

# Toras Aish

## Thoughts From Across the Torah Spectrum

**RABBI DOV KRAMER**

### Taking a Closer Look

“**T**he congregation will have [but] one statute for you and the convert that lives [with you], an everlasting statute for your generations, like you like the convert shall you be before G-d (i.e. the same). One teaching and one law shall apply to you and to the convert that lives with you” (Bamidbar 15:15-16). It seems pretty clear that the laws of the Torah apply equally to those who were born Jewish and those that convert (properly) to become Jews. If anything, it seems as if the point was made more strongly than necessary, as all that G-d needed to say is that the laws of the Torah apply to both. Why the repetition?

Yet, despite this being made quite clear, the Torah spells it out additional times as well. After telling us about the requirement to bring menachos (offerings of flour and oil) and nesachim (offerings of wine) with many of the animal offerings (15:3-12), the Torah specifies that this applies to the "native Israelite" (15:13) and to the convert (15:14) before telling us that this is true across the board (15:15-16). Why must it be said specifically by the menachos and nesachim if we are going to be told that it applies to everything? Shortly thereafter, when commanded about attaining atonement for communal idol worship done inadvertently (15:22-25), the Torah again adds that not only will the community be forgiven, but so will the converts (15:26). This is followed by the procedure for an individual attaining atonement for inadvertent idol worship (15:27-28), where once again the Torah tells us that it applies to both the "native Israelite" and the convert alike (15:29). The consequence of worshipping idols knowingly follows (15:30), including the fact that they are the same for the "native Israelite" and the convert. Why must the Torah reiterate the fact that these laws are the same for converts if we have already been told that all laws apply equally?

When it comes to idol worship, it can be suggested that since the convert has apparently

reverted to his former religious practices, his conversion might be considered to have been negated (see Ramban and Rav S.R. Hirsch). Therefore, the Torah tells us that the convert is also forgiven for his inadvertent idol worship, and, because he is a full Jew, is held fully responsible if done knowingly. He is also included in the communal atonement, even if the "community" is the tribe he has associated with, despite his not being a descendent of that tribe (see Netziv on the Sifri and the Sifri on 10:29). But what about the menachos and the nesachim? Why are the "native Israelite" and the convert mentioned separately?

The Talmud seems to learn out different laws from each. In Menachos (73b) we are told that mentioning the "native Israelite" teaches us that only a Jew can bring nesachim. This can mean either that if a non-Jew brings an offering, the wine required to be brought with it cannot come from him (but is paid for from the Temple's public funds, see Rambam, Hilchos Maaseh Hakarbanos 3:5), or that only a Jew can offer wine as an offering even without being accompanying by an animal offering (see the commentaries on the Rambam). In Kerisus (8b) we are told that part of the conversion process is bringing an offering, and the series of verses including the convert with the laws of menachos and nesachim seems to be the source for this requirement (according to at least one opinion). Nevertheless, we would still need to explain why it is in the description of this law that it was taught, and, since there are many words in this series of verses that can teach us this, why the Torah specified that the convert must bring menachos and nesachim too. The Sifri Zuta (29), explaining the need to mention the individual convert who worshipped an idol inadvertently, says that once the Torah mentioned the "native Israelite" to exclude non-Jews (in this case from bringing sin-offerings), it had to mention the convert so that we don't think that they are excluded as well. This can apply to the menachos and nesachim (where the "native Israelite" is also mentioned), but it wouldn't explain why, if the Torah made it very clear that the laws apply equally to converts, we would think that these cases are different. We have already seen why we might think idol worship is different, but why wouldn't converts be allowed to bring wine offerings if all other Jews were allowed to? The following Midrash (Tunna D'vey Eliyahu Rabbah 27:3, most of which is quoted in Yalkut Shimoni 745) might answer our question.

This issue of Toras Aish is dedicated by  
Mr. & Mrs. Itzy Weisberg  
לעלי נשמת

Mrs. Ida Weisberg  
חיה פייגה בת ר' יעקב יוסף ז"ל  
on her 14<sup>th</sup> yartzeit  
נפטרה י"ז סיון תשנ"ד

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"And the nation mourned greatly' [upon hearing that they would not enter the Promised Land] (Bamidbar 14:39). At that time, G-d said to Moshe, 'go and appease them, for their hearts have left them' (i.e. they were depressed). [Moshe] said to Him, 'Master of the universe, how shall I appease them?' [He] said to him, 'go and appease them with words of Torah.'" The Midrash then quotes from the verses that Moshe was told to teach them, the commandments which we have been discussing, before continuing: "At that time there was a quarrel between the Israelites and the converts. G-d said to Moshe, 'Moshe, why are they quarreling?' [Moshe] said to Him, 'Master of the universe, you know [why].' [He said to him, 'haven't I already said to you (quoting Bamidbar 15:15-16) 'the congregation has one statute for you and for the convert (etc.), one teaching and one law shall [apply to you and to the convert that lives with you]?' From here (i.e. based on this) they (our sages, of blessed memory) said that there are three kinds of converts; there is a convert [who is] like our forefather Avraham, there is a convert that is like a donkey, [and] there is a convert that is like a non-Jew in every matter. The convert that is like a non-Jew in every matter is someone who has [disgusting foods, such as] animal carcasses, torn-apart animals, bugs and creepy crawly things in his house [who] says, 'when will I convert and be among the Jews, whose cuisine is beautiful and have holidays and Sabbaths, and [then] these [disgusting foods] will no longer be in my house? I will force myself to convert.' In the end (after converting), he reverts to his previous ways, so suffering comes upon him for his own benefit, to save him from what he has done. G-d says (to the Jewish people), 'just as he loved you (i.e. your lifestyle), so should you love him,' as it says (Devarim 10:19) 'and you should love the convert.' The convert who is compared to a donkey is one who went to marry a Jewish woman [but she] told him 'I will not marry you until you convert.' He (the non-Jew) said, 'I will force myself and I will convert,' [but] in the end reverted to his old ways. Suffering came upon him for his own benefit and to save him from what he had done. G-d says (to the Jewish people), 'my sons, just as this one sought to live in comfort among you, so should you give him [the opportunity to do so], as it says (Shemos 22:20), 'you shall not oppress a convert.' The convert

who is like our forefather Avraham is one who looked carefully at all the nations; once he saw that they all spoke well of the Jewish nation, he said, 'when will I convert and be like them and enter beneath the wings of the Divine Presence,' as it says (Yishaya 56:3-5), 'and let the son of the stranger not say (etc.), so does G-d say to the barren ones (etc.), and I will give them in my house and within my walls (etc.)' (See Yalkut Shimoni 213, where the three types of converts are those that convert to marry, those that convert to take advantage of our supporting the poor, and those that convert for G-d's sake, with the latter being called equal to those born Jewish.)

G-d had tried to preempt the fight between the Jews and the converts by specifically stating that the laws applied equally to both. Yet, for some reason, this wasn't enough, and, surprisingly, Moshe was unable to end the quarrel by simply pointing this out. Only after G-d reiterated that the words included in His commandments specifically addressed the issue did the fight end. But what was the fight about? Because the lesson learned from this episode is that all three types of converts remain Jewish even after reverting to their old ways, we can safely assume that this was precisely what the fight was about. Sure, they knew that the laws applied to converts too. But they thought that they only applied to converts that maintained their Judaism, not those that abandoned it.

Many non-Jews had joined the Children of Israel when they left Egypt. They had seen the plagues sent against the Egyptian oppressors and wanted to join this new nation. However, this "erev rav," mixture of a multitude of other nations, had been nothing but trouble. They were primary in the sin of the golden calf, complaining about the heavenly manna, and protesting against trying to defeat the Canaanite nations and living in a land that demanded consistent closeness to G-d for survival. Could these "converts" really still be considered Jewish? They weren't being protected by the "clouds of glory," leading many to believe that they were not really Jewish. Yes, any convert that maintains his or her Judaism is a full Jew, but these troublemakers? Many didn't think so, and when G-d taught them laws that specifically excluded non-Jews, they thought it excluded these "pseudo-converts" as well. If they wanted to bring nesachim, the other Jews tried to stop them (according to those that say they brought nesachim in the Midbar). If they sinned inadvertently and tried to bring a sin offering, they were met with opposition. A quarrel erupted between the Jews who insisted they were not real converts and the converts, who insisted they were real Jews. Moshe was unable to quell the quarrel based on quoting G-d's commandments (as they could be referring only to "real" converts") until G-d told them that He meant all types of converts, even those that had (hopefully only temporarily) reverted to their non-Jewish ways.

Perhaps this is why, by the first of these commandments, G-d used three verses to emphasize that the convert is the same as the born-Jew. He knew that these laws being taught now would bring this issue to the forefront, and was teaching us that all [three types of] converts are included. © 2008 Rabbi D. Kramer

**RABBI AVI WEISS**

## Shabbat Forshpeis

**W**hat is the purpose of wearing tzitzit, the ritual fringes that are attached to the four cornered garment mentioned in our parsha? (Numbers 15:37-41) Several classic answers come to mind.

Some suggest the meaning lies in the tekhelet, the unique blue color found amongst the fringes. This color "is like the sea, the sea is like the sky and the sky like the throne of glory." (Menahot 43b) In other words, wearing tzitzit reminds us of G-d's presence.

Still others suggest that the tzitzit remind us to commit to G-d's mitzvot. The numerical value of tzitzit, coupled with the number of knots and strings used to make these fringes, is 613, equal to the number of commandments. Beyond feeling G-d's presence, one, through the wearing of tzitzit, has a constant awareness of responsibility to G-d's law.

Yet another thought comes to mind. The tzitzit remind us of the first garment recorded in the Torah, the one made by G-d for Adam and Eve after they ate from the tree in the Garden of Eden. Indeed, Adam and Eve disobeyed G-d, following the temptations of their eyes and heart. (Genesis 3:6) Here, G-d commands the wearing of fringes in order to avoid being seduced by our own hearts and eyes. (Numbers 15-39)

Note also the use of the verb "tur" (to go after) found in the portion of fringes, (Numbers 15:39) and found when Moshe (Moses) sends the spies out to check out the land at the beginning of our parsha. (Numbers 13:16) Our In the case of the spies, they followed their inner whims and brought back an evil report. Here, in the paragraph of tzitzit, the Torah teaches us not to make the same mistake, not to be led astray.

Ibn Ezra's comments about the prayer shawl worn during services now become clear. He insists that "it is much more necessary...to wear tzitzit during the rest of the day and not merely during prayers, in order to remember not to err and commit a sin, since during prayers [he will be in a holy frame of mind and] in any case, [will] not sin."

In a sense, the prayer shawl serves a different function than that of the fringed garment worn all day. Wrapping ourselves with the prayer shawl helps us to feel G-d's love, G-d's protection and G-d's embrace.

With the establishment of the State of Israel, the tzitzit has impacted upon our national psyche as well. David Wolfsohn records in his memoirs that during the first Zionist Congress, it was unanimously decided

that the Israeli flag be blue and white, the same colors as the tzitzit. He writes, "This talit is our coat of arms, our emblem. Let us take out the talit and unfurl it before the eyes of Israel, before the eyes of all the nations."

May it represent for us as individuals and as people the enveloping love from G-d and, at the same time, the continued need to remind ourselves of our goals and our collective focus. © 2008 Hebrew Institute of Riverdale & CJC-AMCHA. Rabbi Avi Weiss is Founder and Dean of Yeshivat Chovevei Torah, the Open Orthodox Rabbinical School, and Senior Rabbi of the Hebrew Institute of Riverdale.

**MACHON ZOMET**

## Shabbat B'Shabbato

by Rabbi Amnon Bazak, Yeshivat Har Etzion

**T**here is a problem with respect to the list of men sent to scout out the land. First, it is written, "For the tribe of Efraim, Hoshaya Bin Nun" [Bamidbar 13:8], and only afterwards is it written, "For the tribe of Yosef, for the tribe of Menasheh, Gadi Ben Sodi" [13:11]. This is difficult in two ways. First, it would seem most reasonable to list the tribe of Efraim after the words "for the tribe of Yosef," since this is relevant to both of the tribes of Yosef. This is indeed what appears in the beginning of the book of Bamidbar: "For the sons of Yosef: for Efraim, Elishama Ben Amihud; for Menasheh, Gamliel Ben Pedahtzur" [1:10]. In addition, the sequence of the tribes in the current list is problematic. In principle, it seems to be similar to the list in Chapter 1, based on the order of the births of the sons, divided according to the sequence of their births and their mothers: It starts with Leah's oldest children (without Levi, who is omitted from the lists)? Reuven, Shimon, Yehuda, and Yissachar, and ending with the four sons of the maidservants? Dan, Asher, Naftali, and Gad. However, the sequence of the four middle tribes is not clear. In Chapter 1, the order seems logical: Starting with Leah's fifth son, Zevulun, then Rachel's children? Yosef's sons Efraim and Menasheh, and then Binyamin. However, in this week's Torah portion Efraim is mentioned first, followed by Binyamin and Zevulun, with Menasheh at the end. What is the reason for this modified sequence?

Evidently the two questions can be answered at the same time. The tribe of Efraim was moved forward in the list and separated from Menasheh because of the important status of its representative, Yehoshua Bin Nun. It can be assumed that from the very beginning Moshe feared what might happen in the future, which is the reason that he changed Hoshaya's name to Yehoshua (13:16? see Rashi, based on the Midrash: "Let G-d rescue you from the plans of the scouts"). The modified sequence was meant to emphasize that one man among the scouts was unique, the only one who was well known before the beginning of the affair? Yehoshua Bin Nun, Moshe's

servant and the great warrior against Amalek. Moshe hoped that Yehoshua's presence among the other scouts would influence them not to be afraid of the existing inhabitants, including Amalek among others.

This approach can also help explain another difficulty with the passage. When G-d turned to Moshe, He told him to send "one man for every tribe of their fathers, every one a leader among them" [13:1]. That is, we would have expected the list of scouts to consist of the leaders of the tribes, already known to us from the Torah portions of Bamidbar and Nasso. But instead of the tribal leaders, every "Nassi," Moshe sends "prominent men, leaders of Bnei Yisrael" [13:2]. Why didn't he send the real leaders of the tribes? Evidently this was because of Moshe's desire to send Yehoshua, something that he could not have done if he had sent the formal heads of the tribes.

As we know, in the end Yehoshua was not successful in influencing the scouts and the nation as a whole. It was first necessary for the generation to be replaced before Yehoshua could assume the role of the leader of Bnei Yisrael and bring them into the land.

#### **RABBI SHLOMO RISKIN**

## **Shabbat Shalom**

“**A**nd G-d spoke to Moses saying 'Send men to scout the land of Canaan, which I am giving to the Israelite people...' " (Numbers 13:1-2) In the process of becoming a nation, the Jewish people committed any number of sins, but one in particular, as recorded in this week's portion, Shlach, dwarfs all others. The events are as follows: G-d commands Moses to appoint men to explore the land they will be settling—a reasonable request. And so Moses appoints 12 princes to survey the land. After 40 days, they return with their report. As it turns out, the report is phrased in a way which sours the spirit of the people, and instead of being excited about the prospects of the new land, they let out a great cry. As a result of this wail, the Midrash tells us that G-d decides that if they think they have something to cry about now, let them wait. And so this date, the 9th of Av, becomes fixed in the Jewish calendar, reserved for mourning major national tragedies such as the destruction of both Temples, and the exile of the Jews from Spain 500 years ago.

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

and well-fortified. We also saw the giants there..." (13:28) is what they say, but are these words against the land? If the sin of the people wasn't against the land, perhaps it was against G-d? But they never actually say that G-d is wrong, nor do they deny that this is the land promised to them by G-d. In fact, using the expression 'milk and honey' reaffirms G-d's promise to Moses at the Burning Bush: "I will bring you to a land of milk and honey" (Exodus 3:8). If we cannot pin their rebellion against G-d or against the land, what are we left with?

A clue can be found if we take a look at the verse which speaks of the land consuming its inhabitants. We read, "They began to speak badly about the land that they had explored. They told the Israelites, 'The land that we crossed to explore is a land that consumes its inhabitants. All the men we saw there were huge. While we were there we saw Nephilim... We felt like tiny grasshoppers. That's all that we were in their eyes'" (Numbers 13:32-33).

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

Notice the sequence. 'There we saw the giants. We felt like grasshoppers,' followed by, 'That's all we were in their eyes' What this points to is a common phenomenon—how we see ourselves determines how others end up seeing us. If you're a grasshopper in someone else's eyes, obviously he'll crush you without a second thought, and once you think of yourself as a grasshopper, the rest of the world seconds the motion. The image of a grasshopper is striking, capturing the essence of exile: a chirping, tiny creature at the mercy of all; one who is easily crushed. 'We were like grasshoppers' means that the scouts, although princes of tribes, still think like slaves in Egypt, seeing themselves as despised, dependent creatures. How could they have possibly believed in themselves? And if one doesn't believe in oneself, one usually assimilates, gives oneself over to a higher power, decides either to return to Egypt - which Dan and Aviram always wanted to do - or to remain paralyzed and in-active in the desert. In accepting defeat rather than displaying defiance, the Jew is meekly and passively surrendering to fate as it 'hops' all over him.

Now we see how in the scouts' sin lies the seed of the destruction of both Temples. Tragedy erupts not so much when others take a sudden dislike to us, but when we dislike ourselves and become paralyzed and passive as a result. The sin of the scouts is not in the terrible report they bring, but in their vision of themselves, a perception which becomes contagious, and which ends up as a self-fulfilling

prophecy of doom. As James Baldwin said so aptly, he could forgive America for enslaving the Blacks, but he could never forgive America for making the blacks feel that they were worthless, that they deserved to be slaves.

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

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### **RABBI ABBA WAGENSBERG**

## **Between the Lines**

In this week's parsha, G-d tells Moses, "Send forth men to spy out the land of Canaan that I am giving to the Jewish people" (Numbers 13:2). Logically, we would assume that this is the beginning of the story. In Parshat Devarim, however, when Moses reminisces about all the events that occurred during the Jewish people's 40 years in the desert, he reveals a different incentive for sending the spies: "And you all drew near to me and said, 'Let us send men ahead of us to spy out the land'" (Deut. 1:22). After the people made this request, Moses consulted G-d to determine what to do, and G-d allowed the expedition to take place.

The Be'er Mayim Chaim wonders why Parshat Shlach picks up in the middle of the dialogue. Rather than the parsha beginning with G-d's response ("Send forth spies"), it should begin with the Jewish people's initial request! Furthermore, the Torah tells us that Moses sent "anashim" (men) to spy out the land (Numbers 13:3). Rashi explains that the word "anashim" refers to distinguished, important people. In fact, the men who were sent on this mission were the leaders of their tribes. This seems strange. If Moses wanted to spy out the land, why did he send the most eminent rabbis? It would have been more sensible to send out professional spies!

As the story progresses, we see that most of the spies return with a negative report about the land. These people subsequently die in a horrific plague (Numbers 14:37; see Sotah 35a for the gory details). Obviously, the incident with the spies was considered to be a grave error. How, then, are we to understand this week's Haftarah, in which, 40 years after this incident, Joshua sends spies as well (Joshua 2)?! The spies in the time of Joshua are not condemned or punished; on the contrary, their behavior is seen as permissible or even commendable. What is the difference between the two situations?

The Slonimer Rebbe, in Netivot Shalom, teaches that Moses and the Jewish people had

different reasons for sending spies into the Land. Moses trusted G-d completely. He had no doubt that the land was good; he merely wanted to define its energy, to learn how to prepare for it in the best possible way. The Jewish people, on the other hand, had a different motivation. They were wary of entering unknown territory-even though it had been Divinely promised to them-and thus were primarily interested in investigating the physical and material nature of the Land.

According to the commentator Ohr Gedalyahu, the spies' challenge was whether to carry out Moses's mission or the Jewish people's. Whose agents were they going to be? Would they be guided by Moses's perspective, and look at the land through spiritual eyes, or would they instead see the Land from the physically-oriented perspective of the Jewish people?

This whole episode teaches us a valuable lesson. In our own lives, whenever we do a mitzvah, we must ask ourselves why we are doing it. Whose mission are we carrying out? Whose agents do we want to be? Are we doing the mitzvah for ourselves, or for G-d? Our focus makes all the difference. If we do a mitzvah for the right reasons, we grow in the right direction. If we do the same mitzvah, but for our own selfish motives (money, power, honor, etc.), we move in the wrong direction.

Now we can understand why Parshat Shlach begins with G-d's response to the Jewish people, instead of their initial request. Since the people's request is not mentioned, we can learn that the spies were not intended to be guided by the people's motivations. The Talmud (Sotah 34b) also sees a hint to this idea in the wording of G-d's response to Moses, "Shlach lecha" (literally, "Send for yourself"). The Talmud interprets the seemingly superfluous word "lecha" as meaning "from your [Moses's] perspective." In other words, G-d excludes the perspective of the Jewish people from His command, implying that the spies should not go on their mission for the people's reasons.

This explains why Moses selected spiritual leaders for this mission instead of professional spies. Moses was not interested in physically spying out the Land; rather, he wanted to investigate the land's spiritual makeup. The best-equipped people for such a task were those steeped in spirituality.

Now we can also understand the difference between the incident with the spies in this week's parsha and the spies who were sent in the time of Joshua. In Parshat Shlach, when the spies return, the Torah tells us, "The spies came... to report to the Jewish people" (Numbers 13:26). This verse indicates that the spies were primarily focused on doing the will of the people. In the time of Joshua, however, the verse tells us that the spies "came to Joshua and told him all that had happened to them" (Josh. 2:23). The spies

sent by Joshua reported back to him alone. This indicates their pure motivations.

May we be blessed to go in the ways of the righteous, and follow the ways of G-d, in order to ensure that all of our actions are done for the right reasons. © 2008 Rabbi A. Wagensberg & aish.com

**RABBI ZEV LEFF**

## Outlooks & Insights

“**M**oses renamed Hoshea son of Nun, 'Joshua.'” (Numbers 13:16) Prior to the departure of the 12 spies, Moses changed the name of his disciple Hoshea to Joshua. That changed contained within it a prayer that G-d save Joshua from the plot of the spies. It remains to be explained, however, why Moses agreed to send the spies in the first place if he was aware of a plot to malign the Land of Israel. In addition, why did he pray for Joshua alone and not for Calev and the others?

The Vilna Gaon (in Emuna VeHashgacha) explains that there are three ways in which G-d manifests His Divine Providence. The first is called hanhaga nissis, the manifestation of overt miracles. This was the manner in which G-d related to us during the 40 years in the desert. A Cloud of Glory accompanied us by day and a pillar of fire by night; we ate the Heaven-sent manna; and our thirst was quenched by water from a well that flowed from a rock, which accompanied us on our journey. When we sinned, Divine retribution followed immediately in an unmistakable fashion.

The second type of Divine Providence is called hanhagas nissim nistarim. In this stage, G-d relates to us through hidden miracles. This describes the manner in which G-d related to us in the Land of Israel, prior to our exile. At that time, a direct relationship between nature and Torah observance was evident. When we kept the mitzvot and toiled in Torah, the rains fell in their proper times and amounts, health and wealth were our lot; and when we sinned, drought and famine followed. Since our exile from Israel, we have experienced the third type of Divine Providence, hester panim. In this stage, G-d hides His face from us and our ability to see G-d's Divine Providence in the world becomes impaired.

The Vilna Gaon explains that the various manifestations of Divine Providence differ only in our perception. In reality, G-d controls and guides the world equally in a period when we experience Divine miracles as a matter of course, and in a period where all we see is the workings of nature. G-d merely hides His face in the latter period.

Our forefathers in the desert were aware that upon entering the Land of Israel, the manner in which G-d related to us would change from one of open miracles to one of miracles within nature. Manna would no longer descend from the heavens; rather, we would

plow and plant and harvest in order to eat. A well would no longer accompany us; rather, we would depend on rainfall to quench our thirst. Their mistake, however, was to reason that if their lives were apparently subject to the same natural order as the rest of the world, then their ultimate success or failure depended on their own military prowess. This was a grievous error.

It was this mistaken outlook from which Moses prayed that Joshua would be spared. Moses reasoned that he could better prove to the people their mistake by letting them actually see the Land of Israel. He hoped that they would realize the impossibility of conquering Israel with their own might. And yet G-d had assured them that they would in fact conquer the land. They should have concluded that G-d obviously planned to continue aiding them, even if in a less openly miraculous fashion.

Joshua, who was to lead the Jewish people during this new stage of Divine Providence, required a special prayer that he be spared from a distorted perspective on nature. The name Joshua signifies-Hashem Yoshiah-May G-d save you. The Divine name represents the synthesis between the apparent cause and effect of the natural world and G-d's intimate spiritual link with man- the yud represents G-d's creation of the World to Come, and the heh the creation of this world. Moses prayed that Joshua see nature as nothing more than a veil to G-d's direct Divine Providence. Hence Nature-HaTevah- and Elokim are numerically equivalent.

Moses told the spies to bring back the fruits of the Land of Israel precisely to drive home the lesson that they would still be completely dependent on G-d's beneficence. Without water, fruits cannot grow, and in Israel water depends solely on rainfall, which is obviously not in man's hands. Moses wanted them to recognize that even though there would be more effort required to secure a livelihood in the natural setting of Israel than in the desert, the final result would depend no less on G-d than when the manna descended directly from Heaven.

Unfortunately, only Calev and Joshua grasped this point. The others saw only that it was beyond their "natural" abilities to conquer the land, and concluded that even G-d Himself, as it were, could not help them since He had chosen to let them be governed by the natural order. This reasoning led to the purposeless crying on the night of Tisha B'Av when the people wept as a sign of hopelessness.

To correct the purposeless tears of that Tisha B'Av eve in the desert, our Holy Temples were destroyed on Tisha B'Av and we were thrust into exile where we would come to see clearly our dependence on G-d. But rather than crying over our helplessness, our tears on Tisha B'Av must proclaim: "G-d, You promised that we would be redeemed from this exile.

We cannot achieve this redemption through our own efforts. Therefore You must redeem us."

Rabbi Yerucham Levovitz, the great Mirrer Mashgiach, explains the Mishnah at the end of Sotah to mean that Moshiach will not come so long as we attribute our successes and failures to "natural" causes. As long as we look for political, economic and sociological explanations of world events, and excuse ourselves from Torah learning on the grounds that we must earn a livelihood, we will not merit an end to our exile.

Let us strengthen our faith and trust in G-d so that we can finally dry the tears of Tisha B'Av and celebrate it with jubilation, for a Redeemer will have come to Zion. © 2008 Rabbi Z. Leff & aish.com

### RABBI ADAM LEIBERMAN

## A Life Lesson

**W**hile in the desert, the Jewish people wanted to send spies into the Land of Israel to make sure that the land was safe to enter. The spies came back with a very negative report on the land's condition and the spies boldly said: "...we were like grasshoppers in our eyes, and so we were like in their eyes!" (Numbers 13:33)

The spies strongly felt that the current inhabitants in the Land of Israel viewed them as people who were very small in size and who could easily be conquered. But this isn't how it was. The spies first felt that they were like grasshoppers in their own eyes. Only after they themselves felt that they were like grasshoppers did they believe that others perceived them as grasshoppers in their eyes.

This extra piece of information can have a life-changing impact on all of us. People will always perceive you exactly how you perceive yourself.

Most people go through life trying to have others think of them in a certain way. Their daily goal literally consists of making sure everyone has a certain impression of them. But the real you is one who stares back at you in the mirror. That's you-and there's no amount of acting that will ever change that.

Ironically, the way you see yourself is the exact way in which you'll think how others feel about you. And the only way to ever change how you think others view you is to actually change the way in which you see yourself. Doing this can make all the difference in the world. Remember, as long as you really think of yourself as a grasshopper, you will walk around thinking others view you the same way. Whether you think of yourself as insecure, unattractive, unambitious, or any other negative belief- you will live with the reality that others view you in the exact same way.

The only way ever to change how you think others perceive you is to first change the way you see yourself. The secret isn't to get them to change their view of you. Rather, it's to change the way you see

yourself and then the world will see you in this whole new light.

The quick and simple way to immediately change how you see yourself is done with action-not by thought or desire. Start acting in a manner consistent with who you want to become, you'll then see yourself more and more like this person, and you'll "notice" how all those around you seems to just naturally follow your lead. © 2008 Rabbi A. Lieberman & aish.com

### RABBI BORUCH LEFF

## Kol Yaakov

**J**erry and his wife, Karen, were facing a crisis. They had moved to Wheeling, West Virginia from the suburbs of Chicago just 2 years before, due to a promotion Jerry had received in his firm. They realized now that it was a colossal and tragic mistake. Not because of Jerry's job-that was a tremendous success. The problem was Karen and the kids. They knew that the biggest disadvantage to Wheeling was the lack of Jewish education and social circles; there were no day schools or synagogues in Wheeling. But they thought they would be able to withstand the four years that Jerry's assignment in Wheeling was supposed to last.

But now their children had told them that they no longer wish to be Jewish! This was after just two years away from other Jewish kids. What would happen after another two years of Wheeling? This was in addition to Karen and Jerry's 'hermit' social situation ever since they had left their group of Jewish friends in Chicago. Jerry and Karen wondered: "How does G-d look at us now?" They had been given a challenge two years ago whether to take the Wheeling offer or not and they firmly believed now that they had failed the test. How would G-d relate to them now, after they had ruined "His Master Plan" for their lives and made such a terrible mistake?

The answer is in this week's Torah portion, Shlach: "Send for YOURSELF, men, and let them spy out the Land of Canaan that I am giving to the Children of Israel." (Bamidbar 13:2). Rashi comments: "For yourself, meaning according to your own counsel. I (G-d) am not commanding you to do so. If you want, you can send them."

G-d acquiesces to the Jewish People's request to send spies but not enthusiastically: "I had told them that the Land of Israel was good (but they do not trust Me)." (Rashi 13:2).

G-d is not thrilled with the Jewish people's wish to send spies to confirm that the Land of Israel is conquerable and that it is indeed the land of "flowing milk and honey." But He allows it. G-d's lack of excitement towards the idea of sending the spies foreshadows the rest of the events of the Parsha which describes how the spies' mission and the people's reaction to their report caused the eventual death of the entire generation and the 40-year sojourn in the desert.

All this leaves us with many questions. First and foremost, if G-d hinted to His displeasure of sending spies and Moshe knew that G-d was not happy with the notion, why would Moshe go along with it? We even find (in Devarim 1:26) that Moshe was pleased with the idea. How could Moshe send spies if he knows G-d only allows it in terms of "shelach lecha"- "send for yourself, I am not commanding you"? It's one thing to ignore our mother or father when they tell us, "I don't think it's a good idea but do it if you want," but it's quite another to ignore G-d's advice!

Second, why would G-d "set up" and trap the Jewish people? If He knows that sending spies will only lead to disaster, why wouldn't He protect His nation from it?

Finally, it seems unfair for G-d to be so exacting in His words, "Send for YOURSELF" in order to distance Himself from the command. After all is said and done, G-d is the one who tells Moshe to send spies. It is a commandment. What then is the deeper message of "for YOURSELF" if the bottom line is that it is still a commandment?

The answer teaches us a tremendous fundamental of Jewish living and philosophy. G-d deals with us where we are at, not where He is. Sending the spies was not automatically going to lead to the downfall of the Jewish people. It was the proper course of action under the circumstances. G-d was saying: "I wouldn't have suggested that you send spies to investigate the status of the land. I expected you to trust Me and conquer and settle the land, sight unseen. This is exactly the same kind of trust that you demonstrated once before at Sinai. (See Kol Yaakov, "G-d Knows Best" [http://www.aish.com/torahportion/kolyaakov/G-d\\_Knows\\_Best.asp](http://www.aish.com/torahportion/kolyaakov/G-d_Knows_Best.asp)) You shouldn't need the spies. But once you have chosen this route, then you MUST send them. It is now proper for you to send them since you have lowered your spiritual level and the level of trust you have in Me. In fact, if you don't send the spies now, but think you can rely on trust in Me, you will not succeed."

It is true that a very holy and righteous person who trusts in G-d can simply pray and wish for his physical sustenance and he/she will never have to work for it. Money will appear somehow on his doorstep whenever he/she needs it. But for those of us not on this supreme level (99.9999% of us!), it would not only be unwise to rely on G-d alone for our sustenance, it would be a transgression. We must put forth effort in order to achieve results, including "making a livelihood."

The Jewish people, as well, put themselves in a position where the only course of action they could have taken was to send spies. They displayed their lack of complete trust in G-d and had to go about things in the regular ways of making war and conquering land, which is to send spies. G-d was not advising them not to send spies in His phrase of, "for YOURSELF"; rather,

He was just voicing His disappointment that the Jewish people could not raise themselves to the level of complete trust in G-d.

G-d deals with us where we are at, not where He is. Did G-d want the Jews to send the spies? Certainly, not. Did the Jews make a fatal mistake in descending to the level of having to send them? Definitely, yes. But G-d reacted to the Jews' mistake, not with abandonment and disdain, but with a new task and mission for them. They now had to face the danger and the challenge of the spies' report and how they would deal with it. (They unfortunately failed this test as well.)

Whenever we use our free will to make decisions that go against G-d's original plans and wishes, He doesn't leave us to grope through life's difficulties alone. He responds with a brand new list of challenges and tests for us to pass. This does not mean that there is no accountability for our choices and actions. G-d judges us and records all our failures. This of course leads to consequences and punishments. But even if we have chosen a wrong path, He is still with us throughout our lives.

We set the playing field of our lives and hopefully it is in line with His desires for us. But even if it is not, G-d shows up at the "new stadium" that we have built for ourselves and writes a brand new "game-plan." He may now have very different expectations for us than He once did, but great expectations He has.

Now we return to Jerry and Karen and their Wheeling decision. It does seem like the choice of Wheeling was a very bad one. But G-d does indeed relate to them in the same way, even after they had ruined "His Master Plan" for their lives and made such a terrible mistake. He responds flexibly to the situation, lowering His expectations and range of decisions that are to be made. In Chicago, Jerry and Karen's challenges may have been to pray at synagogue every week and to enroll their kids in a Torah school. In Wheeling, their challenge may involve studying Torah with their kids daily and discussing Jewish issues with them. (It may now also encompass making plans to leave Wheeling.)

G-d gave over the course of our destinies to our own free will and decision-making. (There are times when He "steps in" to direct us with His Providence, but this is not the norm.)

Rest assured, though, that no matter what happens and no matter what we decide, He is right there with us at all times. © 2008 Rabbi B. Leff and [www.aish.com](http://www.aish.com)

