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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 more than 50 years ago and was our family Rebbe and close friend until his untimely death.

Mazel-Tov to Rabbanit Dasi Fruchter and Daniel Krupka on their wedding this coming week. Mazel-Tov also to the proud parents, Rena & Chaim Fruchter and Elisa Kahn & Anatol Krupka; siblings, and entire family.

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 archives.**

How many opinions on a given subject would two Jews (or two Israelis) have? Look to the number of political parties in Israel to realize that the answer could be several. Is the national pastime in Israel having political elections? Regardless, this small country, surrounded by enemy nations everywhere on the globe, faces the prospect of yet another election, yet again without achieving a majority able to rule easily for a the next few (or many) years.

In Shelach Lecha, Moshe sends a group of a dozen leaders from twelve tribes on a fact finding forty day tour of the land that Hashem had promised to our ancestors. Moshe asks the leaders to report back on the land – is it good, productive, and everything that God had promised? The tourists do not report back to Moshe as he probably had expected. Instead, they call a meeting of all the people (approximately two million of them) and give both a report and their opinions on options for the future.

Naturally twelve Jews could not agree. While all the tourists report that the land is beautiful, productive, and rich, not all agree that the people should go in and capture it. Ten leaders add to their report by stating that the people are strong and giants, that the land eats up the people, and that B'Nai Yisrael would not be able to capture it. The minority report is that yes there are challenges, but with the help of Hashem, we can and will drive out the people and take over the land that God had promised to our nation.

In the short time since God sent plagues to destroy Egypt, the strongest nation in the world, brought two million of our people through the desert, presented the mitzvot with great drama (Revelation at Har Sinai), provided the people with water from rocks and food from the sky six days a week, did two million Jews not learn anything about Hashem's power? Did they not learn that God sends plagues to our enemies and sends the same symbols to help us out of love? (For example, Hashem turns Egypt's water to blood and drowns the people while turning rocks and sand to refreshing water for B'Nai Yisrael.) Caleb and Yehoshua understand God's message and know that with Him on our side, no other nation can defeat B'Nai Yisrael. The ten other leaders, who should know better, completely misinterpret facts and deny both God's love for Israel and God's power to defeat our enemies, even when operating entirely behind the scenes.

The story of the Meraglim has parallels back to previous Jewish history, as Beth Lesch (one of Rabbi David Fohrman's colleagues) relates convincingly. For example, the Meraglim story shares key words and situations with the story of the brothers' treatment of Yosef when he ends up being sold and exported as a slave in Egypt. (The evidence is available in podcasts at alephbeta.org.) Yehuda, a son of Leah, and Yosef, first born son of Rachel, were the key opponents in the sale of Yosef. In the story of the Meraglim, Caleb, from the tribe of Yehuda, and Yehoshua, from the tribe of Ephraim (grandson of Rachel), work together to try to convince the people that God loves us and wants B'Nai Yisrael to enter the land – with God's full support ensuring victory.

Sefer Bereishis presents generation after generation of sibling rivalry – from Kayin murdering his brother Hevel, to threats and fights between Yitzhak and Yishmael, Yaakov and Esav, and among Yaakov's brothers. Finally Menashe and Ephraim live together in peace; Aharon and Moshe live and work together as a team – progress, but not yet a tikkun for the troubles between the sons of Leah and the sons of Rachel. When Caleb (Yehuda) and Yehoshua (Ephraim) work together to try to save the generation of the Exodus, finally we see a tikkun for the problems between the Leah and Rachel sides of the Jewish family. Unfortunately, their efforts are insufficient to persuade the majority, win a working majority, and create an enduring political leadership for that generation.

Sefer Bemidbar, which started with such promise, falls apart very quickly. Indeed, Miriam's tzaraat (apparently an issue between her and her brother Moshe), the sin of the Meraglim, and Korach's rebellion all take place the same week. (See the *Torah Anthology,* vol. 13, pp. 333-334, for the evidence.) Might B'Nai Yisrael have entered and captured Israel many years earlier if Yosef had not been sold into slavery in Egypt? Certainly the nation could have entered the land 38 years earlier if not for the sin of the Meraglim. How often do we prove to be our own worst enemies?

The discussions of the Meraglim from by beloved Rebbe, Rabbi Leonard Cahan, z"l, from more than a quarter century ago remain vivid in my mind. Rabbi Cahan brought out several of these points in his discussions over the years. Connections across time in the Torah continue to fascinate me after many years of study. Hopefully we Jews can learn some of these lessons and bypass some of the adverse consequences of dispute in the future. Shabbat Shalom.

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 Shlemah for Yehoshua Mayer HaLevi ben Nechama Zelda, Yonatan Ophir ben Ilana, Leib Dovid ben Etel, Asher Shlomo ben Ettie, Mordechai ben Chaya, Hershel Tzvi ben Chana, Uzi Yehuda ben Mirda Behla, David Moshe ben Raizel; Zvi ben Sara Chaya, Eliav Yerachmiel ben Sara Dina, Reuven ben Masha, Meir ben Sara, Oscar ben Simcha; Noa Shachar bat Avigael, Kayla bat Ester, and Malka bat Simcha, who need our prayers. Please contact me for any additions or subtractions. Thank you.

Shabbat Shalom,
Hannah & Alan

Dvar Torah: Shlach: To that Degree They Could See (5765)

by Rabbi Label Lam

> *And they (the spies) returned from scouting the land at the end of forty days. And they went and they came to Moshe and Aaron and the entire assembly of Israel*…(Bamidbar 13:25-26)
>
> *They went and they came….Their going was with a negative agenda and therefore their returning was with a negative report.* (Rashi)

What was so wicked about the report of the spies? They spoke factually about the Holy Land and its inhabitants. They were big! Why such a big punishment? Forty years?! Death in the desert!?

The famous Nazi hunter, Simon Weisenthal related the following about himself. During WWII, into one of the concentration camps, a particularly "religious" inmate managed to sneak a miniature siddur at the risk of death. Mr. Weisenthal at first admired his courage but later his attitude changed. He became aware that this fellow was renting the siddur for fifteen minutes at a time for the steep price of a quarter of one day's meager rations. He grew thick and corpulent while others languished from hunger.

After the war in a DP Camp, Rabbi Eliezer Silver approached him and inquired as to why he had not participated in the prayer services. Simon Weisenthal told the story of how this person had used the siddur, and how that had soured his taste for matters religious. Rabbi Silver bluntly pointed out his foolishness, “You chose to focus on the one person who made “business” with his sidddur while you failed to recognize the dozens of others who were willing to forego a quarter of a day’s rations just to hold the siddur in their hands for a few moments!”

The spies presented larger than life fruits demonstrating that “if you think the fruit is big, you should see the people.” First they fed the fears of the masses with the idea of the extraordinary strength of the land and its inhabitants. Secondly they testified that “it is a land that consumes its enemies.” Our sages tell us that everywhere they went there were funerals of important people. HASHEM had arranged these distractions so that they should remain undetected. They wrongly concluded that it is must be a toxic place, not worthy of inhabiting. Which is it? Is it an extraordinarily healthy land that produces gigantic human specimens or is it a dangerous and unhealthy place? There is an obvious contradiction in their report.

A prisoner once brutally assaulted the Torah describing it a as a book filled with debauchery and murder. He gave a few well known examples. My colleague was quick to point out that it was interesting that he in particular had noticed only those things, and how he had failed to pick up on his radar screen those mountain peaks of human devotion. He explained that Torah is a picture of reality and life is very much a self-portrait. What we tend to focus on speaks volumes about us.

What the spies perceived was not objectively true. It was more a reflection of their-own agenda. What the world accepts as factual news or history depends entirely upon “who” the reporter or historian is. It would help to understand “why” these items have been singled out as being news- worthy or history-making from all that occurs in the course of a day in a world or in a thousand years. “A man hears what he wants to hear and disregards the rest” or so the singer sings. Therefore the discouraging report they delivered said more about them and those who were willing to quickly accept it, than it said about the quality of the Holy Land that HASHEM had promised. For that we needed a forty year detour in the desert so a new generation could absorb Torah and so to that degree they could see.

Good Shabbos!

https://torah.org/torah-portion/dvartorah-5765-shlach/

Majorities Are Often Wrong: Thoughts for Parashat Shelah Lekha

by Rabbi Marc D. Angel *

My late friend and mentor, Professor Mair Jose Benardete, once told me: “You don’t determine truth by counting bonnets!” When seeking truth, one must not be swayed by numbers, by majorities. History has proven time and again that multitudes are often wrong, that lonely dissenting individuals frequently are the great spiritual and cultural heroes of humanity.

In matters of halakha, the Great Court of ancient Israel made rulings based on majority rule. People needed to know the law, and there had to be a definitive decision. But in matters of philosophic or scientific truth, majority votes are irrelevant. Maimonides taught: “When something has been demonstrated, the correctness of the matter is not increased and certainty regarding it is not strengthened by the consensus of all men of knowledge with regard to it. Nor could its correctness be diminished and certainty regarding it be weakened even if all the people on earth disagreed with it” *(Guide of the Perplexed,* 2:13).

Just as majorities are irrelevant in determining philosophic or scientific truth, so they may be misguided in the area of policy making. Because many people prefer one agenda or one political decision, this does not mean that the choices of the many are objectively the best.

This week’s Torah portion tells of the twelve Israelite leaders who entered Canaan to spy out the land. Famously, ten of these spies came back with a report that indicated the overwhelming power of the inhabitants of the land. They thought the Israelites would be crushed by their enemies. Although Caleb and Joshua tried to reassure the people, the majority

report caused panic and loss of heart among the masses of Israelites. This horrible advice of the majority of spies led to the Israelites' wandering in the wilderness for forty years.

Why indeed did the majority of spies come back with such a negative report? These spies, after all, were the top leaders of the Israelite tribes. This elite group should surely have done a better job. Why were only two of them strong enough to resist the majority's erroneous report? The Torah may be alluding to the fact that people — even top leaders — come to incorrect conclusions because their judgment is perverted by their emotions. The spies confronted giants among the Canaanites: "and we were in our own sight as grasshoppers, and so we were in their sight" (Bemidbar 13:33). The spies were infected with fear, with profound feelings of inferiority. Because of their fear and trembling, they were unable to think calmly and reasonably. All factors pointing to the possible success of the Israelites were quashed. They saw giants; they were afraid; their minds could not control their palpitating hearts.

When fear or anxiety govern the decision-making process, majorities will vote with their emotions rather than their minds. People are told: if we follow this path, we will be doomed. Or, people are told: if we don't make this choice, we will undergo catastrophe. Faced with doom and catastrophe, people's judgment is impaired. They can't think beyond their fears. They can't marshal rational arguments to refute the fear-mongers. They become intimidated. They break down crying, and they make decisions based on desperation and panic.

The Torah is not only teaching that majorities can be wrong, it is also teaching that unique individuals are able to stand up against erring majorities. It often happens that wise individuals see more clearly than the dominant majorities; strong and calm individuals are better guides than fear-mongering or self-serving majorities.

Psalm 147 states that God's wisdom is infinite (litvunato ein mispar). Literally, the Hebrew words mean: To His wisdom there is no number. Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik interpreted this phrase to mean: God is not impressed by numbers! His wisdom is absolute Truth. The Truth is not subject to numerical votes. One person who approaches the Truth is more cherished by the Almighty than millions or billions of people who are remote from the Truth.

Our goals should be to strive for genuine truth and to make the best decisions. We are more apt to achieve these goals if we think calmly and carefully, if we try to factor in all relevant information...and if we do not allow ourselves to be swept up by the fears, anxieties and judgments of others – even if they are the majority. The playwright Diane Grant has aptly remarked: "It's better to walk alone, than with a crowd going in the wrong direction."

* Founder and Director, Institute for Jewish Ideas and Ideals.

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 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 Instutite for Jewish Ideas and Ideals at this time.

https://www.jewishideas.org/majorities-are-often-wrong-thoughts-parashat-shelah-lekha

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Crowd Instinct, Personality Instinct: Blog by Rabbi Marc D. Angel

by Rabbi Marc D. Angel *

In his memoir, *The Torch in My Ear,* the Sephardic Jewish writer Elias Canetti)who won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1981(reflects on an insight that came to him as a young man: "I realized that there is such a thing as a crowd instinct, which is always in conflict with the personality instinct, and that the struggle between the two of them can explain the course of human history." *)The Memoirs of Elias Canetti,* p. 387(.This idea became central to Canetti's life, ultimately resulting in his classic book *Crowds and Power.*

What is the "crowd instinct?" It is the desire to blend into a crowd, to dissolve one's personality into a large mass of people. The crowd instinct can be witnessed in sports' arenas, where fans become one with each other and with the players on the field. It can be experienced in mass rallies where fiery orators fire up the crowd, or at rock concerts where

fans lose themselves in their wild admiration of the singers and their music. People have a deep desire to be part of such crowds.

Yet, crowds can become dangerous. When individuals succumb to crowds, demagogues can control them, can drive them to do terrible things, can turn them into lynch mobs or murderous gangs, can push them into terrorism and war.

And so there is also a "personality instinct," a deep desire to retain our own ideas and values, to resist the mesmerizing power of crowds. Although we at times want to share in the enthusiasms and griefs of crowds, we simultaneously want to maintain our inner freedom from the crowds. We want to blend in…but not to blend in.
In the Almighty's blessing of Abraham, we can detect both the crowd instinct and the personality instinct. God apparently wanted Abraham to keep aware of these conflicting pulls, and to maintain spiritual balance.

God promised that He would multiply Abraham's seed "as the stars of the heaven." Stars, although there are so many of them, are essentially alone…light years separate one star from the next. Stars symbolize the personality instinct, the unique separateness of each one. Although part of a galaxy, each star is separate and distinct, never losing its particular identity.

But God also promised that Abraham's seed would be "as the sand which is upon the seas-shore." Sand represents an entirely different kind of multitude than stars. While each star is alone and separate, each grain of sand is surrounded by many other grains of sand. Whereas stars evoke separateness, sand evokes incredible closeness…masses of grains touching each other so that it is almost impossible to take only one grain of sand in your hand. Sand symbolizes the crowd instinct.

Abraham was to found a new nation, and nations need to have adequate numbers in order to thrive. Nation-building entails working with crowds, striving to create consensus among various factions. Nations demand patriotism, national symbols that inspire citizens to feel united with each other. But nations can become dangerous crowds. Demagogues can manipulate the crowd's emotions and can control information that they share with the masses. Crowds can become dangerous; crowds can be turned into murdering, war-mongering and hateful entities.

How can one resist the power of crowds? For this we need the personality instinct. Each person needs to understand the crowd, but keep enough independence not to totally succumb to the power of the crowd. Each person literally has to be a hero, has to be willing to stand up and stand out…and possibly take terrible risks in order to maintain personal integrity.

This was God's blessing to Abraham: Your seed will learn how to form positive, helpful, cooperative crowds that will enhance human civilization. Your seed will be composed of individuals who will have the wisdom and the courage to remain separate, to resist those who would try to manipulate the crowd into wickedness. Your seed — like the stars — will be composed of strong, luminous and separate beings. Your seed — like the sand — will come together to form healthy, strong and moral communities and societies.

Throughout human history, there has been an ongoing tension between the crowd instinct and the personality instinct. Too often, the crowd instinct has prevailed. Masses of people have been whipped up to commit the worst atrocities, to murder innocents, to vent hatred. Too seldom have the masses acted like stars who can and do resist the power of dangerous crowds.

In our time, like throughout history, there are those who seek to manipulate crowds in dangerous, murderous and hateful ways. There are those who play on the fears and gullibility of the masses, who dissolve individuality and turn people into frenzied sheep.

But there are also those who refuse to become part of such crowds, who resist the crowd instinct and maintain the personality instinct. These are the stars who will form a new kind of crowd, a crowd that will bring human beings together in harmony and mutual respect. God's blessing to Abraham is a blessing that we all need to internalize…the sooner the better.

* Founder and Director, Institute for Jewish Ideas and Ideals.

https://www.jewishideas.org/blog/crowd-instinct-personality-instinct-blog-rabbi-marc-d-angel

Shelach – With Eyes on Our Goals

by Rabbi Mordechai Rhine *

Every day we recite the section of Tzitzis found at the conclusion of this week's Parsha. In it Hashem indicates that the Tzitzis will help us "Remember the Mitzvos."
Immediately thereafter the Torah states, "You shall not wander with your heart and eyes, so that you shall remember all of the Mitzvos." We wonder, what is the additional level of "Remember" that is meant by the second directive that wasn't included in the first?

When we examine the text closely, we notice that something special occurred in between the first "Remember" and the second. After the first, the Torah instructed us not to wander with our heart and eyes. In other words, it is possible that a person would be "remembering " and even observing Mitzvos, but still wandering with his or her heart and eyes. It is only after the directive not to wander is given that we are described as "Kadosh-Holy to Hashem your G-d." Guarding our eyes grants us the higher level of connection to Mitzvos described as holiness.

In our time there has emerged a particular challenge to this directive not to wander after our hearts and eyes. Every time we connect to the internet, we are aware of the challenge to stay focused on who we are and where we want to go. There are times that a few clicks, even innocent clicks, can take us to a place that distracts our hearts, eyes, and focus from where we ought to be. While it is possible that a person can reasonably continue to fulfill Mitzvos despite such occasional distraction, the second directive to remember Mitzvos and to be holy is only possible when we are indeed careful not to wander with our hearts and eyes.

I applaud the different initiatives which promote internet safety and awareness of the challenges. Often such initiatives promote distancing from technology and apps that waste our time and distract us from our life goals. This is valuable. Yet, there are many situations which people view as exceptions, and internet will be used. Effective and affordable filtering solutions need to be arrived at and implemented on many levels if we are to truly address the issues. Sometimes a spirit of pessimism exists, claiming that proper filtering just can’t be done.

I once read an article in which the writer claimed that true filtering is simply impossible. "After all," he asked, "if someone were to type a search term of 'breast cancer' would the filter block that too?" And I say: May Hashem save us from illness and may Hashem save us from such small-mindedness. In an age that artificial intelligence can accurately finish your sentences based on context and personal style, in an age that facial recognition can tell the difference between identical twins, I do think a filter can be made that can be effective for the various levels and needs of any user who cares.

The Jew in every generation lived with eyes on a goal. Above all, Jews strove to live Torah lives and raise Torah focused children with a genuine relationship with Hashem. Is it possible to be an observant Jew with eyes that wander? It depends how we define observant. What is clear, like in any relationship, to be faithful, loyal, and Kadosh-Holy, greater focus is required. This is particularly true regarding the risks involving inappropriate internet content which is now recognized to have drug-like addictive appeal.

The Torah community has effectively addressed so many issues. We have as a community created a formidable Kashrus industry. We have as a community created Shemiras Halashon awareness, Choshen Mishpat awareness, and have funded new Mikvaos nationwide. This is the collective work of many organizations as the chose to work together. Meeting the challenges of proper internet use is a formidable goal. From desktops to mobile devices the Mitzva not to wander beckons. With a united nationwide commitment, with strategy and personal fortitude, we will succeed.

Wishing you and yours a wonderful Shabbos!

Rabbi Mordechai Rhine is a certified mediator and coach with Rabbinic experience of over 20 years. Based in Maryland, he provides services internationally via Zoom. He is the Director of TEACH613: Building Torah Communities, One family at a Time, and the founder of CARE Mediation, focused on Marriage/ Shalom Bayis and personal coaching. To reach Rabbi Rhine, his websites are www.care-mediation.com and www.teach613.org; his email is RMRhine@gmail.com. **For information or to join any Torah613 classes, contact Rabbi Rhine.**

Shelach – Tried and True Trust

by Rabbi Yehoshua Singer * © 2021 **

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.

** Mazel-Tov to Rabbi Yehoshua and Rebbetzin Serena Singer on the birth of a baby girl last week (17 Sivan). In case his Dvar Torah arrives after my publication deadline, I am reprinting his Devrei Torah from 2021, which also arrived after my deadline.

The Tzitzit Test: Why do we wear Tzitzit?

By Rabbi Haim Ovadia **

It shall be for you a fringe, and when you see it, you shall remember all the of God's Mitzvot and you will perform them, and you will not detour, led by your heart and eyes which cause you to deviate.

The Talmud (Berakhot 12:2), explains that upon seeing the Tzitzit, one retracts thoughts of three forbidden acts:

> Your heart – that is heresy… your eyes – that is promiscuity… deviate – these are thoughts of idolatry…

This is not a halakhic statement but rather a commentary representing the opinion of the author, Rav Yehudah bar Haviva. The obvious difficulty is that he breaks the rationale for the commandment into three parts, without any support in the original text, and that heresy and idolatry are one and the same. However, future generations have dwelt on the idea of Tzitzit as protection against forbidden sexual acts, probably because of the fantastic story in the Talmud (Menahot 44:1) about a promiscuous man whose Tzitzit saved him from one such act.

Commentators have struggled with the concept of Tzitzit, as there is no immediate and clear relation between the wearing of the Tzitzit and the remembrance of the Mitzvot. R Moshe Al-Sheikh (1507-1593) compares the Tzitzit to tying a knot in the handkerchief to remind yourself something, only at the time the practice was to tie a thread around one's finger. But he continues to say that the practice is useless if one tied the thread without focusing on what he had to remember, and he notes that this is the problem with the Tzitzit. People wear it as a ritual, and they do not focus on the message of the Tzitzit and what it is supposed to remind them. Is it possible that we are missing an essential idea of the Tzitzit?In the Midrash on the Parasha, R Meir suggests that by wearing Tzitzit one merits an interview with the Divine Providence.

> *One who fulfils the mitzvah of Tzitzit, it is as if he has welcomed the Shekhina, because the blue fringe resembles the ocean, the ocean resembles the firmament, and the firmament resembles the Divine Throne.*

R Meir's words should not be taken literally. The ocean and the sky are colorless, and the Divine Throne is an abstract concept, without any physical attributes. In my opinion, R Meir offers a meditative process which allows humans to contemplate God's greatness. It is hard for us to comprehend the vastness of the universe, and even more so, that of its Creator. R Meir says that upon seeing the blue fringe, one thinks of the ocean, which has been, and still remains, a formidable challenge to mankind. Even today, our most advanced and titanic contraptions are dwarfed by the magnitude of the oceans, and we have not begun to scratch the tip of the proverbial iceberg in studying the mysteries of the ocean. That first step sets the stage for the next one, which is the comparison to the sky. The sky, meaning the universe, is greater than the ocean as the ocean is greater than a human being (of course it is much greater than that, but that perspective is sufficient for the mental exercise). The next step is thinking of the creator, which is greater than the universe by the same scale.

This would be a wonderful process, and there is no doubt that observing the marvels of nature is at the core of the spiritual experience, but this process is not clearly conveyed by the biblical text. Furthermore, we must assume that before R Meir offered this meditative technique there was an immediate message was associated with the Tzitzit, and which confirmed one's faith.

Tzitzit in the ancient Near East

The riddle of the Tzitzit always intrigued me, until several years ago I came upon a book by Prof. M. Inbar, dealing with Prophecies in the Mari Documents, in which the author describes the spiritual world of Mari, which thrived on the banks of the Euphrates in the 18th century BCE. The information was found on clay tablets found at the Tel-Hariri site, and one detail caught my eye. It was the concept of prophecy and its verification. It turns out that the Mari culture was blessed with no less than four categories of prophets, one of which, called Barru, was in charge of confirming the validity of the others. What evidence was brought to the forensic lab of those "Prophecy Verifiers"? You have guessed correctly: the Tzitzit. Writes Prof. Inbar (p. 47-48):

> *The divine polygraph, used to ascertain the intention of the gods, could tell whether the prophet is telling the truth and was he indeed a messenger of the gods. The examination was performed by holding a fringe from the prophet's garments or a lock from his hair (or from one who listened to the prophet). Those objects were sent to*

the Barru, who would perform ritual divinations. They believed that the objects represent their owners, and the results of the divination would determine the veracity of the prophecy.

In one case, a local governor submits the items to the king and writes:

I have sent to my master a lock from the prophet's hair and a fringe from his garment, let my master decide whether he is a true prophet.

This concept of the examination of prophecy in the Ancient Near East sheds light, in my opinion, on the Mitzvah of Tzitzit. Wearing fringed garments by the whole nation shows their firm belief in Moses's prophecy, and as a result, in the totality of the Torah and the Mitzvot. This is because the whole nation was present at Mount Sinai, and has witnessed the prophecy of Moses, as it is written (Ex. 19:9): "the people will hear as I speak with you, and they will have faith in you for eternity." The presence of the whole nation in the prophetic event makes all of them, according to the yardstick of the ancient culture, subject of the examination of prophecy. By wearing garments with four visible corners carrying fringes, they declare their faith in the prophecy, as if saying "here are my fringes, come and take whatever you want." One who wears Tzitzit declares he has such confidence in the prophecy, as well as in the prophet who delivered it, and therefore he is not afraid that one will cut the corner of his garment and will examine it to verify the prophecy. By contrast, one who casts doubt on the prophecy will try to hide the corners of the garment to avoid examination.

The coat – dress-code for prophets

Coats and robes appear in the Bible as prophets' clothes of choice. It is said of Samuel that his mother would make for him a small coat every year (I Sam. 2:19). When his spirit was summoned by King Saul, he was described as wearing a coat (Ibid. 28:14). It is said of Elijah that his robe had special qualities, and that he bequeathed it to Elisha as part of delegating his prophetic authorities to him (I Kings 19:13-19). It is most interesting to look at the way the prophet Zachariah (13:4) refers to false prophets:

…on that day, the prophets will be ashamed of their visions and prophecies; no more will they wear a woolen robe to mislead the people.

Another allusion to the practices of the false prophets can be found in the book of Jeremiah (9:24-10:11). The prophet addresses the Israelites and their pagan neighbors, saying:

…as one they will be exposed as fools and ignoramuses… they wear blue fringes and royal purple made by wise men.

Jeremiah says that pagans do possess wisdom, but their prophecy is fake, and they disguise their deceit with the external elements of blue dye and royal purple.

Cutting the corner of the garment

Following the war against Amalek, the prophet Samuel confronts King Saul and tells him that God has rejected him as a king. When the prophet turns to leave, the distraught king grabs the corner of his garment and tears it. It is much more than an attempt to hold the prophet back! It is an act which represents a doubt the king casts on Samuel's prophecy. Saul's act is harshly rebuked by Samuel. First, he compares the tearing of his garment to the tearing of the kingdom.

The Ultimate Tzitzit

In Midrashic literature the term "an all-blue tzitzit" is a sarcastic description of one who thinks he is perfect, but we do find in the Torah an all-blue robe - the coat of the high priest, described thus:

Make the coat of the Ephod all-blue. The opening at the top [lit. mouth of its head] will be inside it. There will be a woven seam around it, like embroidery, it will not be torn. Make on its fringes pomegranates of blue, royal purple, and crimson… and golden bells in them around. One golden bell and one pomegranate… on the fringes of the coat around. It will be on Aaron when he serves, and his voice will be heard when he comes to the inner sanctuary [to be] in front of God, and when he comes out, so he will not die.

The coat is an enhanced version of the tzitzit, as demonstrated by this chart:

Tzitzit	**Coat**

One blue fringe.	The whole garment is blue
Fringes are threads of wool.	A complex pattern of golden bells and pomegranates, which are woven from blue, royal purple, and crimson wool.
Remembrance through sight: "you will see and remember".	Remembrance through sound: "his voice will be heard". Sound can be heard even without being present, and to a greater distance (e.g. foghorn). As Aaron is about to enter the sanctuary, he is reminded of the special situation in which he finds himself, and he is encouraged to act accordingly.
A challenge to tear.	A statement: it will never be torn (explained below).

The intrinsic connection between the coat and the tzitzit was probably clear to Maimonides, since he describes the coat of the high priest as similar to the small tzitzit worn by some under their garments (Laws of the Temple Vessels, 9:3):

> *The coat is all blue. Its threads are folded 12 times, and its opening is woven from the garment itself. It has no sleeves but rather is split into two wings from the neck down…*

There is no biblical or Talmudic source to support Maimonides' description of this coat as a small Tzitzit, and the Raavad challenges him succinctly: "where did he get this from?" Indeed, Maimonides' commentators struggle to understand his words or find the source. Most of them refer to the commentary of Nahmanides on the Torah and suggest that there might have been a Talmudic source which was lost. However, according to what I have presented here, there is a close relationship between the coat and the tzitzit, and therefore Maimonides, maybe intuitively, described the coat as a garment with four corners.

It shall not be torn

The final argument to prove this point is in the words of the Torah "it shall not be torn." One opinion in the Talmud is that tearing the coat is a punishable act (Yoma 72:2), but this opinion is challenged with the argument that linguistically it is a word of advice: "it is good to weave it in that manner so it will not be torn." Maimonides, however, rules that it is punishable. That is because just as the fringes of a regular tzitzit are a declaration of faith, so is the whole coat of the High Priest, and anyone who tears it shows his disregard for the divine prophecy.

This is beautifully expressed by two words chosen to describe the coat – mouth and lip:

> *…its **mouth** will be integral, its **mouth** will have a lip around it, it will be like a mouth of embroidery, it will not be torn.*

Those two words are immediately associated with prophecy, especially that of Moses (Ex. 4:11-16; 6:12):

> *I am heavy of **mouth**… who has given man a **mouth**… I will be with your mouth… you will put the words in his **mouth,** and I will be with your **mouth** and his **mouth**… he will be your **mouth**… how will Pharaoh listen to me when I am heavy of **lips**?*

In conclusion, the Tzitzit, in its original cultural context, served as a powerful statement of belief and trust in the divine origin of Moses' prophecy, and consequently, in the validity of the whole Torah. Though these constructs are not part of our social or religious system today, we could still identify with them in the sense of one who "wears his religion on his sleeve" and be proud of our rich and inspiring heritage.

Shabbat shalom.

** Torah VeAhava (now SephardicU.com). Rabbi, Beth Sholom Sephardic Minyan (Potomac, MD) and faculty member, AJRCA non-denominational rabbinical school). **New: Many of Rabbi Ovadia's Devrei Torah are now available on Sefaria: https://www.sefaria.org/profile/haim-ovadia?tab=sheets** Hebrew quotes from the Torah, omitted here, are in Rabbi Ovadia's orginial in Sefaria.

Shelach: Tzitzit: Mental and Physical

By Rabbi Eliezer Weinbach *

When commanding us to wear tzitzit, the pasuk says “uzchartem et kol mitzvot HaShem vaasitem otam – you shall remember all the commandments of G-d and you shall perform them” (Num. 15:39). There are two aspects here, remembering and doing. But shouldn’t vaasitem be enough? Why does remembering matter if you do all of the mitzvot? Why add uzchartem?

To better understand the role of memory in the mitzvah of tzitzit, I turn to tractate Bava Batra chapter 5, which chronicles the incredible adventures of the great traveling sage Rabba bar bar Chana. In one tale, he is guided to the location of the Jews who had died in the desert between Mitzrayim and Eretz Yisrael. As he gazes upon their perfectly preserved bodies, he notices that they are wearing tzitzit. As the first generation of Jews to hear the command right from Moshe Rabeinu himself, surely the knots and strings would be tied most accurately. The correct way to tie tzitzit is a matter of some debate in the beit midrash, so Rabba bar bar Channa cuts off one of the corners of tzitzit from one of the dead to bring back with him. As he tries to leave, he finds himself immobilized, and the guide explains that if you take anything from the bodies of the dead here you become unable to move. In order to continue on, Rabba bar bar Chana throws back the tzitzit corner (Bava Batra 74a).

When he arrives at the beit midrash and tells his story, and explains how close he was to settling the debate on how to properly tie tzitzit, the rabbis rebuke him. “We didn’t need a physical item to settle this debate! You should have remembered what you saw!” The rabbis are telling Rabba bar bar Chana that he got so caught up in having the vaasitem – the physical mitzvah – that he neglected uzchartem – the part of the mitzvah that relates to the mind.

Mitzvot are meant not only to be performed, but to change us. They are incredible, divine technologies for helping us to become better people, closer to the ideal that HaShem has for us.

When we put up a mezuzah, it’s not just about getting the scroll onto the doorframe. Tzedakah isn’t just about giving. Lulav isn’t just about shaking. We are meant to engage on a deep level with these mitzvot and allow them to change us. This Shabbat, let’s engage both Zechira and Asiya; let’s remember to be changed by the mitzvot that we do.

Shabbat Shalom.

* Rabbi Eliezer Weinbach, an experimental educator, is pursuing graduate level studies in Jewish education and in the environment.

https://library.yctorah.org/2022/06/shlach22/

The Teshuva that Almost Happened

by Rabbi Moshe Rube* © 2021

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.

Shabbat Shalom.

* Rabbi, Knesseth Israel Congregation, Birmingham, AL.

Note: Rabbi Rube is on vacation this week. Watch for new Devrei Torah when he returns.

Rav Kook Torah
Shlach: Repairing the Sin of the Spies

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

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

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

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

> *"[We must] declare to the entire world [the Land's] magnificence and beauty, its holiness and grandeur. If only we could express (with what may appear to us to be greatly exaggerated) even a ten-thousandth of the desirability of the beloved Land, the splendorous light of its Torah, and the superior light of its wisdom and prophecy!*
>
> *The quality of wonderful holiness that Torah scholars seeking holiness may find in the Land of Israel does not exist at all outside the Land. I myself can attest to this unique quality, to a degree commensurate with my meager worth."* (*Igrot HaRe'iyah,* vol. I, pp. 112-113)

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

Kissing the Rocks of Acre

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

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

But Rabbi Abba's love for the Land was not dependent on any external factors — not even the Land's special mitzvot (see Avot 5:16; *Orot,* p. 9). Rabbi Abba cherished the intrinsic holiness of Eretz Yisrael. He recognized that the special qualities

of the Land of Israel, such as its receptivity to prophecy and enlightenment, go far beyond those mitzvot connected to agriculture. Therefore, he made a point of kissing its barren rocks and stones.

'God Willing'

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

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

Without Calculations

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

Rav Kook told the man:

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

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

https://www.ravkooktorah.org/SHLACH_65.htm

What Is Going On? (Shelach Lecha 5780)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

I find it fascinating that a leading economist and a former Governor of the Bank of England should argue for the importance of narrative when it comes to decision-making under conditions of radical uncertainty. Yet that is the profound truth in our parsha.
Ten of the twelve men thought they were part of a story of espionage. The result was that they looked for the wrong things, came to the wrong conclusion, demoralised the people, destroyed the hope of an entire generation, and will eternally be remembered as responsible for one of the worst failures in Jewish history. Read Amy Chua’s *Political Tribes,* mentioned earlier, and you will discover a very similar analysis of America’s devastating failures in Vietnam, Afghanistan and Iraq.[6]

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

FOOTNOTES:

[1] Morality: Restoring the Common Good in Divided Times, Hodder, 2020.

[2] John Kay and Mervyn King, Radical Uncertainty, Bridge Street, 2020. I referred to this book in Covenant and Conversation Emor.

[3] Richard Rumelt, Good Strategy/Bad Strategy, Crown Business, 2011, 79.

[4] Amy Chua, Political Tribes, Penguin, 2018.

[5] Kiddushin 41a.

[6] A more positive example would be to contrast the Marshall Plan after World War 2 with the punitive provisions of the Treaty of Versailles after World War 1. These were the result of two different narratives: victors punishing the vanquished, and victors helping both sides to rebuild.

* * 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.

https://www.rabbisacks.org/covenant-conversation/shelach-lecha/what-is-going-on/

The Harlot Who Discovered a Higher Satisfaction

By Yossi Ives * © Chabad 2022

The portion of Shelach concludes with the mitzvah of attaching tzitzit to the edges of a four-cornered garment. Why? “So that you may remember Him and fulfill His commandments.”1 To illustrate this, the Talmud2 tells of a man “who was meticulous about the observance of tzitzit” and who we later discover was actually a yeshiva student, who hears about an exquisite harlot operating on a distant island who charges 400 gold coins for her services. He sent her the money and booked his slot.

We wonder what a budding Torah scholar was doing engaging in this kind of pleasure. It also seems very unlikely that this man had this kind of money to spare, so what was he doing blowing such a vast sum on this adventure?

Rather, here was an individual who was living a regular life according to his pious leanings, but who began to question whether he was missing out on worldly pleasures. So he decided to pursue what seemed to him the most extravagant adventure into the world of sin. He would go all-out to experience the height of indulgence and see what it was about.

He arrived at a palace, at the heart of which lay a chamber with seven beds, six of silver and one of gold. Each bed was higher than the next, and was reached via a ladder. At the very pinnacle lay the woman he had paid so much to visit.

Everything about the moment was designed to be overwhelming, overpowering the senses.

But just as he was disrobing, the fringes of his tzitzit slapped him in the face. As Rashi suggests, this was no coincidence. The Divine Hand was at work reminding him of who he was and what his values were. Stunned, the man slipped off the bed and slumped to the ground. The woman joined him there, confused by his sudden loss of interest. She said to him: “I swear by the life of the [Roman] emperor, that I will not let you go until you tell what fault you found in me [that made you lose interest].”

Said the man: “I swear that I have never seen a woman as beautiful as you. But, there is this unique commandment from G d called tzitzit …” He went on to explain the significance of the mitzvah as a reminder of our fidelity to the Almighty, Who both rewards and punishes. Despite having shelled out so much money, and despite having traversed such great distances, being confronted by the message of the tzitzit stopped him in his tracks.

He had come to experience, at least once in his life, the ultimate in physical pleasure, only to discover that there is something that has an even greater pull on a person – their relationship to G d! Despite the glamor and allure, even in the face of the promise of the pinnacle of human desire, he realized that there is something even more desirable – his Judaism; spiritual satisfaction.

The woman was shocked.“I shall not let you go unless you tell me your name, the name of your city, the name of your master, and the name of the yeshiva where you studied Torah.” The man wrote down this information and handed it to her.

This is perhaps the most fascinating part of the story. How did this woman know that he had a rabbi and studied Torah? Given what he had come to do that day, his behavior was hardly that of a Torah student!

Perhaps even more perplexing is his willingness to divulge his identity, given the compromising situation he put himself in. Why would he agree to provide specific information that would make it so easy for his activities to become known to his own illustrious rabbi?

This woman knew the power she had over her clients. Never before had anyone displayed that level of self-control. She realized that only someone with unique inner strength would be able to resist temptation in the manner she had just witnessed. Only a person who had been inspired by Torah would have been so transformed by the sign of the tzitzit brushing against his face.

To her it was obvious that this had to be someone instilled with Torah values, someone who had studied in a yeshiva. She didn’t ask him if he had a rabbi, but who was his rabbi. Such a person doesn’t just happen, but is the product of years of

investment.

For all of the embarrassing nature of the situation, this man knew that he had prevailed and had achieved greatness. He had nothing to hide; he had acquitted himself admirably. We can only speculate about what the man expected would happen next, but it is unlikely that he foresaw what was to transpire.

Amazed by what happened, the woman decided to make some changes to her own life. She gave a third of her wealth to the crown (in exchange for permission to convert), a third she distributed to the poor, and the remainder she took with her. She made her way to the yeshiva of the great Rabbi Chiyya, the man's teacher. "Rabbi," she demanded, "give the order that they should make me a convert [to Judaism]."

Rebbi Chiyya sensed that something about this was unusual. "Have you perhaps set your eyes upon one of my students?" Whereupon she produced the note given to her by the man, signaling that she had witnessed a miracle that had inspired her to discover Judaism. Rebbi Chiyya understood the enormous impact this encounter had on both of them. He acquiesced to her request for conversion, and gave his approval to the marriage. "Go, acquire your prize," he told her. "Those sheets which you laid out for him in a manner that was prohibited, now you can lay them out for him in a manner that is permitted."

This woman thought that she had the keys to true pleasure, only to discover that there is a happiness that trumps it. The power of what she had to offer was no match to spiritual strength. All the hype around her luster evaporated when confronted with the infinite appeal of that which is holy and pure. And now that she had decided to go in search of spiritual riches herself.

In a sense, that man could be any one of us. Perhaps our story is not quite as dramatic, but the theme is not so different. We can spend enormous amounts of effort and resources in pursuit of vain satisfaction, only to come to the realization that true and lasting happiness is attained through the grandeur of the soul.

FOOTNOTES:
1. Numbers 15:41.

2. Talmud, Menachot 44a.

***** Rabbi of Cong. Ahavas Yisrael, Pomona, N.Y.; also founder and 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/5553931/jewish/The-Harlot-Who-Discovered-a-Higher-Satisfaction.htm

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Shelach: Doubting Doubts

By Rabbi Moshe Wisnefsky* © Chabad 2022

After hearing of G-d's plan to keep them in the desert for 40 years, some of the Jewish people reconsidered their agreement with the spies' assertion that the Land of Israel could not be conquered. They organized their own army and attempted to enter the land on their own. But because they went against G-d's will and lacked Moses' leadership, the nations who lived near the border of the land repulsed them Numbers 14:40

The people had initially refused to proceed toward the Land of Israel because they believed that it was impossible to conquer it, even with G-d's help. What caused them to suddenly abandon their skepticism? After all, Moses did not show them any new miracles, nor did G-d appear and perform some heavenly exhibition of His strength.

Our sages point out that every Jew inherently believes in G-d. Thus, even while the people were voicing their skepticism, they still believed in Him; their belief was just overshadowed temporarily by their emotions. Therefore, as soon as G-d rebuked them and informed them of the severity of the consequences of their lapse of faith, their inherent faith was awakened.

The same is true of many of the doubts from which we occasionally suffer. Our questions are often due to an exaggerated material perspective on life. Deep within our hearts we indeed believe in G-d. In such cases, the way to overcome our doubts is not to attempt to answer them directly but simply to reawaken the pure faith that lies dormant within us.

* — from *Daily Wisdom*

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Covenant and Conversation
Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, z"l

Fear of Freedom

The episode of the spies was one of the most tragic in the entire Torah. Who sent them and to what end is not entirely clear. In this week's parsha, the text says that it was God who told Moses to do so (Num. 13:1–2). In Deuteronomy (1:22), Moses says that it was the people who made the request. Either way, the result was disaster. An entire generation was deprived of the chance to enter the Promised Land. The entry itself was delayed by forty years. According to the Sages, it cast its shadow long into the future.[1]

Moses told the spies to go and see the land and bring back a report about it: Are the people many or few, strong or weak? What is the land itself like? Are the cities open or fortified? Is the soil fertile? They were also tasked with bringing back some of its fruit. The spies returned with a positive report about the land itself: "It is indeed flowing with milk and honey, and this is its fruit" There then followed one of the most famous 'buts' in Jewish history: "But – the people who live there are powerful, and the cities are fortified and very large. We even saw descendants of Anak ['the giant'] there" (Num. 13:28).

Sensing that their words were demoralising the people, Caleb, one of the spies, interrupted with a message of reassurance: "We should go up and take possession of the land, for we can certainly do it." However, the other spies insisted: "We cannot attack those people; they are stronger than we are.… All the people we saw there are of great size.… We seemed like grasshoppers…" (Num. 13:30–33). The next day, the people, persuaded that the challenge was completely beyond them, expressed regret that they had ever embarked on the Exodus and said, "Let us appoint a leader and go back to Egypt" (Num. 14:4).

Thus far the narrative. However, it is monumentally difficult to understand. It was this that led the Lubavitcher Rebbe to give a radically revisionary interpretation of the episode.[2] He asked the obvious question. How could ten of the spies come back with a defeatist report? They had seen with their own eyes how God had sent a series of plagues that brought Egypt, the strongest and longest-lived of all the empires of the ancient world, to its knees. They had seen the Egyptian army with its cutting-edge military technology, the horse-drawn chariot, drown in the sea while the Israelites passed through it on dry land. Egypt was far stronger than the Canaanites, Perizzites, Jebusites, and other minor kingdoms that they would have to confront in conquering the land. Nor was this an ancient memory. It had happened not much more than a year before.

What is more, they were entirely wrong about the people of the land. We discover this from the book of Joshua, in the passage read as the haftarah to Shelach Lecha. When Joshua sent spies to Jericho, the woman who sheltered them, Rahab, described for them what her people felt when they heard that that the Israelites were on their way:

> I know that the Lord has given this land to you. A great fear of you has fallen on us…We have heard how the Lord dried up the water of the Red Sea for you when you came out of Egypt.… When we heard of it, our hearts melted and everyone's courage failed because of you, for the Lord your God is God in heaven above and on the earth below. (Josh. 2:9–11)

The people of Jericho were not giants. They were as fearful of the Israelites as the Israelites were of them. Nor was this something that was disclosed only later. The Israelites of Moses' day had already sung in the Song at the Sea:

> 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.
> Terror and dread fall upon them;
> Because of the greatness of Your arm, they are still as a stone. (Ex. 15:14–16)

How was it that they forgot what, not long before, they knew?

What is more, continued the Rebbe, the spies were not people plucked at random from among the population. The Torah states that they were "men who were heads of the People of Israel." They were leaders. They were not people given lightly to fear. The questions are straightforward, but the answer the Rebbe gave was utterly unexpected. The spies were not afraid of failure, he said. They were afraid of success.

Never had a people lived so close to God. If they entered the land, their lifestyle of camping around the Sanctuary, eating manna from heaven, living in continuous contact with the Shechinah would vanish. They would have to fight battles, maintain an army, create an economy, farm the land, worry about the weather and their crops, and all the other thousand distractions that come from living in the world. What would happen to their closeness to God? They would be preoccupied with mundane and material pursuits. Here they could spend their entire lives learning Torah, lit by the radiance of the Divine. There they would be one more nation in a world of nations with the same kind of economic, social, and political problems that every other nation has to deal with.

They were afraid of success, and the subsequent change it would bring about. They wanted to spend their lives in the closest possible proximity to God. What they did not understand was that God seeks, in the Midrashic phrase, "a dwelling in the lower worlds."[3] One of the great differences between Judaism and other religions is that while others seek to lift people to heaven, Judaism seeks to bring heaven down to earth.

Much of Torah is about things not conventionally seen as religious at all: labour relations, agriculture, welfare provisions, loans and debts, land ownership, and so on. It is not difficult to have an intense religious experience in the desert, or in a monastic retreat, or in an ashram. Most religions have holy places and holy people who live far removed from the stresses and strains of everyday life. About this there is nothing unusual at all.

But that is not the Jewish project, the Jewish mission. God wanted the Israelites to create a model society where human beings were not treated as slaves, where rulers were not worshipped as demigods, where human dignity was respected, where law was impartially administered to rich and poor alike, where no one was destitute, no one was abandoned to isolation, no one was above the law, and no realm of life was a morality-free zone. That requires a society, and a society needs a land. It requires an economy, an army, fields and flocks, labour and enterprise. All these, in Judaism, become ways of bringing the Shechinah into the shared spaces of our collective life.

The spies did not doubt that Israel could win its battles with the inhabitants of the land. Their concern was not physical but spiritual. They did not want to leave the wilderness. They did not want to become just another nation among the nations of the earth. They did not want to lose their unique relationship with God in the reverberating silence of the desert, far removed from civilisation and its discontents. This was the mistake of deeply religious men – but it was a mistake.

Clearly this is not the plain sense of the narrative, but we should not dismiss it on that account. It is, as it were, a psychoanalytical reading of the unconscious mindset of the spies. They did not want to let go of the intimacy and innocence of the time-out-of-time and place-out-of-place that was the experience of the wilderness. Ultimately the spies feared freedom and its responsibilities.

But Torah is about the responsibilities of freedom. Judaism is not a religion of monastic retreat from the world. It is a religion of engagement with the world. God chose Israel to make His presence visible in the world. Therefore Israel must live in the world. The Jewish people were not without their desert-dwellers and ascetics. The Talmud speaks of R. Shimon b. Yochai living for thirteen years in a cave. When he emerged, he could not bear to see people engaged in such earthly pursuits as ploughing a field (Shabbat 33b). He held that engagement with the world was fundamentally incompatible with the heights of spirituality (Brachot 35b). But the mainstream held otherwise.[4] It maintained that "Torah study without an occupation will in the end fail and lead to sin" (Mishnah Avot 2:2).

Maimonides speaks of people who live as hermits in the desert to escape the corruptions of society.[5] But these were the exceptions, not the rule. It is not the destiny of Israel to live outside time and space as the world's recluses. Far from being the supreme height of faith, such a fear of freedom and its responsibilities is, according to the Lubavitcher Rebbe, the sin of the spies.

They did not want to contaminate Judaism by bringing it into contact with the real world. They sought the eternal dependency of God's protection and the endless embrace of His all-encompassing love. There is something noble about this desire, but also something profoundly irresponsible. The spies demoralised the people and provoked the anger of God. The Jewish project – the Torah as the constitution of the Jewish nation under the sovereignty of God – is about building a society in the land of Israel that so honours human dignity and freedom that it will one day lead the world to say, "Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people" (Deut. 4:6).

The Jewish task is not to fear the real world but to enter and transform it, healing some of its wounds and bringing to places often shrouded in darkness fragments of Divine light.

[1] On the phrase, "the people wept that night" (Num. 14:1), the Talmud says that God vowed, "I will make this a day of weeping throughout the generations." That day was Tisha B'Av, on which, in later centuries, the First and Second Temples were destroyed (Taanit 29a; Sota 35a).

[2] A translation can be found in Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson, Torah Studies, adapted by Jonathan Sacks (London: Lubavitch Foundation, 1986), 239–245.

[3] See Midrash Tanchuma, parshat Naso 16.

[4] Brachot 35b cites the view of R. Ishmael as evaluated by Abaye.

[5] Maimonides, Mishneh Torah, Hilchot Deot 6:1; Shemoneh Perakim, ch. 4.

Shabbat Shalom: Rabbi Shlomo Riskin

"And God spoke to Moses saying 'Send men to scout the land of Canaan, which I am giving to the Israelite people…" (Numbers 13:1-2)

In the process of becoming a nation, the Jewish people committed any number of sins, but one in particular, as recorded in this week's portion, Shelach, dwarfs all others.

The events are as follows: God commands Moses to appoint men to explore the land they will be settling – a reasonable request. Moses appoints 12 princes to survey the land and after 40 days, they return with their report. As it turns out, the report is phrased in a way which sours the spirit of the people, and instead of being excited about the prospects of the new land, they let out a great cry. The midrash tells us that as a result of their wail, God decides that if they think they have something to cry about now, let them wait. And that date, the 9th of Av, thus becomes fixed in the Jewish calendar, reserved for mourning major national tragedies such as the destruction of both Temples, and the exile of the Jews from Spain 500 years ago.

To understand the nature of their sin, we have to look more closely at the events recorded in the portion of Shelach. The report's opening phrase evokes the splendor of the promised land. "Indeed, it's a land of milk and honey," (Numbers 13:27), an expression that has virtually become synonymous with the land of Israel. Displaying the enormous fruits of the land, we can safely conclude from their opening words that the spies had no doubts about the land's fertility. One would be hard-pressed to find in their entire report something against the land itself. True, "the people living in the land are aggressive, and the cities are large and well-fortified. We also saw the giants there" is what they say (13:28), but are these words against the land?

If the sin of the people wasn't against the land, perhaps it was against God? But they never actually say that God is wrong, nor do they deny that this is the land promised to them by God. In fact, using the expression "milk and honey" reaffirms God's promise to Moses at the Burning Bush: "I will bring you to a land of milk and honey" (Exodus 3:8).

If we cannot pin their rebellion against the land or against God, then what are we left with? A clue can be found if we take a look at the verse which speaks of the land consuming its inhabitants: "They began to speak badly about the land that they had explored. They told the Israelites, 'The land that we crossed to explore is a land that consumes its inhabitants. All the men we saw there were huge. While we were there we saw Nephilim… We felt like tiny grasshoppers. That's all that we were in their eyes" (Numbers 13:32-33).

But if the land consumes its inhabitants, how is it possible that the people are huge? There should be no one alive, let alone giants and sons of the Nephilim?! As Nachmanides points out (13:32), a poor, weak land cannot produce people strong in stature. Implicit in Nachnanides' words is that the land is not for average people.

And this is the heart of the problem.

Notice the sequence: "There we saw the giants. We felt like grasshoppers," is followed by "That's all we were in their eyes." What this points to is a common phenomenon – how we see ourselves determines how others end up seeing us. If you're a grasshopper in someone else's eyes, obviously he'll crush you without a second thought, and once you think of yourself as a grasshopper, the rest of the world seconds the motion.

The image of a grasshopper is striking, capturing the essence of exile: a chirping, tiny creature at the mercy of all; one who is easily crushed. "We were like grasshoppers" means that the scouts, although princes of tribes, still think like slaves in Egypt, seeing themselves as despised, dependent creatures. How could they have possibly believed in themselves? And if one doesn't believe in oneself, one usually assimilates, gives oneself over to a higher power, decides either to return to Egypt – which Datan and Aviram always wanted to do – or to remain paralyzed and inactive in the desert. In accepting defeat rather than displaying defiance, the Jew is meekly and passively surrendering to fate as it "hops" all over him.

Now we see how in the scouts' sin lies the seed of the destruction of both Temples. Tragedy erupts not so much when others take a sudden dislike to us, but when we dislike ourselves and become paralyzed and passive as a result. The sin of the scouts is not in the terrible report they bring, but in their vision of themselves, a perception which becomes contagious and which ends up as a self-fulfilling prophecy of doom. As James Baldwin said so aptly, he could forgive America for enslaving black people, but he could never forgive America for making the blacks feel that they were worthless, that they

deserved to be slaves. And that's precisely what Egypt did to the Hebrews!

In this century, we've taken giant steps toward rectifying this distorted vision; but apparently more work needs to be done before the self-image of the grasshopper is gone. Then, even if we live "in a land that consumes" its inhabitants, it only acts as a curse for those who live passive grasshoppery lives. But for the ex-grasshoppers, ready to take responsibility for the road to redemption, this land can really be a blessing.

The Person in the Parsha
Rabbi Dr. Tzvi Hersh Weinreb

True Blue

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.

Torah.Org: Rabbi Yissocher Frand

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, Kalev 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, Kalev 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 Kalev 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". Kalev 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.

Dvar Torah: Chief Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis

Blind people can sometimes see more than everyone else. At the beginning of Parshat Shelach Lecha (Bamidbar 13:18) an instruction is given to the spies who were about to enter into the land:
"Ure'item et haaretz," – "See the land,"

meaning, have a careful look at everything in front of you, come back and report to us.

That's the mission that they were charged with. The unfortunate result was that ten of the twelve spies came back with a tragically irresponsible report. They had seen everything in front of them but had misinterpreted it.

One of the blessings which we recite every morning upon waking up is to say thank you Hashem, "pokeach ivrim" – "Who opens the eyes of the blind." That's because while we are sleeping at night, our eyes are closed, and we thank God for the vision that we have when we wake up.

There is a fascinating question in halacha. If somebody is sadly blind, should he or she say this blessing? The Mishna Brura states that they must. There are two possible reasons. One is that a blind person benefits from the vision of a sighted person and therefore when saying this blessing they are not referring to themselves but rather thanking God for the vision given to clothes who can assist them.

Then there is a second reason. The term 'pokeiach' – 'to open the eyes' is actually the root of the Hebrew word 'pikeach' which means 'bright' or 'clever'. What the blind person is saying, therefore, is, "Thank you, God, for enabling me to understand what is in front of me. I might not physically be able to see it, but I can certainly perceive what is in front of me."

In English we have a beautiful saying, "I see what you mean." Sure enough, a blind person can definitely see what we mean, sometimes far better than others. So unlike a blind person, who possesses the capacity to perceive what is in front of them, the spies wasted and even abused the gift of sight, when they went into the Holy Land.

That very same term, 'ure'item' is repeated at the end of Parshat Shelach Lecha in the third paragraph of the shema (Bamidbar 15:39). It's the same word: "Ureitem otoh." – We should "have a look at" the fringe of our tzitzit. We should utilise the physical vision that we have, to see something which will remind us of the mitzvot that we should perform. We should elevate that capacity to see, to use it for valuable purposes.

Therefore from Parshat Shelach Lecha, let us always remember how important it is for us to strive to properly understand what is happening in front of us and when it comes to the gift of vision, let's use it and not abuse it.

Rabbi Dr. Nachum Amsel
Encyclopedia of Jewish Values*

Visiting The Graves of Tzadikim – Encouraged or Not?

When Moses sent the twelve spies to tour the land in our Parsha, there is an anomaly in the text (Numbers 13:22). It first says, "they went" i.e., the twelve Meraglim-spies, and then "He went to Hebron". Since traditional Jews do not believe that the Torah makes "mistakes," every anomaly like this one is intentionally written, as a clue to teach us an important, new idea. The Talmud (Sotah 34b) explains that Kalev went by himself to Hebron, to ensure that he would come back with a good report, and not fall to the peer pressure of the other delegates who were already beginning to speak negatively about the land. He specifically went to the Cave of the Patriarchs and prostrated himself on the graves of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and their wives, that they should pray for mercy on behalf of his mission.

Today, it is a widespread practice by many Jews to pray for blessings at the grave of the righteous, as Kalen did. Is there any basis for this custom in Jewish law? Why specifically at the graves of Tzadikim? What is so special about these places? Why not pray to the righteous from our homes or from the synagogue? Is this practice encouraged or discouraged? What do the sources tell us?

The Talmud asks about the grave condition when a winter has yielded little or no rain. All the Rabbis agreed that the people should go to the cemetery. But Rabbi Levi bar Chama says the purpose of the cemetery is to humble oneself and feel no better than a dead person (which will bring repentance and then rain). Rabbi Chanina says the purpose is to ask the dead (righteous) to beg God for mercy to bring rain (Taanit 16a). Seven pages later, the Talmud records a similar argument between the sages of Babylonia and the sages of the Land of Israel (Taanit 23b). The Babylonian sages went outside, prayed to God, and asked Him to make it rain. Rav Mani prostrated himself on the grave of his father to reach out to God. Similarly, the Torah tells us that no one knows where Moses was buried (by God) (Deuteronomy 34:6). But there are a myriad of explanations why God did this. Torah Temima commentary writes that God was aware that the Temple in Jerusalem would eventually have to be destroyed. Had God not hidden Moshe's grave, the people at that time would have gathered at the gravesite of Moshe and cried, asking Moses to pray for the removal of the decree. And Moses would have annulled the evil decree. Thus, God did not reveal the precise place of Moshe's grave. Then he says that the blessings of the righteous who have departed are even more favorable to God that the prayer of the righteous who are living (Torah Temima commentary on Deuteronomy 34:6). It is clear from these sources that praying at the graves of the righteous not only helps but is a desired practice.

The Sin of Asking Anything From The Dead - However, the Torah itself forbids asking anything of the dead. Rashi and Ibn Ezra explain (Deuteronomy 18:11 with commentaries of Rashi and Ibn Ezra) that there was a non-Jewish practice of taking a skull or bone of a dead person and asking for the future or for the dead to communicate. This is forbidden as an abomination to God. Maimonides (Maimonides, Book of Mitzvot, Negative Commandment 38, Hilchot Avoda Zara 11:13) explains the sin and practice a bit differently. He states that people would sleep on the graves and would wait for the dead to appear to them and answer their questions. The Code of Jewish Law rules asking anything of the dead is forbidden (Shulchan Aruch, Yoreh Deah 179:13). How, then, is it permitted to go to the graves of the righteous, if asking anything of the dead seems to be a violation of the Torah?

Rambam attempts to differentiate between the two practices of non-Jew who sleeps on the graves, and Jew who asks for a blessing by the grave of a Tzadik. He says that the righteous have no physical power like those who believe that sleeping on the grave will elicit the dead. The power of the righteous is what they believed. On these words of Maimonides, Kesef Mishne elaborates, and says the good works and good words of the Tzadikim in life are the source of their strength. Radbaz explains that sleeping upon or opening the graves is what is forbidden as a non-Jewish practice. But simply asking the righteous for a blessing next to his grave or even by prostration on the grave is a different matter entirely and permitted (Maimonides, Hilchot Avel 4:4).

Nachmanides clarifies how we view the righteous (Nachmanides on Deuteronomy 11:22, brought by Drashot HaRan , Drush Shmini). Tzadikim have closer connection to the divine than the rest of us. That connection is not severed in death, but the emanation continues. Just as the body was the covering of that emanation in life, the bones continue to connect to this emanation at the grave. Thus, it is appropriate to bond with this emanation at the gravesite, and it is not a violation of the non-Jewish practice of conjuring up the dead. Maharil (Maharil, Hilchot Taanit) says this resting place of the righteous is more pure and more holy than other places. Thus, prayers are more readily accepted by the graves of the righteous. Sefer Chasidim (Sefer Chasidim 450) approves of this practice, and cites the Talmudic passage quoted above that seems to endorse the actions of Kalev to receive a blessing from the Patriarchs.

Bach takes a different tack. He acknowledges the apparent contradiction between the blessings of Tzadikim who are dead and the prohibition to consult the dead. Bach then says (Bach on Shulchan Aruch, Yoreh Deah 217) that it is the place that is holy, because of the righteous person buried there. This holiness is the reason it is preferable to ask for blessings there and not elsewhere. Although he is not a completely in favor of the practice, he writes that since the practice of asking for blessings at a graveside is so widespread, he will not object to it. Similarly, Chaye Adam (Chaye Adam, Hilchot Rash Hashana 138:5) rules that it is

forbidden to ask for a blessing from a Tzadik, as this is precisely what the Torah prohibited. Rather, a Jew should go to the grave, and pray directly to God to bless him or her in the merits of that righteous individual who died. Mishne Berurah (Mishne Berurah on Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim 559, no. 41) echoes this sentiment: the place is holy, which improve the chances of the prayer being accepted, and one should pray in the merit of the righteous, and not the righteous themselves. Maharam Shick (Responsa Maharam Shick, Orach Chaim 293) agrees with this sentiment, and then rules that any intermediaries between God and Jews is forbidden, whether they are righteous Jews, dead or alive, or even angels. But he acknowledges that there is a sizable camp of Rabbis who disagree with this approach. Perhaps this is the basis of the Talmudic argument above, where some Rabbi went to the cemetery to change themselves into a more repentant mood, while others when to pray to the righteous dead. That Talmudic passage acknowledges that if the entire purpose of going to a cemetery is to change one's mood (and not ask the dead for a prayer), then it would be also permitted even to go to the graves of non-Jews (Taanit 16a with Rashi commentary). This view is brought down as normative Jewish law by Chafetz Chaim (Mishne Berurah on Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim no. 41) – that it permitted to go to the grave of a non-Jew to change one's mood, while asking the righteous dead directly for a blessing is forbidden.

It must be acknowledged that there is an exceptionally fine line between praying to the righteous discussed in this chapter, and turning those righteous into idols, whom some people today believe have almost magical powers to grant wishes and deliver people's requests on demand. And some Rabbis, like Maharam Schick, therefore, did not allow any practice of praying to the righteous for a blessing, whether alive or dead, for fear that the masses would give actual supernatural powers to certain people. Based on the minority view that granting power to any intermediary is forbidden, there is a controversy by the Rabbis concerning a particular prayer that has nothing to do with praying to Tzadikim, but, rather, follows the same conceptual idea. In the Selichot prayers before Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur, one powerful paragraph asks the angels to go before God and beseech God make our prayers acceptable before Him (End of Selichot before Rosh Hashanah and yom Kippur). Vilna Gaon and other Rabbis ruled that this prayer is unacceptable and removed it from their Selichot service, because an angel, an intermediary, cannot pray on our behalf. Jews must pray to and ask God directly. For a similar reason, Vilna Gaon did not recite the third paragraph of the Shalom Aleichem prayer, sung by many Jews every Friday night before the Kiddush on the wine (Third paragraph of Shalom Aleichem, recited Friday night before Kiddush). Why eliminate this paragraph? The words of this stanza translate as asking the angel of peace to bless us, and Vilna Gaon finds this unacceptable.

Thus, graveside prayers to the righteous who died would be acceptable, except for the Torah prohibition forbidding beseeching the dead. Most Rabbis do not see this as a contradiction to praying at the graves of Tzadikim, either because these two practices are vastly different, or because the place, not the dead Rabbi, is holy, and thus, a proper place for prayer. A minority of codifiers forbade all blessings by Rabbis, dead or alive since intermediaries between God and Jews is always forbidden.

*** This column has been adapted from a series of volumes written by Rabbi Dr. Nachum Amsel "*The Encyclopedia of Jewish Values*" available from Urim and Amazon. For the full article or to review all the footnotes in the original, contact the author at nachum@jewishdestiny.com**

Ohr Torah Stone Dvar Torah

Hafrashat Challah – Rebuke, reassurance or resource? - Cheryl Burnat

This week's parsha, Parshat Shelach, contains the mitzvah of Hafrashat Challah. The mitzvah is found in in the immediate aftermath of Chet Hameraglim (פרק כ:יז-כב) and within the context of entering Eretz Yisrael. Hafrashat Challah is a mitzva deorayta that an individual must separate out a portion of the dough s/he is making and give it to the kohen. The command to take the most simple ingredients and elevate them teaches Bnei Yisrael in the midbar, as well as the generations that follow (as the pasuk says "לדורותם") an important message in Hashem's role in our lives and our requirement to be mindful of it.

In their comments on Hafrashat Challah, the mefarshim appear to be split on whether or not the context of Chet Hameraglim is relevant to the the mitzvah. Interpretations that directly connect the two range the spectrum of Hafrashat Challah being a rebuke-like response to Chet Hameraglim to it being reassurance that Bnei Yisrael will still enter Eretz Yisrael. For example Sforno states that "after chet hameraglim, there was a need for challah in order for there to be bracha in their homes."

This response is harsh and makes it seem as if the mitzvah serves as a form of "tikkun" (correction) for Chet Hameraglim and is a necessity after the chet.

On the other hand there is the Ramban, who suggests at the beginning of במדבר פרק טו:ב that the mitzvot that follow Chet Hameraglim are all connected to Eretz Yisrael and says that "perhaps this section is given now in order to console them (Bnei Yisrael)." The pasuk says: בְּבֹאֲכֶם, אֶל-הָאָרֶץ, אֲשֶׁר אֲנִי מֵבִיא אֶתְכֶם, שָׁמָּה (כ:י"ח) – Hashem reassures Bnei Yisrael that they will indeed be brought into Eretz Yisrael and that Hashem himself will bring them.

Is Hafrashat Challah a response to Chet Hameraglim, a consequence of it or a meaningful coincidence in placement?

Perhaps while it may seem contradictory, the mitzvah of hafrashat challah can be seen both as tochacha (rebuke) of Chet Hameraglim and nechama (reassurance) after Chet Hameraglim that Bnei Yisrael will indeed enter into Eretz Yisrael and this mitzvah will take effect.

Additionally, there are several mefarshim who don't relate at all to Hafrashat Challah in the context of Chet Hameraglim.

The Sefer Hachinuch in mitzvah 385 (שפ"ה) gives the shoresh of the mitzvah as לפי שחיותו של אדם במזונות, ורוב העולם יחיו בלחם, רצה המקום לזכותנו במצוה תמידית בלחמנו כדי שתנוח ברכה בו על ידי המצוה ונקבל בה זכות בנפשנו, ונמצאת העיסה מזון לגוף ומזון לנפש – Because bread is something we are always involved in, Hashem gave us the mitzvah of Hafrashat Challah so that we constantly have increased merits.

Rav Shimshon Rafael Hirsch picks up on the words כתרומת הגורן and writes "just as the threshing floor shows us the abundance with which G-d has blessed our fields, the arisa (of the challah) represents the prosperity He has bestowed on our households." In the same way that giving teruma from the fields acknowledges Hashem's presence and role in the process, so too, taking challah from the bread we make in our homes also serves as this reminder.

Although these do not directly address Chet Hameraglim, perhaps this notion of constantly surrounding ourselves with acknowledgement of Hashem's presence is precisely something that can help us avoid Chet Hameraglim situations in the future.

The mitzvah of Hafrashat Challah can be seen both as rebuke for Chet Hameraglim as well as reassurance of our relationship with Hashem in the face of it. It can also be seen as a strategy for the future so that it doesn't happen again. During Chet HaMeraglim, the spies, along with Bnei Yisrael, were not mindful enough of their situation and therefore came to many (false) conclusions.

The mitzvah of Hafrashat Challah can be seen both as a critique of Bnei Yisrael – "you weren't mindful and that caused you to mess up so now do this mitzvah to remind you to be", as well as a gentle reassurance that yes, you are still going into Eretz Yisrael and will have special mitzvot to do there. It is also a suggestion to help Bnei Yisrael remember to do it differently next time.

If we can internalize and be mindful of the fact that Hashem ultimately controls our lives, then we are less at risk of the fears and doubts that overtook the meraglim and Bnei Yisrael during Chet Hameraglim.

In contrast to the other Mitzvot Teluyot Ba'aretz, mitzvot that are reliant on being in eretz yisrael, Hafrashat Challah is kept d'rabbanan even in Chutz La'aretz. Perhaps it is because this mitzvah gives us the tools to work on ourselves, presents to us the opportunity to be mindful, to daven, and to recognize Hashem's constant presence in our lives. Chet Hameraglim caused a "bechi l'dorot" – a cry for generations (גמרא תענית כ"ט), so Hafrashat Challah – either as a rebuke, reassurance, resource, or all three, is also relevant to all of us independent of time and place.

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There are many practical tips for helping make Hafrashat Challah a mindful experience that reminds us of Hashem's presence in our lives and helps us elevate even the most mundane and make them holy. There are different kavanot – intentions or thoughts – that can be used for each ingredient. Here are some examples I have put together:

Flour: אם אין קמח, אין תורה – Flour represents our most basic needs in life. Without flour we can't survive and we can't learn Torah. In this trying time we daven that we have financial stability, food, and necessary medical equipment etc

Water: אין מים אלה תורה – Torah is like water- It nurtures everything with its lifegiving ability. This is a moment to appreciate our connection to Torah, ability to continue learning despite the obstacles and daven that we continue to be connected to Torah every day.

Yeast: Yeast in Hebrew is שמרים – from the root meaning "to guard." This is an opportunity to daven for Hashem to guard and protect us, our health, our country, and the overall state of the world as it weathers this crisis. Yeast in the dough is what fuels the bread's growth. Despite the challenges we should think about ways we can use the situation for personal and communal growth.

Salt: A small amount of salt enhances all of the flavors in the challah. Sometimes, like flavors, hardships can show our true colors. We daven to Hashem and strive during this time that even our hardships bring out and also enhance the best parts of ourselves.

Eggs: Eggs represent fertility as well as the cycle of life. This is a chance to daven for people who are struggling to have children, people who need a refua shelema, and for a complete refua shelema for everyone affected by corona.

Oil: Oil represents candles and light. In these moments we daven to see the light in all of the darkness and challenge ourselves to be a candle which is able to provide light to others even when it seems very dark.

Sugar: Sugar represents sweetness, מידת הרחמים and all of the brachot in our lives. We daven that Hashem judges us and the entire world in this time only with Rachamim and try for ourselves to remember to be kind and see the good in everyone and everything around us.

A final idea is related to an intention to have while we braid the challah. Why braids? Why don't we just have basic loaves of bread?

There are different explanations given – the unification of zachor and shamor, of kodesh and chol, 2 loaves of 6 braids representing the 12 shevatim etc.

It can also act as a reminder of how rebuke and reassurance come together in this mitzvah.

Additionally, it teaches us the lesson (and especially this last year our communities have been forced to do this) — that sometimes we have all the ingredients, we have the community members, we have our halachot etc, and we work hard to make them work and then something happens (perhaps a global pandemic) and we are forced to take it apart; and think about how to put the components back together in a beautiful way.

When we are mindful of Hashem's role in our lives, and we know we have all the pieces then even if things come apart as they did in Chet Hameraglim, the mitzvah of Hafrashat Challah reminds us that Hashem is with us and we have the ability to put it back together.

Torah.Org Dvar Torah
by Rabbi Label Lam

The Journey Home

They returned from scouting the Land at the end of forty days. They went, and they came to Moshe and Aaron and all the congregation of the children of Israel in the desert of Paran, to Kadesh. They brought them back a report, as well as to the entire congregation, and they showed them the fruit of the land. (13:25-26)

They went, and they came: What is meant by "They went"? [It says already that they returned.] To compare their going with their coming. Just as their return was with evil intent, so was their departure [on the journey] with evil intent. — [Sotah 35a] – Rashi

Your children shall wander in the desert for forty years and bear your defection until the last of your corpses has fallen in the desert. According to the number of days which you toured the Land forty days, a day for each year, you will [thus] bear your iniquities for forty years; Thus, you will come to know My alienation. (Bamidbar 14:33-34)

I was walking home from Shul last Shabbos day, nearing the end of a 15minute walk I take multiple times each Shabbos, it was pouring rain. I bumped into a friend who was coming in the other direction all bundled up in rain gear like me. He was approaching his home on the way back from another Shul. We stood there in the downpour talking for a while and he asked me, "Do we get SCHAR HALICHAH – a reward for walking home from Shul as we do for going to Shul?" I thought about it for a moment and my mind turned the page to this week's Parsha. Maybe this is the beginning of an answer.

First of all, what is SCHAR HALICHAH – reward for going? I am not an expert at all on this subject. I would love to learn more. The general concept is that we look forward to being rewarded in the next world for the effort that we make to go to Synagogue. Even though walking, or during the weekdays, driving is not a Mitzvah in itself but since it is leading you to the Mitzvos involved with being in Shul then there is merit to the going. Maybe it can be compared to building a Sukkah in preparation for sitting in a Sukkah but there's an extra dimension about going to Shul. Usually when it comes to other Mitzvos, there is a principle not to skip over Mitzvos.

Whatever Mitzvah comes to your hand or presents itself first, that's the one to do. It's not like looking for a ripe avocado in the grocery store. If you happen to take out your or meet up with your Tefillin first in your Talis bag then you put on your Tefillin first.

However, when it comes to going to Shul, the longer the way the better, all other factors being equal. You can bypass a Shul to go to another Shul and gain that much more SCHAR HALICHAH. Reb Hutner ztl. explains that the entire experience of being in Shul and Davening is part of the mission of, as King David said, "Kirvas Elochim Li Tov!" "Coming close to HASHEM, for me is goodness!" It's an endless pursuit. Everybody is always arriving in this world but nobody ever arrives. Therefore, moving closer to and going to the place where you can get even closer is all part of the pursuit of coming closer to HASHEM. The process not only leads to and is a means to an end. It is also an end, a goal unto itself.

It's fascinating that we learn the whole concept of a Minyan being ten men from the words, "this bad congregation". It is in reference to the spies, 10 of which were compromised and corrupted, returning with a discouraging report about the Land of Israel. Two of the original twelve remained loyal and dutiful but it is from the ten that learn about a Minyan.

It bothered me for many years until it dawned on me, "HOW MUCH MORE SO IN THE POSITIVE DIRECTION!" If ten people can forestall the dream of generations and frustrate an entire nation from entering the promised land, then if ten people join together for a matter of holiness, how much more so can they actualize the hopes of a people. That's the power of ten.

Now, since they went with a bad mindset and they returned with a negative attitude, then their entire 40-day trip translated into 40 years of wandering in the desert. So, if we set out for Shul with the hope of joining a Minyan and coming closer to HASHEM, then for sure, if we return from our adventure in coming close to HASHEM with a positive report, then going to Shul should surely be reckoned with the journey home.

BS"D

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from: **Rabbi Yitzchok Adlerstein** <ravadlerstein@torah.org>
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date: Jun 23, 2022, 2:22 PM
subject: **Reb Yeruchem** - How To Guarantee Failure In Fighting The Yetzer Hora Parshas Shlach

How To Guarantee Failure In Fighting The Yetzer Hora

Send, for yourself, men and let them spy out the Land[2]

Rashi explains the strange hesitation in lecha/for yourself: "I am not commanding you to do so. If you wish – send them. Because the Jews came and said 'Let's send people [to examine the Land],' Moshe consulted with the Shechinah. Hashem responded: 'I told them that the Land was good…By their lives, I will give them t space for error in regard to the Spies. In this way, they will not inherit the Land.'"

Where might we find this "space" for error? I believe that it is found where HKBH withdraws the assistance that he ordinarily offers a person to resist sinning. As the gemara states,[3] "A person's yetzer hora grows strong against him each day, and wishes to destroy him. Without Hashem's help, he cannot prevail against it."

This is an important principle. The space for error does not, chas v'shalom, mean that Hashem creates snares to trap him. (This should be evident in Chazal's phraseology, when they say[4] that one who comes to purify himself is "assisted" by Heaven; for the one who comes to defile himself, they "create an opening." Note that the would-be evildoer is not "assisted" like the proper person, but only given an opening.) It simply means that Hashem no longer offers His help to keep the person away from aveirah.

This assistance is available even to non-Jews. Hashem has mercy on them, and creates obstacles for them on the path to wrongdoing. When Bilaam travelled with the intent of doing Balak's bidding, an angel appeared in the roadway to block the way.[5] Rashi explains that the traffic-blocker was an angel of mercy, attempting to keep Bilaam from sinning.

One of the general ways in which Hashem assists us in not sinning is in creating a sense of embarrassment and shame. We would do so many more aveiros if that sense of shame would be eliminated – if we never worried about what others think about us.

The entire episode of the meraglim tells this story of the suspension of Divine assistance. The meraglim were exemplary figures. (Ramban[6] opines that they are mentioned in descending order of greatness. That means that four of them were greater than Yehoshua!) Their greatness did not help them prevail over the challenge, once Hashem stopped His usual assistance. Left to their own devices – and greatness – ten failed miserably. Yehoshua succeeded because of Moshe's brachah; Calev sought special assistance at the grave of the avos. The Torah dramatically shows what happens when Hashem stops actively protecting a person from a yetzer hora that is stronger than him.

All the devices Hashem employs to thwart us from doing aveiros, however, are there only when we appreciate them. When people decide they wish to be fiercely independent and go at it alone, Hashem complies. Sadly, left to their own resources, people do not succeed in the constant battle with the yetzer hora.

What, then, were the Jews about to enter the Land to do? Ostensibly, they wanted something quite reasonable: enough military intelligence about the Land to be able to wage a successful campaign of conquest. Aren't we told that we should never rely on miracles, but do reasonable hishtadlus?

Yes – but as we know, "reasonable hishtadlus" is madregah-dependent. And the expectations for a tzibbur are different from those of an individual. For the Bnei Yisrael at that moment, hishtadlus was permitted, but not required. For over a year, they had survived entirely through the miraculous. Hashem was unambiguous about His plan to take them into the Land, and have them inherit it. For them, relying on a miracle was a real option – one they chose not to accept.

Had sending spies been an actual aveirah, Hashem would not have told Moshe that He would countenance it. It wasn't a full aveirah. Rather, it showed a leaning, a predilection of the people for the improper. To that, Hashem responded with "creating an opening" to sin. He did so by removing the assistance that He ordinarily offers good people to prevail over their yetzer hora. Without that assistance, chet was sure to follow.

That is the lesson of the meraglim in a nutshell.

1. Based on Daas Torah by Rav Yeruchem Levovitz zt"l, Bamidbar, pgs. 114-117. 2. Bamidbar 13:2 3. Kiddushin 30b 4. Shabbos 104a 5. Bamidbar 22:22 6 Bamidbar 13:4

From: **Rabbi YY Jacobson** <rabbiyy@theyeshiva.net> reply-to: info@theyeshiva.net
Date: Jun 23, 2022, 7:10 PM
Subject: The Only Legitimate Question In Life - Essay by Rabbi YY

The Only Legitimate Question In Life

Why Were the Spies Condemned for Reporting the Facts?

By: Rabbi YY Jacobson

The difficult we do immediately; the impossible takes a little longer. -- General Montgomery

The Hole in the Roof

A rabbi stands before his congregation and reports to them that a massive hole has been found in the roof of the synagogue.

"Now I have good news and bad news for you," the Rabbi continues. "The good news is that we have the money to repair it; the bad news is that the money is in your pockets."

If We Win?

It's an old anecdote. Years ago, the Israeli parliament, or Knesset, convened an emergency session to figure out a solution for the Israeli economy.

One brilliant minister said, "Let's declare war on the U.S., and then, in the wake of the utter destruction America will bring upon us, we will receive billions of dollars for reconstruction, like Germany and Japan."

"Sounds great," responded another member of the Knesset. "One problem: What will we do if we win the war?"

Twelve Jews on a Mission

This week's portion, Shlach, tells the story of 12 men who were dispatched by Moses from the desert to go and survey the Land of Canaan and its inhabitants. The purpose of their journey was to prepare the Jewish people for the subsequent conquest and settlement of the Land.[1]

Upon discharging the spies on their mission, Moses presented them with a list of questions they needed to answer. "See the Land," Moses said to them. "How is it? And the nations that dwell in it—are they strong or weak? Are they few or numerous? And how is the land in which they dwell—is it good or bad? And how are the cities in which they dwell—are they open or are they fortified?"

When the twelve spies returned from their 40-day tour of Israel they presented to the people a report of their findings.

"We arrived at the Land to which you sent us," the spies said, "and indeed it flows with milk and honey and this is its fruit. But the people that dwell in the land are powerful, the cities are greatly fortified and we also saw the offspring of the giants. We cannot ascend to that people for it is too strong for us," they proclaimed.

The report demoralized the Jewish nation and drained it of the motivation to enter the Land. As a result, the spies died, and much of the generation died in the desert, never making it into the Promised Land. Only 39 years later, in the year 1276 B.C.E., did the children and grandchildren of this generation cross the borders and settle in the Promised Land.

Kill the Messenger?

One of the many questions raised by biblical commentators [2] concerns the reason for the spies being condemned and receiving punishment. Moses gave them a detailed list of questions about the Land; he instructed them to make their own observations as to what will await the people upon their arrival. This is exactly what the spies did. They came back with an answer to all of Moses' questions and reported what they perceived to be the reality. If Moses expected them to cover up their observations -- that the Land was inhabited by mighty men and its cities were greatly fortified -- he should have never sent them in the first place!

Why were the men faulted for relating what they had seen?

Introducing Paralysis

The answer is that if the spies had merely related to the people the reality of the situation as they saw it, everything would have been fine. But they did more than that. They used the difficulties they observed as an excuse to capitulate in the face of fear.

Had the spies returned and said, "Hey guys, we have seen a mighty people and well-protected cities in the Land, so now we need to devise an effective strategy of how to go about our challenging mission," they would have fulfilled their task flawlessly. The moment they responded to the obstacles by saying "We cannot do it anymore," they swayed an entire people to abandon their G-d-given destiny.

The spies are condemned for substituting the legitimate and important question "how will we do it" with the despairing and helpless conclusion, "we can never do it!"

Conquering Your Darkness

Each of us has a domain in our life that needs to be conquered, a terrain that needs to be transformed into a "holy land." Some of us need to battle trauma, fear, insecurity, temptation, addiction, or shame. We must confront challenges within our psyches, our marriages, and our families. Since the challenges that lay in recovery's path are at times frightening, we are naturally tempted to believe that we are incapable of overcoming our darkness and we surrender to the obstacles.

The feeling is understandable, but if you surrender to it, it will rob you of the opportunity to liberate your life and arrive at your personal "Promised Land." The option of resignation compels you to remain stuck in a barren desert made up of the stuff of shame and despair.

The question ought never to be, "can I do it?" That is never the question. G-d conceived you in love, and the day you were born is the day He declared that the world is incomplete without you. As the saying goes, sometimes when you find yourself in a dark place you think you've been buried, but you've actually been planted. The resources to repair the "hole in our personal roof" are present. Every problem can be dealt with. G-d has sent you into each of your life's journeys with the power to bring light into your darkness, and discover your own inner infinity, as an ambassador of love, light, and hope. The only legitimate question is, "how do I do it?"[3]

[1]Numbers chapters 13-14. [2] Nachmanides in his commentary on the opening verses of the portion. [3] This essay is based on an address I heard from the Lubavitcher Rebbe, Shabbos Parshas Shlach, 21 Sivan, 5749 (June 24, 1989), published in Sefer Hasichos 5749 vol. 2. Cf. Likkutei Sichos vol. 13 pp. 39-41. For other answers to the above question see Likkutei Sichos vol. 18 Shlach 1, and many references noted there.

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from: **Rabbi Yissocher Frand** <ryfrand@torah.org> to: ravfrand@torah.org
date: Jun 23, 2022, 4:50 PM
subject: Rav Frand - Sipur and Dibur in Saying Lashon HaRah

Sipur and Dibur in Saying Lashon HaRah

Rashi quotes a Gemara (Sotah 35a) that the Spies—as punishment for their negative report about Eretz Yisrael—died in a plague: Rav Shimon ben Lakish states they died an unusual death (misah m'shuneh). Rav Chanina bar Papa elaborated, based on an exposition by Rav Sheila, that when they died their tongues became elongated and stretched to their navels, and worms started crawling back and forth between their tongues and their navels.

Rashi says they suffered a "midah k'neged midah" ("measure for measure") punishment. The simple reading of Rashi is that they sinned with their tongues (through speech), and therefore their punishment involved this grotesque distortion of their tongues. We might wonder, however, why would it not have been sufficient to punish them midah k'neged midah by having their tongues fall out or somehow become paralyzed so that they could not speak anymore? What is this business of having their tongues become elongated and stretched all the way down to their belly buttons? Why is that too part of the midah k'neged midah?

This is a question asked by the Tolner Rebbe, who provides a lengthy and beautiful exposition to answer this question. I will only be sharing brief parts of his much longer Dvar Torah. In order to answer this question, he calls to our attention—as is his holy style—three very interesting stylistic inferences (diyukim) that appear in the pesukim of our parsha.

Diyuk #1: Upon return of the Spies from their mission, the pasuk says, "They went and came to Moshe and to Aharon and to the entire assembly of the Children of Israel, to the Wilderness of Paran at Kadesh, and brought back the report to them (va'yasheevu osam davar – literally 'they returned their answer') …" (Bamidbar 13:26). However, the next pasuk says: "They reported to him and they said (va'yesapru lo va'yomru lo), 'We arrived at the Land to which you sent us, and indeed it flows with milk and honey, and this is its fruit.'" (Bamidbar 13:27). The Tolner Rebbe asks—and this is really the question of the Ohr HaChaim haKadosh—why the change in expression from va'yasheevu osam davar to va'yesapru lo va'yomru?

Diyuk #2: When pasuk 26 originally says they came back with their report, it says they reported to "them". Who is "them"? Moshe, Aharon, and Klal Yisrael. But in pasuk 27, it suddenly says they told "him". Who is "him"? Moshe Rabbeinu. Why did they switch? What are they telling Moshe Rabbeinu that they are not sharing with Aharon and the rest of Klal Yisrael?

Diyuk #3: Sefer Devorim is known as Mishna Torah. The first several parshiyos of Sefer Devorim are really just a synopsis of what happened to Klal Yisrael in the Midbar Listen to how the pesukim there describe the incident of the Spies (Devorim 1:22 – 25): "All of you approached me and said, 'Let us send men ahead of us, and let them spy out the Land for us and bring word back to us—the road on which we should ascend and the cities to which we should come.'"; "They took in their hands from the fruit of the Land and brought it down to us; they brought back word to us and said, 'Good is the Land that Hashem, our G-d gives us!'" Up until that point, Moshe Rabbeinu does not say anything bad about them! That is not the story of the Meraglim! Eventually, Moshe tells the rest of the story, that the people were too frightened to go into the Land. But that is not the real story. The real story was that the Spies themselves had scared the people with their slanderous report of Eretz Yisrael.

In order to answer the three questions raised by these "diyukim," the Tolner Rebbe explains that the answer lies in the first diyuk – the connotation of the difference between "va'yasheevu osam davar" and the word "va'yesapru". "Va'yasheevu osam davar" means I send you on a mission, I ask you to get the facts, you ascertain the facts, and you report the facts as they are—without editorial comment—just the cold hard facts; no assessment, no elaboration, just the things as they are.

Va'yesaper implies Sipur—the telling of a whole elaborate story. We are familiar with the mitzvah of Sipur Yetzias Mitzrayim. The mitzvah of telling the story of the Exodus is not to sit down at the Seder and say to your children: "We were slaves, the Ribono shel Olam took us out of Egypt, let's eat." Sipur implies questions and answers, beginning with "Gnus" and ending with "Shvach"—telling over the whole story. There is a difference between a report which is just the facts and a story which embellishes the dry facts.

The Ramban writes that the aveyra of the Meraglim was precisely the fact that they went beyond merely reporting facts. They did not stop at the "Va'yasheevu osam davar" but rather they went into their own editorial comment called "Va'Yesapru lo". The Ramban gives an example: Moshe Rabbeinu asked them to report back about the land—whether it was fertile (shmeinah) or infertile (razah), whether it had trees or not. They answered affirmatively to each of those questions. The land was fertile, it had trees, and they brought back fruit to demonstrate this. There was nothing wrong, likewise, in reporting that the inhabitants lived in fortified cities. All this was true and is accurately described in Sefer Devorim, as explained in diyuk #3. However, their aveyra was in the word "Efes…" (But all that is worthless) "…for the nation there is strong." That is editorial comment. It is Sipur. Nobody asked them for that. That was not their mission.

Now, says the Tolner Rebbe, we understand the change in language. First the Torah says that they gave their report – va'yasheevu osam davar. Perfect. No aveyra there. They gave this report to everyone. But then… va'yesapru lo. The Tolner Rebbe quotes the sefer Arvei Nachal, who ties in the second diyuk. He says that they went over to "him"—specifically to Moshe—and whispered something into his ears. When the nation sees the Spies whispering something into Moshe's ears, what does that encourage? "What's the rest of the story?"

The Arvei Nachal says that this was part of the plot. The Spies told Moshe alone, in order to pique the curiosity of the rest of the people: "Hey, what are they whispering to him? Is there something that he knows that we don't know?" The people then pressed the Spies for this "privileged information" and they let word of their editorial comments get out among the people.

Now we understand, says the Tolner Rebbe, the midah k'neged midah of the punishment mentioned in the Gemara in Sotah. Their tongues became elongated—indicating their sin was that they spoke too much! They spoke too much, so they wound up with too much tongue!

The Gemara in Eruchin 15b contains a lengthy passage detailing the evils of Lashon HaRah. The verb used in describing someone who speaks Lashon HaRah is invariably not haMedaber Lashon HaRah, as we might expect, but rather haMesaper Lashon HaRah. Engaging in slander always involves 'story telling'. When someone tells the 'cold facts' (e.g., this fellow went bankrupt), he is engaging in dibur (speech). But when he starts elaborating and building it up into story content (e.g., you will never guess what I know about this fellow…, do you want the scoop why he went bankrupt?), that is being MeSaper Lashon HaRah. It is the process of adding the salt and pepper to the dry facts, revealing the "secret" behind the facts. That is the real aveyra of Lashon HaRah. We are not saying that someone who is Medaber Lashon HaRah (sticking to the basic uncomplimentary facts) is a Tzadik. But someone who elaborates and makes it into a juicy story, he is the real MeSaper Lashon HaRah that the Talmud is discussing.

Transcribed by David Twersky; Jerusalem DavidATwersky@gmail.com
Technical Assistance by Dovid Hoffman; Baltimore, MD dhoffman@torah.orgThis 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 511, 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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subject: **[Rav Kook Torah]**

Rav Kook Torah
Korach: Who Needs the Priesthood?
Rabbi Chanan Morrison

"You have taken too much upon yourselves! All the people in the community are holy, and God is with them. Why are you setting yourselves above God's congregation?" (Num. 16:3)

Korach's call for religious equality resonates well with modern, egalitarian sensibilities. Why indeed do the Jewish people need a special caste of priests? Why cannot each member of the nation participate in the holy service, personally offering up his own gifts to God? Why do we need kohanim to serve as intermediaries?

Specialized Sectors

To answer this question, Rav Kook employed the paradigm of the human body. Each organ performs a unique function, providing for the health and general welfare of the body. Despite their different qualities and tasks, the organs work together, functioning harmoniously as a unified organism.

Human society is also a living organic body, composed of various sectors and groups. Each sector — farmers, scientists, doctors, and so on — provides a specific service for the collective whole. These communal 'organs' meet society's various needs according to their particular talents and training. As they work together and acknowledge the contribution of other sectors, they ensure the harmonious functioning and flourishing of the community as a whole.

The analogy may be extended further. Just as each individual is blessed with certain strengths and ambitions, so too each nation has specific talents and ideals. These national aspirations may be expressed in the sciences, art, philosophy, economic strength, etc.

Not every limb of a gifted individual is directly involved in his chosen profession. The artist utilizes the hand and eyes, the singer uses the voice, the philosopher uses the mind, and the Olympic runner uses the legs. It is similarly impossible for the entire nation to be directly involved in advancing the nation's ideals. Each nation needs a cadre of spiritual leaders who cultivate the soul of the nation. This spiritual elite allows the other sectors to attend to society's material needs, confident that the unique content that gives the nation its distinctive nature will not be forsaken.

Guarding Israel's Spiritual State

The need for a spiritual leadership is even more pronounced when it comes to the Jewish people, whose national ideology transcends the physical world in which we live. All efforts made to advance the nation's material welfare run the risk of diverting energy from the nation's spiritual aspirations. As a mediaeval Jewish moralist commented, "Whatever builds up the physical detracts from the spiritual."

Due to this concern, practical affairs are attended to in desultory fashion. In the end, both aspects are harmed. The nation's spiritual efforts become disoriented due to its confused material state; and its physical state is weakened due to the coerced admixture of concern for spiritual matters.

Therefore, we need a cadre of lofty tzaddikim, blessed with breadth of knowledge, charged with securing the spiritual state of the nation. This elite is not perturbed if the rest of society cannot not fully share in the richness of their spiritual life due to preoccupation with material matters. They know that spirituality will automatically permeate the nation due to the people's natural inclination to holiness. These public servants represent the entire

community, and they safeguard its spiritual treasure. The nation in return regards them as its most important assets, and honors them accordingly.

Radical Agents of Godliness

The Kohanim are mistakenly thought of as intermediaries between man and God. In fact, they are not meant to be intermediaries to God, but to enable immediacy to God.

When we approach God, we do not approach Him with our basest drives and inclinations, but with our holiest aspirations and desires. It is our elevated qualities which draw our entire being toward a Godly, enlightened life.

The same is true for the national organism. It is not right or even possible to approach God using society's weakest elements. The nation cannot draw near to God with those who are preoccupied by lives confused by physical sensations and upheavals. This would lead to a feeble level of enlightenment, spiritually impoverishing the nation and the world at large.

Society therefore designated a special sector to enable the entire people to approach God. The lofty, righteous kohanim, steeped in kindness and elevated wisdom, truly know God. The rest of the nation relies on the holiness of their knowledge and emotions. The nation takes pride in the spiritual greatness of the kohanim; it is blessed through their blessing and sanctified through their sanctity. The people are bolstered with strength and inspiration as they work toward their material, social, and political objectives.

The need to appoint a select cadre of spiritual leaders reflects an innate aspect of human nature. Only after a long progression will this institution be truly revealed in all of its nobility — but we are not deterred by lengthy processes. We continue along the path we started so long ago, and we look forward to its completion and perfection.

To designate the entire people as priests, without distinctions, all equally wise and spiritually enlightened — this is not feasible in the world's present state. Currently we need to aspire to a national spirit of holiness, by virtue of the nation's noblest parts. The kohanim will serve as radical agents for sanctity and spirituality, enabling the entire nation to flourish in all endeavors, in its renascence of life in the Land of Israel.

(Sapphire from the Land of Israel. Adapted from Orot, pp. 53-55)

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from: **The Rabbi Sacks Legacy Trust** <info@rabbisacks.org>
date: Jun 23, 2022, 11:30 AM
subject: Assembling Reminders (Shelach Lecha)

COVENANT & CONVERSATION

Lord Rabbi Jonathan Sacks zt"l

Assembling Reminders

SHELACH LECHA • 5775, 5782

Imagine the following: You are driving ever so slightly above the speed limit. You see a police car in your rear-view mirror. You slow down. You know perfectly well that it is wrong to exceed the speed limit whether anyone is watching or not but, being human, the likelihood of being found out and penalised makes a difference.

Recently a series of experiments has been conducted by psychologists to test the impact of the sense of being observed on pro-social behaviour. Chenbo Zhong, Vanessa Bohns and Francesca Gino constructed a test to see whether a feeling of anonymity made a difference. They randomly assigned to a group of students either sunglasses or clear glasses, telling them that they were testing reactions to a new product line. They were also, in an apparently unrelated task, given six dollars and chance of sharing any of it with a stranger. Those wearing clear glasses gave on average $2.71, while those wearing sunglasses gave an average of $1.81. The mere fact of wearing dark glasses, and thus feeling unrecognised and unrecognisable, reduced generosity. In another experiment, they found that students given the opportunity to cheat in a test were more likely to do so in a dimly lit room than in a brightly lit one.[1] The more we think we may be observed, the more moral and generous we become.

Kevin Haley and Dan Fessler tested students on the so-called Dictator Game, in which you are given, say, ten dollars, together with the opportunity of sharing any or none of it with an anonymous stranger. Beforehand, and without realising it was part of the experiment, some of the students were briefly shown a pair of eyes as a computer screen saver, while others saw a different image. Those exposed to the eyes gave 55 per cent more to the stranger than the others. In another study researchers placed a coffee maker in a university hallway. Passers-by could take coffee and leave money in the box. On some weeks a poster with watchful eyes was hanging on the wall nearby, on others a picture of flowers. On the weeks where the eyes were displayed, people left on average 2.76 times as much money as at other times.[2]

Ara Norenzayan, author of the book Big Gods, from which these studies are taken, concludes that "watched people are nice people."[3] That is part of what makes religion a force for honest and altruistic behaviour: the belief that God sees what we do. It is no coincidence that, as belief in a personal God has waned in the West, surveillance by CCTV and other means has had to be increased. Voltaire once said that, whatever his personal views on the matter, he wanted his butler and other servants to believe in God because then he would be cheated less.[4]

Less obvious is the experimental finding that what makes the difference to the way we behave is not simply what we believe, but rather the fact of being reminded of it. In one test, conducted by Brandon Randolph-Seng and Michael Nielsen, participants were exposed to words flashed for less than 100 milliseconds, that is, long enough to be detected by the brain but not long enough for conscious awareness. They were then given a test in which they had the opportunity to cheat. Those who had been shown words relating to God were significantly less likely to do so than people who had been shown neutral words. The same result was yielded by another test in which, beforehand, some of the participants were asked to recall the Ten Commandments while others were asked to remember the last ten books they had read. Merely being reminded of the Ten Commandments reduced the tendency to cheat.

Another researcher, Deepak Malhotra, surveyed the willingness of Christians to give to online charitable appeals. The response was 300 per cent greater if the appeal was made on a Sunday than on any other day of the week. Clearly the participants did not change their minds about religious belief or the importance of charitable giving between weekdays and Sundays. It was simply that on Sundays they were more likely to have thought about God. A similar test was carried out among Muslims in Morocco, where it was found that people were more likely to give generously to charity if they lived in a place where they could hear the call to prayer from a local minaret.

Nazorayan's conclusion is that 'religion is more in the situation than in the person,'[5] or to put it another way, what makes the difference to our behaviour is less what we believe than the phenomenon of being reminded, even subconsciously, of what we believe.

That is precisely the psychology behind the mitzvah of tzitzit in this week's parsha of Shelach Lecha:

This shall be your tzitzit and you shall see it and remember all the Lord's commandments and keep them, not straying after your heart and after your eyes, following your own sinful desires. Thus you will be reminded to keep all My commandments, and be holy to your God.

Num. 15:39

The Talmud (Menachot 44a) tells the story of a man who, in a moment of moral weakness, decided to pay a visit to a certain courtesan. He was in the course of removing his clothes when he saw his tzitzit and immediately froze. The courtesan asked him what the matter was, and he told her about the tzitzit, saying that the four fringes had become accusing witnesses against him for the sin he was about to commit. The woman was so impressed by the power of this simple command that she converted to Judaism.

We sometimes fail to understand the connection between religion and morality. Dostoevsky is reputed to have said to have said that if God did not exist, all would be permitted.[6] This is not the mainstream Jewish view.

According to Rabbi Nissim Gaon, the moral imperatives accessible to reason have been binding since the dawn of humanity.[7] We have a moral sense. We know that certain things are wrong. But we also have conflicting desires. We are drawn to do what we know we should not do, and often we yield to temptation. Anyone who has ever tried to lose weight knows exactly what that means. In the moral domain, it is what the Torah means when it speaks of "straying after your heart and after your eyes, following your own sinful desires." (Numbers 15:39)

The moral sense, wrote James Q. Wilson, "is not a strong beacon light radiating outward to illuminate in sharp outline all that it touches." It is, rather, "a small candle flame, casting vague and multiple shadows, flickering and sputtering in the strong winds of power and passion, greed and ideology." He added: "But brought close to the heart" it "dispels the darkness and warms the soul."[8]

Wittgenstein once said that "the work of the philosopher consists in assembling reminders."[9] In the case of Judaism the purpose of the outward signs – tzitzit, mezuzah and tefillin – is precisely that: to assemble reminders, on our clothes, our homes, our arms and head, that certain things are wrong, and that even if no other human being sees us, God sees us and will call us to account. As a result of recent research, now have the empirical evidence that reminders make a significant difference to the way we act.

"The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked; who shall know it?" said Jeremiah.

Jeremiah 17:9

One of the blessings and curses of human nature is that we use our power of reason not always and only to act rationally, but also to rationalise and make excuses for the things we do, even when we know we should not have done them. That, perhaps is one of the lessons the Torah wishes us to draw from the story of the spies. Had they recalled what God had done to Egypt, the mightiest empire of the ancient world, they would not have said: "We cannot attack those people; they are stronger than we are." (Num. 13:31) But they were gripped by fear. Strong emotion – fear especially – distorts our perception. It activates the amygdala, the source of our most primal reactions, causing it to override the prefrontal cortex that allows us to think rationally about the consequences of our decisions.

Tzitzit, with their thread of blue, remind us of heaven, and that is what we most need if we are consistently to act in accordance with the better angels of our nature.

[1] Chen-Bo Zhong, Vanessa K. Bohns, and Francesca Gino, Good Lamps Are the Best Police: Darkness Increases Dishonesty and Self-Interested Behavior, Psychological Science 21 (2009), pp. 311–314. [2] This and the following paragraphs are based on Ara Norenzayan, Big Gods: How Religion Transformed Cooperation and Conflict, Princeton University Press, 2013, pp. 13-54. [3] Ibid., p. 19. [4] Voltaire, Political Writings, ed. David Williams (Cambridge, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p. 190. [5] Norenzayan, Big Gods, p. 39. [6] He did not say these precise words, but said something similar in The Brothers Karamazov (1880). [7] Commentary to Brachot, introduction. [8] James Q. Wilson, The Moral Sense, Free Press, 1993, p. 251. [9] Philosophical Investigations, §127.

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fw from hamelaket@gmail.com
from: Ohr Somayach <ohr@ohr.edu>
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Ohr Somayach :: Torah Weekly :: Parsha Insights
For the week ending 18 June 2022 / 19 Sivan 5782
Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair - www.seasonsofthemoon.com
Parshat Shlach Lecha
Impossible Objects
"See the Land. How is it?" (13:18)

In the twentieth century, artists began to play with perspective by drawing "impossible objects." These objects included stairs that always ascend or cubes where the back meets the front. Such works were popularized by the artist M. C. Escher and the mathematician Roger Penrose. Although referred to as "impossible objects," such objects as the Necker Cube and the Penrose triangle can be sculpted in 3D by using anamorphic illusion. When viewed at a certain angle, such sculptures appear as the so-called impossible objects.

In 1946, American scientist Adelbert Ames Jr. invented the "Ames room." When viewed through a peephole, the room appears to have normal perspective. However, all other viewpoints reveal that the room is constructed of irregular trapezoids. One of the most interesting effects of an Ames room is that the distorted perspective can make people and objects look much bigger or smaller than they really are. For this reason, Ames rooms are widely used in movies for practical special effects. A well-known example is the homes in the Shire from the Lord of the Rings and The Hobbit films. Using this forced perspective, the character of Gandalf appears much larger than the characters of Frodo and Bilbo, without the use of digital effects.

"I spy with my little eye…" is a guessing game where one player (the spy) chooses an object within sight and announces to the other players that "I spy with my little eye something beginning with...," and names the first letter of the object. Other players attempt to guess this object.

In truth, we all have 'little eyes.' Eyes that want to see — what they want to see. This world can be a world of anamorphic illusion. If we choose to rely on our own vision, we will blame the Creator for creating a world that makes no sense to us, a world of illusion. Hashem gives us 20/20 vision. But to see things as they really are, we must see beyond our little eyes and use the eyes of faith.

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from: **Bais HaVaad Halacha Center** <info@baishavaad.com>
date: Jun 23, 2022, 9:00 PM
subject: Business Halacha Daily

Can I Oppose my Neighbor's Plan to Extend His House Before a Local Zoning Board?

Question: My neighbor wants to build an extension onto his house that I feel will negatively affect me. He needs a variance from the local Zoning Board in order to do so. Am I permitted to object before the board?

https://baishavaad.org/can-i-oppose-my-neighbors-plan-to-extend-his-house-before-a-local-zoning-board/ to view

Rav Shmuel Honigwachs

Answer: In olden times, Jews were confined to ghettos, where there was a very limited amount of living space. The Maharik discusses a case where a newcomer wants to take up residence in the ghetto but the old residents oppose his presence because he will occupy space that they cannot afford to give away. He says that the residents would be permitted to petition the local squire in order to prevent this Jew from moving in and this would not be forbidden under the category of going to a secular court. He compares this to a case brought in the Mishnah of a man who spots a lost object and falls on it. The Gemara explains that since the man did not make a valid kinyan on the object, others may grab it away from him. Presumably, the original man who fell on it can also do whatever he can to keep them away and retain it for himself.

The Maharik says that the space in the ghetto can be compared to the lost object in the Mishnah. Since the land the man wants to occupy is currently ownerless, he has a right to try to grab it for himself. However, the current residents, who have already "fallen" on the spot, also can do whatever it takes to prevent him from acquiring it, including petitioning the local authorities to keep him away.

Note, however, that the Bais Yosef disagrees with this comparison and does not permit petitioning the authorities in this manner.

There is an additional question about whether one is ever permitted to oppose the construction of a shul. The Pischei Teshuva says that even according to the Maharik, one would only be able to use the authorities to prevent the building of a private home but not to prevent the building of a

shul. However, the Divrei Chaim clearly argues and says that the Maharik's reasoning can be used even to prevent a shul from being built.
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http://www.israelnationalnews.com/Articles/Author.aspx/1199
Chief Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis chiefrabbi.org
Dvar Torah Shelach: The Torah's antidote to an inferiority complex
22 June 2022
What is the Torah's antidote to an inferiority complex? In Parshat Shelach Lecha, we are told how the meraglim, the spies, returned from the Promised Land. Ten out of twelve of them delivered an evil report; they said (Bamidbar 13:33),
"Vanehi be'eyneynu kechagagim vechain hayinu b'eyneyhem." When we saw the tall people living in Chevron, we appeared to ourselves as if we were grasshoppers and that's also what they thought of us."
Now it's one thing for them to describe how they were feeling but to presume that the inhabitants of Chevron viewed them as being like grasshoppers – how were they to know that? It's obviously because they felt totally inadequate and inferior at that time.
On this passage the Kotzker Rebbe remarks that they shouldn't have bothered about what the Canaanites were thinking of them. They should have concentrated on their own values and strengths. Let us actually look at the text: let's see what Yehoshua and Calev, the two righteous meraglim (spies) said. First of all they said to the nation,
"Tovah haaretz meod meod!" – "This land is very, very good!"
They didn't just say 'tovah' – good, or 'tovah meod' – very good, but 'tovah tovah meod' – very, very good! Their attitude was to look on the bright side, to be positive, to look at the blessings that Hashem had given them. In addition they said to the people,
"Im chafeitz banu Hashem heivi otanu," – "It's Hashem Who wants to bring us into the land."
Their implication was: let's trust in Him. They continued,
"ki lachmeinu hem," – "they are our bread."
Today we might say, 'they're toast!' meaning: we can devour them. We are strong. We have power.
So therefore here we have the Torah's four key points as it offers an antidote to an inferiority complex.
1. First of all, don't be bothered by what you think others are thinking about you.
2. Secondly, be positively minded.
3. Thirdly, recognise your own strengths and abilities.
4. Finally, always trust in Hashem.
Shabbat shalom.
Rabbi Mirvis is the Chief Rabbi of the United Kingdom. He was formerly Chief Rabbi of Ireland.

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from: **Alan Fisher** <afisherads@yahoo.com>
to: Saadia Greenberg <sgreenberg11@gmail.com>,
date: Jun 23, 2022, 11:22 PM
subject: Devrei Torah for Shabbat Shelach Lecha 5782
BS"D June 24, 2022
Potomac Torah Study Center
Vol. 9 #39, June 24, 2022; 25 Sivan 5782; Shelach 5782
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 more than 50 years ago and was our family Rebbe and close friend until his untimely death.
Mazel-Tov to Rabbanit Dasi Fruchter and Daniel Krupka on their wedding this coming week. Mazel-Tov also to the proud parents, Rena & Chaim Fruchter and Elisa Kahn & Anatol Krupka; siblings, and entire family.
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 archives.
How many opinions on a given subject would two Jews (or two Israelis) have? Look to the number of political parties in Israel to realize that the answer could be several. Is the national pastime in Israel having political elections? Regardless, this small country, surrounded by enemy nations everywhere on the globe, faces the prospect of yet another election, yet again without achieving a majority able to rule easily for a the next few (or many) years.
In Shelach Lecha, Moshe sends a group of a dozen leaders from twelve tribes on a fact finding forty day tour of the land that Hashem had promised to our ancestors. Moshe asks the leaders to report back on the land – is it good, productive, and everything that God had promised? The tourists do not report back to Moshe as he probably had expected. Instead, they call a meeting of all the people (approximately two million of them) and give both a report and their opinions on options for the future.
Naturally twelve Jews could not agree. While all the tourists report that the land is beautiful, productive, and rich, not all agree that the people should go in and capture it. Ten leaders add to their report by stating that the people are strong and giants, that the land eats up the people, and that B'Nai Yisrael would not be able to capture it. The minority report is that yes there are challenges, but with the help of Hashem, we can and will drive out the people and take over the land that God had promised to our nation.
In the short time since God sent plagues to destroy Egypt, the strongest nation in the world, brought two million of our people through the desert, presented the mitzvot with great drama (Revelation at Har Sinai), provided the people with water from rocks and food from the sky six days a week, did two million Jews not learn anything about Hashem's power? Did they not learn that God sends plagues to our enemies and sends the same symbols to help us out of love? (For example, Hashem turns Egypt's water to blood and drowns the people while turning rocks and sand to refreshing water for B'Nai Yisrael.) Caleb and Yehoshua understand God's message and know that with Him on our side, no other nation can defeat B'Nai Yisrael. The ten other leaders, who should know better, completely misinterpret facts and deny both God's love for Israel and God's power to defeat our enemies, even when operating entirely behind the scenes.
The story of the Meraglim has parallels back to previous Jewish history, as Beth Lesch (one of Rabbi David Fohrman's colleagues) relates convincingly. For example, the Meraglim story shares key words and situations with the story of the brothers' treatment of Yosef when he ends up being sold and exported as a slave in Egypt. (The evidence is available in podcasts at alephbeta.org.) Yehuda, a son of Leah, and Yosef, first born son of Rachel, were the key opponents in the sale of Yosef. In the story of the Meraglim, Caleb, from the tribe of Yehuda, and Yehoshua, from the tribe of Ephraim (grandson of Rachel), work together to try to convince the people that God loves us and wants B'Nai Yisrael to enter the land – with God's full support ensuring victory.
Sefer Bereishis presents generation after generation of sibling rivalry – from Kayin murdering his brother Hevel, to threats and fights between Yitzhak and Yishmael, Yaakov and Esav, and among Yaakov's brothers. Finally Menashe and Ephraim live together in peace; Aharon and Moshe live and work together as a team – progress, but not yet a tikkun for the troubles between the sons of Leah and the sons of Rachel. When Caleb (Yehuda) and Yehoshua (Ephraim) work together to try to save the generation of the Exodus, finally we see a tikkun for the problems between the Leah and Rachel sides of the Jewish family. Unfortunately, their efforts are insufficient to persuade the majority, win a working majority, and create an enduring political leadership for that generation.
Sefer Bemidbar, which started with such promise, falls apart very quickly. Indeed, Miriam's tzaraat (apparently an issue between her and her brother Moshe), the sin of the Meraglim, and Korach's rebellion all take place the same week. (See the Torah Anthology, vol. 13, pp. 333-334, for the

evidence.) Might B'Nai Yisrael have entered and captured Israel many years earlier if Yosef had not been sold into slavery in Egypt? Certainly the nation could have entered the land 38 years earlier if not for the sin of the Meraglim. How often do we prove to be our own worst enemies?

The discussions of the Meraglim from by beloved Rebbe, Rabbi Leonard Cahan, z"l, from more than a quarter century ago remain vivid in my mind. Rabbi Cahan brought out several of these points in his discussions over the years. Connections across time in the Torah continue to fascinate me after many years of study. Hopefully we Jews can learn some of these lessons and bypass some of the adverse consequences of dispute in the future. Shabbat Shalom.

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 Shlemah for Yehoshua Mayer HaLevi ben Nechama Zelda, Yonatan Ophir ben Ilana, Leib Dovid ben Etel, Asher Shlomo ben Ettie, Mordechai ben Chaya, Hershel Tzvi ben Chana, Uzi Yehuda ben Mirda Behla, David Moshe ben Raizel; Zvi ben Sara Chaya, Eliav Yerachmiel ben Sara Dina, Reuven ben Masha, Meir ben Sara, Oscar ben Simcha; Noa Shachar bat Avigael, Kayla bat Ester, and Malka bat Simcha, who need our prayers. Please contact me for any additions or subtractions. Thank you.

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fw from hamelaket@gmail.com
from: Rabbi Yirmiyohu Kaganoff <ymkaganoff@gmail.com>
to: kaganoff-a@googlegroups.com

Grand Opening!

By **Rabbi Yirmiyohu Kaganoff**

Question #1: Aramaic or Arabic? Why is Kaddish in Aramaic? Isn't it prohibited to pray in Aramaic and Arabic?

Question #2: Doing it right - In which arm does a lefty hold the sefer Torah?

Question #3: Caught in the act - Do I join everyone in reciting Berich She'mei when I am in the middle of pesukei dezimra?

Background

The structure of most of our prayers, including the Shemoneh Esrei and the berachos we recite surrounding the Shema, was created by the Anshei Keneses Hagedolah, 120 great leaders of the Jewish people who lived during the beginning of the second Beis Hamikdash. Many of these leaders had been exiled to Babylonia before the destruction of the first Beis Hamikdash. This venerable group included such great leaders as Ezra, Mordechai, Nechemiah, Daniel, Chanaya, Mishael, Azaryah, Zerubavel, Shimon Hatzadik (of the famous story with Alexander the Great), Chagai, Zecharyah and Malachi (the last three prophets of the Jewish people). The Anshei Keneses Hagedolah authored and edited the last volumes of Tanach and organized it into its final form (Baba Basra 14b-15a).

Perhaps one way to recognize how great the leaders of this generation were is by realizing that Mordechai, whom we all knows was a great gadol, was not the greatest of his generation. All agree that this distinction belongs to Ezra.

Chazal tell us that Ezra was so great that he should have returned to Eretz Yisrael accompanied by the same types of miracles that occurred when Yehoshua led the Bnei Yisrael into Eretz Yisrael. Then, the Bnei Yisrael experienced many overt miracles including what happened when the Jordan River was crossed, when Yericho was conquered, and when the Canaanite kings were eliminated (Berachos 4a). Unfortunately, the Jewish people in the days of Ezra were not on a high enough level to warrant such miracles, but the statement of Chazal provides an appreciation for the greatness of their leaders.

Ezra, fully aware of the problems that Kelal Yisrael faced in so many major areas -- from intermarriage (see Ezra, Chapter 9), to Shabbos observance (see Nechemiah, Chapter 13), to knowledge of the laws germane to the Beis Hamikdash (see Chaggai, Chapter 2; Pesachim 17a) -- instituted many takanos to assist the rebirth of the Jewish community in Eretz Yisrael in his time (Bava Kama 82a). Among the many improvements he made was adding to the takanah made by Moshe Rabbeinu to read the Torah three times every week. After Ezra's additions to this takanah, three people are called up every time the Torah is read, and it is read also at Mincha on Shabbos. Thus, in his day, the practice of reading the Torah already resembled the way we fulfill this mitzvah.

Berich She'mei

In the article I sent last week, I discussed some of the halachos and customs that we observe when we remove the sefer Torah from the aron hakodesh. We discussed the beautiful Aramaic prayer that begins with the words Berich She'mei. This prayer, whose source is in the Zohar (Parshas Vayakheil #206a\#225), was written by Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai, the author of the Zohar, the tanna quoted all over the Mishnah and Gemara simply as Rabbi Shimon, whose burial place on Har Meiron is the focus of much celebration, poetry, and three-year olds' haircuts on Lag Be'Omer.

Bowing during Berich Shemei

In many communities, the custom is to bow before the sefer Torah when reciting the words desagidna kamei, "When I bow before Him," during Berich She'mei. The authorities dispute whether this custom is proper. The Riaz, a rishon, is among those who contend that one should not bow other than to Hashem, not even toward the aron hakodesh or a sefer Torah (quoted by Shiltei Hagiborim, Kiddushin 14b note #1 and by Keneses Hagedolah, Yoreh Deah 282). Rav Yisrael Binyamin, an esteemed 16th century posek, also questioned this practice, contending that it might be forbidden because of the prohibition of worshipping idols (see Shu't Ohalei Yaakov #57)!

The Kaf Hachayim concludes that we should not bow during Berich She'mei, since bowing when the sefer Torah is taken out is not mentioned in the Gemara, and the Gemara rules that we are to bow at specified points during the Shemonei Esrei – and not at any other time. This position is well-known as the opinion of the Vilna Gaon, who contended that we should not bow anywhere except when dictated by Chazal, not only during the Shemoneh Esrei, but also during such prayers as Kaddish and Aleinu (Biur Hagra, Orach Chayim 56:10).

On the other hand, the Maharikash, a highly respected 16th century posek, rules that it is correct to bow before the sefer Torah (Shu't Ohalei Yaakov #57), because otherwise we are stating something untruthful when we declare (while saying Berich She'mei) desagidna Kamei -- that we bow to Hashem but we do not. The Chida accepts this conclusion (Birkei Yosef, Orach Chayim 134:3), which is subsequently followed by Rav Ovadyah Yosef (Shu't Yabia Omer, Volume 5, Orach Chayim #8) who explains that bowing towards the sefer Torah is a sign of respect to Hashem, just as standing up for a sefer Torah is. This latter distinction is expressly opposed by the Riaz, who contends that it is required to stand up for a sefer Torah, but prohibited to bow to it.

A similar discussion is applicable regarding bowing when reciting Aleinu. Our custom is to bow when we say the words va'anachnu kor'im umishtachavim umodim¸ in which we say that we bow to Hashem. (Sefardim recite a shorter version here: va'anachnu mishtachavim.) Again, if we do not bow when we say these words, it appears as if we are being hypocritical and untruthful – we claim to be bowing, but we aren't!

Language

Much halachic literature is devoted to the fact that Berich She'mei is recited in Aramaic. In general, we discourage prayers in Aramaic, although there are major exceptions, such as Yekum Purkan, some selections in our selichos, and, of course, Kaddish. Some even question why we sing the beautiful Shabbos zemer, Kah ribbon alam, written in Aramaic by the great posek and mekubal, Rav Yisrael Najara, which includes prayers and requests (Shu't Har Tzvi, Orach Chayim #64). (By the way, there is no mention of Shabbos in Kah ribbon alam, and some Sefardim recite it as part of the daily davening, somewhat similar to the way we say Adon Olam or Yigdal.)

No Aramaic

The Gemara states that a person should not request from Hashem in the Aramaic language when he is praying by himself (Sotah 33a; Shabbos 12b). Many reasons are offered to explain this ruling (Elyah Rabbah 101:9); a more in-depth study of this topic will be postponed to a future date. For our purposes, I will share three approaches to the question, since there is an interesting halachic ramification that results.

A. Aramaic was viewed as a type of pidgin Hebrew, and therefore not acceptable for dignified procedures, such as davening (Ma'adanei Hamelech). As some authorities note, Arabic is also considered a slang offshoot of Hebrew, and, therefore, it would be prohibited to daven in Arabic, in private (Elyah Rabbah 101:9).

B. In the days when Aramaic was the common spoken language, there was concern that if Jews prayed in Aramaic, they would forget whatever Hebrew they still maintained (Tamim Dei'im, quoted by Elyah Rabbah 101:9).

C. Hashem made certain that the angels do not understand Aramaic, so that they would not get jealous of some of the beautiful Aramaic prayers we recite (Tosafos, Berachos 3a s.v. Ve'onin; Be'er Sheva, Sotah 33a).

According to the second and third reasons I cited, an individual could pray in Arabic, but not in Aramaic, whereas, according to the first reason, he should not pray in Arabic either.

We should also note that, since the prohibition against praying in Aramaic is only when praying privately, two of the three prayers we have mentioned, Kaddish and Berich She'mei, are not concerns, since they are recited only with a tzibur.

Reciting Berich She'mei during pesukei dezimra

What should someone do if he is in the middle of reciting pesukei dezimra when the sefer Torah is taken out? Should he recite the prayer of Berich She'mei, or does this constitute a prohibited interruption? Rav Shimon Greenvald, a greatly respected authority in pre-war Hungary, was asked this question, ruling that our davener should not interrupt pesukei dezimra to join the tzibur for Berich She'mei or any of the other prayers recited when the sefer Torah is taken out (Shu't Maharshag 1:52:2). However, if he has completed the brocha of Yishtabach and has not yet begun the brocha of Yotzeir Or, nor has he yet answered Borchu, he may recite Berich She'mei and the other prayers, together with the tzibur (Shu't Yabia Omer, Volume 5, Orach Chayim #8).

The reason for this ruling is that, although it is prohibited to interrupt between Yishtabach and Borchu, a very important matter may be performed at this time, and it is better to do it at this point in the davening than during the alternative options. For example, someone who did not have tzitzis or tefillin available before davening, or it was too early, then, for him to put them on, should put them on immediately after Yishtabach and, at that time, recite the appropriate berachos.

The basis for this is found in earlier authorities, who discuss whether mitzvah requirements or community needs are permitted to be discussed between Yishtabach and Borchu. The Tur (Orach Chayim 54) rules: "One may not interrupt between Yishtabach and Yotzeir, unless it is for community needs or (to solicit) for someone who needs to be supported from charity." The Rema discusses this question at length (Darchei Moshe, Orach Chayim 54:1) and codifies the ruling of the Tur in his comments to Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chayim 54:3), although he concludes that it is best to attempt to avoid any interruption at all. Thus, we see that, when there is a necessity to interrupt, it is better to do so between Yishtabach and Borchu than either earlier or later.

Berich She'mei and Rabbeinu Tam tefillin

Many men have the practice of removing their regular tefillin, which they refer to as Rashi tefillin, toward the end of davening and then putting on a different pair of tefillin, called Rabbeinu Tam tefillin. (A discussion of this topic will need to wait for a different time.) The question is what to do on Rosh Chodesh, since, according to some kabbalistic sources, tefillin should not be worn any time after Musaf, thus limiting strongly the opportune times for putting on Rabbeinu Tam tefillin. Some authorities permit putting on Rabbeinu Tam tefillin while reciting Berich She'mei (Yalkut Yosef 34:9), and wearing them through the reading of the Torah.

Being in the right

Returning to the laws of taking out the sefer Torah – the sefer Torah should be removed from the aron hakodesh using the right hand primarily and carry it by resting it against the right shoulder. This is because (1) the right hand and arm are used for most mitzvah actions. In addition, (2) various pesukim, such as, "His right hand embraces me" (Shir Hashirim 2:6) refer to our relationship with Hashem and the Torah in terms of the "right" hand.

Sefer Torah for southpaws

What should a left-handed person do? Should he pick up the sefer Torah primarily with his stronger hand and rest it against his stronger shoulder, or should he do both with his right hand and arm?

It should make a difference which of these two reasons is primary. If a right-handed person is to hold the Torah with his right hand because he uses it more to perform mitzvos, a left-handed person should take and hold the sefer Torah with his left hand, which is the one he uses to perform mitzvos. On the other hand, if the right hand is preferred because pesukim place emphasis on the right, a lefty should use his right hand, as in the pesukim.

We find different approaches among the halachic authorities. The Pri Megadim (Eishel Avraham 134:5) is uncertain whether a left-handed person give the left hand preference when taking out the Torah, and seems more inclined that he should. On the other hand, the Sha'ar Efrayim concludes that a left-handed person may emphasize either hand as he takes the Torah out, but he should rest it in his right hand against his right shoulder, notwithstanding that this is his weaker hand and arm, unless he is afraid that he might drop it (Sha'ar 10:2). The Mishnah Berurah (282:1) rules that when a sefer Torah is handed from one left-handed person to another, they should both emphasize use of their right hands.

Shabbos versus Yomim Nora'im

On weekdays, when the chazzan receives the sefer Torah, he invites the community to join him, reciting the posuk, Gadlu laHashem iti uneromemah Shemo yachdav (Tehillim 34:4), "Join me in declaring the greatness of Hashem: thereby, we shall exalt His Name, together." On Shabbos and Yom Tov, two other pesukim are recited before the posuk Gadlu, both of which are recited first by the chazzan and then by the community in unison: the posuk of Shema Yisrael, and then the praise Echad Elokeinu, gadol Adoneinu, Kadosh Shemo, "Our G-d is one, Our Lord is great, His Name is Holy." This last passage is not a pasuk in Tanach, but a praise that has its origin in Mesechta Sofrim (Chapter 14). (We should note that the procedure described in Mesechta Sofrim varies somewhat from our practice.)

On Shabbos, these two pesukim are recited only in the morning, but not at Mincha. The Aruch Hashulchan writes that he is uncertain why this is so (Orach Chayim 292:2).

When the chazzan recites the word Gadlu, he should bend over a little bit, reminiscent of bowing (Aruch Hashulchan, Orach Chayim 282:1), although other authorities disagree with this practice, noting that one is not permitted to add additional bowings to our davening (Biur Hagra, Orach Chayim 56:10).

On Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, the practice is to add the word venora (awesome) to the posuk Echad Elokeinu, so that it reads Echad Elokeinu gadol Adoneinu, Kadosh veNora Shemo. "Our G-d is One, our Lord is Great, His Name is Holy and Awesome!" Notwithstanding that our standard practice is to add the word veNora only on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, many authorities contend that the word veNora should be added also on Shabbos and other Yomim Tovim (Elyah Rabbah 134:4; Pri Megadim, Eishel Avraham 134:4). Mesechta Sofrim, the major source introducing this praise, mentions this practice, as does Rav Amram Gaon.

Follow the leader

The Shulchan Aruch mentions a practice, followed in most Sefardic congregations, that the entire tzibur follows the sefer Torah as it is removed from the aron hakodesh and brought to the shulchan from where it will be read. This is an honor for the sefer Torah, in that everyone follows it like an

honored guest. The source for this practice is in Mesechta Sofrim (Chapter 14). However, when this is not a standard custom in the shul in which you are davening, there are authorities who feel that it is better to refrain from this practice, because it gives an impression of yohara, halachic conceit (Aruch Hashulchan 282:1).

Stand up for the Torah!

While the sefer Torah is moving, there is a requirement min haTorah to stand up and remain standing in its honor. This is derived by the Gemara (Kiddushin 33b) in the following way: The Torah requires that we stand when a talmid chacham walks by. The source for this law is the words in parshas Kedoshim, takum vehadarta pnei zakein, "You must rise and treat with respect the presence of an elder," and Chazal explain that the term "elder" means someone worthy of respect because of his learning, even if he is still young. On the basis of a kal vechomer, the Gemara proves that it is a mitzvah min haTorah to show the same level of respect for the Torah itself: if we must stand for someone who studied the Torah, we must certainly stand for the Torah itself.

Conclusion

In the introduction to Sefer Hachinuch, the author writes that the main mitzvah upon which all the other mitzvos rest is that of Talmud Torah. Through Torah learning, a person will know how to fulfill all of the other mitzvos. That is why Chazal instituted a public reading of a portion of the Torah every Shabbos, twice, and on Mondays and Thursdays. Knowing that the proper observance of all the mitzvos is contingent on Torah learning, our attention to keriyas haTorah will be heightened. According the Torah reading the great respect it is due should increase our sensitivity to the observance of all the mitzvos.

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fw from hamelaket@gmail.com
http://ohr.edu/this_week/insights_into_halacha/
Ohr Somayach
Insights into Halacha
blogs.timesofisrael.com
Why Leaders Become Corrupt (Shlach)
Rabbi Ben-Tzion Spitz

Power will intoxicate the best hearts, as wine the strongest heads. - Charles Caleb Colton

Moses selects twelve men, twelve princes of Israel to scout the land of Canaan, the land God promised to the nation of Israel. The princes are named. Each one was a great leader. Not only were they great leaders, the rabbinic tradition holds that they were also righteous men.

However, between their appointment and their report on what they saw in the land of Canaan, something happened. Something that led them to sin so gravely that they sowed panic and dissension within the nation of Israel. They repudiated Moses' leadership and God's omnipotence and brought upon the entire nation the punishment of forty years of wandering in the desert.

The Chidushei HaRim on Numbers 13:2 wonders how this transformation occured. How did ten of the most important men of Israel's leadership, ten righteous men fall so low, so fast?

He explains that it had to do with the people. It was not only their appointment and the power it represented that corrupted these previously righteous men. It was the people they represented. Somehow, by having some level of representation of the people, the princes picked up on the people's intentions. The problem was that a certain percentage of the population didn't want to enter the Promised Land. They had tired of the desert, of Moses' leadership and of God's presence in their lives. They wanted to be free of those, and ironically, return to the slavery and the familiarity of Egypt. Those rebellious intentions somehow infected the previously righteous leaders once they were appointed. That tainted the princes' scouting mission from the start. Their scouting of the land of Canaan commenced with an intention to sabotage the planned entry into the land.

However, two princes were spared from the conspiracy and demonstrated greater strength of character and loyalty. Those were Joshua and Caleb. Before Joshua had departed on the mission, Moses renamed Joshua (in Hebrew, he changed it from Hoshea to Yehoshua) by including a part of God's name in Joshua's name. Caleb went to the Cave of the Patriarchs in Hebron to pray at their graves. It seems that by binding oneself so firmly to God that it becomes a part of one's name and identity, as well as intense prayer calling on the merits of our forefathers somehow deflected the negative influences of the crowd on those two leaders.

May we always seek ways to deflect the corruption and negative influences we may find.

Dedication - To the induction of Rabbi Yosef Tzvi Rimon as the Rabbi of Gush Etzion. Shabbat Shalom Ben-Tzion Spitz is a former Chief Rabbi of Uruguay. He is the author of three books of Biblical Fiction and over 600 articles and stories dealing with biblical themes.

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from: Ben Olam Haba <**ben@halachafortoday.com**>
date: Jun 23, 2022, 8:15 PM
subject: Week In Review: Week of Parashas Shelach 5782
Halacha For Today: Week In Review
Week of Parashas Shelach 5782
(Parashas Korach in Eretz Yisroel)
Week of Parashas Shelach 5782
CURRENT TOPIC: HILCHOS SEUDAH - MEALS & FOOD
Click Here to Print a PDF Version of WEEK IN REVIEW
Halachos for Sunday, June 19, 2022

1) It is imperative for a Yid to eat with Derech Eretz, in a dignified way. According to the Rambam (Sefer HaMitzvos, Lo Ta'aseh 195) and other Poskim, eating in a non dignified manner may be a transgression of one or more biblical commandments. (See Aruch HaShulchan Siman 157:1 and Elya Rabbah Siman 170:23 what he quotes from the Shl"a)

2) One should ideally not eat while standing. (Rambam Hilchos Dayos 4:3. See also Ben Ish Chai Parshas B'Har Siman 11)

L'Chatchila, it is also best not to drink while standing. Though many people are not stringent with this and they do have on whom to rely, the AriZal was very careful with this. (Mishna Berura Siman 296:6. See also Shu"t Rav P'Alim Vol. 2 Siman 45)

Some Poskim maintain that only Talmidei Chachamim (Torah scholars) need to be stringent not to drink while standing, but other people need not be stringent with this. (See Shulchan Aruch Harav Siman 296:15. Though, from his language it seems that even non Talmidei Chachamim should try and emulate the Talmidei Chachamim in this matter when possible)

Halachos for Monday, June 20, 2022

1) One should not eat in the street, in public, as doing so is an indication that one has no shame, and can even lead to being disqualified as a witness in a Jewish court of law. (See Shulchan Aruch Choshen Mishpat Siman 34:18, based on the Talmud (Kiddushin 40b) that says that one who eats in public is likened to a dog.)

2) One should not drink an entire [normal sized] cup of wine in one gulp, as doing so seems like a gluttonous way to drink (Gargaran).

Nor should it be drunk in too many sips, as that seems haughty, rather the proper way to drink it is in two gulps.

If the cup is very small (less than a Revi'is), then it may be finished in one gulp. If the cup is larger than normal, it may be finished in more than two gulps. (Shulchan Aruch and Ram"a Siman 170:8. See Mishna Berura S"K 20-22 for some other exclusions)

Some Poskim maintain that by Kiddush and Havdalah the above doesn't apply, and the entire Becher of wine may be drunk in one gulp. (See Shu"t Mishne Halachos Vol. 8 Siman 33)

Soft drinks, juices, water or other drinks are not subject to the above Halacha, as it only pertains to wine.

Halachos for Tuesday, June 21, 2022

1) It is proper to leave over a little bit of what was in your plate, and not totally finish everything down to the last crumb. (See Ben Ish Chai Parshas B'Har Siman 14 and Sefer Eitz Hasadeh Chapter 19:13 quoting Rav Chaim Kanievsky Zatzal that it is good to be stringent with this.)
One who took a bite out of a piece of bread [or other food items], should not put it back in middle of the table, as it is unappetizing to other people and they will not eat from it after it was bitten from. Rather he/she should make sure to finish the entire piece. (Mishna Berura 170:36)
2) During the meal, it is important to refrain from doing things that may disgust others at the table, such as killing a fly on the table. (Sha'ar HaTziyun 167:26)
One should not spit, burp, blow their nose loudly, or do similar things, in front of another person at the table. (See Aruch HaShulchan Siman 170:12 that these things should not be done in front of others anytime, even not during a meal, based on the Talmud Chagiga 5a and Eiruvin 99a)
One whose hands are unclean should not eat at a table with others. (Kaf HaChaim 163:14)
It is important to ensure that children do not touch the food in the serving plates on the table directly with their hands, as they are usually unclean, and as such will disgust the adults at the table. (Sefer Chasidim Siman 829)
Many people refrain from allowing small children to sit and/or stand on a table. (Based on an incident brought in the Sefer Chasidim Siman 920, for reasons of Sakana, danger)
Halachos for Wednesday, June 22, 2022
1) After eating fish, before eating meat or chicken (and vice versa), many people are stringent to wash their hands, as not doing so may lead to danger (and we are more stringent with danger than with Halachic prohibitions; See Shulchan Aruch Yoreh Deah Siman 116)
However, nowadays many Poskim are lenient with the above as they maintain that certain circumstances changed from the times of the Talmud, and it is no longer a Sakana, danger (Mogen Avraham, quoted in Mishna Berura 173:3. See also Shu"t Shevet Haleivi Vol. 6 Siman 111. The Kaf HaChaim 173:4 and others argue with the Mogen Avraham and maintain that it is still in force nowadays and pasken that it is still required)
2) Even those who are lenient with washing the hands, should eat or drink something to separate between the fish and the meat.
(Mishna Berura 173:4)
Those who are stringent and wash, do not need to wash with all the requirements of Netilas Yadayim (utensil, Chatzitza etc.), they simply need to "rinse off" the hands, and dry them (as it is repulsive to eat with wet hands) before resuming to eat. (Mishna Berura 173:6)
Halachos for Thursday, June 23, 2022
1) Food (raw or cooked) or drink that was stored under a bed that someone slept on , even if they were covered, should not be eaten, as a Ruach Ra, impure spirit, rests on this food/drink. (Aruch HaShulchan Siman 165:4 based on the Shulchan Aruch Yoreh Deah Siman 116:5. See also Shulchan Aruch HaRav Hilchos Shmiras HaGuf V'Hanefesh Siman 67, Chachmas Adam Siman 68:3. The Gaon of Vilna was also extremely stringent with this.)
Even if the food was in a utensil, and that utensil was covered by another utensil, it still gets the Ruach Ra and should not be eaten even B'Dieved. (Psak of Rav Shlomo Zalmen Auerbach Zatzal in Halichos Shlomo Perek 13:17)
The prohibition applies to vitamins as well as food, but does not apply to medicines. (ibid. footnote 27)
Therefore, it is important to not store food there, and thus necessitate discarding them and transgressing the sin of Bal Tashchis, wasting food.
2) Some Poskim are lenient in cases of great monetary loss and allow the food to be eaten, B'Dieved. (Based on Psak of the Shvus Yaakov quoted in the Pirush of Rav Akiva Eiger, Pischei Teshuva and Yad Efraim to Shulchan Aruch Yoreh Deah 116:4 and 5.)
As always, for Halacha L'Ma'aseh a Rav should be consulted.
Halachos for Erev Shabbos Kodesh, June 24, 2022
Double Portion L'Kavod Shabbos Kodesh
Halachos for Erev Shabbos Kodesh
1) Some people do not eat food or drink that was in a bathroom. (See Likutei MaHarich Seder Hanhogas HaSeuda Dibur Hamaschil H'Ochel Pas in the name of MaHarsh of Belz)
However, according to most Poskim there is no Halachic problem with eating food that was in a bathroom.
Still, it is best not to bring food/drink into a bathroom as doing so is a Bizayon, an act of disrespect. (See Mogen Avraham Siman 166:3, Shu"t Tzitz Eliezer Vol.14 Siman 2, Shu"t Be'er Moshe Vol. 5 Siman 1 and Shu"t Har Tzvi Vol. 1 Siman 50. See also Shu"t Yabia Omer Vol. 3 Siman 1 and Vol. 4 Siman5)
2) The above is only for the room that has the toilet, and does not apply to a room that has in it a only a bath/shower with no toilet, as in such a room it is permitted to store food. (See Shu"t Teshuvos V'Hanhagos Vol. 1 Siman 11 and Sefer Ishei Yisrael Perek 53 footnote 82 where he quotes Rav Chaim Kanievsky Zatzal saying that the Chazon Ish Zatzal stored food in a bathtub that was in a room without a toilet)
Storing medicines in a medicine cabinet in a bathroom is permitted (Shu"t Teshuvos V'Hanhagos ibid.)
However, actually eating or drinking in a bathroom is prohibited according to everyone. (Be'er Heitev Siman 3:2)
Halachos for Shabbos Kodesh
1) One who causes food or drink to become ruined transgresses two sins:
a) Bal Tashchis, the prohibition against destroying any useful item [in a destructive manner] (See Rambam Hilchos Brochos Perek 7:9 and Hilchos Melochim Perek 6:8.)
b) Bizui Ochlin, a separate prohibition against destroying food/drink, or treating them disrespectfully.
The reason behind this prohibition is that doing so is being ungrateful to Hashem Who has bestowed so much good into this world. (See Rashi to Taanis 20b Dibur HaMaschil Ain Ma'achilin Oso L'Behaima. See also Rabbeinu Yona in Sha'arei Teshuva Sha'ar 3 Os 230 regarding the severity of destroying, or even talking bad about, Hashem's food)
2) It is especially important not to discard or ruin bread, if it is a piece larger than a Kzayis. (Shulchan Aruch Siman 180:3)
If the bread is no longer edible, it may be discarded, though according to many Poskim it may be best to feed to the birds instead of discarding it.(See Chayei Adam Klal 45:5 who quotes a Zohar that is stringent even with crumbs, not to discard them)
If bread [or other food] must be thrown out, it should be wrapped respectfully (e.g. in a bag or piece of paper) and then discarded. (See Sefer V'Zos Habracha end of Chapter 2)
Crumbs [that collectively are less than a Kzayis] may be discarded, but should not be stepped on or otherwise treated disrespectfully, as doing so may lead to poverty. (Mishna Berura Siman 180:10)

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from: **Rav Immanuel Bernstein** <ravbernstein@journeysintorah.com>
date: Jun 23, 2022, 6:59 AM
subject: Dimensions in Korach
DIMENSIONS IN CHUMASH
Korach Saving On

Korach took… and On, son of Peles.[1]

One of the most enigmatic members of Korach's team is On, son of Peles. After being mentioned by name in the opening verse of our parsha, he is never mentioned again. In explanation of this phenomenon, the Gemara informs us that his wife convinced him to withdraw from his participation in Korach's dispute:

She said to him: what difference does it make for you? If the one [Moshe] is the leader, you are a follower, and if the other [Korach] is the leader, you will be a follower!

Having convinced On that he had nothing to gain from being involved with Korach, his wife proceeded to extricate him from Korach's assembly, thereby saving his life. The question is: what was it about On's wife's words that caused him to change his mind? What exactly did she say that he had not already considered? Did he originally think that if Korach succeeded then he, On, would be the leader?

Apparently, On was of the understanding that if Korach succeeded, it *would* better his situation. After all, Korach's claim to Moshe was: "For the entire assembly are holy, and Hashem is in their midst, and why do you lord over the congregation of Hashem?"[2] It sounds as if Korach was claiming that there should be no leaders *or* followers in the Jewish people, only equals! If so, then to side with Korach could potentially bring about an improvement in On's status.

To this end, his wife enlightened him: Do not be fooled into thinking that if Korach wins there will be no more leaders. If he wins, and becomes the "first comrade", he will effectively be the new leader. Either way, you will remain a follower, and will have gained nothing. On's wife thus has the distinction of realizing centuries ago that even when everyone is equal, some people will be more equal than others, and no one more so than the one who preaches that equality.

From the World of Remez: Between the Eidah and the Kahal

On the morrow of Korach's uprising, during which he and his men were killed, the people once again complain. In response to this, a plague breaks out, which is only stopped by Aharon taking *ketores* (incense) and running into the midst of the assembly. There are some verses describing these two days which are quite similar to each other in theme and content, but which nevertheless contain some differences in their phraseology.

1. On day one of Korach's rebellion, Moshe and Aharon are told: " הִבָּדְלוּ מִתּוֹךְ הָעֵדָה – *separate yourselves from amid this assembly*."[3] On day two, the verse says: "הֵרֹמּוּ מִתּוֹךְ הָעֵדָה – *remove yourselves from the assembly*."[4] What is the difference between "הבדלו" and "הרומו"?

2. In both of the above verses, the offending assembly is called "עדה – *an assembly*," whereas when Aharon takes the *ketores*, the verse says, " וַיָּרָץ אֶל תּוֹךְ הַקָּהָל – *he ran into the midst of the congregation*."[5] Why does the reference change from "עדה" to "קהל"?

After the plague had been halted, the verse says:[6]

וַיִּהְיוּ הַמֵּתִים בַּמַּגֵּפָה אַרְבָּעָה עָשָׂר אֶלֶף וּשְׁבַע מֵאוֹת מִלְּבַד הַמֵּתִים עַל דְּבַר קֹרַח

Those who died in the plague were fourteen thousand and seven hundred, aside from those who died on account of the matter of Korach.

Why does the verse need to emphasize that the number who died on the second day was aside from those who died on the first day? Isn't it obvious?

R' Yehoshua Leib Diskin reveals an entirely new dimension in these verses. We know that on account of Aharon bringing the *ketores* among the people, the plague stopped. Now, we are not told exactly how many more people would have died had Aharon not stopped the plague, but perhaps we can find out…

On the first day, the entire Jewish people were under the decree of being wiped out, but this was rescinded when Moshe pleaded for mercy on their behalf. On the second day, when the complaining persisted, the original decree of destruction was brought back. Here, too, however, there was a measure of mercy, whereby instead of the entire people being wiped out, they would be represented by a core group of people. The smallest representation of an entity in Torah is Terumah (תרומה). In this instance, in order to take the place of the entire nation, the Terumah had to be the most desired amount, which is one fortieth. This is why, on the second day, Hashem did not use the original term "הבדלו" to denote separation, but rather the term "הרומו", which is related to the word "תרומה".

How much is "Terumah" of the Jewish people? The counting of the people in Parshas Bamidbar tells us that they numbered 603,550. A fortieth of that number is 15,088. From whom was this number comprised? The verse informs us that those who died in the plague were 14,700. This leaves 388. However, since this was essentially the same decree as that of the first day, those who died on that day are also reckoned in this amount. This is why the verse specifies that those who died in the plague were "aside from those who died relating to the matter of Korach."

And how many people died on the first day? There was Korach himself, Dasan and Aviram and the 250 men, totaling 253. Adding this to the 14,700 of the second day gives us 14,953. However, this still does not give us the total of 15,088, for there are still 135 missing. What happened to them? The answer is, these men were the ones who were spared by Aharon taking the ketores and running into the midst of the people. We noted that, unlike the earlier verse which uses the term "עדה", this verse says that he ran into the midst of the "קהל". Why the shift in phraseology? Because the numerical value (gematria) of the word "קהל" is 135, indicating the number of people who were saved by this act.

A different level!

[1] Bamidbar 16:1. [2] Bamidbar 16:3. [3] 16:21. [4] 17:10. [5] 17:12. [6] 17:14.

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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 insturucted 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)	"l'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 that 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 Kalev 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 Kalev 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 Tzizit

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?

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 'professsional' 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 Mitzrayyim. 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 suckling. In this posture, Moshe is sympathetic to the people's needs not because he sees their demands as reasonable, but because he sees the people as deeply immature. You wouldn't explain to a suckling why crying for food is inappropriate, and Moshe doesn't try.

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

THE SPIES:

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

1. Hashem tells Moshe to send spies to the Land.

2. Moshe chooses spies and gives them instructions.

3. The spies return and make their report, convincing the nation that conquest of Cana'an is impossible. Yehoshua and Kalev attempt to counteract the effect of this report, but they are unsuccessful.

4. The people conclude that they cannot conquer the Cana'anite nations and begin making plans to return to Egypt.

5. Hashem threatens to kill the people for their rejection of His promises, but Moshe saves their lives.

6. Hashem decrees that all of the people of military age will die in the desert.

7. The people realize their error, try to enter the land, and are beaten back.

VERSION 2:

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

1. The people -- not Hashem -- propose sending spies, and Moshe agrees.
2. There is an explicit rationale to the mission: to find the best way to go up to the Land and the right cities to attack.

3. The spies themselves report only that the land is good, and seem to commit no crime. Instead, the people are blamed for rebelling against Hashem. The spies' report of the strong cities and giant people appears only in the complaining words of the people.

4. Moshe himself responds to the people's rejection of Hashem's guarantees, scolding them for their lack of trust in Hashem and offering examples of situations in which Hashem has supported them.

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

COMPARE TO THE CALF:

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

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

1. Relationship: he emphasized that Hashem had already established a relationship with these people by saving them from Egypt and performing miracles for them.

2. Reputation: he **asked rhetorically what the "public relations" effect on God's reputation would be if He destroyed the people** He had identified as His. Part of the goal of the Exodus was not just to save this particular nation, but also to introduce Hashem to the world and communicate His omnipotence and benevolence. His failure to successfully lead His own nation to freedom would throw His power (and goodness) into question in the mind of the nations.

3. **Commitments: Moshe focused on the promises Hashem had made to the Avot, Avraham, Yitzhak, and Ya'akov. Even if the present people deserved nothing, a commitment had been made to their predecessors to give their descendants the land of Israel; if God killed their children here, that promise would remain unfulfilled.**

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

THE WHOLE NINE YARDS:

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

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'onenim* – "like complainers". In other words, they had nothing concrete about which to complain; rather, they were looking for things to critique and fault about Mosheh's leadership.

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

Once this level of intensity – the B'rit Mishkan – was lost, we moved back to B'rit Sinai – where we are promised victory over our enemies and perpetual settlement in the Land (if we don't violate its sanctity too broadly), but we will have to fight for it ourselves. Coming into the Land on these terms would have been the completion of the 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)