them, as people with intrinsic and extrinsic strength, to aspire to fulfill the will of Hashem, and have faith in divine providence.

Moses' mistake was that they weren't ready yet for this.

Though the emissaries that Moses sent were respectable dignitaries, they didn't understand the intent of their mission. They thought they were going on a classic espionage mission to evaluate whether the land could truly be conquered, and whether they were able to do it. Notably, they suffered from low self-esteem: "and we were like locusts in their eyes..." When a person doesn't believe in himself, he feels that others perceive him as a locust. This is a subjective perception that stems from a lack of self-confidence. Actually, it was the spies themselves that saw themselves as locusts. This leads us to the conclusion that a person's role and important status aren't enough to guarantee faith in Hashem. They didn't believe in their own abilities.

Some commentators believed that it was their positions that sabotaged their missions. They were actually concerned they would lose their status as princes once the people enter the land. They preferred to preserve their status and social footing in the desert, so they were in no rush to enter the land. According to these commentators, the conclusions they reached from their tour of the land weren't just the

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result of a lack of faith. They were also influenced by other considerations which led them astray. Moses had apparently realized that the princes' motives weren't pure, and that they stemmed from interests and personal gain, and that is why he wanted to reform them, by sending them on this mission.

The author of the *Kli Yakar*, in his commentary on the story of the spies, says the following: "Hashem said to Moses – it would have been better to have sent women [as spies], since they love the land, and would never speak ill of it."

Why did the *Kli Yakar* believe that women would have an advantage over men when it comes to love for the land of Israel? When trying to understand what the *Kli Yakar* meant by saying that women wouldn't speak ill of the land, I recalled a study on female leadership published in the eleventh edition of *Eretz Aheret* (2002), which stated as follows: "Male leadership focuses on the job. Men criticize and rule things out without a second thought. Their mode is rational-aggressive. In contrast, women lead differently. Women tend to lead with a more "social" style. They focus on creating a pleasant environment and provoking the enthusiasm of those they lead. They are unwavering in their faith, and less rational. They work on strengthening self-worth."

This is perhaps what the spies, who were tribal princes, lacked: the interactive and personal facet of leadership, the ability to lead an open and inclusive dialogue on the process toward the goal at hand, to release tension, and to make sure that everyone in the group finds his or her place, and understands the power of sharing in achieving the goal and maintaining faith in attaining that goal.

I am a big believer in the women's abilities to lead, and I am convinced that this type of leadership is one that includes others and causes them to grow. Women, who are fond of the land, would never speak ill of it.

Dvar Torah: TorahWeb.Org

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.

Most of us have returned to shuls and to yeshivos. 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.

Torah.Org Dvar Torah by Rabbi Label Lam

Who Is The Boss Here?

HASHEM said to Moshe, saying, "Send (Shelach) for yourself men who will scout the Land of Canaan, which I am giving to the children of Israel. You shall send one man each for his father's tribe; each one shall be a chieftain in their midst." (Bamidbar 13:1-2)

What started out looking like a noble venture lead by men of honor quickly became a national tragedy. What in the world went wrong? Now we are like forensic scientists approaching this entire episode as a crime scene with orange tape and police lights flashing. What went down here? We begin with twelve great men and in the end there only two that walked away unscathed and not corrupted. What was the major fault? What was their crime?

Some of the most profound conversations I have ever had were with young children that were sent to my office. One young fellow is sitting there in a defiant mood. I wait for him to calm down and I ask him sternly, "Who's the boss here!?" He looks up sheepishly and mumbles, "You!" I immediately shake my head no, and let him know, "Not me!" I ask again, "Who's the boss here?" He thinks for a bit and looks up at me again and says, "HASHEM!?" I tell him, "That's right! We both work for the same boss!"

The Midrash tells us that we each sent into this world to perform a mission, to do a uniquely customized job that no one else can do. It's not always easy to remember that fact. We live a large and distracting universe. Sometime we lose track of why we are here and Who it is that sent us. How do we remain loyal and connected to that mission?

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There's a Talmudic concept, "The messenger is like the one who sends him." A person is an extension of the one who sent him. We assume the power of attorney granted by whomever it is that we represent. We take on the power and proportion of the one who sends us. . Even a simple task like lighting a Shabbos candle is enhanced not so much by the originality or genius of the performer but by the connection to The One Who Commands him or her to do so. That's what a Mitzvah is. It's not just a good deed. It means connection, and to be in the company of. A Mitzvah creates and connects us with the sender and puts us in HASHEM's company. The deed is not less than an extension of the will of HASHEM, our G-d, King of the Universe. That is what shines forth in the context of a Mitzvah!

There's another factor at play as well. Let's say I was to approach the Governor's mansion at 3:00 o'clock AM and begin to knock on the door and demand a meeting with the Governor. Somebody would likely shout out, "Who goes there?" I might sheepishly answer, "Label Lam!" "Go away you fool!" they would appropriately respond and I would be made to leave. However if I was carrying a message from the President I would bang on the door more emphatically and when asked what the racket was all about I would forget at that moment about myself and I would answer with a sense overpowering urgency, "It's a message from the President!" The door would open wide! If I know who it is that I truly represent in the world then I gain the courage needed to perform my mission.

Maybe now we can understand the serious disconnect of the Meraglim, the spies. What was their failure? They went on this mission as representatives of the interests of the People of Israel. They assumed the most basic fears and limitations of the ones whom they represented. Then with those eyes they perceived the gravity and seemingly impossibility of the entering and conquering a land of giants. At the very end of the Parsha we are commanded, "And it will be to you for Tzitzis (fringes) and you will look upon it and you will remember all the Mitzvos (Commandments) of HASHEM and you will perform them and you will not stray after your hearts and after your eyes which you go straying after them. (Bamidbar 15:39) Tzitzis are a constant reminder, everywhere we turn. Who do you work for? Whom do we represent? Who is the boss here?

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From: Rabbi **Josh Rapps** mj ravtorah@shamash.org

Shiur haRav Soloveichik ZTL on Parshas Shelach

shelach.1997 **Shiur HaRav Soloveichik ZT" L**

on Parshas Shelach (Shiur date: 6/4/75)

[Note: this summary was taken from a shiur presented by the Rav on Parshas Shelach. I have attempted to transcribe it as close as possible to the actual shiur, therefore it is quite a bit longer than the usual summary. Any mistakes in the transcription are attributable to me. Josh]

Shelach Lecha Anashim. We all know Rashi's quotation of the Tanchuma as to why was the story of the Meraglim juxtaposed next to Miriam? Because these wicked people saw how Miriam was punished for speaking slander against her brother yet did not learn from her mistake. This is a simple yet complex Tanchuma. Every Tanchuma needs to be explored in depth. We must first explore the Miriam incident to understand the Tanchuma. What exactly was her sin?

In Ki Teytze we are commanded to remember what happened to Miriam on the way from Egypt. It is included as one of the 6 Zechiros recited daily by many. Rashi in Ki Teytze interprets the verse of Zachor in terms of Lashon Hara, remember and don't engage in slander. A Jew may not speak slander against another like Miriam did against her brother. It is interesting how the Torah singled out Lashon Hara from all other Mitzvos Bayn Adam Lachaveiro. Why was it necessary to place special emphasis on Lashon Horah? Why did the Torah deem it necessary to include the incident of Miriam among the greatest events in Jewish History, to the point that it is one of the 6 incidents that a Jew must always remember? On the surface it seems like an episode that was not on par with other events like the war against Amalek or Mattan Torah or creation of the world, which are other incidents that we are commanded to remember.

The answer to this problem lies elsewhere. In order to understand it we

have to analyze the Miriam episode and discover what was the error on the part of Aharon and Miriam. What did they accuse Moshe of?

[The Rav added the following parenthetic remark: the Rambam in his introduction to Zeraim and his classification of Torah Shbeal Peh, has a separate section of interpretations of the Torah as transmitted to us by Moshe. Rambam says that we must interpret the text in these cases exactly the way the Mesorah interprets. Normally we have great latitude in interpreting the Torah. With certain Parshios we don't have this freedom. For example Ayin Tachat Ayin. We interpret as monetary damages not physical retribution. We have no right to interpret this in a manner that differs from the Mesorah. The Rambam also quotes another case of Pri Aytz Hadar etc. One may not interpret Pri Aytz Hadar as any type of beautiful fruit other than the Esrog. Another example is Vkatzosa es Kappah. We may not interpret it in any way other than money damages. There is only one way of translation, that of the Mesorah and Kabbalah. The Rav said in the name of Reb Chaim and Reb Moshe, that the Parsha of Miriam belongs to the group of Parshios that we must explain strictly according to the Kabbalah.]

So how did Chazal interpret the sin of Miriam? Why was Moshe's wife called Kushis? Because she was unique and singular. Kushis means black but it means that she was unique and singular in her beauty and depth of character. Chazal say that Moshe took her and separated from her (Isha Kushis Lakach). When Hashem told Moshe to send Bnay Yisrael back to their tents He commanded Moshe to remain with Him. Other people can return to their homes and jobs. Not Moshe. He did not return to his previous life. Even though Moshe should have continued the marriage, he did not. Miriam and Aharon considered this separation as unnecessary and unfair. Rashi says that this episode developed when Tzipporah commented that now the wives of Eldad and Maydad, after they prophesied, will be divorced like she was.

How did Miriam and Aharon argue against Moshe's actions? How did they know that he was not commanded by Hashem to separate from his wife? They said "aren't we all prophets"? They asked why is Moshe's contact with Hashem different than theirs? Hashem told them that indeed Moshe is different. Moshe is unique as he has a completely different level of prophecy. This answer on the surface does not seem to satisfy their question. They agreed that Moshe was the greatest of prophets. They only wanted to know why he was different as far as separating from his spouse since they did not.

The answer is that they did not understand Moshe. Moshe was completely different from other prophets. Miriam and Aharon were not aware of the incongruity of Moshe's prophecy and that of other prophets. They knew that Moshe was the most outstanding prophet. But they did not appreciate his singularity of being totally at variance with other prophets. They argued that Hashem has also spoken to them, yet they were never told to withdraw from their spouses. They concluded that apparently Hashem disapproves of a life of abstention. They failed to see that what was correct for them was not correct from Moshe. Moshe enjoyed a separate status that was beyond comparison. Certain rules applicable to Miriam and Aharon were out of place in reference to Moshe. The Rambam in Yesodot Torah says that the prophecy of Moshe differed from other prophets. All prophets were inspired in a dream, Moses while awake, prophets were spoken to through angel, but Moshe spoke "mouth to mouth" with Hashem. There was no allegory revealed to Moshe no riddle or parable. All prophets prophesied through fear and weakness. Moshe was vigorous enough to prophesy without physical change. None of the prophets could prophesy at their leisure. Moshe simply needed to concentrate his mind and prepare for prophetic revelation. Others could not. Moses was totally different. In the words of the Torah, Lo Kayn Avdi Moshe. Not only was he greater than all others, he is different, there is no comparison. It was a different dialogue between Moshe and Hashem as compared to other prophets.

Their sin was overlooking these 4 words of Lo Kayn Avdi Moshe. The uniqueness of Moshe took expression in a separate article of faith as one of the 13 fundamentals of faith (formulated by the Rambam). We testify that we believe the words of all prophets and that the prophecy of Moshe is true and

that he was the father of all prophets that came before him and after. We single out Moshe from the rest of the prophets. He was the father and greatest, no one compared to him. This uniqueness is so important that we must remember it constantly as an article of faith. The Rambam derived all this from the sin of Miriam.

There will never be another like Moshe. He was the most unique and different. But he was also alone. No one could share his experiences. Here we come across the cornerstone of Judaism: the idea of Bechira. We believe that we are an Am Hanivchar, a Chosen People. Anyone who denies Bechira denies Judaism. If we would not have been selected, our worth as Jews would be naught.

What is Bechira? What does it mean to be a chosen people? The Torah defines it by equating it with Segula, which is defined by Chazal as something special. Man has many possessions. However there is a certain treasure among many others that is treasured the most. Man treats it with special tenderness and care and relates to it in a peculiar way. It is singular. There is in an intrinsic quality that is different in terms of the relationship. For example, Jacob loved Rachel. The Torah says that Leah saw that she was hated. It was not that he hated her, rather it was a different type of love. Jacob loved all his children, but there was something special between Joseph and Jacob that did not exist between Jacob and Reuben. There was a special relationship that existed between Jacob and Rachel that Jacob and Leah did not have. It was not a question of intensity, it was a different type of love. Ki Oso Ahav Avihem, Joseph was loved in a different manner than the others. It was an indescribable love that can't be analyzed. The one who recognized this was Judah. In his confrontation with Joseph in Vayigash, he said Vnaphso Keshura Bnafsho, the life of Jacob was tied up with the life of Benjamin. The special love resulted in a metaphysical union of souls. There was oneness between Jacob and Joseph and Jacob and Binyamin. The Midrash says Vayle Toldos Yaakov, Yoseph, it inserts a hyphen saying Toldos Yaakov Yoseph. They were one single person. According to Chazal, what happened to Jacob happened to Joseph. It was not a psychological love. The I awareness of Jacob included Joseph. However the love for his other children did not facilitate this oneness. Jacob only united with Joseph and Binyamin.

Miriam failed to understand the uniqueness of Moshe, the Segula element in him. She and Aharon did not know that he merited special attention and deserved to be treated specially. Their sin was to compare Moshe to the other prophets. We now understand why the Torah added the 3 words Baderech Btzayschem Mimitzrayim in Ki Taytze when telling of the obligation to remember the Miriam incident. The Torah is stressing that if Moshe would not have been the unique prophet that was different from all others, Yetzias Mitzrayim would not have taken place. No other prophet could have accomplished Yetzias Mitzrayim. Only Moshe, because he was special and had the element of Segula. In order to liberate the people, the appointment to speak on behalf of Hashem and to be His messenger was indispensable. Only Moshe could achieve that distinction. Not Aharon nor Miriam.

Why did the Jews merit to be taken out of Egypt? After all, Chazal say that both the Jew and Egyptian were idolaters. They were taken out because the Jew is different. The Segula element in Moshe made it possible for him to take them out. Miriam did not recognize the greatness of Moshe. Even though they were poised to enter Eretz Yisrael, they did not see the Segula quality in Moshe. We must remember never to repeat Miriam's mistake and deny the Segula, the unique element in Moshe, to such an extent that it is one of the fundamentals of faith.

No other prophet can announce new laws after Moshe. No other prophet can interpret the Torah. Regular people can interpret, But a prophet can not claim that he has been told by Hashem to interpret the law. Only Moshe could interpret and introduce laws on behalf of Hashem. In Zecharia, there is a story that some people in the diaspora sent a letter inquiring from the Kohanim as to how should they observe the fast days after the construction of the Beis Hamikdash? Should they continue the observance or not? This

inquiry was addressed by the Navi to Hashem. Hashem answered that these fast days will eventually be L'sasson Ulisimcha. Hashem gave instructions to Zecharia concerning a Mitzvah Drabanan. Hashem told the Navi how they should observe this Mitzvah. Why should that not raise the Mitzva of these fast days to the level of Dorayasa? The answer is that since it did not come from Moshe it remains a Mitzvah Drabanan. This demonstrates the uniqueness of Moshe.

The episode of the Meraglim is very puzzling. Why was it necessary to send them in the first place? What were they supposed to report to Moshe? The report they brought did not satisfy the mission that Moshe gave them. Why were they so severely punished? At first glance their sin is an enigma.

The Rav explained: if one reads the verses in proper context, we see the answer. The main question is why did Moshe send them in the first place? In the Torah they were not called Meraglim. The Torah describes their mission as Latur. The difference between Rigul and Tur is Rigul means to seek out the weak spots of a potential enemy. The spy must collect strategic military information. The Torah describes the job of a spy in Miketz. Yoseph accused his brothers of being spies that came to find the most vulnerable spots in Egypt to attack. The spies sent by Moses were charged with a mission that had very little to do with seeking out the weaknesses of the land. They were charged with exploring the land. It was simply a study of the land. Moshe asked that they submit on their return a demographic report based on a few characteristics. Tell us about the population size, the climate, the farming conditions. The requested report was almost devoid of intelligence data. Moshe knew that their entry to Eretz Yisrael would depend on miracles anyway. Why did he send them? After all, when they went out of Egypt they had no intelligence. Yet they went anyway.

The Rav suggested that Moshe acted according to the Halacha of Assur Ladam Lkadeh Isha Ad Sheyirena. One may not betroth a woman until he sees her, no matter how highly recommended she comes. The story of Eliezer and Rivka is the basis for this law. Even though Eliezer told Isaac what transpired on his trip to Charan, even though Eliezer was a trusted servant, Isaac did not take her for a wife immediately. Before Kidushin and Nissuin he brought her into the tent of Sarah. Is she a worthy successor? Will she be able to restore the glory of his mother? Would the same blessings that were present in the tent of his mother return? Rashi says that all these things returned. Only then was he convinced and he married her. He did not betroth Rivka based on Eliezer's report until he was convinced that she was worthy of replacing Sarah.

Avraham testified to the trustworthiness of Eliezer. Eliezer told Isaac about her piety and kindness and commitment. Why did he not trust his opinion? Because marriage is not just an ordinary transaction or a civil commitment or mundane partnership. It is an existential commitment, a personalistic covenant of 2 lonely people that join together to unite and reach a common destiny, to travel the same road together. In order to make such an all encompassing commitment one can not trust anyone. One must know the woman well enough, and visa versa. The woman must know the man also. Had marriage been just a civil institution and not an existential, covenantal union, then first hand personal knowledge would not have been necessary. Marriage is more than a conventional, practical solution. It is a metaphysical merger of destinies. It is the oneness of two souls. Therefore Eliezer could not be relied upon no matter how loyal he was.

We read in Bhaloscha that the Jews, with Moshe in the lead, were ready to invade Eretz Yisrael. Moshe invited Yisro to join them on their march to Eretz Yisrael. The entry to Eretz Yisrael was not simply the act of crossing the Jordan River or climbing up the hills. To Moshe it was the marriage of people and land. It was the union of the rocky hills and the sandy trails with the people that returned to their origin who left centuries before. Entry to Eretz Yisrael meant that land and people were to be fused into one single existence with a common destiny. Land and people were to share victory and defeat, honor and shame, forever. As the Rambam says Kidsha Lashata V'Kidsha Leasid Lavo. The marriage was to last forever. The groom could not enter the land without getting to know the bride, the land, intimately.

They knew that it was a land of milk and honey but they had to experience it. That's why Moshe sent explorers to study the land prior to their entry. He sent them simply to study the land. There was no reason to gather intelligence. He sent them as the prospective groom to meet the would be bride. He sent them to see the land "Mah He" to get acquainted because we are going to unite destinies forever.

Why was it necessary for Moshe to give them instructions of how to enter the land and the route they should take? They would have found the road on their own. Moshe revealed to the explorers why he sent them and what their mission consists of. He said that they should go up through the Negev and up the mountain. We have to go back to Vayeshev to understand the significance of this.

When Jacob sent Joseph to check on his brothers it says that he sent him from the valley, the depression, the depths of Chevron and he came to Shechem. Rashi says something that *prima facie* appears puzzling. He asks: Chevron is not in a valley it is on a plateau. Valley here refers to the Bris Bayn Habesarim and Avraham Avinu. Rashi saw in the word *Emek* great symbolism. In a valley, one finds himself surrounded by tall mountains, with restricted light and a very limited field of vision. On the contrary, a person standing on top of a mountain has an enormous field of vision. From the top of the mountain he can see things that normally would be beyond his scope of vision in a valley. Rashi tells us that *Emek Chevron*, the depression of Chevron, means that Jacob accompanied Joseph down the hill and into the depression. He didn't just send Joseph, he accompanied him along the way. When he came into the valley, Jacob bade Joseph farewell and sent him to his brothers in Shechem.

Why did Jacob accompany Joseph, after all it was quite a distance from where they lived in the hills, down to the valley. He did this because the Hashgacha wanted him to. There was great symbolism in Jacob accompanying him down the hill into the valley. Jacob was completely unaware of the consequences that this mission would have. He descended from the mountain where he normally enjoyed clear vision, *Ruach Hakodesh*, to the valley where his vision became clouded. Had Jacob had his decisive intuition that day, he never would have sent Joseph to his brothers. He knew that the brothers hated Joseph. He never would have sent him to check on their welfare. Jacob did not know that he would not see Joseph for another 22 years. The Exile in Egypt began the moment he kissed Joseph good bye and sent him to Shechem. Joseph was not being sent to Shechem but to Egypt. That day Jacob was in the valley with obscured vision. If he was on the plateau with *Ruach Hakodesh*, with his clarity of vision, he would never have lost Joseph. But he descended with Joseph into the valley and his vision became obscured. He precipitated the exile by sending Joseph. Joseph was the first exile to leave Eretz Yisrael for Egypt. Jacob was the next. Jacob lost his vision and acted in ignorance of the results that this errand would produce.

Now Moshe said, what Jacob started will now be consummated. He told the 12 explorers to go up to go up from the south, to climb the same mountain to the same place where the covenant that united people and land was struck. Go up the same mountain that Jacob descended when he entered the depths of exile. Jacob was the one who precipitated the process of separating clan and land when he sent Joseph to see his brothers. The history of Jewish Exile started when Jacob descended from the peak of the mountain into the valley of Chevron with Joseph, from the moment Joseph turned his back on Jacob.

Now Moshe said that they were elected to carry out a much more pleasant assignment. We are about to climb to the peak of the mountain and cast a searching glance across the land. We no longer belong to the generations that waited and looked forward to the return of the people to the land. We are a fulfilling generation. With one look we will embrace the entire grandeur of the land and landscape and you will immediately understand our relationship to the land. We are not looking for a land in terms of material sense. We are being wedded to the land with a merged destiny. We will feel the suffering of the land when it is occupied by

strangers. The land shares in our plight when we are suffering in exile.

Rashi quotes that when Hashem appeared to the patriarchs as *Kel Shakay*, He used a name that means He promised but did not yet fulfill. The patriarchs lived in an era of superhuman faith in Hashem. Moshe's generation was one of fulfillment, it is characterized by the *Shem of Hashem*. Moshe said that their era will be one of fulfillment with the return of the people to the land.

Moshe told them *U'Reysem es Haaretz Ma He*. What was their mission and what they were to report back? He told them to go up through the Negev. The Negev is the cradle of Jewish History. It was what pulled Avraham and where the *Bris Bayn Habesarim*, covenant between Hashem, man and land was consummated. Now Moshe said we will reverse Jacobs movements. Jacob went from the peaks of the mountain to the depths of depression and exile. We will go up from exile to return to the land and unite our destinies. It behooves us to unite destinies with the land because you will see that the land is worthy of waiting for and uniting with it. The most outstanding quality of the land according to Chazal is that *Shechina* is to be found there. Everyone can be inspired only in *Eretz Yisrael*. There is no prophecy in *Chutz Laaretz*. The task of the jewish people is to be a nation of prophets. This can only happen in *Eretz Yisrael*. In his attempt to run away from prophecy, Jonah attempted to escape from the land. You will see that the land is worthy of our sacrifices and our waiting and hope.

He told the explorers to recognize the element of *Segula* in *Eretz Yisrael*. Somehow that uniqueness, *Segula*, can be united with the uniqueness of the people. He sent them because its forbidden to betroth a woman without first seeing her. He wanted them to see the beauty of the land, that it is worthy of the people. The majority of the spies did not even show enough interest to enter Chevron. They certainly did not go up the mountain that Jacob descended from. They just explored it piece meal instead of taking in all its grandeur from the top of the mountain. They did not understand the *Segula* charisma of the land and the people. The land is dispensable, and if so, so are the people. It was just a land. They never reported back to Moshe "*URiysem es Haaretz Ma He*": is it worthy of an eternal union with the people or not? Only Yehoshua and Kaleb said that the land is *Tova Meod Meod*, it is worthy of us to be joined in an insoluble union. We have no other land, our destinies are linked up. That's why *Tanchuma* said that the spies should have taken a lesson from Miriam. Just like she overlooked the *Segula* element of Moshe, they ignored the *Segula* element of the land. That's why they were both severely punished. She ignored his uniqueness even though she knew that there were differences between her, Aharon and Moshe. Both stories showed a lack of appreciation of the *Segula*. If one does not believe in *Segula*, he can not simply act in faith and can not wait for the redemption.

The element of *Segula* applies in Judaism to many situations. We have a hierarchy of values where we must make choices. For example *Shabbos* is considered *Chemdas Yamim*, it is unique, singular, a *Segula*. *Yom Tov* is not *Segula* as there is a common *Kedusha* that applies to all *Yomim Tovim*. *Torah*, *Moshe*, *Moshiach*, *Am Yisrael*, *Shabbos*, *Malchus Bays Dovid* have the element of *Segula*. The definition of *Segula* is to be found in the Almighty. The *Rambam* repeats many times that Hashem is not only One, but He is the only One. He is singular. This is the great mystery of faith. On the one hand Hashem is the origin of everything. Wherever there is existence Hashem is present. This is the mystery of *Ehye Asher Ehye*. To exist means to be in the heart of eternity. Whoever is embraced by Hashem exists. There is unity between creation and creator. On the other hand, Hashem is alone, different in the ultimate sense of the word from the world. Hashem not only created and sustains the world, He also negates the world. He is exclusive, a *Yachid*. If there is being, it is only the true being of the Almighty. No one can imitate Hashem or say that he shares in divinity. Divinity is exclusive. Consequently our existence is a dream, as the *Piyut* says on *Yom Kippur*, *Kachalom Yaouf*. It is only an illusion.

In one sense, Hashem supports the world and is close to the world. All we have to do is look at Hashem to see how to live. On the other hand Hashem is *Yachid*, only He exists. When the finite being comes close to

Hashem, he discontinues to exist, as when finitude is added to infinity, you have infinity. Hashem is Echad. The paradox is that there is communication with man in this world, yet Hashem is Yachid Bolamo, and there can be no communication because there is no world existence besides Hashem. The Zohar says Kulo Kman Dlaysa Dami, from the standpoint of Hashem the world is as if it never existed.

Since man is created in the image of Hashem he has a dialectic existence. He is part of the universal order as well as a single Segula individual. Man may be compared with other creatures, with the brute in the field and the tree in the forest. At the same time man remains an outsider with nothing in common with nature. He is at times part of the universal order and other times he confronts the universal order. Moreover, within society and the relation between man and man, on the one hand he is told to practice Chesed to tear down the barriers surrounding the egocentric individual and share everything with others through an open existence of Chesed. On the other hand, man is also urged to guard his uniqueness.

Man exists in 2 spheres. If man lives only in Reshus Hayachid he becomes and egotist. If he lives only in the Reshus Harabim he loses his originality and inspiration, his Segula element, and becomes an imitator.

Moses was the great leader who on the one hand was one of the crowd. In Judaism, leadership is measured by the leader's ability to suffer for the crowd. The leader takes over the accumulated total suffering of the individuals in the crowd. The capacity to suffer for the millions is the first prerequisite of the Jewish leader. Not to be glorified by millions. That is the approach of the pagan hero. The Jewish hero is the individual suffering for the many and with the many. Moshe suffered with them at the Golden Calf episode when he said Mechayni Na. He sacrificed his life for the people. His life was open to all. He did not display his Segula when he dealt with simple people. He could never be left alone. He sat and judged the people from morning till night, surrounded by them in the midst of the crowd. He personified their hopes and dreams. He suffered with them and rejoiced with them.

However there was a Segula element in Moses. He was lonely. This Segula, singular existence could not be communicated to the people. How could there be communication with the people if there was no one else like him. He was the loneliest person on the earth who would take the Ohel Moed and erect it outside the camp. Moshe was 2 people in Reshus Harabim and Yachid. When he was in the Reshus Harabim he merged with the people. When he was in Reshus Hayachid, he could communicate only with Hashem. This mode of existence which is rooted in the idea of Vhalachta Bdracahv finds its complete harmony in Hashem, but as far as human beings are concerned, we are dialectic beings.

Wherever the Segula element is present we can not rationalize events. For example our faithfulness and attachment to Eretz Yisrael is incomprehensible in logical terms. The closeness of people to land is amazing. American Jews are usually very pragmatic. But they are ready to attack anyone, even the president, if he says something that is not in the spirit of zionism, we must ask where is their logos? They will risk everything, even their status and standing as citizens of this country when it comes to Eretz Yisrael. [Editor note: this shiur was given in 1975, a time of crisis for Israel in the UN and within the American Government]. The normally clear minded Jew becomes cloudy when it comes to Eretz Yisrael. This is because our relationship with Eretz Yisrael is one of Segula.

We can not rationalize events that revolve around Segula. There is an element of the frighteningly strange, of the hidden and ineffable in the Segula charisma. Why were we selected as Segula? Why was Eretz Yisrael selected as the land of the Am Segula and endowed with the Segula quality? These are enigmas. Why should an Am Segula live in exile for hundreds of years? This is logically incomprehensible. When values are comparable and when common denominators unite many values, the mind is capable of rationalization. However, Segula is above and beyond the capacity of the logos to understand. When Segula is in the background it is easy to understand history. At other times when Segula is revealed, Am Segula,

Eretz Segula, Moshe Segula, the enigma arises and everything becomes mysterious. Segula element can only be lived and accepted as an act of faith.

A fringe of blue, Tcheyles, is included in the tzitzis, Lavan or white. White and sky blue symbolize 2 ideas in hebrew semantics. Lavan symbolizes that which is plain and readily grasped. It is symbolic of human understanding. The clear and distinct, white and obvious, are the criteria of truth. As we say in hebrew, Hadavar Mechuvav. White represents that which is clear and understood in my mind.

Blue according to Chazal is indicative of the mysterious, boundless distance. Chazal said that Tcheyles is similar to the sea and the sea is similar to the heavens which are similar to the Kisei Hakovod. It represents what is remote from our reach, the Segula quality. The paradoxical unfolding of our destiny is symbolized by Tcheyles.

The Jew apparently is expected to focus on the white. The Torah encouraged man to explore the phenomena of nature and use his mind to be scientifically oriented and technologically minded. as long as he is exploring the white color. 7 (or 6) threads of Tzitzis are white (Machlokes Rambam and Raavad). There is one thread that is blue in the tzitzis. There are things that go beyond the rational, something mysterious and awesome where we encounter unexpectedly the Segula quality. Everything becomes distant and strange, remote as the sky and distant from our mind. But we have been trained to accept Lavan and Tcheyles. If the experience is understandable then our intellect interprets it accordingly. Otherwise we interpret it through Tcheyles, through an act of faith: Uriysem Oso Uzechartem es Kol Mitzvos Hashem.

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from: **Peninim on the Torah** peninim@hac1.org

By Rabbi A. Leib Scheinbaum

date: 1991

subject: Parasha Shlach

“And we were in our own eyes as grasshoppers and so we were in their eyes.” (13:33) Shelach-> 5751 The Kotzker Rebbe Zt”l remarks that this statement was considered to be one of the sins of the spies. Although it was wrong to be bothered by their own smallness in contrast to the giants of the land, it was also improper to be concerned by the people’s opinion of them. What interest was it to them in what manner they were being viewed by others? The sentiments of others shouldn’t affect a man’s righteous mission. Perhaps we may add that this feeling of inferiority displayed by the spies was the source of their misinterpretation and slanderous views of Eretz Yisroel. One who is insecure and feels ill at ease with his mission in life will often slander and malign those whom he senses are opposed to him. The litmus test of one’s confidence in his convictions is the ability to maintain an aura of dignity and nobility, without reducing himself to vulgarity and slander in the face of opposition. Intolerance is a reflection of insecurity.

“One man, one man, of every tribe you shall send.” (13:2) Shelach-> 5751 The commentaries draw various conclusions regarding the distinction between the failure of Moshe’s “spies” in contrast to the success of the spies sent by Yehoshua, as the Bnei Yisroel were prepared to enter Eretz Yisroel. Regarding the spies that Moshe sent, the Torah states that each tribe sent its own representative. Each tribe, related only to its own personal interests, was not comfortable with another tribe’s emissary, and demanded its own delegate. This discord and mistrust amongst brethren led to the disgrace of Hashem’s Name. In contrast to this, we find that Yehoshua sent only two men to search out Eretz Yisroel on the eve of their battle to conquer the land. No individual raised an issue regarding his leader’s choice of spies since there was a strong harmonious relationship among the populace. This harmony and accord throughout the nation propelled the successful mission of the spies, which spearheaded the triumphant chain of battles to conquer Eretz Yisroel.

from: The Rabbi Sacks Legacy Trust <info@rabbisacks.org>

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subject: Confidence (Shelach Lecha 5781)

Confidence

by Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks zt"l

It was perhaps the single greatest collective failure of leadership in the Torah. Ten of the spies whom Moses had sent to spy out the land came back with a report calculated to demoralise the nation.

We came to the land to which you sent us. It flows with milk and honey, and this is its fruit. However, the people who dwell in the land are strong, and the cities are fortified and very large... We are not able to go up against the people, for they are stronger than we are... The land, through which we have gone to spy it out, is a land that devours its inhabitants, and all the people that we saw in it are of great height... We seemed to ourselves like grasshoppers, and so we seemed to them." (Num. 13:27-33)

This was nonsense, and they should have known it. They had left Egypt, the greatest empire of the ancient world, after a series of plagues that brought that great country to its knees. They had crossed the seemingly impenetrable barrier of the Red Sea. They had fought and defeated the Amalekites, a ferocious warrior nation. They had even sung, along with their fellow Israelites, a song at the sea that contained the words:

The peoples have heard; they tremble; Pangs have seized the inhabitants of Philistia. Now are the chiefs of Edom dismayed; Trembling seizes the leaders of Moab; All the inhabitants of Canaan have melted away. (Ex. 15:14-15)

They should have known that the people of the land were afraid of them, not the other way round. And so it was, as Rahab told the spies sent by Joshua forty years later:

I know that the Lord has given you the land, and that the fear of you has fallen upon us, and that all the inhabitants of the land melt away before you. For we have heard how the Lord dried up the water of the Red Sea before you when you came out of Egypt, and what you did to the two Kings of the Amorites who were beyond the Jordan, to Sihon and Og, whom you devoted to destruction. And as soon as we heard it, our hearts melted, and there was no spirit left in any man because of you, for the Lord your God, He is God in the heavens above and on the earth beneath. (Joshua 2:9-11)

Only Joshua and Caleb among the twelve showed leadership. They told the people that the conquest of the land was eminently achievable because God was with them. The people did not listen. But the two leaders received their reward. They alone of their generation lived to enter the land. More than that: their defiant statement of faith and their refusal to be afraid shines as brightly now as it did thirty-three centuries ago. They are eternal heroes of faith.

One of the fundamental tasks of any leader, from president to parent, is to give people a sense of confidence: in themselves, in the group of which they are a part, and in the mission itself. A leader must have faith in the people they lead, and inspire that faith in them. As Rosabeth Moss Kanter of the Harvard Business School writes in her book Confidence, "Leadership is not about the leader, it is about how he or she builds the confidence of everyone else." 1 Confidence, by the way, is Latin for "having faith together."

The truth is that in no small measure a law of self-fulfilling prophecy applies in the human arena. Those who say, "We cannot do it" are probably right, as are those who say, "We can." If you lack confidence you will lose. If you have it – solid, justified confidence based on preparation and past performance – you will win. Not always, but often enough to triumph over setbacks and failures. That, as mentioned in our study of parshat Beshallach, is what the story of Moses' hands is about, during the battle against the Amalekites. When the Israelites look up, they win. When they look down they start to lose.

That is why the negative definition of Jewish identity that has so often prevailed in modern times (Jews are the people who are hated, Israel is the nation that is isolated, to be Jewish is to refuse to grant Hitler a posthumous victory) is so misconceived, and why one in two Jews who have been

brought up on this doctrine choose to marry out and discontinue the Jewish journey. 2

Harvard economic historian David Landes, in his The Wealth and Poverty of Nations, explores the question of why some countries fail to grow economically while others succeed spectacularly. After more than 500 pages of close analysis, he reaches this conclusion:

In this world, the optimists have it, not because they are always right, but because they are positive. Even when wrong, they are positive, and that is the way of achievement, correction, improvement, and success. Educated, eyes-open optimism pays; pessimism can only offer the empty consolation of being right. 3

I prefer the word "hope" to "optimism." Optimism is the belief that things will get better; hope is the belief that together we can make things better. No Jew, knowing Jewish history, can be an optimist, but no Jew worthy of the name abandons hope. The most pessimistic of the Prophets, from Amos to Jeremiah, were still voices of hope. By their defeatism, the spies failed as leaders and as Jews. To be a Jew is to be an agent of hope.

The most remarkable by far of all the commentators on the episode of the spies was the Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson. He raised the obvious question. The Torah emphasises that the spies were all leaders, princes, heads of tribes. They knew that God was with them, and that with His help there was nothing they could not do. They knew that God would not have promised them a land they could not conquer. Why then did they come back with a negative report?

His answer turns the conventional understanding of the spies upside down. They were, he said, not afraid of defeat. They were afraid of victory. What they said to the people was one thing, but what led them to say it was another entirely.

What was their situation now, in the wilderness? They lived in close and continuous proximity to God. They drank water from a rock. They ate manna from heaven. They were surrounded by the Clouds of Glory. Miracles accompanied them along the way.

What would be their situation in the land? They would have to fight wars, plough the land, plant seed, gather harvests, create and sustain an army, an economy and a welfare system. They would have to do what every other nation does: live in the real world of empirical space. What would become of their relationship with God? Yes, He would still be present in the rain that made crops grow, in the blessings of field and town, and in the Temple in Jerusalem that they would visit three times a year, but not visibly, intimately, miraculously, as He was in the desert. This is what the spies feared: not failure but success.

This, said the Rebbe, was a noble sin but still a sin. God wants us to live in the real world of nations, economies and armies. God wants us, as He put it, to create "a dwelling place in the lower world." He wants us to bring the Shechinah, the Divine Presence, into everyday life. It is easy to find God in total seclusion and escape from responsibility. It is hard to find God in the office, in business, in farms and fields and factories and finance. But it is that hard challenge to which we are summoned: to create a space for God in the midst of this physical world that He created and seven times pronounced good. That is what ten of the spies failed to understand, and it was a spiritual failure that condemned an entire generation to forty years of futile wandering.

The Rebbe's words ring true today even more loudly than they did when he first spoke them. They are a profound statement of the Jewish task. They are also a fine exposition of a concept that entered psychology only relatively recently – fear of success. 4 We are all familiar with the idea of fear of failure. It is what keeps many of us from taking risks, preferring instead to stay within our comfort zone.

No less real, though, is fear of success. We want to succeed: so we tell ourselves and others. But often unconsciously we fear what success may bring: new responsibilities, expectations on the part of others that we may find hard to fulfil, and so on. So we fail to become what we might have become had someone given us faith in ourselves.

The antidote to fear, both of failure and success, lies in the passage with which the parsha ends: the command of tzitzit (Num. 15:38-41). We are commanded to place fringes on our garments, among them a thread of blue. Blue is the colour of the sky and of heaven. Blue is the colour we see when we look up (at least in Israel; in Britain, more often than not we see clouds). When we learn to look up, we overcome our fears. Leaders give people confidence by teaching them to look up. We are not grasshoppers unless we think we are.

NOTES

1. Rosabeth Moss Kanter, *Confidence*, Random House, 2005, 325. 2.
- National Jewish Population Survey 1990: A Portrait of Jewish Americans, Pew Research Center, October 1, 2013.
3. David Landes, *The Wealth and Poverty of Nations*, London, Little, Brown, 1998, 524.
4. Sometimes called the "Jonah complex" after the Prophet. See Abraham Maslow, *The Farther Reaches of Human Nature*, Harmondsworth, Penguin Books, 1977, 35-40.

Date: June 13, 1996

Sender: dvartorah@torah.org

To: dvartorah@torah.org

Subject: **Slanderizing the Land**

by Chaim Ozer Shulman

A. BUT THE PEOPLE ARE POWERFUL

The Ramban (Nachmanides) in the beginning of Parshas Shelach struggles to explain what the sin of the Meraglim (spies) was.

The simple understanding of the Chumash is that the Meraglim sinned by saying: "Indeed the Land flows with milk and honey BUT the people that dwell in the Land are powerful" (Efes Ki Az Ha'am) (13:27 28), implying that they would not be able to conquer the Land.

The Ramban, however, asks that how could the Meraglim have been punished for this report if they were sent by Moshe Rabeinu in the first place to: "See the Land how is it, and the people that dwell therein are they strong or weak, few or many" (13:18). The spies were merely doing what they were sent for!

An answer to the Ramban's question, which is implicit in many commentaries, is that the Meraglim were sent not to see whether to conquer the Land but to see the best way to conquer the Land, so that to the extent possible they would not have to rely on miracles. But when they said "But the people are powerful" they implied that Bnei Yisroel would not be able to conquer the Land. And this showed a lack of trust (Bitachon) in Hashem. For Hashem said: Go & conquer the Land. And Bnei Yisroel should have believed that they would be able to conquer the Land.

There is a principle "Ein Somchin Al Hanes" that one should not rely on miracles. However, that principle does not apply where Hashem promised that Bnei Yisroel could conquer the Land. In such a case, as long as Bnei Yisroel make an effort (Hishtadlus) they should be confident that Hashem will help them conquer the Land. So by not believing that they could conquer the Land, they showed a lack of trust in Hashem.

B. THE SIN OF SLANDERING THE LAND

Rashi in the beginning of the Parsha seems to learn that the sin of the Meraglim was a different one. Rashi says: The story of Meraglim is adjacent to the story of Miriam (at the end of last week's parsha) to show us that Miriam was punished for the slander she spoke on her brother, and the Meraglim saw this and did not take heed.

It appears from this Rashi that the sin of the Meraglim was that they spoke Lashon Hora on the Land.

In fact the Torah in verse 32 states: "And they slandered the Land ... saying: The Land consumes its inhabitants, and all the inhabitants are giants." Rashi states that in fact Hashem caused many Caananites to die so they would be preoccupied with their own mourning, and not notice the spies. The Meraglim failed to understand this, and slandered the Land, saying the Land kills its inhabitants.

The Ramban, however, states that one cannot learn that the sin of the

Meraglim was merely that they spoke Lashon Hora because even before the Torah states in verse 32 that: "they slandered the Land," Caleb silenced the people in verse 20 stating: "We shall surely ascend and conquer the Land."

It appears that Rashi understands that the Meraglim committed two sins, one in that they did not believe that they could conquer the Land stating "But the people are very powerful," which caused Caleb to respond by silencing them stating "We shall surely ascend", and second in that they spoke Lashon Hora on the Land stating "the Land eats its inhabitants."

In fact, we see that there were two sins from the response of Yehoshua and Caleb (14:7 8): "[Yehoshua and Caleb] spoke to the entire Bnei Yisroel saying the Land that we passed through ... is very very good. If Hashem desires us He will bring us to this Land ... a Land flowing with milk and honey."

They countered the Lashon Hora by saying "the Land is very very good," and they countered the lack of trust in Hashem by saying "If Hashem desires us He will bring us to this Land."

C. COMPARISON TO MIRIAM

Rashi in beginning of the Parsha, quoted above, states that the story of Meraglim is adjacent to the story of Miriam because Miriam was punished for the slander she spoke on her brother, and the Meraglim saw this and did not take heed.

Rashi implies that the Meraglim violated the prohibition of Lashon Hora. It seems strange, however, that there could be Lashon Hora on land?

I would suggest that Miriam's sin was not just for speaking Lashon Hora on Moshe, but also for speaking Lashon Hora on Hashem, as we see from what Hashem told Miriam: "Why did you not fear to speak against my servant Moshe" (12:8). In other words, if Hashem chose Moshe as his servant, then criticizing Moshe is indirectly criticizing Hashem, as if to say Hashem chose a servant who does not know the proper way to serve him. And the same is true with the Land of Israel. Hashem would not choose a Land that was bad. So to slander the Land of Israel is indirectly to slander Hashem, implying that He would choose an inferior Land.

In fact, this is implied by Rabeinu B'Chaye (Rabbi Bachya Ibn Pekudah) who states in last week's parsha that the story of the complainers about the Mon (manna, the heavenly bread the Jews ate in the wilderness) was placed right before the story of Miriam, and in turn the story of Miriam was placed right before the story of Meraglim, because they were all sins of slander. The complainers spoke badly about the Mon, Miriam spoke badly about Moshe and the Meraglim spoke badly about the Land of Israel.

Certainly there is no Lashon Hora on Mon! But the comparison must be that by criticizing the Mon they were indirectly criticizing Hashem who gave it to them. And the same is true of criticizing the servant of Hashem, or of criticizing the Land of Israel.

To conclude, we see that the Meraglim sinned: (i) by speaking badly about the Land that Hashem chose, and not having faith (Emunah) that his choice was a good one, and (ii) by lacking trust (Bitachon) that Hashem would help them conquer the Land.

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From: Shabbat Shalom <shabbatshalom@ounetwork.org> date: Jun 3, 2021, 8:35 PM Subject: OU Shabbat Shalom Weekly Shelach:

True Blue

Rabbi Dr. Tzvi Hersh Weinreb

This week, I begin by taking the liberty of sharing two very personal experiences with you. Neither experience felt momentous at the time they occurred, but both experiences had significant impact on my "inner" spiritual life.

The first occurred several decades ago when a group of Israeli scholars visited Baltimore, where Chavi and I then resided. They scheduled a lecture at a local synagogue and entitled the lecture "A New Discovery." The title evoked my curiosity, and so I decided to attend.

This lecture was perhaps the first delivered in the United States to present the findings of this group about the discovery, or perhaps more aptly, the recovery, of the authentic tekhelet, the blue dye which was used extensively in ancient times by royalty and, more importantly, from our Jewish perspective, to color some of the fringes of the tzitzit.

In this connection, I remind you of the following passage in this week's Torah portion, Shelach (Numbers 13:1-15:41). The passage reads:

"The Lord said to Moses as follows: Speak to the Israelite people and instruct them to make for themselves fringes on the corners of their garments throughout the ages; 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 in your lustful urge..." (Numbers 15:37-39)

We are thus enjoined to attach tzitzis or fringes to our four-cornered garments and to add to these fringes a "cord of tekhelet" or "cord of blue." The source for the dye which colored the cord of blue was a sea animal known as the chilazon, whose exact identity was lost over the ages so that until recent times observant Jews only attached colorless fringes to their talitot.

A nineteenth century rabbi, Rabbi Gershon Henoch Leiner, who was also the leader of the Hasidic sect of Radzin, spent years searching for a sea creature which fit the description of the chilazon. His investigations led him to conclude that the chilazon was a sub-species of squid from which the blue dye could be extracted. The rabbi was unsuccessful in convincing the other leading rabbis of his time that his identification was accurate, but his followers, Hasidim of Radzin, adopted the practice of using this particular dye for their "cord of blue."

In the twentieth century, Rabbi Isaac Herzog, who would eventually become the Chief Rabbi of Israel, wrote a dissertation disproving Rabbi Leiner's contention, and suggested instead that the true chilazon was a type of snail, specifically the Murex trunculus.

The scholars who visited Baltimore and delivered the lecture which I attended were representatives of a then recently formed organization called Ptil Tekhelet (see www.tekhelet.com). They reported that their organization had not only corroborated Rabbi Herzog's findings but had resolved the various questions which he had left unanswered. Furthermore, this organization was producing tzitzis with the proper "cord of blue" and marketing their product.

Need I say more? I was convinced there and then that I would procure this new product and would wear the "true blue" tekhelet from that time forward. I continue to do so to this very day, baruch Hashem.

When I began using this "cord of blue," I could not have predicted the profound impact it would have upon me. I am neither a mystic nor the son of a mystic, but nevertheless, I experience a numinous mystical mood each morning when I wrap myself in my tallit to pray.

This was the first of the two experiences that I share with you today.

The second experience occurred that same year. I was privileged to lead an expedition to Eastern Europe, mainly to visit sites of Jewish significance. Tragically, most of those sites are neglected cemeteries or synagogues in ruins. My special interest is visiting graves of famous Jews, particularly the graves of great rabbinic scholars.

I've guided quite a few similar expeditions over the years and have developed the practice of studying the published works of the rabbinic scholars whose graves I visit. That year, we visited the city of Prague and stood on line behind a large group of non-Jewish tourists who were attracted to the grave of the great Maharal, allegedly the creator of the famous Golem and thus an attraction even to non-Jews.

Rather than wait patiently behind that group, I suggested that we visited another famous grave, that of Maharal's successor in the Prague rabbinate, Rabbi Shlomo Ephraim of Lunshitz, known by the title of his masterwork, Kli Yakar. At his grave, I made a silent vow to familiarize myself, not only with Kli Yakar, but with its author's entire oeuvre.

That ordinary episode led to what some would call serendipity, and others would call divine providence. For, you see, having adopted the "cord of blue," I began to search the sources to better understand its significance. Particularly, I was puzzled by Ramban's insistence that it was the "cord of blue," not at all the "cords of white," that effectively enable us to "recall the Commandments of the Lord and observe them" and not follow our eyes' and hearts' and lustful urges. What's the secret of the cord of blue's magic?

I found many answers to this question, but my favorite one is to be found in the Kli Yakar's commentary toward the end of this week's Torah portion. He begins with the Talmudic passage which reads, "The blue of tekhelet evokes the image of the deep blue sea, from there to the blue of heaven, and from there to the Almighty's 'throne of glory.'"

He proceeds to describe the grand works of nature which faithfully obey the Lord's design. The heavens, with the sun and the moon and the stars, never fail to follow the Lord's will. Furthermore, they do so joyously, without protest or resistance, happily and out of love.

The sea behaves differently. Its waves strive to overcome their boundaries and to deluge the shore. They are contained, however, by their fear of the Lord and not by the love they have for Him. As the prophet Jeremiah puts it, "Should you not tremble before Me, who sent the sand as a boundary to the sea... not to be transgressed? Though its waves toss, they cannot prevail..." (Jeremiah 5:22)

Kli Yakar thus reminds us that there are two basic motives to religious behavior: fear or awe of the Almighty on the one hand, love and attachment to Him on the other. By contemplating the sea, we acknowledge His power to contain our "waves," our "lustful urges." By moving on to contemplate the heavens, we are inspired to worship him joyously and lovingly. We are then positioned to stand before His "throne of glory."

There are many paths open to us in our search for spirituality. The "cord of blue" provides us with one easy path—the color blue, and only the color blue, prompts us to contemplate the deep blue sea and the blue of heaven. From there, we can glimpse the Almighty's "throne of glory," the highest level of spirituality!

I can't assure you that you will glimpse the Almighty's "throne of glory" the instant you begin to wear the "cord of blue." But I encourage you nevertheless to wear tekhelet, contemplate both the sea and the heavens, and patiently await the next glorious spiritual achievement.

Rabbi Dr. Tzvi Hersh Weinreb is Executive Vice President, Emeritus of the Orthodox Union

From: **Rabbi Yissocher Frand** <ryfrand@torah.org> to:
ravfrand@torah.org date: Jun 3, 2021, 4:28 PM subject: Rav Frand -
Kalev's Side Trip to Chevron

Parshas Shelach

Kalev's Side Trip to Chevron

These divrei Torah were adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Series on the weekly portion: #1165 Tallis Falling off During Davening / Cleaning Glasses With Your Tallis? Good Shabbos!

The Lesson of Kalev's Side Trip to Chevron

Parshas Shelach contains the infamous story of the Meraglim. The pasuk says that "They went up through the south (Va'ya'lu ba'negev) and he came to Chevron (va'yavo ad Chevron)..." [Bamidbar 13:22]. The grammatical inconsistency in this pasuk jumps out at us immediately. The pasuk begins in the plural – they went up – but concludes in the singular – he came to Chevron.

Rashi alludes to the Gemara [Sotah 34b] which raises this question. Rava states: This teaches that Kalev separated himself from the scheme of the Spies and went to (the Machpela Cave to) pray for Divine assistance by the gravesite of the Avos. The answer to the question is that not all the Spies went to Chevron. "And he came to Chevron" refers specifically to Kalev ben Yefuneh. The rest of the Spies went their way, and Kalev took a detour to the burial site of Avrohom, Yitzchok, and Yaakov, invoking their help to seek

Divine Mercy that he should be spared from falling into the plan of the other Spies. (The Talmud explains that Yehoshua already received a special Bracha from Moshe Rabbeinu that he should not be ensnared by the Spies' plans, and therefore he did not need to travel to the Mea'ras haMachpela.)

Rav Shlomo Wolbe, zt"l, asks a question: Normally, when a person does not know what to do—should I or should I not?—He wants Heavenly assistance to help resolve his dilemma. In such a situation, it is understandable why someone would go to Kever Avos to ask for Siyata D'Shmaya in helping resolve the matter: "Please, Grant me the good sense to make the right decision!"

But here, Kaleb already knows what the right decision is. He already knows that he is facing trouble. He must have already sensed that the others were planning to give a negative report about Eretz Yisrael. He knows that he does not want to join in with them. He knows what to do—there is no dilemma!

When does someone go to a Rebbe, a wise person, a great man and ask for advice? That is when he does not know what to do. Here, Kaleb knew full well what course of action he should take. What, then, was the purpose of this side trip to Chevron to pray at the Cave of Machpela?

Rav Wolbe concludes: We see from this story a life's lesson, a lesson that we must always bear in mind: A person should try to avoid situations that involve big decisions. When there is a need to choose and a person must leave it up to his own free-will and good senses, he may not make the right decision. Therefore, it is always safer to put ourselves in situations where we do not need to make such decisions. It is better to remain in territory where the "tough decision" is already made for us as a forgone conclusion.

We can go into "decision making mode" with the best intentions and tell ourselves "I am going to make the proper choice and I am strong," but when it comes to crunch time, so many times in life we do not have the will power or the guts to follow through on what we know to be the correct path to follow, and we wind up making the wrong decision.

I will give a very mundane example. You are on a diet and you are going to a wedding. You know that there will be these tables laden with all the delicacies in the world. Someone might say "I am going to go there and I do not need to worry. I will make the right decision and keep to my diet!" And where does he find himself? Right in front of the 'franks in blankets'. He had the best of intentions, but...

So, what should someone do? Avoid the smorgasbord! Go ahead and eat a ton of vegetables before you go to the Chasunah. Fill yourself up with stuff that you are allowed to eat. Do not put yourself in a place of temptation, because as strong as you may feel before the smorgasbord, when you get there, it is not the same.

This is what Kaleb said. I know what the right thing is, and I know I need to make a decision. Ribono shel Olam, I am asking for Your Mercy—do not put me in a situation where I need to rely on my own free will.

This is a principle of many of the Ba'alei Mussar. Specifically, it is a very famous rule of thumb from Rabbi Yisrael Salanter: It is always best to minimize the nisayon (temptation). Minimize the scope of any choice you need to make to the point where there is virtually no choice to be made!

One of the places he says this is all the way back in Sefer Bereshis. Hashem tells Yaakov "Return to the land of your fathers and to your birthplace and I will be with you." [Bereshis 31:3] Yaakov had lived by Lavan for twenty-plus years. The Ribono shel Olam came to him one night and told him to go back home. Okay, so Yaakov needs to tell his wife and family that they are going back home. The next morning, we would expect him to tell his wives, "G-d appeared to me and told me we have to go back home. Pack up your bags and let's go!"

What does Yaakov Avinu do? "Yaakov sent and summoned Rochel and Leah to the field, to his flock, and said to them, 'I have noticed that your father's position is not toward me as in earlier days; but the G-d of my father was with me. Now you have known that with all my might I worked for your father, yet your father mocked me and changed my wage ten times; but G-d did not permit him to harm me....'" He gives them a whole speech, pasuk after pasuk, explaining what a crook their father was, and how terribly their

father treated him, explaining to them why it is not in their best interest to remain there. [Bereshis 31:5-12] He finally says, almost as an afterthought after this lengthy persuasive argument, that he was given a Divine command to return to the land of his birthplace. [Bereshis 31:13]

What was the response of Rochel and Leah to their husbands' message? "Have we still a share and an inheritance in our father's house? Are we not considered by him as strangers, for he has sold us? And he has even totally consumed our money! Rather, all the wealth that G-d has taken away from our father belongs to us and to our children." [Bereshis 31:14-16] After this whole bitter speech analyzing all the financial and social justifications for leaving their father's home, they throw in "so now, whatever G-d has said to you, do." It is like they add this justification as an afterthought "By the way, G-d said to do this, so okay—let's do it!"

For twelve pasukim, Yaakov and his wives weigh the pros and cons of staying or leaving. This should not take twelve pasukim. This should take two pasukim. "Yaakov said to his wives 'G-d said to go.'" Next pasuk: "Fine. Let's go!" End of discussion! Why did Yaakov need to give that whole schmooze, and why did his wives need to give their whole schmooze? The answer is, says Rav Yisrael Salanter, that they were psyching themselves up. This is not a tough decision. This is a no-brainer slam-dunk! But they need to make the decision in that fashion. They do not want to be put in a situation of "Should we or should we not follow the command of G-d? Is it the right thing or is it not the right thing to heed the Word of the Almighty? By first logically concluding – even aside from what G-d commanded – this is definitely the way to go, the decision to follow the Word of G-d has already been made for them!

This, Rav Wolbe says, is how we need to go through life. We cannot necessarily rely on our own strong free will, because when someone puts himself in that situation, there can be all sorts of rationalizations. All kinds of "thought processes" can come into play that will affect our choices. This touches every aspect of our life—where we live, where we work, who our co-workers are, who our neighbors are, and what effect they will have on us. It is not wise for people to say, "I will not be affected / I do not need to worry / I will make the right decision". Kaleb ben Yefuneh is telling us "Do not do that!" Don't rely on your "freedom of choice" because too many times in life we, in fact, do not make the right decision.

Transcribed by David Twersky; Jerusalem DavidATwersky@gmail.com
Technical Assistance by Dovid Hoffman; Baltimore, MD
dhoffman@torah.org

This week's write-up is adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissochar Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Series on the weekly Torah portion. A complete catalogue can be ordered from the Yad Yechiel Institute, PO Box 5111, Owings Mills MD 21117-0511. Call (410) 358-0416 or e-mail tapes@yadyechiel.org or visit <http://www.yadyechiel.org/> for further information.

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from: torahweb@torahweb.org

to: weeklydt@torahweb.org

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Rabbi Ahron Lopiansky –

Eretz Yisroel:

Home of Klal Yisroel and HKB" H

This week's parsha marks one of Israel's two low points, i.e. the sin of the megalim: the other being the sin of the golden calf. At first glance there seems to be no comparison between the two sins; the latter is a sin of some form of idolatry (however we explain it), which is the worst sin in the Torah, while the former seems to be part of the usual bickering of Klal Yisroel, not so different than many other such episodes in the midbar. And yet, the sin of the megalim is the one that has become the "night of crying" for Klal Yisroel, and was the root of the churban, the most difficult of our national experiences. What was it that made this grumbling so different?

The passuk in Tehillim (106:24) describes the event as "they despised (vayimasu) the desirable land." We note two elements in that description: that Eretz Yisroel is a "desirable" land, and that it wasn't Klal Yisroel's grumbling per se that was the core issue, rather it was the "despising" of Eretz Yisroel that was the sin. Let us ponder this point a bit.

Halachically, a marriage takes place when a man and wife enter the chuppah or, more specifically, a private space (yichud), or alternatively into the husband's dwelling (hachnassa lirishuso.). In other words, a true union takes place in a common exclusive space. At Har Sinai Hashem designated us as His beloved one, and one can compare this to kiddushin/erusin. At this point of betrothal, the woman is prohibited to all other men but is still not together with her husband. At the time of nissuin, when they enter that common space, they are in a total union. If Sinai is compared to erusin then it stands to reason that Eretz Yisroel is the nissuin, i.e. the common space shared by Klal Yisroel and the Divine Presence. It is not accident that the Gemara which deals with the mitzvah of living in Eretz Yisroel is found in Kesuvos, the mesechta focused on nissuin.

Now let us look at the two terrible sins of Klal Yisroel. At Sinai we became betrothed to Hashem, so to speak. The main manifestation of this status is being prohibited to "other men". Indeed, the sin of the golden calf consisted of straying to a false god. This was a terrible sin, not unlike adultery. Adultery is, from one perspective, a betrayal of one's spouse, but it is not a complete rejection. However, if a woman despises her husband, this is not a mere breach in the relationship, but it means that, in effect, there is no marriage and no hope.

At the sin of the meraglim, Klal Yisroel were not merely complaining about the difficulties of conquering Eretz Yisroel, rather they were expressing a disinterest in it. It wasn't that they thought the land wasn't fertile or pleasant; the word "despised" wouldn't have described such a feeling. Rather, it was what the land meant that they spurned. They were not interested in "living with" Hashem, and that means that the union has no chance. "Living with Hashem" demands an extraordinary refined standard of morality, and they just weren't interested in that.

Eretz Yisroel is an eretz chemda, a land the needs to be craved. Its physical qualities are extraordinary, but that is not the focus of this craving. Rather it is a craving for an Eretz Yisroel as the place in which we "live with" Hashem, in which one lives with a sense of the immanence of Hashem, and in which our own behavior must bear testimony to this reality.

When the day comes that we once again crave that "living with" Hashem, the redemption will have begun.

More divrei Torah from Rabbi Lopiansky

More divrei Torah on Parshas Shlach

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from: **Rabbi Yochanan Zweig** <genesis@torah.org> to:

rabbizweig@torah.org date: Jun 2, 2021, 5:31 PM subject: Rabbi Zweig on the Parsha - With Strings Attached

Parshas Shlach With Strings Attached

“...and remember all the commandments of Hashem...” (15:39)

The Torah stipulates that the tzitzis should serve as a reminder of our obligation to perform all of the mitzvos. Rashi explains that the numerical value of the word tzitzis is six hundred ("tzadi" is ninety, "yud" is ten, "tzadi" is ninety, "yud" is ten and "taf" is four hundred), and when we add the eight threads and five knots, we reach a total of six hundred thirteen, corresponding to the six hundred thirteen mitzvos in the Torah.¹ The Ba'alei Tosafos question how Rashi arrives at the number six hundred for the word "tzitzis" when the spelling of the word from the Torah contains only one "yud". The answer given by the Ba'alei Tosafos is that the word "tzitzis" is recorded in the Torah three times, and on one of those occasions the word is written "letzitzis", with a "lamed" which adds an additional value of thirty; by dividing the number thirty into three, for the number of times "tzitzis" is written, we restore the correspondence between the word "tzitzis" and the number six hundred.² It seems highly unlikely that upon seeing the tzitzis a

person will make these intricate calculations leading him to remember all of the mitzvos of Hashem. Why is remembering the mitzvos expressed in this type of manner?

The Ramban questions Rashi's explanation that we should include the five knots and eight strings in order to reach a total of six hundred thirteen, for the Talmud teaches that the Torah-mandated obligation of tzitzis involves only the top knot, while the other four are Rabbinically mandated. Therefore, how can Rashi include all five knots in the calculation which is made to fulfill the Torah's obligation of remembering the mitzvos?³

Rashi teaches that the mitzva of tzitzis is equal to all of the other six hundred twelve mitzvos in the Torah. This creates a unifying thread between tzitzis and the other two mitzvos in the parsha, refraining from idol worship and observing the Shabbos, which have the same quality.⁴ It is understandable that performing idol worship is equivalent to violating the entire Torah, for it negates Hashem's supremacy, as is violating the Shabbos, for Shabbos is the affirmation of Hashem as Creator of the universe. What is the basis for tzitzis being equivalent to all of the other mitzvos? Furthermore, a person is not even obligated to wear tzitzis; the requirement of tzitzis from a Torah perspective is only applicable if a person wears a four-cornered garment. How can a mitzva which is not even a constant requirement be so important?

Aside from the perfunctory elements of the mitzva of tzitzis, the mitzva contains another more fundamental concept. The commentaries explain that tzitzis is akin to a uniform which identifies a slave as belonging to his master.⁵ Consequently, it is no coincidence that tzitzis is included as a part of the reading of Krias Shema, for wearing tzitzis indicates an ongoing reaffirmation of the acceptance of the yoke of Heaven. It is the extension of the declaration made in Krias Shema. In order to increase the efficacy and potency of the tzitzis as the tool by which a person remembers and reaffirms his commitment to perform the six hundred thirteen mitzvos, i.e the expression of his acceptance of the yoke of Heaven, the Torah states “ve’asu lahem tzitzis” – “and they shall make for themselves the tzitzis”.⁶ This means that the reminder does not stem from looking at the tzitzis after donning them, rather the Torah requires that our Sages create a reminder from the tzitzis itself. When a person ties a string around his finger in order to remind himself of something of great significance, it is not the string which is of primary importance, rather that which it is meant to remind him of. Similarly, the Torah instructs our Sages to find symbolic references within the tzitzis so that donning tzitzis itself will be a reminder of our acceptance of the yoke of the Almighty. Therefore, if need be, we can make elaborate calculations, including even Rabbinically mandated stipulations to assign the tzitzis the symbolic representation of the acceptance of all of the mitzvos. It is far more effective a reminder if we are the ones who create the symbolism ourselves.

It is for this reason that the Torah does not mandate wearing tzitzis; if the Torah had, the effectiveness of the tzitzis as a reminder would have been dampened, for the reason to wear the tzitzis would have devolved into an act which is done only to fulfill the Torah imperative. A Rabbinical creation of the constant obligation to wear tzitzis is more effective as the reminder for we have designated its symbolism. Since tzitzis contains the fundamental principle of acceptance of the yoke of the Almighty, it can be grouped with refraining from idol worship and keeping Shabbos.

1.15:39 2. Menachos 39a see Tanchuma Sheach..3.15:26 4.15:41 5. Tos. Menachos 39a, Sefer Hachinuch, Seferorno 15:39 6.15:38;39,

Internal Injury “Send forth men...” (13:2)

This week's parsha introduces the episode of the spies who spoke disparagingly concerning Eretz Yisroel. As a result of the spies' actions the entire generation of Bnei Yisroel who accepted their evil tidings were doomed to die in the desert.¹ Rashi explains that the reason why this parsha is juxtaposed to the story of Miriam's affliction with tzora' as recorded at the end of last week's parsha, is that the spies should have taken a lesson from Miriam regarding the consequences of speaking Loshon Horah.² The

prohibition of speaking Loshon Horah is amongst the most severe offenses recorded in the Torah. The Chofeitz Chaim enumerates the many positive and negative precepts violated when engaging in Loshon Horah.³ Why did the spies, who were the greatest leaders of the generation, require the incident with Miriam to teach them a precept which is clearly delineated in the Torah?

The Torah identifies the sin of the spies as “vayatziu dibas ha’aretz asher taru osah” – “and they presented evil tidings concerning the land that they had spied out”.⁴ Although we can infer that giving such a negative account of Eretz Yisroel reflected the spies’ deep-rooted lack of faith in Hashem’s ability to fulfill His promise that Bnei Yisroel would enter Eretz Yisroel, the Torah focuses upon the Loshon Horah spoken concerning the Land.⁵ Based upon this verse, the Chayei Adam records speaking disparagingly about Eretz Yisroel as a separate prohibition. Why is it so grievous an offense to speak Loshon Horah regarding a piece of land; an inanimate object?

In last week’s parsha, immediately after recording the Loshon Horah which Miriam spoke against Moshe, the Torah states “veha’ish Moshe anav me’od” – “and the man Moshe was exceedingly humble”.⁶ What is the connection between the two verses? Speaking Loshon Horah is generally portrayed as “bein adam l’chaveiro” – “a sin against society”, the heinous nature of the sin reflected by its anti-social repercussions. Although the aforementioned is valid, the Torah is revealing to us that the most destructive force which is unleashed when we engage in Loshon Horah is the damage we inflict upon ourselves. The Torah records the exceedingly humble nature of Moshe immediately after Miriam’s criticism of him to teach us that he was completely unaffected by her comments. The damage caused by Miriam’s words was the damage she caused herself. Loshon Horah causes part of the transgressor to die; this is reflected by the tzora’as – dead flesh, which is a natural by-product of the transgression. Consequently, Aharon pleaded with Moshe to pray for their sister, “al na sehi kemeis” – “let her not be like a corpse”.⁷

This message was not apparent until the story of Miriam, when it became evident that a person has violated the sin of Lashon Horah even if the subject of the tidings is unaffected. This should have prevented the spies from speaking Loshon Horah, even against an inanimate object.

1.14:21-24 2.13:2 3. See Hilchos Issurei Lashon Horah based on the Sefer Chofeitz Chaim 4.13:32 5. Sotah 35a 6.12:3 7.12:12

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from: **Rabbi Berel Wein** <genesis@torah.org>
to: rabbiwein@torah.org
date: Jun 2, 2021, 11:18 AM
subject: Rabbi Wein - The Slander of Israel Continues

Parshas Shlach

The Slander of Israel Continues

The land of Israel has always posed a problem for the Jewish people. On one hand, it is and always has been our national homeland, the land promised to us by the Lord from the days of our forefathers. It is the Holy Land, the most special place on earth. On the other hand, the record of the Jewish people in the land of Israel, and their behavior and attitudes, has often been a spotty one.

The Law makes demands upon those who live here. It has, to speak, a very delicate digestive system, and the land rejects, after a period, behavior that is detrimental to creating a viable and moral society. Yet, the attachment of the Jewish people to the land of Israel is so strong that it has been able to survive centuries of separation, conquest, and exile.

Whatever period of history you choose, Jews always lived in the land of Israel, and some Jews lived there even vicariously. The Jews never forgot that they were strangers in alien countries, and if some of them did forget, the societies that they lived in eventually reminded them that they were, after all, only strangers and outsiders. All this serves as a backdrop to the spies who appear in this week’s Torah reading.

Over the centuries, there are many reasons given by the commentators as to why the spies returned with such a negative report, with twisted positive facts into potential calamities and disasters. But one of the main and cogent reasons for this behavior was the ambivalent fear that has always existed within Jewish society, i.e., to commit to national existence in the land of Israel, independent of the blandishments and seeming advantages of physical life under different circumstances.

The fear and trepidation exhibited by the spies, when Moshe confidently said to bring back a report about the land of Israel, did not die with that generation of doubters in the desert. I am not speaking here of immigration to the land of Israel today, or entering the process of Aliyah. Rather, I am addressing an attitude that exists in almost all sections of the Jewish world outside of the land of Israel. That attitude is the commitment involved in living in the land of Israel, a justified concern regarding the spiritual and social commitment necessary to successfully live as a Jew in the land of Israel.

It is this challenge, more than anything else, that shook the spies and turned them into slanderers. There are many of these same personalities, unfortunately, that still exists today in the Jewish world. There are Jewish organizations as well as individuals who are in the forefront of anti-Israel movements and programs, not politically driven, but rather an expression of the ambivalence that prevails within the souls besetting Jews in our time. The results of the behavior of the spies should be a sobering reminder regarding the dangers of slandering the land of Israel and the Jewish population.

Shabbat shalom,
Rabbi Berel Wein

from: Daily Halacha <return@email.dailyhalacha.com>
date: Jun 1, 2021, 3:06 AM
subject: When is the Earliest Time for the Evening Shema?
The Rabbi Jacob S. Kassin Memorial Halacha Series
Dedicated Today For Refuah Shelemah for Yona bat Ester by Friends and Family

Authored by **Rabbi Eli J. Mansour** (6/1/2021)

Description: **When is the Earliest Time for the Evening Shema?**

When is the earliest time in the evening when one can fulfill the Misva of reading the nighttime Shema?

This issue is subject to a debate among the Rishonim (Medieval Talmud scholars). Rashi (Rabbi Shlomo Yitzhaki, France, 1040-1105), commenting to the first page of Masechet Berachot, writes that communities who recite Arbit early, before sundown – as many communities do in the summertime nowadays – do not fulfill the Shema obligation with that recitation. They must therefore repeat the Shema after dark, and they fulfill the Misva through the recitation of the bedtime Shema. According to Rashi, then, one cannot fulfill the Misva of the evening Shema before Set Ha’kochavim (nightfall).

Rabbenu Tam (France, 1100-1171) disagreed. He claimed that just as one can fulfill the requirement of Arbit before sundown, one can fulfill the Shema obligation at that time, as well. This is also the position of the Ri (France, 12th century), who noted that the Gemara cites views allowing reciting Shema even before Set Ha’kochavim.

The Shulhan Aruch (Orah Haim 235; listen to audio recording for precise citation) writes that if one prays Arbit with a Minyan before sundown, he should recite Shema with the congregation but he does not fulfill his Shema obligation at that time, and he must therefore repeat Shema (without the accompanying Berachot) after dark. The Shulhan Aruch thus follows Rashi’s position, that the evening Shema must be recited after Set Ha’kochavim, and this is, indeed, the Halacha. This is why when congregations recite Arbit early – as is commonly done on Friday night during the summer months – the Rabbi announces after the prayer service that everyone should ensure to repeat Shema after dark.

When after dark should a person repeat the Shema?

Intuitively, we might assume that one should simply recite all three paragraphs of Shema at the time of the bedtime Shema before he goes to sleep, and have in mind to fulfill his Shema obligation at that point. However, the Mishna Berura (Rav Yisrael Meir Kagan of Radin, 1839-1933) writes that one should not rely on the bedtime Shema to fulfill the evening Shema obligation. People generally recite the bedtime Shema with the intention of protecting themselves from Mazikin (harmful spirits), and not for the Misva, and in order to fulfill the Shema obligation one must have in mind that he seeks to fulfill the Biblical command of Shema. And even if we argue that one fulfills the Misva without this intention, the Misva does require the serious acceptance of God's kingship, and people generally recite the bedtime Shema casually, when they are not in the frame of mind to contemplate such weighty matters. Therefore, the Mishna Berura writes, one who recited Arbit early, and must therefore repeat the Shema, should make a point of reciting the evening Shema at some point before bedtime, rather than relying on the Keri'at Shema Al Ha'mita.

One might, at first glance, question the Mishna Berura's ruling in light of Rashi's comments cited earlier. Rashi wrote explicitly that one can fulfill the obligation of the evening Shema through the recitation of Keri'at Shema Al Ha'mita. If Rashi clearly allows relying on the bedtime Shema for the Misva, why did the Mishna Berura write that one should not rely on the bedtime Shema?

The answer becomes clear when we read Rashi's comments more carefully. Rashi writes, "Therefore, we are obligated to recite it when it gets dark," and then he proceeds to comment that one fulfills the Shema obligation through the recitation of Keri'at Shema Al Ha'mita. This implies that optimally one should recite Shema after nightfall, but if he did not, then he can fulfill the Misva through the bedtime Shema. Rashi did not allow relying optimally on the bedtime Shema for fulfilling the Misva, but rather mentioned that one can fulfill the Misva through the bedtime Shema if he had not recited it earlier. As the Mishna Berura wrote, it is preferable to recite it after dark rather than waiting until Keri'at Shema Al Ha'mita. In fact, Rashi comments may likely have been the source for the Mishna Berura's ruling.

Summary: One cannot fulfill the Misva of the evening Shema before dark. Therefore, if one prays Arbit before dark, even though he recites Shema as part of Arbit, he must repeat Shema after dark. One should not rely on the Keri'at Shema Al Ha'mita recitation for this purpose.

From: Daily Halacha <return@email.dailyhalacha.com>

date: Jun 3, 2021, 3:51 AM

subject: Parashat Shelah: Shabbat – Our Collective Obligation - Weekly Parasha

Insights by Rabbi Eli Mansour

Weekly Parasha Insights by Rabbi Eli Mansour

Sponsored for Refuah Shelema of Yona bat Ester

Description: **Parashat Shelah: Shabbat – Our Collective Obligation**

The Torah in Parashat Shelah tells the story of the Mekoshesh Esim – a man who publicly desecrated Shabbat while Beneh Yisrael were in the wilderness. The people who found him committing the act of Shabbat desecration brought him to Moshe, and G-d commanded that the man should be punished.

Rashi, commenting on this episode (15:32, writes, "Bi'gnutan Shel Yisrael Diber Ha'katub" – "The verse speaks in criticism of Yisrael." This story was told as criticism of Beneh Yisrael, noting that they failed to observe Shabbat.

The question arises, why is the entire nation criticized for one man's Shabbat desecration? We might have thought that to the contrary, the "Mekoshesh Esim" was the exception that proved the rule – the fact that he was found violating Shabbat, and was punished, shows that the rest of the nation properly observed Shabbat. Why, then, is this story seen as an indictment of all Beneh Yisrael?

Rav Yosef Salant (Jerusalem, 1885-1981), in his Be'er Yosef, explains that there are two aspects to Shabbat observance – an individual obligation to observe Shabbat, and a collective obligation to ensure that Shabbat is properly respected. These two obligations are expressed by the two commands of "Zachor Et Yom Ha'Shabbat" ("Remember the day of Shabbat" – Shemot 20:7), and "Shamor Et Yom Ha'Shabbat" ("Guard the day of Shabbat" – Devarim 5:11). The command of "Zachor" refers to our individual obligation to observe Shabbat, whereas the command of "Shamor," which requires us to "guard" Shabbat, refers to our collective obligation to ensure that Shabbat is observed.

Rav Salant cites the comment of the Chizkuni (Hizkiya Ben Manoah, France, late 13th century) that Moshe had appointed people to "patrol" the camp on Shabbat and ensure that Shabbat was not violated, and this is how the "Mekoshesh Esim" was found. However, Rav Salant writes, it appears that there were not enough patrols, because although the "Mekoshesh Esim" was discovered, the patrols did not see him in time to prevent him from violating Shabbat. Apparently, not enough people volunteered for this job – to ensure the observance of Shabbat. And for this reason, Rav Salant explains, Rashi writes that this story is an indictment of Beneh Yisrael for failing to observe Shabbat. Although all but one member of the nation properly fulfilled the individual obligation of Shabbat observance, the nation as a whole failed in regard to its collective obligation.

We must be mindful of both our personal obligation towards Shabbat, and also our collective responsibility. Although we obviously cannot enforce Shabbat observance today the way this was done in ancient times, we need to do what we can to contribute to the collective observance of Shabbat, to each do our share to create a special, joyous, sacred environment which can inspire and encourage our fellow Jews to observe Shabbat and reap the incalculable benefits of this sacred day.

from: Torah Musings <newsletter@torahmusings.com>

date: Jun 1, 2021, 11:01 AM

subject: Torah Musings Daily Digest for 06/01/2021

Peticha Kolelet Lisefer Pri Megadim

Beyond Biblical: The Petihah Kollelet On Rabbinic Law

by **R. Gidon Rothstein**

Biblical Fences

Although I claimed to have finished my short-version re-summary of Peri Megadim's discussion of laws with roots in Scripture last time, one of the first points he makes about Rabbinic law also takes us back to the Biblical. Hazal point to Vayikra 18:30, u-shmartem et mishmarti, guard My charge (English translations have "keep") as what empowers them to legislate; if so, there may be no right to guard what was set up to guard, an idea the Gemara often phrases as ein gozerin gezerah le-gezerah, we do not make a protective rule to ensure observance of what itself is protective.

The idea might apply to some Biblical laws. Peri Megadim accepts the view the Torah itself creates seyagim, protective fences. The prohibition of bal yera'eh, owning leavened grains on Pesah, is in his view a Biblically instituted protection against eating the hametz, as is hatzi shi'ur, the prohibition against partaking of less than the minimal amount of any prohibited item. If so, perhaps there is no hatzi shi'ur prohibition for bal yera'eh, as that would be a seyag le-seyag, a double protection. Peri Megadim suggests the same for the a nazir's proscription from eating grapes, which he thinks is likely the Torah's protecting the nazir from the "real" prohibition, drinking wine.

Rabbinic Rules with a Connection to Scripture

The Gemara often offers a verse for rabbinic laws, while conceding it is only asmachta, a hint or hook on which to hang the law. Peri Megadim finds some asmachtaot stronger than others. He reads Ra'ah, R. Aharon Ha-Levi, a contemporary of Rashba, to say a law with an asmachta hashuvah, an important or significant link, has some aspects of the Biblical. In such cases, we would not say safek le-kula, we are lenient in cases of doubt, nor would we rule out a gezerah le-gezerah, another protective law for this original one, because it is enough like a Biblical law to generate protective rabbinic laws.

(A reminder: his idea here depends on his consistent acceptance of Rambam's view any rabbinic rule has the Biblical support of lo tasur, do not stray from what the rabbis say.)

For two of his many examples, the Gemara supplies a verse for the obligation to give certain honors to kohanim, where Peri Megadim is sure the idea is rabbinic; the Gemara requires being strict about a doubtful case of muktze despite its being rabbinic. Without repeating our original discussion of his examples and counterexamples, I do think it is worth repeating the pressing need his idea raises: to know which of the verses the Gemara cites are for which purposes, whether they are full-fledged sources, showing us a Biblical law, significant hints to an idea, an asmachta hashuvah, or more ordinary derivations, closer to homiletical, leaving the rule plainly rabbinic.

Makkat Mardut

A significant marker of rabbinic law was its being punishable with lashes of a different kind than the Biblical ones. Peri Hadash pointed out Hazal had two ways to enforce their rules, these lashes or nidui/herem, shunning. Lashes for an already-completed sin would be a fixed number (39 or 13 were the two views), he thought, where those seeking to bring cessation of an ongoing sin (or to yield observance) had no upper limit. Peri Megadim thinks the former type were also administered less harshly than Biblical lashes.

Ran provided the operative distinction for when to give which type of punishment. Nidui was for rules the rabbis completely innovated, lashes for extensions/protections

of Torah law. His idea reminds us again of the value/need to know the sources of ideas, because a person who violates a rabbinic prohibition becomes invalid as a witness at a rabbinic level, where a Biblical violation invalidates him at a Biblical level.

Rabbinic lashes do not require witnesses to have warned the sinner before he committed the violation, and can be administered for some Biblical sins, such as where the Torah did not institute lashes. For rabbinic rules without action (where the Biblical version has no lashes of its own), Peri Megadim was less sure, and certainly knew of some rabbinic sins for which no lashes were ever instituted.

And sometimes, the rabbis instituted or administered lashes without a violation, such as a woman who took a vow and then violated it without knowing her husband had nullified it. She technically had not sinned and yet would be disciplined for it, an idea Peri Megadim suggests should also apply to a Jew who thinks he is sinning (eating fat he and others assumed to be prohibited) and finds out he did not (it was shuman, permitted fat).

The Benefit of a Mitzvah

The Gemara assumes mitzvot lav lehanot nitenu, performance of a mitzvah is not considered a benefit, so that if someone blows shofar on my behalf, he has not benefited me financially (an idea mostly important for situations where I am not permitted to gain benefit from that other person, usually because one of us made a vow to that effect). Ba'al Ha-Ma'or thought the idea included only Biblical rules, where Ran assumed it extended to rabbinic ones as well. For Ran, I could have someone else perform a rabbinic mitzvah for me without worrying about the vow between us.

Mishneh Le-Melech thought Rambam allowed this idea only bedi'avad, when it has already been done or there are no other choices, such as when the only Jew available to blow shofar is not allowed to give benefit to a particular Jew. Shulhan Aruch ratified the idea, the other Jew may only benefit if the shofar blower is blowing anyway.

The idea might also allow using items prohibited in benefit for mitzvot, such as orlah oil, produce of the first three years of an olive tree, for Hanukkah candles, as long as it is a bedi'avad situation (for Rambam; Tosafot allowed it even le-chathillah).

The Strength and Intent of Rabbinic Law

Sometimes, the Gemara says Hazal enforced their rules at a level similar to, or occasionally greater than, Torah law. Peri Megadim thinks the idea worked only for original rabbinic legislation, laws they made with some purpose in mind. Hazal also occasionally said lo pelug, this case does not really fall under the rubric of our concern, but to leave it out of the rule would blur the issue. For those lo pelug rules, Peri Megadim says Hazal would never hold the line more than for a Torah law.

Magen Avraham said rabbinic laws do not require intent, although berachot seem to be an exception, and Peri Megadim notes women are generally exempt from rabbinic rules with a time component, as they are with Biblical ones.

Bal Tosif

Peri Megadim spent more than a little time on the Biblical prohibition of bal tosif, not to add to the Torah, since—as Rambam pointed out—any rabbinic legislation seems to violate the rule. Rambam thought Hazal articulating the distinctions between their legislation and Biblical avoided the problem, an ironic idea given how easily the line blurs, as we have seen.

Ra'avad raised Hazal's suggesting *asmachta'ot*, verses to support their ideas, as a counter-proof, since it obviously makes less clear they are legislating rather than expounding. Kesef Mishneh says Hazal say when they are doing that. Kesef Mishneh also said the leniencies in rabbinic law, such as that cases of doubt are treated leniently, were another way for Hazal to show they were not committing bal tosif. Ra'avad instead thought bal tosif only applied within an existing Biblical law, such as adding another section of the Torah to one's *tefillin*. Based on an idea of R. Eliyahu Mizrachi in his supercommentary to Rashi on the Torah, and Tosafot's permitting repeat performances of mitzvot without any concern about bal tosif, Peri Megadim distinguished between adding new or strange materials to a mitzvah (a fourth, different, verse to the kohen's blessing) and adding more of the original material, which is like doing the mitzvah again.

This latter idea also ties in with the question of intent, a person has to mean to include the extra item or performance within the mitzvah for us to worry about bal tosif.

Rashba escaped bal tosif for rabbinic law by claiming the Torah gave a blanket exemption to the Sanhedrin and the central courts, the right to legislate for the Jewish people as necessary without worrying it seems like adding to Torah law.

Getting back to Rambam, he says the prohibition only comes when the rabbis or others add to Torah law, not (for example) *halachah le-Moshe mi-Sinai*, laws handed down orally, even going back to Sinai. Although it sounds like he also frees adding to rabbinic law of bal tosif issues, Peri Megadim is sure that cannot be, because Rambam held all rabbinic law comes under the penumbra of *lo tasur*, and is therefore Biblical. Because, remember, only the Biblical roots of all rabbinic law allow us to make blessings with the word *ve-tzivanu*, Gd commanded us, as we act rabbinically.

Rambam's view of *bal tosif* also explains how people can voluntarily perform mitzvot when exempt; since they do not claim to be obligated, they are not adding to Torah law.

Prescribed Customs and Politeness

There are two more categories for Peri Megadim, custom and *derekh eretz*. By custom, he means practices set up by some authority (prophets, perhaps, or rabbis), such as waving the *aravot* on *Sukkot* (not, and I think it bears repeating, whatever people just start doing on their own; for him, that's not even a custom).

Although Rambam and Rashi seem to agree on a general rule not to recite blessings before fulfilling a custom, there are exceptions. Rambam was consistent in seeing no blessing before the truncated *Hallel* on *Rosh Hodesh*, where *Ittur* thought it would have a blessing when performed communally, and *Rabbenu Tam* and *Rosh* thought such customs could be blessed. For these latter two, the custom of *hoshanot* did not get a blessing only because it was *tiltul*, carrying an item, not a significant enough action to produce a blessing.

Rambam, Rashi, and *Ittur* have to explain why we recite blessings when fulfilling the custom of observing the second day of holidays outside of Israel. Fortunately for them, the Gemara said it was to prevent people from treating the second day casually. Peri Megadim is not happy with that alone, argues the blessings of *al* (*al achilat matzah*, on eating matzah, for example) are easier to say, because they are praise for the institution of the mitzvah in addition to being preparatory for a mitzvah performance. *Ritva* also suggested ordained customs achieve some level of obligation, making *ve-tzivanu* appropriate even for them. Peri Megadim wonders, in line with all this, whether courts might give rabbinic lashes to enforce observance of these kinds of laws as well.

Last, we saw the idea of recommended ways of living, such as guests obeying a host, making blessings on spices and/or a lit fire at the end of *Shabbat*, in both cases avoiding the word *ve-tzivanu*, as Gd commanded us.

The first part of the *Petihah Kollelet*, then, lays out for us the halachic system, what obligates Jews, from the most serious Biblical prohibitions down to the good practices the rabbis told us to follow. Figuring out what parts of our Judaism go where were an important part of observance, Peri Megadim was telling us, with both practical and conceptual ramifications all along the way.

Vol. 13

The Torah Anthology

MeAm Lo'ez

by

Rabbi Yitzchok Magriso

(first published in Constantinople, 1764)

Translated by
Dr. Tzvi Faier

Edited and with Notes by
Rabbi Aryeh Kaplan



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PORTION OF SH'LACH

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

NUMBERS 13

לג

CHAPTER 1

13:1,2 ונדרב רהנה אל-משה לאמר: שלח- לך אֲשֶׁר- יְחִירוּ אֶת- אֶרֶץ בְּנֵינוּן
אשר- אני נתן לך לְבָנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל איש אֶחָד אֲישׁ אֶחָד לְמַשָּׁה אֶבְתָּחֵן
מִשְׁלָחוֹ פֶּלֶג וְשָׁא כְּהָם:

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 observe the excavations (*chafi*_structured by the Canaanites for sions. Our desire to send spies a quality of the land."³

When Moses heard these a dispatch scouts was not with revealed in the Portion of *Deva* men, one for each tribe" (Deute them solely on the basis of his o consult God to see if He agrees

When Moses went to con "They are capable of misleading not fathom the hidden recesses scouts should be sent for the pu But I, who test the inner parts of lack of faith in Me. Although I land, they wish to know the qual that they betray a lack of faith i begun to offend Me in this mann this matter. If you wish, send th

God's answer is indicated in t The words, "for yourself," are a "Sending them will be your deci Nothing at all will I command y

Another interpretation regarding us that God said to Moses, send out spies, the final decision t will constitute an insurrection ag where everyone is a leader. You you wish. But because they had leged to see the land when the ti

One may think of this as folle of his son to a woman possessed family. But the son said, "I wish to tell me."

The father became very angry that if he did not show the wom

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 "mamlekhet 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 sucking 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 Canaan.

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 Cana'anite 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 Calev 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?

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 Kalev'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 Kalev 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’onemim* – “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’onemim* 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 Sinaitic 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'rit Sinai, Mosheh could only point to *Hessed* as a Divine attribute which would save the people.**

Now that they had rejected B'rit Sinai – all that they had left was B'rit 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'rit 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'rit 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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TALMUD TIPS

by Rabbi Moshe Newman

Shlach Lecha: Yoma 44-50

The Heirs to the Hair

We learned in a beraita: “Kimchis had seven sons, and each one of them served as Kohen Gadol. The Chachamim asked her, ‘What did you do to merit this great honor?’ She replied, ‘I never allowed the beams of my house see my uncovered hair.’”

Clearly, Kimchis was an important and remarkable person. To have merited receiving this unique and superlative spiritual reward from Above for her modesty, she undoubtedly went beyond the letter of the law in her observance of the halacha requiring a married woman to cover her hair.

We similarly find that our great Torah scholars were renowned for their extraordinary modesty, as we see where Rabbi Yossi said, “The beams of my house have never seen the seams of my shirt.” (Shabbat 118b) In practical terms, this means that he did not turn his shirt inside out whenever he changed clothing, but pulled it over his head while sitting up in bed so that he remained covered as much as possible – out of modesty.

In the case of Kimchis and her sons on our *daf*, one might wonder how the reward of *Kehuna Gedola* was measure-for-measure an appropriate honor for her modesty in covering her hair. To explain this connection, Rashi (here) cites the Jerusalem Talmud as follows: King David says in Tehillim 45:14, “The dignity of a princess (which can also be translated as “a daughter of the King”) is in her modesty – and her garment is made of gold embroidery.” A woman with the essence of such outstanding modesty

deserves children who will wear the golden garments of the *Kohen Gadol*.

However, how was this honor technically possible, since there should be only one *Kohen Gadol* at a time? If the seven sons served consecutively, it would seem to imply the death of the previous son. What type of honor would it have been for this pious woman to have buried six of her sons?

A key to the answer is in the *gemara*’s account of her son named Yishmael. He became *tamei* (spiritually impure) just before Yom Kippur one year, and Yeshaiov his brother served as a temporary substitute that year. This same temporary disqualification occurred to Yishmael in a different year, and his brother Yosef served instead that year. Despite these incidents being mentioned only in regard to three of her sons, we can infer that this happened more than twice, which eventually led to all seven brothers having an opportunity to serve as *Kohen Gadol* – while all the brothers were alive and together. (Tosefot Yeshanim) In this manner, the service of all her seven sons was certainly an honor for their mother, and certainly brought great *nachat* (Torah joy) to their righteous mother. (See the Maharsha’s *Chiddushei Aggadot* on our *sugya*, where

he poses a fascinating question and advances a brilliant answer regarding the timings and identities of the events that transpired.)

I found a specific detail in the *beraita* particularly intriguing. Why does Kimchis say the *beams* of her house never saw her hair, instead of saying that the *walls* of her house never saw her hair? “Beams” generally refer to the *roof* beams above, whereas walls would be the usual eye-level sides of her abode. Did she perhaps say “beams” to indicate that she took special care to never expose the hair on the very top of her head to the (unlikely) possibility that a person on a ladder was looking at her from near the roof beams, or that someone was flying a drone with a camera above her head? I do not think this is the explanation. Rather, Kimchis was not just a *person who acted ‘modestly’*, she was, in her very essence, a

modest person. Since her modesty was inherent and intrinsic, it was only *natural* that she would not expose her royal hair toward any direction of the compass.

(For a detailed treatment and understanding of the halacha of hair-covering for a married woman, see Shuchan Aruch *Even H'Zer* 75. The sources in *Shas*, explanations from the Rishonim and rulings by our great Poskim are many, and may depend on numerous factors, such as place – both geographical and its precise “public nature”, time, and communal customs and norms. The topic is renowned to be complex and certainly well beyond the scope of a Daf Yomi column titled “Talmud Tips.”)

● *Yoma 47a*

PARSHA INSIGHTS

by Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair

Mutilation or Dedication

“...and (do not) seek after your heart and after your eyes which will lead you astray” [Rashi: *The heart and the eyes are like the body's spies, brokering for it the sins sought by its animal nature*] (15:39)

Hermann Rauschning in his book “Gespräche mit Hitler” (published in English as *Hitler Speaks*) writes that Hitler said to him; “The tablets of Mount Sinai have lost their validity. Conscience is a Jewish invention. Like circumcision it mutilates man.”

It's interesting that Hitler linked conscience with circumcision. Conscience requires us to think about the consequences of our actions, to focus on the future and not the present. The body wants to ignore consequences. The body's agenda is instant gratification – a gratification that evaporates immediately with its satisfaction. Circumcision dedicates that part of a man's body from which flows his future, his tomorrow. So too, with a woman, the Hebrew name for womb is *rechem*. You can rearrange the letters of *rechem* to spell *machar*, which means “tomorrow.” The body is not interested in the future. Its entire agenda is the present. Both conscience and

circumcision harness our instincts and direct them to build a future world.

Conscience comes from Sinai. The Torah mandated a revolution in human behavior: Education for all. The sanctity of human life, equality before the law, a vision of world peace where nations would beat their swords into ploughshares, the moral imperative to care for the sick, the aged, the orphan, the widow.

What the arch anti-Semite called mutilation, we call dedication.

Avraham Avinu made a *brit* – a pact with G-d. Avraham dedicated his future, his progeny, and their progeny throughout the generations, to G-d. And G-d, so to speak, dedicated everything that He would be in this world to come about through the children of Avraham Avinu. The covenant was the mutual dedication of everything each would ever be to the other.

Q & A

Questions – Shlach

1. Why is the portion about the *meraglim* written immediately after the portion about Miriam's *tzara'at*?
2. To what was Moshe referring when he asked the *meraglim* "Are there trees in the land"?
3. Who built Hebron?
4. Which fruits did the *meraglim* bring back?
5. How many people carried the grape cluster?
6. Why did G-d shorten the *meraglim*'s journey?
7. Why did the *meraglim* begin by saying the land is "flowing with milk and honey"?
8. Why did the *meraglim* list Amalek first among the hostile nations they encountered?
9. How did Caleb quiet the people?
10. Why did the Land appear to "eat its inhabitants"?
11. Besides the incident of the *meraglim*, what other sin led to the decree of 40 years in the desert?
12. On what day did *Bnei Yisrael* cry due to the *meraglim*'s report? How did this affect future generations?
13. "Don't fear the people of the Land...their defense is departed." (14:9) Who was their chief "defender"?
14. Caleb and Yehoshua praised Eretz Canaan and tried to assure the people that they could be victorious. How did the people respond?
15. "How long shall I bear this evil congregation?" G-d is referring to the 10 *meraglim* who slandered the Land. What halacha do we learn from this verse?
16. How is the *mitzvah* of *challa* different from other *mitzvot* associated with Eretz Yisrael?
17. What is the minimum amount of *challa* to be given to a *kohen* according to Torah Law? Rabbinic Law?
18. Verse 15:22 refers to what sin? How does the text indicate this?
19. Moshe's doubt regarding the punishment of the *mekoshesh etzim* (wood-gatherer) was different than his doubt regarding the punishment of the blasphemer. How did it differ?
20. How do the *tzitzit* remind us of the 613 commandments?

All references are to the verses and Rashi's commentary, unless otherwise stated.

Answers

1. 13:2 - To show the evil of the *meraglim* (spies), that they saw Miriam punished for *lashon hara* (negative speech) yet failed to take a lesson from it.
2. 13:20 - Were there any righteous people in the land whose merit would "shade" the Canaanites from attack?
3. 13:22 - Cham.
4. 13:23 - A cluster of grapes, a pomegranate and a fig.
5. 13:23 - Eight.
6. 13:25 - G-d knew the Jews would sin and be punished with a year's wandering for each day of the spies' mission. So He shortened the journey to soften the decree.
7. 13:27 - Any lie which doesn't start with an element of truth won't be believed. Therefore, they began their false report with a true statement.
8. 13:29 - To frighten the Jews. The Jewish People were afraid of Amalek because Amalek had once attacked them.
9. 13:30 - He fooled them by shouting, "Is this all that the son of Amram did to us?" The people quieted themselves to hear what disparaging thing Caleb wished to say about the "son of Amram" (Moshe).
10. 13:32 - G-d caused many deaths among the Canaanites so they would be preoccupied with burying their dead and not notice the *meraglim*.
11. 13:33 - The golden calf.
12. 14:1 - The 9th of Av (Tisha B'av). This date therefore became a day of crying for all future generations: Both Temples were destroyed on this date.
13. 14:9 - Iyov.
14. 14:10 - They wanted to stone them.
15. 14:27 - That ten men are considered a congregation.
16. 15:18 - The obligation to observe other *mitzvot* associated with Eretz Yisrael began only after the possession and division of the Land. The *mitzvah* of *challa* was obligatory immediately upon entering the Land.
17. 15:20 - No fixed amount is stated by the Torah. Rabbinic Law requires a household to give 1/24 and a baker to give 1/48.
18. 15:22 - Idolatry. "All these commandments" means one transgression which is equal to transgressing all the commandments - i.e. idolatry.
19. 15:34 - Moshe knew that the *mekoshesh etzim* was liable for the death penalty, but not which specific means of death. Regarding the blasphemer, Moshe didn't know if he was liable for the death penalty.
20. 15:39 - The numerical value of the word *tzitzit* is 600. *Tzitzit* have eight threads and five knots. Add these numbers and you get 613.

WHAT'S IN A WORD?

Synonyms in the Hebrew Language

by Rabbi Reuven Chaim Klein

Fun with Fish (Part 2/2)

When Moses sent spies to scout out the Holy Land ahead of the Jews' conquest, only two spies remained loyal to the cause: Caleb and Joshua. Throughout the Bible, Joshua is always described as *Yehoshua/Hoshea bin Nun* ("Joshua son of Nun") because his father's name was Nun (I Chron. 7:27). Now, the word *nun* actually means "fish," which leads a certain apocryphal Midrash made famous by Rabbi Avraham Vilner (1765-1808) to claim that Joshua was put into the river as a little child and swallowed up by a fish. According to this fanciful tale, the fish was caught and brought to the Pharaoh, whereupon they cut it open and discovered the child inside. That child – Joshua – ended up being raised in Pharaoh's house and rose to the position of Chief Executioner. Although Rabbi Yitzchak Yishaya Weiss of Neve Achiezer in Bnei Brak already debunked the provenance of this Midrash, other traditions claim that Joshua was called "bin Nun" because he was destined to swallow up the thirty-one Canaanite Kings like a "fish" (Midrash *HaBiur* to *Haftarat Shlach*), or because G-d was ready to hear Joshua's supplications (*tachaNUNim*) once he would enter the Holy Land (Megaleh Amukot 27). Either way, the fact remains that the word *nun* means "fish." In this essay we will continue discussing different Hebrew words for "fish" – starting with *nun*.

The Hebrew word *nun* in the sense of "fish" never appears in the Bible. As you may have realized, the common word for fish in Biblical Hebrew is *dag/dagah*. Why does the word *nun* not appear in the Bible?

Rabbi Aharon Marcus (1843-1916) theorizes that the word *nun* has been excised from Biblical Hebrew because Canaanites and other nations deified the "fish" or "sea-creature" that this word denotes, turning Nun into the name of a god. In order to downplay this development, Biblical Hebrew purposely left out the word *nun* from all books of the Bible, which is why *dag* became the standard word for "fish."

Nonetheless, the word *nun* remains the standard word for "fish" in Hebrew's Semitic sister languages like Aramaic and Ugaritic. In fact, *nun/nuna/nuni* are the standard words used by the Targumim in translating the Hebrew *dag*, and they appear numerous times in the Talmud. For example, the Talmud (*Kiddushin* 25a) relates that the people of a certain town mocked Rav Hamnuna, whose name sounds like *cham nuna* ("hot fish"), by calling him *kar nuna* ("cold fish"). Plus, the letter NUN in the ancient paleo-Hebrew script (*Ktav Ivri*) looks like a fish.

When the Torah describes G-d creating sea-monsters known as a *taninim* (Gen. 1:21), Rabbi Marcus argues that at the core of *taninim* is the word *nun*, as the letter TAV is not part of the root. In offering this explanation, Rabbi Marcus explicitly rejects scholarly speculation that the word *taninim* is a Sanskrit loanword.

Interestingly, Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch (to Gen. 1:21) also suggests that the word *tannin* is derived from the word *nun*, but adds that *nun* itself is derived from the Hebrew word *nin* ("offspring," or in Modern Hebrew "great-grandchild"). He compares this to the word *dag*, which primarily denotes fecundity (as we saw last week), but also carries the additional meaning of "fish."

Rabbi Ron Yosef Chaim Masoud Abuchatzeira takes the exact opposite approach from Rabbi Hirsch's. Whereas Rabbi Hirsch suggested that the word *nun* comes from *nin*, Rabbi Abuchatzeira submits that *nin* actually comes from *nun*. The Talmud (*Brachot* 20a) relates that fish are fruitful and multiple in large quantities because they are not susceptible to the Evil Eye. Accordingly, explains Rabbi Abuchatzeira, the common word "offspring" (*nun*) is derived from the word "fish" (*nun*) in an effort to deflect the Evil Eye from upon one's descendants.

Rabbi Abuchatzeira fascinatingly compares this to a well-known custom among Tunisian Jews (especially those from Djerba) who give their children names related to “fish” in order to help immunize them from the Evil Eye. Examples include masculine names like Hayuta/Hauita (“fish” in some North African dialects of Arabic, although in Aramaic it means “snake”), Manani (“merou” or “grouper” fish, possibly also related to *nun*), Bugid (“striped red mullet”), Hadir (“torpedo fish”), Karutz (“bass”), Uzifa, Wurgana, and feminine names like Shelbia (“Salema porgy”), Svirsa, Murgana, Manana (feminized form of Manani), and Baharia (“mermaid”).

Another possible derivative of *nun* is the place-name Ninveh. Rabbi Avraham (b. Hillel) Rivlin explains that the word Ninveh is a portmanteau of *nun* (“fish”) and *naveh* (“home”), and indeed the cuneiform symbol for that city is a fish inside a house. When Jonah refused to go to the city of Ninveh, G-d punished him by making him experience the meaning of that city's name in that he was swallowed by a fish, such that a fish became his home. Rabbi Nissim Paniri adds that the name Jonah (*Yonah*) is spelled with the same letters as Ninveh, except that Jonah's name is missing a second NUN. In order to give Jonah that extra NUN so that he would identify with Ninveh and agree to be G-d's emissary to that place, G-d placed him inside a fish (*nun*).

Rabbi Aryeh Moshe Teicholtz suggests that the name Ninveh relates to the Aramaic word *nun* and recalls the fish-god that they worshipped there. In order to stress the urgency of Jonah's mission to Ninveh, G-d had the prophet swallowed up by a fish (*nun*) so that Jonah would remember about their idolatrous fish-cult and agree to help them repent.

There are several other words for “fish” in the Talmud that we have not yet discussed:

1. Besides the word *nun*, another common word for fish in Judeo-Aramaic is *kavra*. It remains unclear whether the term *kavra* refers to all fish in general or to a specific type of fish (see *Tosafot* to *Moed Katan* 11a). Dr. Marcus Jastrow (1829-1903) notes that the Mishnaic word *kaveret* means “beehive” or “basket” (*Sheviit* 10:7, *Bava Batra* 5:3, *Keilim* 8:1, 15:1, 22:10, *Ohalot* 5:6, 8:1, 8:3, 9:1), leading him to explain that *kavra* in the sense of “fish” refers specifically to “live fish” that are kept in

a cauf (i.e., basket). According to this, it would seem that *kavra* can refer to any type of fish housed in such a portable fish tank. On the other hand, the Talmud (*Chullin* 109b) relates that *kavra* is a type of fish that tastes like the *girutha* bird (which Jastrow identifies as the “moor hen”), which suggests that *kavra* refers to a specific species of fish, not to all fish in general.

2. The Mishna (*Bechorot* 8:1, *Karitot* 1:3, *Niddah* 3:4) discusses the Halachic status of a miscarriage that results in a fetus in the shape of a *sandal*. The Babylonian Talmud (*Niddah* 25b) explains that the shape of a *sandal* resembles the shape of a fish in the sea. Rashi (there and to *Ketuvot* 39a) and his son-in-law Rivan (to *Yevamot* 12b) further note that this refers to a specific fish named *sandal* (such is also implied by the Jerusalem Talmud, *Niddah* 3:4). Meiri (to *Yevamot* 12b) adds that this *sandal* resembles a free-floating piece of meat that does not have clear limbs (perhaps a jellyfish?).

3. The Talmud (*Chullin* 109b) relates that the brain of a *shibuta* fish tastes like pork and is a *kosher* substitute for that porcine foodstuff. Moreover, the Talmud (*Kiddushin* 41a) relates that Rava would personally engage in preparations for the Sabbath by salting the *shibuta* fish for consumption. Jastrow identifies *shibuta* as probably referring to the “mullet” (or, *Mugil cephalus*) fish, while others identify the *shibuta* as the sturgeon or porpoise fish. The most definitive approach is that of Drs. Zohar Amar and Ari Zivotofsky, who identify *shibuta* as the fish known as *shirbot*/*shabout* (or *Arabibarbus grypus*) in English. Indeed, this type of fish fits the Jerusalem Talmud's description that the *shibuta* can be found in Babylonia, but not in the Holy Land (*Taanit* 4:5). (See also *Minchat Chinuch* 550:2, who suggests that the term *shibuta* can refer to both kosher and non-kosher types of fish.)

Remarkably, an ancient tradition claims that there is a certain type of fish that does not swim on the Sabbath (Radak to Gen. 2:3, *Yalkut Reuven* to Gen. 2:2, *Shevet Mussat* ch. 11). Based on this, some sources connect the word *shibuta* (spelled with a TET) with *Shabbat* (spelled with a TAV), thus identifying the *shibuta* fish as that fish which refuses to swim on the Sabbath (see *Megadim Chadashim* to *Shabbat* 119a).

*Special thanks to Rabbi Degani Kohen from Beitar/Baka for bringing the Jerbi custom to my attention.

PARSHA OVERVIEW

At the insistence of the *Bnei Yisrael*, and with G-d's permission, Moshe sends 12 scouts, one from each tribe, to investigate Canaan. Anticipating trouble, Moshe changes Hoshea's name to Yehoshua, expressing a prayer that G-d will not let him fail in his mission. They return 40 days later, carrying unusually large fruit. When 10 of the 12 scouts state that the people in Canaan are as formidable as the fruit, the people are discouraged. Calev and Yehoshua, the only two scouts still in favor of the invasion, try bolstering the people's spirit. The nation, however, decides that the Land is not worth the potentially fatal risks, and instead demands a return to Egypt. Moshe's fervent prayers save the nation from Heavenly annihilation. However, G-d declares that they must remain in the desert for 40 years until the men who wept at the scouts' false report pass away. A remorseful group rashly begins an invasion of the Land, based on G-d's original command. Moshe warns them not to proceed, but they ignore this and are massacred by the Amalekites and Canaanites.

G-d instructs Moshe concerning the offerings to be made when the *Bnei Yisrael* will finally enter the Land. The people are commanded to remove *challah*, a gift for the *kohanim*, from their dough. The laws for an offering after an inadvertent sin, for an individual or a group, are explained. However, should someone blaspheme against G-d and be unrepentant, he will be cut off spiritually from his people. One man is found gathering wood on public property in violation of the laws of Shabbat and is executed. The laws of *tzitzit* are taught. We recite the section about the *tzitzit* twice a day to remind ourselves of the Exodus.

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Email. info@ohr.edu

Contributing authors, editors and production team: Rabbi Nota Schiller – Rosh HaYeshiva, Rabbi Yitzchak Breitowitz - Rav of Kehillos Ohr Somayach, Avi Kaufman, Rabbi Reuven Chaim Klein, Rabbi Reuven Lauffer, Rabbi Yaakov Meyers, Mrs. Rosalie Moriah, Rabbi Moshe Newman, Rabbi Shlomo Simon, Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair, Rabbi Yehuda Spitz, Mrs. Helena Stern.

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COUNTING OUR BLESSINGS

by Rabbi Reuven Lauffer

TO BELIEVE IS TO BEHAVE (PART 8) (LAILAH GIFTY AKITA)

“These are the precepts whose fruits a person enjoys in this world, but whose principal remains intact in the World to Come. They are: honoring one’s parents; acts of kindness; early arrival at the study hall in the morning and the evening; hosting guests; visiting the sick; providing the wherewithal for a bride to marry; escorting the dead; praying with concentration; making peace between two people; and Torah study is the equivalent of them all.” (Tractate Shabbat 127a)

The seventh mitzvah is escorting the deceased on their final journey. As with the previous mitzvah, this does not refer only to participation in the funeral service. Rather, it also includes all arrangements and preparations that must be taken care of before the actual burial. These acts are described by the Rabbis as being *chessed shel emet* – true kindness. The expression *chessed shel emet* is a slight variation of the words that Yaakov used when speaking with Yosef: *chessed v’emet* – kindness and truth (Ber. 47:29). The Torah says that at the end of his earthly life, Yaakov makes a few last requests regarding his passing and his burial. When Yaakov asked his son Yosef to promise not to bury him in Egypt, Yaakov says, “If I have found favor in your eyes... and do kindness and truth with me.” In the Midrashic texts, the phrase *chessed v’emet* is called *chessed shel emet*.

What was Yaakov alluding to when he asked Yosef to treat him with “kindness and truth”? Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch clarifies that Yaakov did not doubt that Yosef would bury him with appropriate pomp and ceremony. This was something that Yaakov regarded as *chessed*, kindness. But, of greater concern to Yaakov was the *emet* – the truth. Yaakov wanted to be buried in the Land of Israel. Why was it so important to Yaakov to be buried in the Land of Israel and not in Egypt? Where was the urgency for him to have Yosef swear to him that he would do as he asked? Rabbi Hirsch explains that Yaakov wanted to impress on his descendants that Egypt was not *their* place, that they did not belong there. With his passing, Yaakov wished to convey to them a final

message: they were merely sojourners in a land not theirs. The Land of Israel was their natural homeland, and it was to the Land of Israel that they should aspire to want to live.

The Midrashic texts define *chessed shel emet* as being kindness that cannot be repaid in this world. For this reason, anything involved in the burying of a dead person is described as *chessed shel emet* – because the deceased is no longer able to give anything in this world to compensate for the kindness that was done to him by bringing him to a Jewish burial. In effect, being involved with part of the burial process is a completely altruistic act.

The altruism of being involved in burying the dead is clear. However, there is one group of Jews who are nearly excluded from being a part of this mitzvah – *kohanim* (“priests”). Due to their elevated spiritual status, they are forbidden to come into direct contact with a dead body or to enter a cemetery. This severely curtails their ability to be involved in this exalted mitzvah. However, not all that long ago, in Amsterdam, an enterprising *kohen* actually managed to perform the mitzvah without transgressing the various potential prohibitions. The Jewish community there had purchased a piece of land to create a new cemetery. They held a ceremony that was attended by the entire community, during which the land for the cemetery was consecrated. It was a hauntingly memorable event.

Soon after its consecration, someone from the community passed away. He was the first person scheduled to be buried in the new cemetery. The

accepted local custom was that the final preparations for the grave were normally done by the burial society as the deceased arrived at the gravesite. But, this time everyone was surprised to find that the grave was completely ready for the burial. The local burial society in charge of the cemetery had no idea how the grave came to be prepared for the deceased, and after the funeral was over they began to make inquiries. They discovered that a member of the community wanted very much to be able to partake in the mitzvah of burying the dead, but, because he was a *kohen*, he had never been able to do so. When that *kohen* had heard that the very first burial was

going to take place in the new cemetery, he was filled with an urgent sense of spiritual anticipation. In his mind, he was being presented with a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to fulfill a mitzvah, one that a *kohen* cannot normally perform. However, since this cemetery did not yet have any corpses in it, it was not considered to be a place of spiritual impurity. Therefore, the *kohen* was permitted to enter it. And this is exactly what he did! The night before the funeral, he had entered the completely empty cemetery and had prepared the grave to be ready for the next day. In that way, despite his being a *kohen*, he was able to accrue a unique mitzvah.

To be continued.....

LETTER AND SPIRIT

Insights based on the writings of Rav S.R. Hirsch by Rabbi Yosef Hershman

Separating Challah

In addition to the portion of produce that is to be gifted to the Kohen, we are commanded to take a part off of every batch of dough that we prepare in our homes.

Just as the threshing floor shows us the abundance with which G-d has blessed the field, our dough represents the prosperity with which G-d has blessed our homes. In both cases, the Torah instructs that an owner may not partake of his goods until he performs the symbolic act of separating a portion for the Kohen. In the case of produce, it is called *terumah*, while in the case of dough it is called *challah*. (This is the origin of the name of traditional loaves served on Shabbat).

By separating this *terumah* or *challah*, the owner gives homage to G-d, in recognition of His blessing of his field and home. The gift goes to the Kohen, who represents the Sanctuary of Torah. This awareness begins in the field and is renewed when he prepares the daily bread for himself and his family. While the crops that ripen in the field are a blessing to all people, the bread baked in one's home symbolizes his individual blessing.

There is no minimum quantity stated for the portion separated. The obligation may be satisfied (according to the Torah) with even the tiniest piece of dough or a single kernel from the whole pile. (There is, however, a rabbinic minimum requirement.) On the other hand, there is a maximum limit for both. Both are termed *reishit*, meaning *the beginning of*, or *the first portion of*. This would not remain a true description unless a considerable amount remains. Hence, our Rabbis taught that if one declares his whole barn to be *terumah*, or the whole of his dough to be *challah*, his declaration is invalid and has no effect.

This teaches an important lesson: No one may consider the Kohen's relation to the Torah to be a substitute for his own. He should not view the Kohen's existence as worthy and his own existence as insignificant. Instead, he is to understand that blessing preserves his own existence — and that existence is dedicated to G-d and His Torah.

- *Source: Commentary, Bamidbar 15:20*

The students, alumni, staff and events of Ohr Somayach
by Rabbi Shlomo Simon

Moshe Males (24)
Telz Stone, Israel
Michlalah L'Minhal Degree in
Structural Engineering, 2020
Mechina – Since 2019

Many years ago, my wife and I moved to Cleveland, Ohio from New York. We were newly married. While the Jewish community in New York was friendly, it was not overly welcoming. By contrast, the Midwesterners were openly friendly and welcoming. The contrast between the two regions was brought home to me when I first entered an elevator in a downtown Cleveland office building. The other people in the elevator, total strangers, and probably non-Jews, took the twenty seconds that we were together to introduce themselves and inquired after my welfare. I was almost too shocked to answer. That would never happen in a midtown New York elevator. In our first three years of living in the religious neighborhood of Cleveland Heights, we literally had invitations for every Shabbos and Yom Tov meal.

I mention this because Moshe Males' father is from Cleveland, and, upon meeting Moshe for the first time, I immediately recognized that warmth, openness, friendliness and optimism that are characteristic of the denizens of that place. Although Moshe was born in Israel, he was brought up in Telz Stone – a community established by the philanthropist and Clevelander Irving Stone, and which was for a number of years the site of the Israeli branch of the Telshe Yeshiva of Cleveland. Although Telz Stone may be filled with Jews from all over the world, a touch of the Midwest is still felt there.

Moshe is the third of nine children and had a typical *charedi* education. He went to *Tiferet Yehuda* in Telz Stone for *cheder* and *Netzach Yisroel* in Har Nof for *yeshiva katana*.

He chose not to continue on to *yeshiva gedola* right away but to spend some gap years working. He was good with his hands and had a fascination with building. For the next few years, he learned the trades necessary for renovations and construction, and worked in that field.

At eighteen Moshe decided to get an advanced degree in Structural Engineering so that he could be licensed to build multistory buildings in Israel. He did all the coursework to complete his *bagrut* (an advanced academic high school diploma) and then was accepted to *Hamichlalah L'Minhal* – an Engineering school in Jerusalem.



In his third year of college, he decided to reconnect with his learning, and was encouraged by his parents and friends to check out Ohr Somayach in Jerusalem. Rabbi Guy Matalon, the head of the Mechina Program, convinced him to come to us. He started at the Yeshiva in the mornings, attending college in the evenings. A little over a year ago, during the Covid-19 crisis when the Yeshiva was in lockdown, Moshe moved into the dorm so that he could continue learning Torah. He graduated with his degree in Structural Engineering, and in June 2021 will defend his thesis and project in front of a panel of engineers for his license. In the meantime, he has been honing his building skills by renovating the Lauffer Building on our campus.

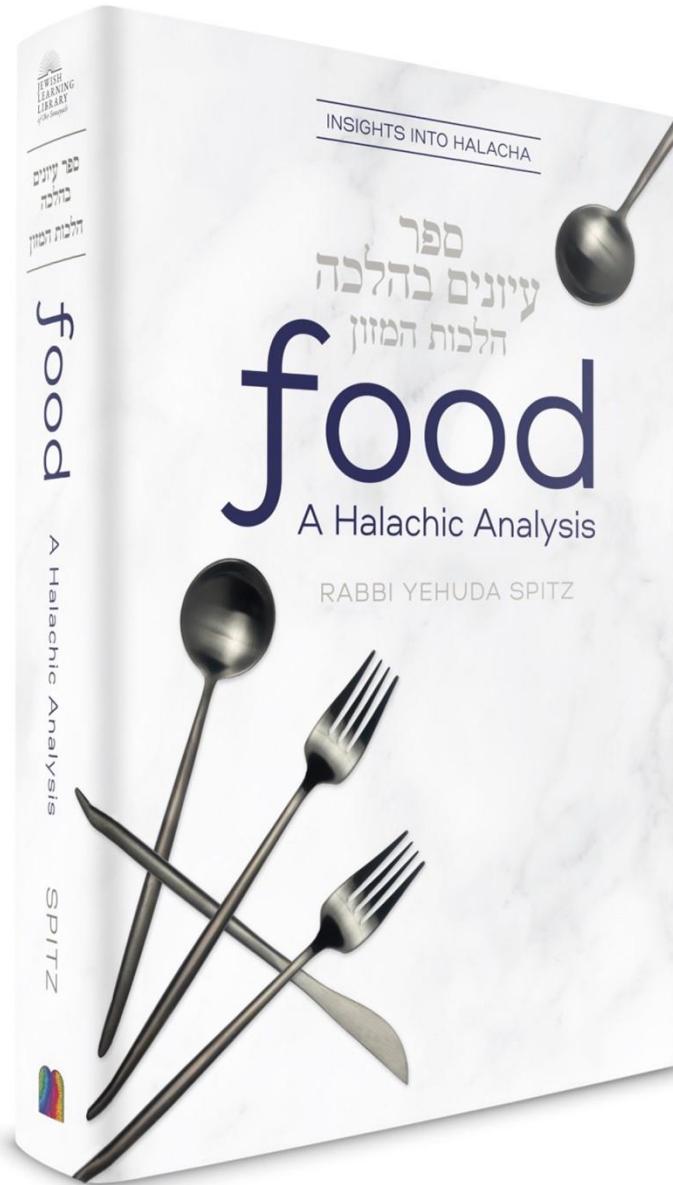
When asked about his future plans, he answered that before he starts working as an engineer he needs to spend more time learning in Ohr Somayach. He will soon sit for another exam – the entrance *farher* to the Beis Midrash program. We wish him all the best.

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