

DIVREI TORAH FROM INTERNET
ON PARSHAS SHELACH - 5756

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Ohr Sameach - Torah Weekly - Shlach

* TORAH WEEKLY * Highlights of the Weekly Torah Portion WEEK "Sing, My Soul!" thoughts on Shabbos Zemiros Parshas Shlach For the week ending 21 Sivan 5756 (28 Sivan 5756)* 7 & 8 June 1996 (14 & 15 June 1996)

Summary: At the insistence of the Bnei Yisrael, and with Hashem's permission, Moshe sends twelve scouts, one from each tribe, to investigate Canaan. Anticipating trouble, Moshe changes Hoshea's name to Yehoshua, expressing a prayer that Hashem should not let him fail in his mission. They return 40 days later, carrying unusually large fruit. When ten of the twelve scouts state that the people in Canaan are as formidable as the fruit, the men are discouraged. Calev and Yehoshua, the only two scouts still in favor of the invasion, try to bolster the spirit of the people. The nation, however, decides that the Land is not worth the potentially fatal risks, and instead they demand a return to Egypt! Hashem is 'angered' by this attitude, but is eventually 'placated' by Moshe's fervent prayers. However, He declares that the nation must remain in the desert for 40 years until the men who wept at the false report of the scouts pass away. A remorseful group, regretting their previous mistake, rashly begins an invasion of the Land based on Hashem's original command. Moshe warns them not to proceed, but they fail to heed this warning, and are massacred. Hashem instructs Moshe concerning the offerings that will be made when the Bnei Yisrael will finally enter the Land of Israel. The people are commanded to remove challah, a donation for the Kohanim, from their dough. The laws for an offering after an inadvertent sin, for an individual person or a group, are explained. However, should someone blaspheme against Hashem and be unrepentant, he will be cut off spiritually from his people. One man is found gathering wood on public property in violation of the laws of Shabbos, and is put to death. The laws of tzitzis are taught, and twice a day we recite this section of the Parsha because it reminds us of our Exodus.

Commentaries

THE EYE OF THE BEHOLDER "The land of Israel is very good." (14:7) 'I don't know how you live in this country! You're living in the Third World! It's dirty and dangerous! It's beyond my comprehension why someone with a decent standard of living would uproot himself and live in a Levantine slum!'

Why is it that to some people the Land of Israel seems so beautiful while others struggle to see its beauty and leave disappointed? There once was a beautiful princess who had many suitors for her hand in marriage. Obviously she could not marry all of her suitors, and so she devised a plan to select the more promising candidates: When a young man would come to woo her, her servants would usher him into an ante-chamber. On the table in front of him were some fruit and some books of Torah scholarship. The servants told him that the princess would be with him shortly. They bade him to make himself comfortable and to help himself to some fruit. What the suitor did not know was that there was a spy-hole in the wall of the room. Through this, the princess would observe the aspiring husband. If he took a piece of fruit and made a bracha with the proper concentration, or if he took up a book and began to learn intently, then she would emerge in her finest apparel and appeared as a rare beauty. If, however, the suitor took some fruit and failed to make a bracha, or idled his time away and didn't use the opportunity to learn Torah, then she would put on torn rags, blacken her face and teeth and emerge looking like a hag. Eretz Yisrael is like that princess. If a person comes to the Land looking for spirituality, he will be enchanted even by the physical beauty of Eretz Yisrael. On the other hand, if a person is not worthy, everything will seem dirty and dingy. However, Eretz Yisrael will never embarrass a person. So rather than suffering the embarrassment of being rejected by the Land, Eretz Yisrael allows the person to think that he had rejected her... (Based on The Ramban in a letter to his students)

EAR-LENDING OR BENDING? "And Calev stilled the people towards Moshe and said 'We should certainly go up and possess the Land for we are well able to take it.'" (13:30) "Friends Romans and Countrymen, lend me your ears. I come to bury Caesar not to praise him..." Mark Anthony must have learned a thing or two from (I'havdil) Calev in this week's Parsha! Calev knew that after hearing the negative words of the spies, the people were in no mood to hear anything good about Moshe Rabbeinu. And thus, his first words gave the people the impression that he was going to speak against Moshe. It was only once he had gained their attention, that he started to praise Moshe. If you want someone to listen to you, the worst thing you can do is to start off by saying "You're wrong!" That's a real ear-closer. If you want to get your point across, you must first make sure that the other person is listening to you. The nature of a person is that he is more ready to listen to approbation than criticism. To get your point across, start off by agreeing, truthfully, with some aspect of the other person's point of view. After all, not everything he said could have been wrong! Reb Moshe Leib of Sassov once saw a nobleman riding in a carriage with his wife and children. The carriage was drawn, not by horses, but by an entire Jewish family. To increase their speed, this fiendish nobleman kept lashing them. Reb Moshe Leib, who had a very distinguished bearing, held up his hand and halted the carriage. He looked inside and saw the nobleman's son. Suddenly, Reb Moshe Leib gathered the child into his arms and began to kiss him, exclaiming what a beautiful child he was! How delicate and sensitive he was! He put the child down and then confided to the nobleman that the cries of the family who were harnessed to his carriage were harming the child's emotional well-being. Reb Moshe Leib advised the nobleman to send the family away. Upon hearing this, the nobleman immediately freed the family... If you want someone to 'lend me your ears,' you must first find something that their ears will want to 'borrow!' (Based on Eser Tzichzachus in Rabbi Zelig Pliskin's Growth through Torah)

PIPES IN TIME "And also it is a land flowing with milk and honey." (12:27) Eretz Yisrael is the channel through which flows the spiritual current that supports the entire universe. It's a pumping station, funneling spiritual energy to the cosmos. This spiritual pipeline comes down to this world through Har Habayis, the Temple Mount, and then radiates out through Eretz Yisrael to the whole cosmos. Shlomo Hamelech (King Solomon), the wisest of all men, had the ability to discern the exact location of these spiritual pipelines as they traversed Eretz Yisrael: He grew flowers in Jerusalem that would normally grow only in Africa, because he knew the exact path of the African flowers' life-force as it made its way to Africa. Just as Eretz Yisrael is a pipeline in space, so too Shabbos is a spiritual pipeline in time, flowing and distributing spiritual energy to the week. This is hinted to in the words "...flowing with milk and honey" -- the ubiquitous description of the Land of Israel. Because if you take the last letters of the words "...flowing with milk

and honey" in Hebrew and reverse them, they spell Shabbos! It's interesting to note that Physics also recognizes an exact relation between Space (Eretz Yisrael) and Time (Shabbos). Time is, according to Physics, the negative signature of Space. In other words, Space is the end of Time, backwards (i.e. Shabbos -- the last letters of "...flowing with milk and honey" backwards). Just as Time is the negative signature of Space, likewise Shabbos is the 'reverse polarity' of Eretz Yisrael...

Haftorah: Yehoshua 2:1-24 **STREETS OF GOLD** Can you imagine what it must be like to look for a new job almost every single week of the year? It's bad enough trying to find and hold down one job, but to have to start again every Monday morning, pounding the tarmac to find yet another way to put bread on the table... But that is exactly what Jews did in America at the turn of the Century. To escape the pogroms of Czarist Russia, Jews fled to America having heard stories of a goldenh medina -- a land where the streets were paved with gold. In a sense that may have been true, but to mine that gold meant working on Shabbos... and that was unthinkable. So, these Jews would get hired on Monday, work until Friday afternoon, not turn up on Shabbos and get fired again on Monday. This happened week after week. It was through this tremendous self-sacrifice that Torah was established in America. What kept those spiritual heroes, and thus their descendants, connected to Yiddishkeit (Judaism) was that they never for one moment thought of breaking Shabbos. It never entered their minds for a second. You had to keep Shabbos! That was as self-evident as saying you had to breathe! There is an interesting puzzle in this week's Parsha: Why was it that the Spies that Moshe sent came back with a negative report, while those which Yehoshua sent in this week's Haftorah, came back positive and enthusiastic? The difference was their attitudes to the mission in the first place: The spies that Moshe sent went with the attitude of whether to enter the land, whereas those of Yehoshua had had no question as to whether to enter the land. That was Hashem's will. Not to enter the land was unthinkable. It never entered their minds for a second. The only question was how enter the land. When a person starts of with the mind-set that is exclusively positive, his focus will be locked on achieving his objective, because the thought of not doing never enters his mind. (Based on Rabbi Abraham Twerski)

Sing, My Soul! Insights into the Zemiros sung at the Shabbos table throughout the generations. - Yom Shabbos Kadosh Hu - The Sabbath Day is Holy

"Women light the Shabbos candles, observe the laws of Niddah (family purity) and properly bake Challos (by tithing a portion of them). Their merit will protect them when the day comes for them to give birth. If they were not negligent in observing these laws the birth will be a quick one." This is based on a Mishnah (Shabbos 31b) familiar to those who recite the chapter of Bameh Madlikin in the Sabbath Eve prayer service. It states that women are prone to danger during childbirth for being negligent in the observance of family purity, tithing the challah they bake and lighting Shabbos candles. In this Mishnah the candle-lighting is listed last but in this song of tribute to the Sabbath we mention it first as a merit for a woman to have a safe and swift delivery

Written and Compiled by Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair General Editor:
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PARSHAT HASHAVUA PARSHAT SHLACH

by Menachem Leibtag

The severe punishment that Bnei Yisrael received for "chet ha'mraglim" (the sin of the spies) seems rather unfair. After all, what did the meraglim do wrong? They were instructed to report the facts, and that's exactly what they did! Furthermore, even if we accept that the meraglim sinned by intentionally slanting their report, why should the entire nation have been punished for being misled? Finally, even if we accept that the entire nation was somehow guilty, the people immediately repented, stating and showing their willingness to take the challenge of conquering the Land! Why did God insist

that "dor ha'midbar" (the generation of the desert) must wander for forty years until they perish!

This week's shiur examines this tragic event in an attempt to understand why.

TOURISTS OR SPIES

To our surprise, although this event is commonly known as "chet ha'meraglim", in Parshat Shlach they are NEVER referred to as such! For the sake of convenience, our shiur will continue to refer to them as the "meraglim", however, we will show that their mission involved much more than just spying out the land. [The parallel account of this event in Sefer Dvarim (see 1:22-24) does refer to them as "meraglim". The reason for this discrepancy is discussed in the further iyun section.]

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'. To be more precise, we must analyze the specifics of that mission, as detailed in Parshat Shlach:

"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)

Note as you read the above psukim that the meraglim are sent on a FACT FINDING mission. They are asked to gather TWO types of information, concerning:

1) 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) THE FEASIBILITY OF MILITARY CONQUEST -

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

This is not a job for spies! Normally, SPIES are sent only AFTER a nation has decided to engage in war. The military commander sends a small number of spies to help plan HOW to attack the enemy. The mission of the meraglim is entirely different. They are gathering information to help the nation decide IF they should conquer the Land. [The Further Iyun section discusses the question why would God request that Bnei Yisrael send a mission that would ask this question.]

This decision which Bnei Yisrael must make - IF they should conquer the Land - includes TWO stages, parallel to the double mission of the meraglim. First the nation must decide (1) whether this Land is suitable for them. If so, they must then ascertain (2) whether it is feasible to conquer it.

This understanding explains why a senior representative from each "shevet" (tribe) is sent on this mission:

"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)

A COMMISSION OF INQUIRY

Thus, one could compare the meraglim to a 'Congressional Commission of Inquiry', appointed to engage in a feasibility study vis a vis the establishment of Eretz Canaan as the new national homeland for Bnei Yisrael.

This understanding also explains why the meraglim report back not only to Moshe, but also to the entire public (13:26). If they were simply military spies, they should have reported back ONLY to Moshe and possibly the military command, not to entire nation. Furthermore, if they were spies, there would be no reason to send the tribal leaders (and certainly no reason to publicize their names). It is because they comprise a 'fact finding mission' that specifically the national leaders are sent. Consequently, they are expected to report back to the entire nation.

A PROOF FROM SEFER YEHOSHUA

This distinction between 'spies' and a 'commission of inquiry' can be illustrated by comparing these meraglim sent by Moshe to the meraglim sent by Yehoshua [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 came to YEHOSHUA

and they told HIM concerning what happened to them." (2:24)

Note that Yehoshua secretly sends two "meraglim" to spy out the city who report only back to him, and not to the entire nation. Let's summarize the differences between these two missions to highlight their contrast:

Meraglim OF MOSHE	Meraglim OF YEHOSHUA
fffff=	fffff=
12 men	2 men
Tribal leaders	unnamed
publicly	secretly
"la'tur" (to tour)	"l'ragel" (to spy)
[the type of land,	[only military information]
its fruit, its cities etc..]	

The reason for these differences is quite simple. Yehoshua's meraglim are sent as purely military spies, to help Yehoshua plan HOW they should conquer the Land. Moshe's meraglim are sent as an inquiry commission, to help the people determine IF they should conquer the Land.

ONE REPORT / TWO OPINIONS

When the meraglim return, their report correlates perfectly with the double purpose of their mission: (1) In regard to the NATURE OF THE LAND - SUPERB:

"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 and honey..."

(13:26-27); (2) In regard to the FEASIBILITY its CONQUEST - UNFEASIBLE:

"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).

This was the commission's MAJORITY opinion. Kalev and Yehoshua presented the DISSENTING opinion. They concluded that conquest of the Land was 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 existed in regard to the feasibility of its conquest: The majority opinion concludes that it is futile to even attempt to conquer the land, while the dissenting opinion (Kalev and Yehoshua) argues that with Divine assistance (see 14:9), conquest is achievable. What is the reason for this difference of opinion?

One could suggest that this argument stems from a difference of opinion in regard to their belief in God's ability to assist Bnei Yisrael in battle. Kalev and Yehoshua insist that God will help them, while the others are doubtful. This, however, can not be! Is it possible that after witnessing the Exodus and some sixteen months of miraculous existence in the desert, that ten out of the twelve tribal leaders do not believe in God's ability to help 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 the possibility of Divine assistance. Unfortunately, they are also well aware of the possibility of Divine punishment. Throughout their journey, not only has God intervened numerous times to help them, He had also intervened numerous times to punish them. "Dor ha'midbar" does not doubt God's capability to assist them in battle, RATHER their own ability to be WORTHY of that assistance.

The meraglim are well aware that being worthy of Divine assistance requires the highest level of religious observance and obedience to God. This precise warning is 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 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..." (see Shmot 23:20-25)

We can infer from this warning that God's assistance only comes if Bnei Yisrael remain obedient. Should they not listen, they will fall before their enemies. This fear is reflected in the people's complaint:

"Why has God brought us to this land to fall by the sword,

our women and children will be taken as spoils, it is better that we return to Egypt." (Bamidbar 14:3)

From their experiences in the desert thus far, the meraglim conclude that Bnei Yisrael will not be capable of retaining that spiritual level necessary to be worthy of miracles in conquest of the Land. Therefore they conclude that the results of attacking the people of Canaan will be disastrous. The entire nation concurs. [One can bring additional proof from Sefer Yehoshua 7:1 -26/ the story of sin of Achan. There we find that the sin of one individual caused Bnei Yisrael's defeat in the war against "ha'Ai".

The conclusion of the "meraglim" seems quite logical and realistic, while that of Kalev and Yehoshua a bit over-idealistic. Why then is God so angered?

THE "CHET"

We noted earlier that the report of the meraglim (13:25-29) appeared to be rather objective, as they reported according to the guidelines of their assignment. However, their rebuttal of Kalev's 'dissenting opinion' sheds light on their true character. Note that the Torah refers to this rebuttal as "dibah" - SLANDER:

"But the people who went up with him said: We cannot attack that people for it is stronger than we. And they spread DIBAT HA'ARETZ among Bnei Yisrael saying: The land which we visited is one that DEVOURS ITS INHABITANTS, ALL the people who we saw there are GIANT... we looked like GRASSHOPPERS to ourselves, and that is HOW THEY SAW US." (13:30-33)

These are not the objective statements of a fact finding mission, rather hysterical exaggerations of the situation made in a desperate attempt to shape public opinion. A land does not devour its inhabitants, nor is it possible that the meraglim are perceived by the Canaanites as 'grasshoppers'! In the second stage of their report, the meraglim show their true character. Instead of confessing their fear that the nation is not worthy of Divine assistance, 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.

PROPER LEADERSHIP

In this situation, ideal leadership, such as Kalev and Yehoshua, should have challenged the nation to raise their spiritual level, in order to become worthy of Divine assistance. Instead of rallying the nation to fulfill its destiny, the meraglim hide their spiritual cowardice behind a wall of hyperbole! They succeed in persuading the people to prefer the return to Egypt over the challenge of becoming God's special nation in Eretz Canaan.

The proper attitude is reflected in Kalev and Yehoshua's rebuttal: "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 - DO NOT FEAR THEM." (14:8-9)

The people's preference of adopting the conclusion of the meraglim over the conclusion Kalev reflects their spiritual weakness as well. Undoubtedly, the slanted report presented by the meraglim had influenced their decision. However, since the Exodus and throughout their desert journey, the people had consistently shown a lack of idealism. Had the Land of Israel been offered to them on a silver platter, Bnei Yisrael would have been delighted to accept. However, once they realize that conquering the Promised Land requires commitment and dedication, the nation declines.

God's conclusion is inevitable: "ad ana y'naatzuni ha'am ha'zeh..." - How long will this people defy Me, and how long will they have no faith in Me, despite all the signs..." (14:11-12)

As was the case at "chet ha'egel", God wishes to destroy the entire nation, opting to make a nation out of Moshe instead. Once again, Moshe petitions God to invoke His "midot ha'rachamim" (attributes of mercy). However this time, it is impossible to reverse the "gzar din" (verdict), it could only be delayed. 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. This generation is destined to die in the desert, while a new generation is to be prepared and educated. T'SHUYA WON'T HELP!

This interpretation explains why the repentance of the "ma'apilim" (see 14:39-45) is insufficient. Even though they declare:

"We are prepared to go up and conquer the place which God has spoken of, FOR WE WERE WRONG." (14:40)

Had the sin of the nation been only this isolated incident, then their repentance most probably would have sufficed. However, the problem of "dor ha'midbar" did not begin here at Kadesh, it was a general attitude problem which had already surfaced numerous times (see T'hilim 95:8-11, Shmot 6:9-12, and Yechezkel 20:5-9). Even after they received the Torah and built the Mishkan, their numerous complaints against Moshe since the time they left Har Sinai were inexcusable. "Chet Ha'meraglim" was not an isolated sin, it was simply the "straw that broke the camel's back".

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

It is not often in Jewish History when the opportunity arises for Am Yisrael to return to its homeland. The implication of such an opportunity is greater than the fulfillment of a single mitzvah of "yishuv ha'aretz" (settling the Land): 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

FOR FURTHER IYUN

A. 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. Sefer Bamidbar 'challenges' us to find the connection between these mitzvot and the ongoing story. After "chet ha'meraglim" and before the story of Korach, several such parshiot are recorded (15:1-41):

- 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

1. Attempt to relate these parshiot to chet ha'meraglim? (Compare both thematically and linguistically.)

2. Where in Sefer Vayikra does each mitzvah belong?

3. 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 studied the structure of chumash?

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?

B. In Sefer Dvarim (1:17-30) we find a parallel account of the story of the meraglim which is quite different. 1. Read the first chapter in Dvarim carefully to understand the context of the story of the meraglim in Sefer Dvarim. Note that it coming to explain why the mitzvot which Moshe is about to give to Bnei Yisrael at Arvot Moav were first given forty years earlier at Har Sinai.

2. Compare the two accounts carefully, noting the key differences. Why here are they called "meraglim"?

3. Compare the mission of the meraglim in Dvarim to the meraglim sent by Yehoshua. Now is there more of a similarity?

4. Note that in Dvarim the name of the meraglim are not mentioned.

Furthermore, the sin appears to be totally the fault of the people. Try to explain why this aspect of "chet ha'meraglim" is being presented in Sefer Dvarim, while considering that forty years have passed and Bnei Yisrael are planning to begin their conquest of Eretz Canaan in a very short time.

5. Relate your answer to Dvarim 3:21-22. (note that this pasuk concludes a unit which began in Dvarim 1:6).

C. One may ask: Why should conquering the land be a question at all? Surely, Bnei Yisrael must do as God commands them. Obviously, He intends for them to conquer the land. Why then does God instruct Moshe to send the meraglim on this mission (see Rashi 13:1). What possible gain could come from their report. No matter what they see, Bnei Yisrael must fulfill the mitzvah of "kibush ha'aretz".

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. As Bnei Yisrael 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.

During the time in the desert, Bnei Yisrael enjoyed a supernatural existence, they witnessed God's presence, they ate from the manna etc. (see Dvarim 8:2-5). In preparation for their conquest of the Land, there may be value in the fact that Bnei Yisrael participate actively in the process, and begin to live like any normal nation. It is important that they decide on their own that they want the land, it is important that they devise a plan how to conquer it. It is important the tribal leaders are involved in the decision, and not only Moshe.

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.

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YESHIVAT HAR ETZION VIRTUAL BEIT MIDRASH PROJECT(VBM)

PARASHAT SHELACH SICHA OF HARAV AHARON LICHTENSTEIN SHLIT"AA

This shiur is dedicated by mr. and mrs. Herbert seif in memory of her father, yisroel alter ben mordechai yaacov z"l, whose yahrzeit is 15 sivan.

Et Devar Hashem Baza

Summarized by Zev Jacobson

An individual who inadvertently transgresses the injunction against idolatry must bring a sacrifice to achieve atonement. "However, if a person commits [such an act of idolatry] high-handedly...he is blaspheming God and that person shall be cut off [spiritually] from among his people. Since he has treated God's word with contempt and violated His commandment, that person shall be utterly cut off [and] his sin shall remain upon him" (Bamidbar 15:29-30)

The intentional sinner is "cut off" not only because of the severity of his action, but also because he sinned "be-yad rama," high-handedly. It is the spirit of open rebellion against God that leads to excision - "karet" - and not the physical motions of idol-worship alone.

The Gemara (Sanhedrin 99a) lists a series of people who have "treated God's word with contempt" and are therefore punishable by karet, both in this world and in the World to Come. We can divide this list into sins relating to mitzvot and those relating to Torah. But it is difficult to understand why some of these are included. For example, one of the mitzva transgression which engenders karet is "despising the festivals," which is interpreted as performing melakha (labor) on Chol Ha-moed. Why is one punished so severely for transgressing a Rabbinic enactment?

Once again, the distinction between act and motivation must be drawn. One who performs melakha on Chol Ha-moed either fails to understand the significance of these days or else is aware of their holiness and flagrantly attempts to desecrate it. Both attitudes constitute a serious lapse in religious outlook. But the latter far surpasses the former in terms of "treating God's

word with contempt."

Moving to the list of transgressions relating to Torah, the Gemara continues: "Rabbi Meir says: 'He who learns Torah but does not teach it is called one who despises God's word'... Rabbi Natan says: 'This term refers also to one who has the opportunity to immerse himself in study but fails to do so.'"

One cannot help being shocked and frightened by the words of these two sages. Neglect of Torah study and failure to teach are crimes that ultimately result in spiritual excision. Lack of commitment in these areas is tantamount to having contempt for God's word, placing one in the company of those who deny the validity and origin of the Torah (mentioned previously in the Gemara).

One can, of course, find an escape route in the words of Rabbi Natan. One is guilty only if he has the opportunity to learn but fails to do so. Many people, however, feel they are forced by circumstances to choose a career other than chinukh; many also feel forced to live a lifestyle that does not afford the luxury of Torah study, not even for a few hours every week, and are, therefore, are blameless for not learning.

Yet, while it is true that many factors which shape one's life are not within one's control, there is still a great deal that is dictated by one's own decisions. Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, Chief Rabbi of Britain, tells of his first meeting with the Lubavitcher Rebbe zt"l. He had prepared a list of questions to ask the Rebbe, and introduced himself as a student of philosophy at the Cambridge University. But before he could begin asking his questions, the Rebbe asked him: "Tell me, what do you do for Yiddishkeit in Cambridge?"

Taken aback, he answered: "Well, in the situation in which I find myself..."

The Rebbe interrupted: "One does not find oneself in a situation; one puts oneself in a situation."

One who has chosen a specific career or way of life that does not allow time or peace of mind to study cannot honestly claim to be a victim of circumstances. If one has opted for a standard of living that demands unceasing effort to maintain it, is the claim that "circumstances do not allow" acceptable?

One for whom Torah study is not a top priority must ask: "Why?" Is it perhaps because the value and importance of study are not recognized, shoved aside in favor of other pursuits? Does the lack of commitment to study and teaching indicate a fundamental problem in one's religious outlook? Granted, there are mitigating factors, but everyone must confront this issue with honesty and integrity. And, of course, one should not adopt an "all-or-nothing" attitude.

The same type of self-examination must be undertaken by one who learns, but does so half-heartedly. Limmud Torah involves more than merely collecting information. It is a process that must permeate the fiber of one's being; one who is not immersed in his study of Torah would do well to consider the cause and thereby effect changes in attitude and behavior.

The level of commitment one shows to actual study betrays one's loyalties. One who does not possess the courage to engage in self-examination and self-improvement, slow as the process may be, is in spiritual danger.
(Originally delivered at Seuda Shelishit, Shabbat Parashat Shelach 5755.)
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Rabbi Frand on Parshas Sh'lach

Parshas Shlach:

Missing Dots Hint at Yehoshua's Special Relationship to Moshe

In this week's Parsha we read about the sending of the 12 spies. The 12 spies were supposed to investigate the situation in Eretz Yisroel prior to Klal Yisroel entering the land. We know, unfortunately, of the sad outcome of this chapter.

[Ten of the twelve spies gave a false bad report. Though Calev and Yehoshua gave a good report, the Jewish people believed the spies and decided that it

was not worth fighting a dangerous war for the Land of Israel, and instead demanded a return to Egypt. As a punishment, the Jews were required to remain in the desert for 40 years, until all the adults who had believed the spies passed away.]

The chapter begins with the listing of each of the 12 spies by tribe. The verse says "And from the Tribe of Ephraim was Hoshea bin Nun". The Torah uses the unique form "bin Nun" rather than "ben Nun" to express the idea that he was the son of Nun.

The Ramba"n explains that "bin Nun" was like a nickname, hinting at the fact that Hoshea was particularly wise and sharp intellectually. He was, thus, given the title "binNun" (from the root `Binah' -- understanding), meaning "the wise one".

I saw an interesting alternate interpretation from the sefer HaMedrash v'Hamaseh. Normally, our Rabbis tell us, there are three partners in man -- his father, his mother, and G-d. In truth, however, there can be another partner in the creation of man, and that is his Rebbe, his teacher. As Chaza"l, our Rabbis, say, "Whoever teaches the son of his neighbor Torah, it is as if he gave birth to him." Unfortunately, this is usually not the case. The relationship between Rebbe and Talmid (student) is usually not as strong as the relationship between father and son. There are, however, cases where the Talmid is such a dedicated student (Talmid-muvhak), that the student can truly be considered the child of his Rebbe.

Yehoshua was such a Talmid. Our Rabbis describe him as the disciple par excellence, who never left the side of Moshe, his teacher. Chaza"l say that when Moshe finished giving a shiur, the Elders would leave. There would be some Talmidim still present and then they, too, would leave. Finally, Moshe Rabbeinu would walk and Yehoshua bin Nun would follow him. Because Yehoshua was such a dedicated Talmid, he received more from Moshe than any other individual, and eventually became Moshe's successor.

Consequently, we can actually say about Yehoshua bin Nun that he had another partner in his making. That partner was Moshe Rabbeinu. That is why, the sefer HaMedrash v'Hamaseh says, Yehoshua was called Bin Nun, with a single dot (chirik) under the letter Bais rather than the three dots (segol). Yehoshua was the son of Nun, but not fully the son of Nun. The Torah, symbolically, took away from the full "Ben" (with a segol) relationship that Yehoshua had with his father, to show that in this case his teacher had an even greater role in his development than did his father.

Moshe Tells Yehoshua "'Just Say No' to the plan of the Spies"

There is a very interesting and fascinating Targum Yonasan ben Uziel in this week's Parsha. The Torah tells us that before the Spies were sent out, Moshe changed the name of Hoshea to Yehoshua. Rash"i cites the statement of Chaza"l, our Rabbis, that this was a message: "May G-d save you (Yoshiecha) from the peril of the Spies." The Targum Yonasan ben Uziel adds an editorial comment here. He says, "When Moshe Rabbeinu saw the humbleness of Hoshea, he felt compelled to change his name to Yehoshua". What does the Targum mean? Isn't humility a desirable quality?

The Avnei Shoham gives a powerful interpretation: The Tosefta in Tractate Shabbos [17:4] brings an argument between Beis Shammai and Beis Hillel [the school of Shammai, and the school of Hillel] as to what one can or must do with bones that are left on the table after a Shabbos meal. Beis Hillel says they are not muktzeh [forbidden to be handled on Shabbos or Yom Tov] and you are allowed to pick them up and discard them like you do regularly during the week. Beis Shammai say you must remove the entire table or tablecloth and shake it off, thus getting rid of the bones.

The Tosefta adds that Rav Zecharia ben Avkilos would act neither according to the practice of Beis Shammai nor according to the practice of Beis Hillel. Wanting to strike a compromise, he would pick up the bones and throw them behind the couch. The Tosefta comments that this attitude of Rav Zecharia ben Avkilos, of trying to strike a compromise between Beis Shammai and Beis Hillel - destroyed the Beis Hamikdash.

What does the Tosefta mean? The Tosefta is referring to the famous Gemara in Tractate Gittin [56a] that describes how a certain Jew went to the Caesar in Rome and told him that the Jews were rebelling against him. The Caesar knew that the Jews were loyal and refused to believe this Jew. The Jew then said, "I'll prove it to you. Send them an Offering and have them sacrifice it on

their Altar. If they refuse to sacrifice it, that means they've rebelled." The Caesar agreed and sent an animal with this Jew, requesting that it be offered on the Altar. The Jew went ahead and secretly blemished the animal, knowing that it would then have to be rejected.

The Gemara describes that the Rabbis considered offering it anyway because of "political considerations" (mi'shum shalom malchus - peace with the King), but Rav Zecharia ben Avkilos argued against this, saying that "People will misinterpret this, and say that blemished animals may be offered on the Altar". The Rabbis then considered killing the plotting messenger, so the king would never find out what happened. Again, Rav Zecharia ben Avkilos argued against this saying "People will misinterpret this, and say that one who blemishes a Sacrifice is deserving of the death penalty".

As a result they did nothing, and the Temple was destroyed. Regarding this incident Rav Yochanan said, "The 'humility', the desire to constantly satisfy every opinion and every situation, of Rav Zecharia ben Avkilos, destroyed our Temple and exiled us from our Land".

Chazal are telling us that modesty, humility and the art of compromise and peacemaking are tremendous attributes, but sometimes one has to stand up and be counted and say "Let the chips fall where they may -- this is the way it has to be!". One cannot _always_ try to make Shalom. One cannot always compromise. Sometimes one must take a stand. This was R. Zecharia ben Avkilos' failing.

Now we understand what the Targum Yonasan ben Uziel is teaching. Moshe Rabbeinu knew that Yehoshua was a lover and a pursuer of peace, one who always tried to find common ground and find a way to compromise.

However, Moshe Rabbeinu, intuitively or with Ruach HaKodesh, knew that there would come a time, during the incident with the spies, that Yehoshua would have to stand up and be counted, stand up and rebel.

Therefore, the Targum says that when Moshe saw that Yehoshua needed a 'booster shot' of internal strength (shtark-keit), Moshe changed his name and gave him a Blessing -- that G-d give him the fortitude, strength and courage that if the situation called for it he would be able to stand up and say "No". This was the Blessing of "May G-d save you from the plan of the Spies".

Sources and Personalities

Ramba"n -- R. Moshe ben Nachman; (1194-1270); Spain, Eretz Yisroel

Rash"i -- R. Shlomo Yitzchaki (1040-1105); France

Targum Yonasan ben Uziel -- Aramaic paraphrase of the Chumash attributed by some to a disciple of Hillel. Tosefta -- Tanaitic collection of Baraisos; a kind of parallel work to the Mishneh

Transcribed by David Twersky; Seattle, Washington twerskyd@scn.org
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Project Genesis, the Jewish Learning Network learn@torah.org P.O.
Box 1230 http://www.torah.org/ Spring Valley, NY 10977 (914)
356-3040

From: dmgreen@skynet.net (Dvartorah@torah.org)

P arshas Shelach

by Chaim Ozer Shulman

A. BUT THE PEOPLE ARE POWERFUL

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

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

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

An answer to the Ramban's question, which is implicit in many

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

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

B. THE SIN OF SLANDERING THE LAND

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

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

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

The Ramban, however, states that one cannot learn that the sin of the Meraglim was merely that they spoke Lashon Hora because even before the Torah states in verse 32 that: "they slandered the Land," Caleb silenced the people in verse 20 stating: "We shall surely ascend and conquer the Land."

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

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

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

C. COMPARISON TO MIRIAM

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

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

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

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

complainers spoke badly about the Mon, Miriam spoke badly about Moshe and the Meraglim spoke badly about the Land of Israel.

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

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

Rabbi Dovid Green <dmgreen@skynet.net> <dmgreen@michiana.org>
Moderator, Dvar Torah Project Genesis
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Project Genesis, the Jewish Learning Network learn@torah.org P.O. Box
1230 http://www.torah.org/ Spring Valley, NY 10977 (914) 356-3040

"Mordecai Kornfeld <kornfeld@netmedia.co.il>

Dear readers, It is my pleasure to share with you the exciting news that my wife and I were blessed, one week ago, with a baby boy! I would like to apologize for not distributing the Parashat Beha'alotcha issue in all the excitement. I hope to mail out this week's issue on schedule, once again.

L'hitra'ot, -Mordecai
PS - Please mention in your prayers a plea that Hashem should grant the as-yet-unnamed baby (Tinok HaNolad ben Ayeleth), who is still not completely recovered from an infection, a full and speedy recovery. Thanx, -MK

The Weekly Internet
P * A * R * A * S * H * A - P * A * G * E
by Mordecai Kornfeld (kornfeld@jer1.co.il) edited by Yakov Blinder

This week's issue has been dedicated by Charles Popper to the memory of his mother in law, Mrs. Golda Blinder, whose passed away on 18 Sivan.

Parashat Shelach 5756

THE SEA, THE SKY, THE THRONE OF HIS GLORY

Rebbi Meir used to say, "In what way is Techelet (a bluish color used to dye one of the Tzitzit threads - Bamidbar 15:38) different from all other colors (i.e. why was it chosen as the color for this Mitzvah)? Because Techelet is similar [in color] to the *sea*, the sea is similar [in color] to the *sky*, and the sky is similar [in color] to [Hashem's] *Throne of Glory*, as it says (Shemot 24:10), "They saw the G-d of Israel, and under His feet was something like a sapphire stone, bright as the color of the sky." "

(Sotah 17a, Menachot 23b, Chullin 89a)

The Gemara explains that the Techelet thread which is attached to the corners of a Jew's four-cornered garments displays the relationship between the Jew and his Creator. It serves to remind us of our unique attachment to Hashem's Majesty. There is an obvious question, however, concerning the manner in which the Gemara depicts this connection. Why does the Gemara not say directly, "Techelet looks like the Throne of Glory?" Why mention the sea and the sky as intermediary steps in this comparison?

The reason that the *sky* was included in the string of comparisons is easy enough to explain. Since we have never actually seen the Throne of Hashem, we must first bring textual proof as to the color of the Throne before we assert that Techelet is similar to it in color. The verse likens the color of the Throne to that of a much more familiar object -- the sky ("under His feet was something like... the color of the sky"). Therefore, it was necessary for Rebbi Meir to point out that (as we can see) Techelet is sky-colored, before concluding that (as the verse states) the Throne of Hashem's Glory is also sky-colored.

But we have yet to explain the necessity of including the *sea* in Rebbi Meir's list of comparisons. It would have been just as easy for Rebbi Meir to

compare the color of Techelet directly to that of the sky, without mentioning the sea! Through a close examination of Rashi's commentary in the three places where Rebbi Meir's statement is recorded, we can gain insight into this question.

II

Rashi in Sotah 17a explains that Techelet is actually not exactly the same color as the sky -- it is more similar to the color of the sea. In other words, the sea's color is somewhere between Techelet and the color of the sky (= the color of the Throne). This is why the Gemara, in demonstrating that the Techelet is reminiscent of the Throne, has to describe the similarity in stages. Techelet is similar to the sea; the sea, in turn, is similar to the sky.... (Tosfot Sens, ibid., offers the same explanation.)

This however, leads us to another question. If Techelet is, in fact, not really the color of the Throne, why was Techelet chosen to be the color by which we remember the Throne? If the purpose of the Techelet in our Tzitzit is to remind us of Hashem's closeness to us, why not dye the thread sky-blue, rather than using a color which is only *reminiscent* of the sky's color through a two-step comparison? A friend of mine, Rebbi Hadar Margolin of Har Nof Jerusalem, suggested a solution to this problem.

Rashi in Sotah refers to a Sifri (a halachic Midrash on Bamidbar -- Ch. 115), which tells us that the point of Rebbi Meir's statement is to prove that when someone performs the Mitzvah of Tzitzit, it is as if he has had an encounter with the Shechinah (= the Divine Presence of Hashem). The Gemara in Menachot (43b) formulates this theme somewhat differently: "Rebbi Shimon bar Yochai said, 'Whoever is careful to perform the Mitzvah [of Tzitzit] will, as a reward, merit to have an encounter with the Shechinah.'" The connection between Tzitzit and an encounter with the Shechinah is mentioned, but here the encounter with the Shechinah is referred to as an ultimate *reward* for the Mitzvah, i.e. in the World to Come, while according to the Sifri the performance of the Mitzvah is *tantamount* to ("Ke'ilu") encountering the Shechinah.

The Sifri's statement may explain why the color of Techelet is not identical to that of Hashem's Throne. A true encounter with Hashem is not possible in this physical world. Nevertheless, the Tzitzit strings that dangle from our garments -- by reminding us that the Divine Presence watches over us from every angle -- can elevate us to *feel as though* ("Ke'ilu") we are in direct contact with the Divine Presence. This pseudo-encounter with Hashem is what is hinted at by the twice-removed comparison between the Techelet thread worn on our Tzitzit and Hashem's Throne. The color of Techelet thus demonstrates that our Tzitzit grant us an appreciation of the Divine Presence even in the mundane world in which we live, where a glimpse of His true Presence is distant from our grasp.

This is what can be learned from the words of Rashi in Sotah.

III

In his commentary to Menachot, Rashi seems to offer another approach to the question of why Rebbi Meir mentions the color of the sea in connection with the Techelet. Rashi (s.v. Domeh) comments cryptically,

"Techelet is similar [in color] to the sea" -- where miracles were performed for Israel.

What is Rashi's intention in this comment? What is the connection between the miracles performed at the Red Sea and the color of Techelet? Rebbi Herzog (in an article on the subject of Techelet) suggests that Rashi may be hinting at a comment made by the Sifri:

"Why is [the color used in Tzitzit] called "Techelet" (from the root Kaf-Lamed)? Because the Egyptians were annihilated ("Kalu," from the root Kaf-Lamed) in the [Red] Sea."

(Sifri Bamidbar, Ch. 115)

The color, as well as the name, of Techelet is hinting to what happened at the Red Sea. Rashi is in effect telling us that the color of the Techelet has a *dual* significance -- it reminds us of Hashem's Throne on the one hand, and it also recalls the miracles wrought for us at the Red Sea on the other. This, then, is why Rebbi Meir mentions two similarities of color when describing Techelet: "Techelet is similar to the sea, and the sea is similar to sky (= the Throne of Glory)." Both of these similarities are significant in their own right!

Perhaps we may add the following observation to Rebbi Herzog's insightful comment. The two symbolismisms of the color of Techelet are not

necessarily unrelated. There is a clear relationship between the miracles of the Red Sea and encountering the Shechinah. Chazal (= the sages of the Talmud) tell us that when Hashem led the Bnai Yisrael through the sea, not only did He split open the waters of the sea, but He split open the heavens as well, exposing His glory to the people as they crossed. As Rashi puts it:

"This is my G-d and I will glorify Him" -- He was revealed to them in all His glory, until the people were able to point to Him and say, "*This* is my G-d..." Even the maidservants who crossed the sea perceived G-d with more clarity than the prophets!"

(Rashi, Shemot 15:2)

We may suggest that the point of the Techelet is to remind us that as Jews, we are able to raise ourselves to a spiritual height from which we can clearly perceive the Majesty of Hashem in His creation (or the sky-colored Divine Throne of Hashem's Glory). In order to substantiate this claim, Techelet recalls as well the events which occurred at the Red Sea, during which the Jews actually *did* perceive the Divine Presence. The resemblance of Techelet to the color of the sea serves to reinforce the theme of our intimate relationship with Hashem.

IV

It is interesting to note that Tosafot (s.v. Mipnei) to Sotah 17a, quoting the Yerushalmi, presents yet another version of Rabbi Meir's statement:

Techelet is similar [in color] to the sea, the sea is similar [in color] to *grass*, grass is similar [in color] to the sky, and the sky is similar [in color] to [Hashem's] Throne of Glory.

(Yerushalmi Berachot 1:2)

In this version, the color of grass is added in the progression of colors. In light of the explanation we offered for Rashi's words in Menachot, the added mention of grass in Rabbi Meir's statement is especially appropriate.

The Gemara (in Sotah 11b) relates an enigmatic Aggadah concerning the Egyptian exile. When the Egyptians were pursuing their policy of infanticide, the Jewish mothers would go out to the fields to give birth, so that their newborn babies would not be detected by the Egyptians. When the Egyptians discovered the ruse, they came out to the fields to kill the infants there. But Hashem caused the babies to be miraculously swallowed up into the ground, where they were safe from the Egyptians' evil plottings. The Egyptians, not to be deterred, proceeded to plow up the ground. After they left, however, Hashem miraculously caused the babies to sprout up out of the ground like the *grass* of the field, as it says (Yechezkel 16:7), "I made you as numerous as the grass of the field..." (There is obviously more to this Aggadah than is immediately apparent. Its allegorical meaning, however, will have to left for a future discussion.)

Perhaps, then, the color of Techelet is intended to remind us of this miracle as well. Techelet is similar in color to grass, which reminds us of the manner in which Hashem miraculously caused our people to experience a population explosion during the Egyptian exile.

We may develop this thought a bit further. As the Gemara in Sotah (ibid.) continues, when Hashem revealed His glory to the Jews at the splitting of the Red Sea it was the miraculously rescued infants (now grown up) who exclaimed (Shemot 15:2), "*This* is my G-d..." They were the first to recognize Hashem's Divine Presence, Rashi explains, because they had *already* witnessed His glory on a previous occasion. In other words, the children who "grew as grass" in Egypt experienced an encounter with the Shechinah on a level comparable to the one which the Jews experienced at the Splitting of the Red Sea.

It is now clear why Rabbi Meir (in the Yerushalmi's version of his statement) mentions the color of grass in his list. It is for the same reason that he mentions the color of the sea. Recalling the story of the miraculous births in Egypt helps to substantiate for us -- in the same manner as the miracles at the Red Sea -- that it is possible for a human being to experience a close encounter with Hashem's Divine Presence, in this world!

May we all merit to observe the Mitzvah of Tzitzit properly, and to see Hashem's true Glory!

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candle lighting: 8:11 pm

Peer Pressure by Rabbi Shimon Kerner

"And they went up in the south and he came until Chevron..." (13:22) >From this grammatical inconsistency Rashi deduces that Calev alone went to Chevron. He prostrated himself upon the graves of the patriarchs and declared that he would not be swayed by the evil counsel of his colleagues. Rashi teaches us a great lesson in confronting negative peer pressure. First, we see the power of prayer. When an individual needs courage and inner strength, he can generate it through sincere prayer. Indeed, we ask Hashem every day to "keep us far away from evil men and bad companions."

We may glean an additional insight from Calev's choice to pray at the burial site of his ancestors. Why was it so important to go there, as opposed to anywhere else, to pray? We might answer this by first analyzing a person's motivation to act like his peers. The Rambam (Hilchot Deot 6:1) states that man naturally is molded in thought and action by his social group and his place of residence. To restate this, a vulnerability to peer pressure is part of the human condition and we cannot escape it.

Why is this so? When everybody laughs about a joke they heard, even the one in the crowd who didn't quite get it forces himself to laugh because by nature, nobody wants to stand out and be viewed as different. This is terribly uncomfortable.

With this understanding, perhaps we can understand why Calev chose to go to Mearat Hamachpela to daven. By doing so, he said: "it is true that there are ten of them and only two of us. But on our side is the merit of the patriarchs and matriarchs, and all those tzaddikim who preceded us. In fact, we are the quantitative and qualitative majority. Ironically, it is "they" who should feel "different" - not us."

We all confront situations in which we are tempted by an apparent majority of people to do something which is not right. When that happens, we should turn to Hashem in prayer to gain the fortitude necessary to withstand the temptation to join. Additionally, we should remind ourselves that there is no need to feel alone. There are many others who join with us even though they may not be right here, right now. We should remember the words of the Rama in the very first paragraph of the Shulchan Aruch: "And he shall not be embarrassed by those who mock him in the service of his G-d."

Editorial Staff Uriel Lubetski Jacob Goldberg David Greenstone Seth L. Ness ness@acom.yu.edu

PARASHAT SHLACH - SHAALVIM

Parashat Shlach: Tshuva -by Aaron Weiss (A chumash Bamidbar is helpful but not essential for this d'var Torah.)

When B'nei Yisrael received the news that they were not going to be allowed to enter Eretz Yisrael for another forty years, they quickly realized that they had made a mistake by believing the report of the M'raglim (spies). "They awoke early the next morning and ascended the mountain, saying: we are here, and we will ascend to the place that Hashem has said, for we have sinned. And Moshe said: why are you transgressing the word of Hashem, and it will not succeed. Do not ascend, for Hashem is not in your midst, and do not fall before your enemies. ...But they strengthened themselves to ascend to the top of the mountain, and the Ark of the Covenant of Hashem, and Moshe, did not move from amidst the camp. And the Amalekites and Cna'anites living on the mountain descended, and they smote them (B'nei Yisrael) and routed them unto Horma. [Bamidbar 14:40-44]"

After the narrative of the M'raglim the Torah continues with a series of seemingly unrelated parshiot:

[15:1] - [15:16] -The mitzvot of Mincha and Nsachim: Whenever one brings a korban he accompany it with a meal offering (Mincha) of flour and oil, and a measure of wine to be poured on the corner of the mizbeach (Nsachim).

[15:17] - [15:21] -The mitzvah of Chala: When one makes dough he must take off a part of it as an offering to the kohen.

[15:22] - [15:31] -The laws concerning the korban of one who accidentally transgresses the sin of idolitry, and the punishment of one who transgresses

purposefully.

[15:32] - [15:36] -The narrative of the Mikoshesh: A man was found cutting wood on Shabbat. He was put under guard until Moshe asked Hashem what was to be done with him. Hashem commanded that he be put to death by stoning. Rashi explains that although it was known that the punishment for violating Shabbat is death, it was not known which type of capital punishment should be administered.

[15:37] - [15:41] -The mitzvah of Tzitzit, which we are familiar with from the Sh'ma.

Although these parshiot do not seem to have anything to do with the story of the M'raglim, a closer look reveals that there is a connection between the sin of the M'raglim and the parshia of Tzitzit. Describing the reason for the Mitzvah, the Torah writes, "v'lo taturu" - "and you will not stray after your hearts and after your eyes..." [15:39]" Rashi points out that there is not only a literary connection to the story of the M'raglim, but a conceptual one as well. "'v'lo taturu' - as in 'mitur ha'aretz' - 'from searching out the land [13:25]'. The heart and eyes are the spies of the body, they broker transgressions for it. The eyes see, the heart desires, and the body commits the sin."

There are also a number of further connections between the sin of the M'raglim and the parshia of Tzitzit. M'raglim: "And your children will wander in the desert forty years, and they will bear your whoredoms..."[14:33]"

Tzitzit: "And you will not stray after your hearts and after your eyes, after which you go whoring. [15:39]"

M'raglim: "And they said to one another, 'Let us appoint a leader and return to Egypt.' [14:4]"

Tzitzit: "I am Hashem your G-d, Who brought you out of the land of Egypt to be your G-d..."[15:41]"

M'raglim: "I Hashem have spoken, if I shall not do thus to this entire evil congregation who gather against Me..." [14:35]"

Tzitzit: "...I am Hashem your G-d.[15:41]"

When B'nei Yisrael realized their sin, they tried to atone for it by doing what Hashem had originally wanted them to do, conquering Eretz Yisrael. They were mistaken, however, to think that this could bring atonement. Hashem's decree that they would not be allowed to enter Eretz Yisrael, and instead would wander in the desert for forty years, shows that their sin resulted in some fundamental flaw that needed to be rectified before they could enter Eretz Yisrael. The mitzvah of Tzitzit comes to make sure that we don't repeat the patterns that led B'nei Yisrael their sin. It is to ensure that once we overcome the flaw it does not reappear. The four parshiot that precede that of Tzitzit come to show the way to rectify the flaw itself.

By believing the M'raglim, B'nei Yisrael committed two sins, one by following after their hearts, and one by following after their eyes. "And they (the M'raglim) brought back word unto them (Moshe and Aharon) and unto the entire congregation of B'nei Yisrael, and they showed them the fruit of the land. [13:26]" These two sins are the reason that Hashem took two separate Shvuot (oaths) describing the punishment of B'nei Yisrael (see [14:21-25] and [14:26-36]). In the first shvuah Hashem described their sin as provoking Hashem, "all who provoked Me shall not see it (the land) [14:23]". In the second Shvuah Hashem described their sin as despising the land of Israel, "the land which you have despised [14:31]".

The first sin is that which they committed with their hearts. They provoked Hashem by believing that they would not be able to overcome the nations living in Eretz Yisrael. They did not think that Hashem was unable to defeat their enemies. After all of the miracles they had experienced they had no doubts about Hashem's ability. What they doubted was that Hashem would defeat their enemies for them. They doubted their connection and relationship with Hashem. It is for this reason that Yehoshua and Kalev end their plea not to listen to the other spies by saying, "And Hashem is with us, do not fear them. [14:9]"

The second sin is that which they committed with their eyes. They saw the fruits of the land, and they allowed themselves to fall into materialistic desires. Ironically, this resulted in "despising the land", in being unwilling to enter the very land that produced the fruit of which they were desirous. Once they gave in to materialistic desires, it was much harder for them to be willing to fight for the land. By exchanging their idealistic (unselfish) drive

for a materialistic (selfish) one, they ended up being unwilling to fight for the land of Israel.

The four parshiot that follow the story of the M'raglim come to show the way to rectify these two sins. The first two parshiot, the mitzvot of Mincha and Nsachim, and the mitzvah of Chala, address the sin of materialism. The Mincha and Nsachim are made up of oil, wheat, and wine, the staples of an agricultural society. Chala is a part of our daily bread. These mitzvot each enjoin us to take the staples of daily existence and give them to the service of Hashem.

The next two parshiot, that of the laws concerning idolitry, and that of the man who desecrated Shabbat, address the sin of "provoking Hashem" by breaking the bond between Hashem and ourselves. Our relationship with Hashem can be breached in two ways. One is by turning to other G-ds and thereby replacing Hashem. The other is by rejecting Hashem's place in the world. This is the effect of desecrating the Shabbat, which serves as a sign that Hashem created the world.

These five parshiot show us how to fix the sin of believing the M'raglim. B'nei Yisrael could not atone for the sin of not entering Eretz Yisrael on one day by entering on the next. It is not enough to realize that an error was made and be willing to do what should have been done in the first place. All five parshiot command us to take practical steps to rectify the underlying fault that caused the original sin. Only by plotting and exercising such steps can a sin be truly overcome. Shabbat shalom.

Haftorah Parshas Shelach

MESSAGE FROM THE HAFTORAH PARSHAS SH'LACH

by Rabbi Dovid Siegel, Rosh Kollel (Dean) Kollel Toras Chesed of Skokie Yehoshua 2:1

This week's haftorah reveals to us the power of perfect faith and the miraculous events that can result from such inner strength. The haftorah begins with Yehoshua, the newly appointed successor to Moshe Rabbeinu sending two special individuals on a secret mission to investigate the land of Israel. The Jewish people were situated directly outside the Promised Land and Yehoshua sought to determine the most strategic point from which to enter the land. This mission was quite dangerous considering the fact that the present inhabitants were well aware of the impending Jewish threat to the land.

Yehoshua instructed the spies to survey all of Eretz Yisroel, placing special focus on Yericho. The spies crossed the Jordan River and proceeded directly to the first inn inside the city's walls, the house of Rachav. Their entry was immediately discovered by the King of Yericho who sent a strong message to Rachav demanding the release of the intruders. Out of the goodness of her heart, Rachav engaged herself in an unpredictable heroic rescue act. She quickly hid the spies and then persuaded the king's messengers that the spies had left her house and exited the city. When the messengers were out of sight she disclosed to the spies that the inhabitants of the land were awestricken by the Jews and their Hashem. She added that she personally recognized Hashem to be in absolute control over the entire universe and that she fully believed that Hashem could easily defeat everyone who would stand in His way.

Our Chazal (Yalkut Shimoni, Yehoshua 8) reflect upon this most unusual experience and sharply contrast it with the disheartening experience of the spies in this week's sidra. Today we read about ten of the Jewish people's greatest men who went on a similar mission to survey Eretz Yisroel. Yet the result of their mission was devastating and it ultimately misled the Jewish people to seriously reject Eretz Yisroel. Chazal point to the fundamental difference between the two groups of spies. They explain that the spies in the days of Yehoshua were totally devoted to their mission and were therefore met with enormous success. The Rabbis imply here that the spies in the days of Moshe Rabbeinu were lacking in their total commitment to their mission. Because of this weakness their perception about the land was distorted and they were overwhelmed by their initial experiences in the land. Conversely, the spies in Yehoshua's times were totally committed and were therefore prepared to overcome any obstacle in their way.

In reality the land of Israel presented extraordinary challenges to the Jewish people. The inhabitants of the land were far from friendly to the Jews

and it was obvious that only an open miracle could secure the safety of the Jewish nation. The original spies displayed grave concern over the dangerous plight the Jewish people were in. They observed the towering stature of the giants in the land and the constant involvement of its inhabitants in eulogies and funerals. Unfortunately, the original spies succumbed to their well-grounded fears and eventually forfeited the privilege of entering Eretz Yisroel. The second group of spies however possessed perfect faith and total commitment. With such inner strength they were not influenced by any of their frightening experiences and faithfully fulfilled their mission.

This stark contrast serves as a profound lesson in total faith and trust in Hashem and in its indescribable results. From a practical perspective Yehoshua's spies stood no chance and faced almost immediate guaranteed death. The Jewish nation was camped within earshot of Eretz Yisroel and a secret mission like this was bound to be discovered. Although Chazal (see Yalkut Shimoni ibid.) tell us that the spies disguised themselves as travelling salesmen it would be difficult to fathom that these great pious men could truly pass as Canaanites. The only real thing that had going for themselves was their steadfast faith and trust in Hashem. They bravely entered the "lion's den" and decided to lodge in the home of Rachav, a close contact to the country's high ranking officials. She was fondly known throughout the land and enjoyed a warm personal association with all the authorities. In fact, the results were exactly as predicted and the spies were immediately detected upon entering Rachav's home.

However, when one possesses perfect faith in Hashem the events which follow are far from predictable. Our Chazal (see Yalkut ad loc. 9) reveal to us a most startling demonstration of Divine Providence and inform us that Rachav had recently embraced the Jewish religion. In fact, Hashem had actually directed the spies to the only Jewish soul in the entire land of Eretz Yisroel. Their faith proved rewarding and instead of delivering the spies to the king, Rachav quite understandably extended herself in all ways to assist her newly gained Jewish brethren. She encouraged them with her profound statements of faith and was actually a catalyst in delivering the Promised Land directly into Jewish hands. The Yalkut continues to inform us that Rachav was quite favorably rewarded for her heroism and merited to marry the Jewish nation's leader Yehoshua. Her new life was quite fruitful and she became the forbearer of many Jewish prophets and priests. Instead of an almost guaranteed death for the spies through their perfect faith they were successful in their mission and secured the deliverance of the land of Israel to their Jewish brethren. These are some of the indescribable results of perfect faith and commitment to Hashem. Let it be His will that our constant strides in faith and commitment to Hashem serve as a special merit for us to finally return to our Homeland in peace and harmony.

by Rabbi Dovid Siegel, Rosh Kollel (Dean) Kollel Toras Chesed of Skokie 3732 West Dempster Skokie, Illinois 60076 847-674-7959 fax: 847-674-4023 e-mail: kollel@mcs.com URL: <http://www.mcs.net/~kollel> Haftorah, Copyright (c) 1996 by Rabbi Dovid Siegel and Project Genesis, Inc Project Genesis, the Jewish Learning Network learn@torah.org P.O. Box 1230 <http://www.torah.org/> Spring Valley, NY 10977 (914) 356-3040

"Josh Rapps <jr@sco.COM> mj-ravtorah@shamash.org"

The bulk of the notes and material we have used to prepare the summaries of the Rav's ZT" L Chumash Shiurim comprises the parshios between Breishis and Bhaloscha. So between now and Shabbos Breishis there are several long Shiurim that the Rav presented during various Yarchei Kallah that we will be writing up. There also is a wealth of Shiurim and notes on Tisha Bav which we hope to get to as well. So please recognize that the flow of divrei torah we send out over the summer will be reduced. -josh rapps jr@sco.com

Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky <rmk@yoss.org> <drasha@torah.org>
DRASHA PARSHAS SHELACH -- BUG EYES 6/14/96 Volume 2 Issue 37

Spies. The word invokes images of self-assured people who are willing to risk their lives on behalf of their country. Before the Children of Israel entered into Canaan, Moshe sent spies who were supposed to be of that ilk. The Torah labels them as "men of character, quality, and of good name."

(Numbers 13:3)

But they were not the confident men they were thought to be. They failed in their mission. Not only did they report what they saw, they editorialized. They instilled in the nation a profound fear of the future, claiming that the G-d who redeemed them from Egypt, split the sea, and miraculously sustained them in an empty desert, would be humbled by the giants that they would encounter in their conquest of Canaan.

They informed the people: (Numbers 13:33) "We saw the sons of giants, we felt in our own eyes like grasshoppers next to them, and that is how we were considered in their eyes."

The Talmud (Sotah 35a) discusses whether the spies actually overheard them say that they saw man-like grasshoppers in their presence or only imagined it. What relevance is there to relate what the giants may have said or how the spies were perceived by them? The main thrust of the story is to show lack of faith in the Almighty. Our victory or defeat is dependent upon our self-evaluation, not the perception of others.

Perhaps the Torah, in repeating the words of the giants and the perceptions of the spies, is teaching us a lesson in human behavior and emotion.

Since our story deals with the Canaanite Giants, this week, I would like to relate a tale regarding a Brooklyn Dodger.

Jackie Robinson was hired in 1947 as the first black Major League Baseball player. Despite malicious racist harassment and appalling physical and verbal attacks, he played fearlessly and professionally. Throughout his career he refrained from responding to the repulsive provocations while gaining notoriety as one of the greatest players of his era.

What kept him going was his attitude. He felt equal to any white player. On the day of his professional debut, his wife was excited to attend his first major league performance. Before he left for the stadium he gave her some advice.

"You'll have no trouble spotting me out there on the ball field," he said with a smile. Then he paused. "I'll be wearing number 42."

The Torah is relating the story of the meraglim (spies), yet it leaves us with a message of self-esteem. The moment one views himself as a grasshopper in the eyes of others, that is how he is viewed by them.

The spies claimed that they felt like grasshoppers; then they added, "and that is exactly how they viewed us."

Their addendum may have had no relevance to their mission, but it relevant to ours. Perhaps if the spies would have had the confidence of victory and strong faith in the Almighty, they would have viewed themselves as able bodied soldiers who had the capacity to defeat any giant. Only when they drew back in fear and trepidation were they viewed as little bugs.

The blessing in Leviticus 26:8 that, "five of you (Israelites) shall pursue one hundred," applies only when the spirit of Hashem is with us. Without it, we don't have vision.

When we view ourselves with pride and ability, then we are giants, too! But when we look at ourselves with unreasonable insecurity and lack of faith, then we hear our adversaries calling us insects. In order to feel like a giant you must have the vision of one. You can't have the vision of a giant when you have the eyes of an insect. Good Shabbos

Dedicated by Mr. and Mrs. Mickey Friedman in honor of the marriage of their son Jonathan to Sherry Reznik

Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky

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<http://www.yoss.org/>

Project Genesis, the Jewish Learning Network learn@torah.org P.O. Box 1230 <http://www.torah.org/> Spring Valley, NY 10977 (914) 356-3040

SELECTED HALACHOS RELATING TO PARSHAS SHELACH
By Rabbi Doniel Neustadt

For final rulings, consult your Rav.

And Bnei Yisrael were in the desert... It is to Bnei Yisrael's discredit that the nation observed only one Shabbos properly... (Rashi 15:32).

Winding a Baby Swing on Shabbos

QUESTION: Is it permissible to wind up a [mechanical] baby swing on Shabbos?

DISCUSSION: Winding up a baby swing set could possibly be a case of Tikun Mana, fixing or creating an object, which is a prohibition derived from Makeh Bepatish(1). Let us explain:

There is a well documented dispute among earlier Poskim as to whether one is allowed to wind up a stopped watch on Shabbos. The Chaye Adam (44:19) rules that winding a stopped watch is prohibited Min Hatorah because of Tikkun Mana. The winding "creates" or "fixes" the watch, since a stopped watch is considered "broken". Many Poskim dispute this logic. They hold that since a watch is made initially as an object that must be constantly wound, when it is stopped, it is not considered "broken" and winding it does not "fix" it(2). The majority of the Poskim(3), however, including the Mishna Berura(4), rule stringently and do not permit winding a stopped watch. Such is the prevalent custom and it may not be changed(5).

Contemporary Poskim, however, debate the Halachic status of other wind-up gadgets, such as wind-up toys. Some Poskim(6) rule that there is no difference between a watch and a toy. If a watch is forbidden to be wound up, so is a toy. They reason that since a wind-up toy is supposed to be used in its wound stage, the winding transforms the toy from an inoperative piece of metal to a moving toy. That action, similar to winding a watch, is prohibited, possibly even Min Hatorah.

Harav S. Z. Auerbach disagrees(7). He introduces two basic arguments to prove that there is a fundamental difference between the winding of a watch and the winding of a toy. In brief(8):

Winding a watch sets it for a long period of time (thus "transforming" it). A toy, however, "runs" for a few minutes and then stops; Since the purpose of a watch is to show the time at all times, when it is stopped, it is considered "broken", and winding it is considered "fixing" it. A toy is not malfunctioning when it does not run. It is made to run at specific times only. Thus, when it is stopped, it is not considered "broken". Winding it does not render it "fixed". In other words, winding does not "fix" it; rather, it makes it usable, which is permitted.

Both of the arguments advanced by Harav Auerbach concerning wind-up toys would pertain to a baby swing as well. It follows, therefore, that the answer to our question would depend on the above quoted opinions.

In reality, however, it is difficult to be lenient. First of all, we are debating a possible Issur Min Hatorah and, as stated earlier, there are contemporary Poskim who do not differentiate between a watch and toy. Secondly, even Harav Auerbach was hesitant to actually rely on the previously mentioned arguments. He remained undecided whether, according to the view of the Chazon Ish(9), there may be a rabbinical prohibition to wind toys up. Indeed, Shemiras Shabbos K'hilchasa does not quote Harav Auerbach as permitting winding toys up but rather "as not objecting when minors wind up toys"(10).

There may, however, be a solution to the problem. Almost all Poskim agree(11) that there is no biblical prohibition against winding up a running watch [indeed, some Poskim allow it L'chatchilla]. The swing, therefore, may be pushed slightly to start it swinging. The subsequent wind-up would be permitted according to the majority of Poskim, since the swing is already in motion(12).

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FOOTNOTES:

1 Obviously, a musical swing set is prohibited, and is the not the subject of our discussion.

2 Panim Meiros 2:123; Yaavetz 1:41; Ksav Sofer 55; Shoel Umaishiv 6:53 and others.

3 See Daas Torah 338:3 and Minchas Shabbos 80:241.

4 338:5. See also 252: 50. See also Chazon Ish 50:9 who disputes the Chaye Adam's logic but nevertheless forbids winding a stopped watch Min Hatorah. His reasoning is that winding the watch sets in motion the mechanical cycle which is running the watch. The setting up of this cycle is either Boneh or

Makeh Bepatish.

5 Ksav Sofer, (ibid) and Minchas Shlomo 9.

6 Harav M. Feinstein (quoted in Sefer Tiltulei Shabbos pg. 28 fn36) and Harav S.Y. Elyashiv (quoted in Shalmei Yehuda 5:13).

7 See also Be'er Moshe 6:32 for a concurring opinion.

8 See Minchas Shlomo 9 and Shmiras Shabbos Khilchasa 16: fn39.

9 See footnote 4.

10 Indeed, in the final version of Harav Auerbach's notes on Shemiras Shabbos Khilchasa (1993), he amends his earlier lenient ruling to point out that according to the Chazon Ish, it may be prohibited Miderabanan.

11 See Shaar Hatzion 338:17-18 and Yechave Daas 2:49 for the various views.

12 Although Mishna Berura himself allows a running watch to be wound only in case of necessity, such as an ill person, it is safe to assume that winding a swing set would be less stringent. In addition, a baby's needs are comparable to an ill person's needs, see Rama OC 228:17.

SHABBAT SHALOM: The sin of inaction By RABBI SHLOMO RISKIN
"And God spoke to Moses saying: 'Send out men for yourself that they may spy out the land of Canaan, which I give to the children of Israel.' Of every tribe of their father shall you send a man, every one a ruler among them."
(Numbers 13:1-2)

HOW should we understand the sin of the spies in this week's portion of Shlah? After all, Moses sent out a reconnaissance mission and his messengers made a logical assessment based on a keen and objective evaluation. Wherein lies their guilt?

Moreover, Jewish tradition deals more harshly with the scouts than with the other great sinners of the Bible, the worshipers of the Golden Calf. Since the three sins for which the Torah commands that we accept death rather than violate are idolatry, adultery and murder, it would certainly seem that the sin of the spies - not one of these three - deserves a more lenient punishment. Yet it is the sin of the spies which has the dubious honor of being the most heinous crime of the desert experience, and the one whose ramifications accompany us throughout history.

After all, midrashic tradition insists that the day when the spies returned with their ill-fated report was none other than Tisha B'Av, the date on which both of our Holy Temples were subsequently destroyed. The deaths of 3,000 instigators of the calf-worship cannot be compared to the Divine decree following the sin of the spies that the entire generation must perish in the desert.

Why has the sin of the spies and not the sin of idolatry become the prototype for so much pain and suffering?

The answer can be found in the contrast between two Hebrew words which are often taken to be synonyms for each other, za'aka and tza'aka. The difference between the zayin of one word and the tzadi of the second makes all the difference in the world.

According to my teacher and mentor, Harav Joseph B. Soloveitchik zt'l, a tza'aka is associated with an outcry devoid of any therapeutic or salutary action. We read in the portion of Mishpatim: "You shall not afflict any widow, or fatherless child. If you at all afflict them, and they cry to me, I will surely hear their cry..." (Ex. 22:21-22) The cry of the widow is a tza'aka, spelled with a tzadi. The Bible pictures a woman powerless to do anything except cry out to God!

In contrast, the context in which the word za'aka appears reveals a different type of cry. In the Book of Judges, for example, the verb vayazek describes General Barak calling out the troops. There was a cry, but not a directionless scream. Barak's cry is the cry of action.

Similarly, in the Book of Esther we read that Mordechai cries a great cry, vayazak za'aka gedola, (Esther 4:1). This too is not the hopeless cry of the widow. Mordechai doesn't stay home, expressing his pain to the heavens. He goes into the "midst of the city" and comes before the king's gate. Jews everywhere, in all the provinces, do the same. Word reaches Esther, and her direct involvement thrusts the tale forward, ultimately nullifying Haman's decree. Mordechai's za'aka is a political act of the highest order.

Rav Soloveitchik notes that the opening words of Maimonides' Laws of

Fasting reads: "It is a positive commandment to cry out (lizok, with a zayin), and to blow the hatzotzrot [the silver trumpets of last week's portion] upon the advent of any danger."

He explains that the great religio-legal codifier is thereby saying that our response to danger requires concrete action - war or negotiation.

With this in mind, we see that the basic difference between the sin of the spies and the sin of the golden calf is as significant as the difference between za'aka and tza'aka. In the golden calf debacle, the Jews were terrified at the absence of Moses, and in their desire to create a substitute bridge to God, they did the wrong thing - but at least they did something.

But when it came to the sin of the spies, the Jews seem more helpless than the weakest of the weak. They are paralyzed by the negative report of the investigating committee, and do nothing at all.

And what causes this paralysis? It is only their lack of self-confidence, their sense of impotence. God may have had his plan for this people, but the people have substituted their own agenda, or rather lack of one, based upon the frailty of their bodies and the meagerness of their imagination. They are as grasshoppers in their own eyes.

Their terror of the anakim (giants), survivors of an ancient period of history (Gen. 6:4), demonstrates that the descendants of Abraham have lost their pride in themselves and therefore their confidence in God. Hence they can only retreat to the blank pages of Egypt, which really means a return to prehistory. They are unable to forge ahead with the plan God has established. It is not surprising then that Tisha B'av is associated with the sin of the spies because the destruction of the two Temples represents a return to prehistory. The exiled, galut Jew can only cry to God in the form of a tza'aka and not za'aka.

The sin of the spies is made manifest every time a Jew is no longer willing or able to grapple with ugly realities that the spies tell us will be our lot in Israel. The sin of the scouts emphasizes our divinely mandated responsibility to act in history with integrity and dignity.

Such action may include mistakes, but the worst mistake of all is inaction, for it robs us of any opportunity to prevail.

Shabbat Shalom

From: "Bircas Hatorah <bircas@jer1.co.il>" To: Weekly Words of Torah from Bircas Hatorah

Selected, translated and arranged by Rabbi Dov Rabinowitz

Shlach

"And they came to the stream of Eshkol (Nachal Eshkol), and they picked from there a stalk and a bunch (eshkol) of grapes ... They called that place the stream of Eshkol (Nachal Eshkol) on account of the bunch (eshkol) which the children of Yisroel picked from there." (13, 23 & 24)

The Gaon of Vilna (Kol Eliyahu) objects that originally it was not called Nachal Eshkol, so how can it say that they came to the place (called) Nachal Eshkol.

He explains that originally it really was called Nachal Eshkol, after a person who was called Eshkol, as (we find) Einar. Eshkol and Mamrei (Bereishis

14,24). Now, the personal name Eshkol is written in the short form (chaser) without a va"v (as we find in possuk 23 DR). However, after they picked the bunch of grapes, they called it Nachal Eshkol in the long form (malei) with a va"v (as we find in possuk 24 DR), indicating the plural, while a word which (is written in) the short form indicates the singular.

Thus (we find that) our Sages said (Succah 6b): "BaSuccos, BaSuccos, BaSuccos (VaYikra 23 - 42,42,43) (the first two references are in the short form, while the third is in the long form DR) we have four (references) here" since BaSuccos in the short form indicates a single (allusion) ... and only the long form indicates the plural.

AND it would (even) seem that there was (originally) a difference in the pronunciation between the long and the short forms.

And so here (in our case) we can explain that originally the place was called Nachal Eshkol in the short form, without a va"v, as it is written in the Torah (in possuk 23 DR), after an individual who was called Eshkol. And when they picked the bunch of grapes from there, they called the name of the place Nachal Eshkol in the long form, (with a va"v) which indicates two (aspects

of) Eshkol, (calling it) after the person Eshkol, and (also) after the bunch (eshkol) of grapes which they picked from there.

Thus it is written "And they came to the stream of Eshkol" in the short form; "They called that place the stream of Eshkol" in the long form.

"And they spoke (literally gave out) (a bad) account of the land which they had travelled through ... it is a land which consumes its inhabitants, and all the people that we saw in it are mighty (literally people of measure)" (13,32). Rash"i explains: all the places which we passed through, we found them burying (their) dead. And HaKadosh Boruch Hu did it for (their) good, so that they would be engaged in their mourning, and would not pay attention to them.

Rav Menachem Mendel of Kotsk notes that (in the light of this) we must consider what was the transgression of the meraglim (spies); after all, they told the truth, because they (actually) did see them burying (their) dead, and they also saw giant people.

He explains that the concept of 'truth' does not (refer to) one who says about something (well) known that it is such, for if he would say the opposite, he would be a (manifest) liar. (All) we can say about (such an individual) is that he does not lie. A person does not (merit) the title 'a man of truth' unless (he has the ability that), if he observes something which seems (to human eyes) to be opposite of what HaShem has said, he exerts himself to devise all kinds of schemes and interpretations in order to discover (in what he saw) that which HaShem assured; such a person is definitely 'a man of truth.'

This was the sin of the meraglim; they did not want to scrutinize the situation, to understand it to its ultimate depth, in order to see the truth of the assurance of HaShem (that they could conquer the land), as Yehoshua and Calev did.

"And you shall remember all the mitzvos ..." (15,39)

The Baal HaTurim elaborates that since 'remembering' is written with regard to tzitzis, therefore (the Torah) commanded to put four tzitzis on the four corners (of the garment) so that each direction (literally place) that (the person) turns, he will remember. Each one has five knots, so that he will remember the five books of the Torah.

And each one has eight strings, so that he will refrain from transgressing with the eight parts of the body which induce a person to sin: the ears

the eyes the mouth the nose the hands the feet the sexual organs the heart.

If a person guards himself from transgressing, he will merit to ascend above the eight (levels of the) Heavens ... and if he transgresses (with (these eight organs) he is judged with eight afflictions, the disintegration of the body in the grave, and the seven depths of Gehennom.

(The word) tzitzis has a gematria (numerical value of its letters) of 600, (provided that an extra 10 for yo"v is added, to correspond to the way it is pronounced rather than the way it is written in the short - chaser - form in the Torah - see Sifsei Chachamim on Rash"i 15,39 DR) and (together with) the eight strings and five knots (this makes a total of) 613, to tell us that the mitzvah of tzitzis measures up against the entirety of the Torah.

B"H

Torah Studies

Adaptation of Likutei Sichos

by

Rabbi Dr. Jonathan Sacks

Chief Rabbi of Great Britain

Based on the teachings and talks of the Lubavitcher Rebbe
Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson on the weekly Torah Portion

The Sidra of Shelach contains the episode of the spies whom Moses sent to gather intelligence about the land of Canaan.

Ten of the twelve spies returned with disparaging reports, that although the land was fertile, its inhabitants were too strong and their cities too well guarded to be defeated by the Israelites.

The whole story is shot through with difficulties.

How could the spies, so soon after the miraculous deliverance from Egypt, doubt that G-d would give them victory?

How could the morale of the Israelites be so easily broken?

Why did Caleb and Joshua, the only faithful voices amongst the spies, not dispel the anxiety by mentioning the great catalogue of miracles in which the people had witnessed the power of G-d?

It is clear that some unease lay beneath the surface of the spies' behavior.

What this was, and how it is capable of affecting us, is the subject of this week's Sich'a.

THE SPIES' DESPAIR

In our Sidra we read of the report of the spies who were sent by Moses to discover the nature of the promised land of Canaan and its inhabitants.

Ten of the twelve returned with a counsel of despair.

They broke the morale of the Israelites by suggesting that they would not be able to conquer it because "the people that dwell in the land are fierce and the cities are fortified and very great." They argued that "We are not able to go up against the people; for they are stronger than we."

Indeed, the Rabbis in the Talmud understood them to have made an even stronger claim.

The Hebrew word for "than we" can also be translated as "than Him." The spies said "they are stronger than Him," that is, that the Canaanite nations were - as it were - too powerful even for G-d.

The Rabbis pungently expressed this audacious proposition as saying, as it were, that "even the master of the house cannot remove his furniture from it."

MYSTERIES

What is the meaning of this remarkable episode?

It is part of our spiritual task to remove the cry of despair which the Israelites first gave when they heard the ominous news and which has had its echoes throughout our history.

As the Talmud says: That day was the ninth of Av and the Holy One blessed be He said, "They are now weeping for nothing, but I will fix (this day) as an occasion for weeping for generations."

So our many chapters of national mourning have written through them a trace of that moment when faith was lacking in the saving power of G-d. And we have, by faith, to compensate that moment of faithlessness.

But what was the specific meaning of the event? Why did the spies argue as they did? What was the answer to their challenge? And how were they able to reduce the people to despair, a people who had witnessed the great miracles of deliverance - the plagues and the division of the Red Sea - the miracles of protection against the snakes and scorpions of the desert, and the miracles of providence, the Manna and the Well?

These were not events that made demands on their faith. They had seen them happen with their own eyes. How could the report of ten men suddenly outweigh the natural conviction that what G-d had done to Egypt He would do to Canaan in its turn?

More remarkable still: Why, when Caleb replied to their arguments, did he not mention these recent miracles? They were surely the most convincing proof of his case. And yet we find instead that he says only, "We shall go up, indeed go up, and inherit it (the land) for we are well able to overcome it."

Was it, perhaps, that the Canaanites were a stronger force than the Egyptians, so that G-d's victory in Egypt did not assure victory in Canaan? But this could not have been Caleb's reason, for at the crossing of the Red Sea the Israelites had sung, "All the inhabitants of Canaan are melted away. Terror and dread fall upon them. By the greatness of Your arm they are as silent as stone."

Forty years later, when Joshua began the conquest of the land, evidence of this terror still remained.

His two spies were told in Jericho: "For we have heard how the L-rd dried up the water of the Red Sea for you when you came out of Egypt ... and as soon as we had heard, our hearts melted, and there was no spirit left in any man because of you." So the Israelites could not have felt that Canaan represented a more formidable obstacle than Egypt, which was the dominant power at that time.

Fear of Involvement

The explanation, given in Chassidut, is this.

The spies were not animated by fear of physical defeat. Instead they feared a kind of spiritual defeat.

In the wilderness, each of the Israelites' needs was met by a direct gift from G-d. They did not work for their food. Their bread was the Manna which fell from the heavens; their water came from Miriam's Well; their clothes did not need repair.

The possession of the land of Israel meant a new kind of responsibility.

The Manna was to cease. Bread would come only through toil. The providential miracles would be replaced by labor; and with labor came the danger of a new preoccupation.

The spies were no ordinary men. They were princes of their tribes, especially selected by Moses for the mission. And their anxiety was a spiritual one.

Their fear was, that a concern to work the land and make a living might eventually leave the Israelites with progressively less time and energy for the service of G-d.

They said, "It is a land which eats up its inhabitants," meaning that the land and its labor, and the preoccupation with the materialistic world, would "swallow up" and consume all their energies. Their opinion was that spirituality flourishes best in seclusion and withdrawal, in the protected peace of the wilderness where even the food was "from the heavens."

THE MISTAKE

And yet, the spies were wrong. The purpose of a life lived in Torah is not the elevation of the soul: It is the sanctification of the world. The end to which every Mitzvah aims is to make a dwelling- place for G-d in the world - to bring G-d to the light within the world, not above it.

A Mitzvah seeks to find G-d in the natural, not the supernatural.

The miracles which sustained the Jews in the wilderness were not the apex of spiritual experience. They were only a preparation for the real task: Taking possession of the land of Israel and making it a holy land. We can now see the rationale of the spies' argument.

The miracles which they had witnessed did not prevent them saying of Canaan, "they are stronger than we." Precisely because the Israelites had been delivered, protected and sustained by miracles, they had been able to dedicate their whole existence to G-d. But in a land where every benefit had to be worked for, their spirituality might decline and be defeated. The miracles were not, in their eyes, a reason for being confident about the entry into the land. On the contrary, they were the reason for wishing to stay in the wilderness. And when as the Talmud says, they claimed that, as it were, "even the master of the house cannot remove his furniture," they meant: G-d Himself created the natural order (i.e., "His furniture"), and He decided (according to their misconception) not to dwell in the natural world. So long as miracles surrounded them, the Israelites could make themselves into vessels to receive His will.

But land, labor, natural law - everything that faced them in the land of Israel - were not the vehicles of Divine revelation. G-d, they argued, is higher than the world. So let us, too, be higher than the world. As soon as we enter the land of Israel we leave this realm.

THE MIRACULOUS AND THE EVERYDAY

The spies had drawn a distinction between miracles and natural events, since the natural order is as it is only because it is G-d's will. But this was their error. For, the inner will of G-d is to be found in the sanctification of the natural world.

And this is why Joshua and Caleb did not comfort the people by talking of the miracles that had taken them this far and which would see them safely into their land.

For, in crossing the Jordan, they were to pass beyond a faith that lives in miracles, into a life that would sanctify time and place, and turn the finite familiar world into the home of G-d.

They said: "If the desire of the L-rd is in us, He will bring us into the land . . . (then its people) are our bread, their defense is removed from over them, and the L-rd is with us, fear them not."

In other words, if it is G-d's will that we should enter the land, then we can remain close to Him there. Instead of being "a land that eats up its inhabitants" it will be "our bread." Instead of our being reduced to its level, it will be raised to ours.

CALEB'S ANSWER

In fact, the miracle concealed in nature is more miraculous than the supernatural.

The plagues, the division of the Red Sea, and all similar supernatural events

show that G-d is not confined by nature but can break through its regularities. But a miracle which is clothed in nature shows that G-d is not bound at all, not even by the "confines" of supernatural law; but He can combine the natural with the supernatural. So the Mitzvah, the act which discovers G-d within the everyday shows that G-d is truly everywhere. He does not need the extraordinary to proclaim His presence.

He is G-d even within the dimensions of the world. This is the real miracle, that the infinite can inhabit the finite, and that natural and supernatural can become one.

This is what the entry into the land of Israel signified.

And so Caleb's answer to the ten spies was, "Let us go up, let us indeed go up and inherit the land." In other words, let us "go up" twice over. We have ascended to the spirituality of the wilderness, we have risen above the concerns of the world. Let us now make a new and greater ascent, finding G-d within the world itself. And let us possess the land, not as someone who buys something from a stranger, but as someone who inherits something because of his oneness with its owner.

The Wilderness of the Day

None of the Torah's narratives is simply a story.

Every Jew experiences the two realms of the wilderness and the land of Israel, and knows the tensions between them. They are two periods in his life, and they are two parts of every day. He begins in the wilderness, in the morning seclusion of learning and prayer. And then he must emerge into the "land of Israel," the world of business, livelihood and labor.

It is then that he may feel stirring in him the doubts that plagued the spies.

While he is learning and praying he feels himself wholly given over to the spiritual demands of Judaism. But in his work he can see little or no religious significance. Worse than that, he may feel that it is "a land that eats up its inhabitants" - that work so consumes him and invades his mind that even while he is praying or learning, the world of his everyday worries constantly intrudes and breaks his concentration.

But he is making the spies' mistake, of placing G-d outside the world, of failing to respond to G-d's presence in every human transaction, of forgetting the imperative to "Know Him in all your ways."

He must remember Joshua and Caleb's words that "if the desire of the L-rd is with us" that we take our Judaism into every facet of our involvement with the world, then "they are our bread," and the world is assimilated into holiness.

There is also another wilderness. The desire of the spies to rest secure in G-d's miraculous protection was a wish for the intensity of religious experience. Ultimately it was self-centered, because their reluctance to accept the responsibility of changing the world was also an unwillingness to move beyond private satisfactions to helping others.

In us, their argument has its counterpart. We are sometimes hesitant in helping others with their spiritual development because we feel it would adversely affect ourselves - we might have to compromise ourselves, or we might become condescending. But these are rationalizations of the same mistake.

Spirituality is not self-contained, a private possession not to be shared with the world. Instead, its essence lies in a Jew reaching out beyond himself to his fellow Jew, to the world of his work, extending holiness to everything he touches, without the fear that he is placing his faith at risk, without the thought that this or any situation lies outside the domain of G-d.

(Source: Likkutei Sichot, Vol. IV, pp. 1041-1047)

End of text - Torah Studies - Shelach