

Toras Aish

Thoughts From Across the Torah Spectrum

RABBI DOV KRAMER

Taking a Closer Look

“**A**nd My servant Kalev, as a result of there being a different spirit with him, and his following after Me completely, I will bring him [in]to the land that he came, and his descendants will inherit it” (Bamidbar 14:24). What about Yehoshua? Wasn't he also an exception, whereby everybody else but he and Kalev died in the desert? Why didn't G-d tell Moshe that his faithful student Yehoshua would also be allowed to enter the Promised Land?

Okay, I know. Yehoshua is mentioned with Kalev later (14:30) as being the exceptions, but why did it take so long for G-d to let Moshe know this? Although the commentators do differentiate between Kalev and Yehoshua insofar as Moshe prayed for Yehoshua (see Rashi on 13:16) whereas Kalev had to pray for himself (see Rashi on 13:22), Kalev spoke up first (13:30) while Yehoshua only joined Kalev in disagreeing with the other spies later (14:7-9), and only Kalev had children and could actually inherit the land, it still seems awkward that Yehoshua was totally ignored initially, leaving his teacher and mentor (Moshe) not knowing (until later) that his student would also be allowed to enter the land.

Which brings us to a different, perhaps even more difficult, question: Why was the decree against the nation repeated, as if Moshe didn't already know that the generation was not going to make it to the Promised Land? First, G-d threatens to wipe out the entire nation completely and start a new one from Moshe (14:12). Moshe responds by arguing why G-d can't (or shouldn't) do so (14:13-16), followed by his prayer on their behalf (14:17-19). G-d relents (14:20), but only as far as not wiping out the entire nation and starting anew with Moshe (see Or Hachayim). G-d swears (14:21) that no one but Kalev will make it to the Promised Land (14:22-24), again, without mentioning that Yehoshua will also be allowed to go. After telling Moshe that they will therefore have to turn back towards the Sea of Reeds (14:25), the paragraph ends. The tragic story seems to have been told; except for Kalev, the generation will not be allowed to complete their journey.

But then, in a new paragraph, G-d speaks to Moshe again (14:26), this time with Aharon, although Chazal tell us that that just means that Moshe told Aharon and then together they told the nation (not that

Aharon received the message directly from G-d). G-d asks how long He must tolerate the complaints (14:27, compare with 14:11), and tells Moshe and Aharon to tell the nation that He swears that He will kill out the entire generation (14:28-29) so that none of them, except for Kalev and Yehoshua, will make it to the Promised Land (14:30). Why was this repetition necessary, and why was Yehoshua only mentioned the second time?

As the Or Hachayim and the Netziv point out, the first???paragraph" was told only to Moshe, without any instructions for him to relay the information to anyone else. Only the second time is the word???laimor," ("saying") added, i.e. the permission or instruction to tell over what G-d told him to others. The question then becomes why didn't G-d just tell Moshe that he could/should tell the nation what His decree was the first time? Why did there have to be two paragraphs, one just for Moshe's ears and one to be shared with everyone else? By taking a closer look at the two paragraphs, an interesting picture emerges.

When G-d first speaks to Moshe about destroying the nation (14:11), He asks, "until what point will this nation anger Me." On top of the unwarranted complaining done when the journey to the Promised Land first started (11:1), the crying over the newly-forbidden relationships (see Rashi on 11:10), the insult of the heavenly manna (11:6), the craving for meat (11:4) and the indulgence in it after it was provided (11:32-33), the nation now believed the spies assessment that the inhabitants of Canaan were too powerful for G-d to drive out (see Rashi on 13:31). They cried all night (14:1), wishing they had either died in Egypt or in the desert rather than trying to conquer Canaan (14:2), and tried to organize themselves to head back to Egypt (14:4). The words "until what point" refer to the level of irritation they had brought G-d to (as it were). G-d was so fed up with them that he wanted to wipe them out and start a new nation with Moshe. In this private conversation between G-d and Moshe, after Moshe convinces G-d not to wipe them out there is no mention at all of G-d killing them (even over time). All that G-d says (and swears to) is that "all of those that went against Me will never make it to the Promised Land."

Before explaining the difference between not being able to enter the Promised Land and dying in the desert, let's get back to Kalev and Yehoshua. If they never "went against G-d," i.e. never angered Him, then they would not have been included with those that

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wouldn't be allowed to enter the land. Rather than the question being why was Yehoshua being an exception omitted, the question is really why did G-d have to mention Kalev being an "exception to the rule" if he was never part of the "rule" in the first place (i.e. never angered G-d so wasn't excluded from being allowed to enter the land).

Rashi (11:24) tells us that at first Kalev did make it seem as if he agreed with the other spies, telling them that he was on their side (so that they would let him speak) even though he never really was. Malbim takes it a step further, saying that initially Kalev did agree with the rest of the spies, which is why he went to the burial place of the forefathers to pray to be saved from such an outlook. If Kalev initially was with the spies, that means that he had been against G-d. Even if he was never really "with" them (only pretended to be) was saying he was with them enough to be included with those who went against G-d, and therefore excluded from being allowed to enter the Promised Land? In order to make it perfectly clear that Kalev was not, G-d told Moshe that Kalev would cross into the land. Moshe already knew that Yehoshua was not part of that group, so G-d didn't have to tell him that Yehoshua could go. That Kalev could, on the other hand, was not as obvious, so G-d pointed out that Kalev could go too.

So G-d told Moshe that He listened to his prayer and he wouldn't wipe the nation out, but He still wouldn't let them enter the Promised Land. Does this mean they must die first? The assumption is that the only way for them to not enter the land is if they die before the rest of the nation crosses into it. But is that really true? Isn't it possible for them to stay alive on the east side of the Jordan River while the rest of the nation crosses over to the west side? Moshe was forbidden from entering the land, but he conquered the lands of Sichon and Og, didn't he? And the Tribes of Reuvain and Gad settled their families there before everyone else crossed, didn't they? Had Reuvain and Gad not asked for their inheritance to be there, wouldn't all 12 Tribes have shared equally on the eastern side (and the western side)? In the first paragraph, the private conversation with Moshe, once G-d agreed not to destroy the nation there is no mention of anyone dying. The rest of the conversation is only about entering or not entering the land.

Immediately prior to telling Moshe that He wants to destroy the nation, "G-d's glory appeared to all of the Children of Israel in the Tent of Meeting" (14:10). The Yalkut Shimoni (643) tells us that G-d appeared to them hoping it would get them to repent. Although the context is getting to repent from throwing stones at Moshe and Aharon (or Kalev and Yehoshua; see Rashi), it could be suggested that G-d was hoping that they would also repent from the slander they had said/believed about Him and His land. Had they done so, although G-d had already sworn that they couldn't enter His land, they wouldn't have had to die prematurely, and/or in the desert. They could have joined the rest of the nation while they conquered the lands of Sichon and Og, and lived there until they died of natural causes. Their children would have crossed onto the western side of the Jordan and conquered Canaan while they stayed on the eastern side, thus keeping with G-d's oath while letting them live out the rest of their lives. But, unfortunately, they didn't repent, and continued to bemoan the thought of having to conquer.

G-d had enough of their complaining, requiring a second communication with Moshe, this time to be repeated to the nation. G-d asked "how long" this evil congregation would keep complaining (14:27). Not "how much" (14:11, see Netziv), but "how long." G-d had given them time to reconsider their attitude, but nothing had changed. How long did G-d wait before losing His patience (as it were) and upping the decree from not entering the land to "dying in the desert" (14:29 and 32, as if to drive the point home that now death was part of the decree, whereas it wouldn't have been had they repented)? "And the men that spoke badly about the land died on the seventh day of Elul" (Targum Yonasan, 14:37). That's a full month after the spies came back with their report. Some (see Tur/Shulchan Aruch Orach Chayim 580:2) say it was the seventeenth of Elul, which makes for an interesting symmetry of having 40 days to repent for the 40-day mission. Either way, though, initially G-d swore that they couldn't enter the land, but didn't say that they needed to die in the desert. Perhaps they didn't even need to wander for 40 years in the desert, as this part of the punishment is also only mentioned in the second paragraph. After giving them plenty of time to repent, G-d told Moshe to tell them that now it's too late. Not only wouldn't anyone (besides Kalev and Yehoshua) be allowed to enter the land, but they would all die in the desert during the 40 years the nation would have to spend wandering. This way, G-d still kept his word that they wouldn't die all at once, but they would get what they wished for (14:2), dying in the desert rather than crossing into the Promised Land.

The commentators on the Tur/Shulchan Aruch ask why the seventeenth (or seventh) of Elul is a fast day based on the spies dying on that day if the death of the wicked is usually celebrated. Based on the above, we can understand not just why there are two separate

paragraphs detailing the decree after the sin of the spies, and why Yehoshua is not mentioned as an exception in the first paragraph. If the nation had 30 or 40 days to repent and didn't, it makes sense to try even more than usual to repent on that day. If nothing else, realizing the consequences of not repenting should help get us to improve our ways. © 2010 Rabbi D. Kramer

RABBI MORDECHAI KAMENETZKY

Parsha Parables

This weeks parsha tells the story of one of the greatest debacles in Jewish History-the failed mission of the twelve meraglim (spies). It begins simply with the charge from the Almighty which was prompted by Moshe's request. And the Lord spoke to Moshe, saying, Send for yourself, men, that they may spy the Land of Canaan, which I give to the people of Israel; of every tribe of their fathers shall you send a man, everyone a leader among them (Numbers 13:1-2).

The Torah tells us how Moshe directs them, almost verbatim to Hashem's command. And Moshe sent them to spy out the land of Canaan, and said to them, Go up this way southward, and go up into the mountain (ibid v. 17).

Yet the mission goes awry. Instead of telling a tale of a beautiful country flowing with milk and honey, ten of the spies focus on negativity, spinning stories about insurmountable giants, unconquerable cities and a land that devours its inhabitants.

It truly bothers me. If the idea was agreed to by G-d Almighty, how could it have gone so wrong. Did Moshe charge the spies any differently than he was charged himself? What was lacking in Moshe's command that left the meraglim uninspired?

After the passing of Rav Yosef Leifer, the Pittsburgher Rebbe in 1966, his son, Rabbi Avrohom Abba Leifer left Newark, New Jersey to take his place. Although his father's shul was much smaller than the shul in Newark, Rabbi Avrohom Abba felt that he owed a debt of gratitude to the community in Pittsburgh which played refuge to his father after the war. And so, he abandoned all he had built in Newark. Indeed Rabbi Leifer arrived at a considerably smaller shul and community, and immediately began to try to institute many of the religious and Chasidic amenities that he was accustomed to in the New York metropolitan area.

One of his first missions was to try to bring Chalav Yisrael to Pittsburgh. Chalav Yisrael, literally, Milk of an Israelite refers to milk which has been produced under the supervision of a Jew. In Talmudic times, it was not uncommon for farmers to mix the milk of their various herds together, unbeknownst to their customers (a practice, according to what I have been told, that still occurs even today in remote areas of Europe). Thus, the Rabbinic Sages prohibited the consumption of milk from a non-Jewish farmer, unless it was processed under the watchful eye of a Jewish

person who assumed responsibility for its status. Though lenient rulings were issued, to allow all US milk (based on USDA fines that would be imposed for fraudulent labeling of cows milk), the Rebbe felt, as many do today, that a leniency should not be used if at all possible. And thus he set out on a mission to produce Chalav Yisrael for the Pittsburgh Jewish community.

The Rebbe approached a farmer who had a small dairy in northwestern Pennsylvania. Rabbi, I could do it for you, but the process of koshering my utensils and accommodating a Rabbi may be costly, but if you are willing to pay for it, I'm game.

The Rebbe had his work cut out for him. The concept of Chalav Yisrael would be foreign to the few wealthy individuals who were known as the benevolent members of the community. The Rebbe decided to try the President of the Community's Jewish Day School to allow the school to purchase the more expensive milk for the school. The man was a generous individual, but the Rebbe was skeptical. The budget was tight and the man was not strictly observant himself. Why would he want to support an endeavor like Chalav Yisrael?

The Rebbe decided to be straight. He approached the man and asked, I would really like to bring Chalav Yisrael to Pittsburgh. Wouldn't it be wonderful if the children would drink Chalav Yisrael? He was expecting an incredulous reaction, and he began to explain.

But he was stopped in his tracks. I know what that is! Milk of Israel! Rabbi I am not a religious man but I want you to know one thing anything that has to do with Israel I am 100 percent behind! Anything you need and it's yours!

Pittsburgh got its Chalav Yisrael.

I noticed a stark difference in the way Hashem presented the words Land of Canaan to Moshe and the way that Moshe presented it to the spies. Hashem describes the land, Land of Canaan, which I give to the people of Israel. In fact in almost every reference to the land that involves a mitzvah or a noble act, it is referred to as the Land that I promised The Land that you are going to inherit The Land where I shall bring you.

But when Moshe refers to it, he sends them to spy out the land of Canaan. No inheritance, no promise, no Israel in the land.

Perhaps when one goes to see the land of our fathers which was promised to us, he sees it with an entirely different perspective than just seeing the Land of Canaan. © 2010 Rabbi M. Kamenetzky and torah.org

RABBI BEREL WEIN

Wein Online

Too much self confidence is also a detriment. Moshe sends forth the leaders of the tribes of Israel to search out the Land of Israel and report back to him. He gives them specific instructions as to

what their report should contain and confidently awaits their successful return from their potentially hazardous mission.

It apparently never dawns upon him that these chosen leaders are capable of bringing back a negative report about the Land of Israel and that they would, in spite and resentment, publicize such a report and incite the people of Israel to rebel against Moshe's leadership and G-d's Providence.

Moshe never imagines that the leaders of the tribes of Israel would somehow view the land of Israel differently than he does. To Moshe it is the Promised Land, the land of the forefathers of Israel and of Jewish destiny and future. But the men sent to bring back the report to Moshe-except for Calev and Yehoshua-see only the problems and difficulties that will confront the Jewish state.

Moshe glimpses eternity and they see only giants and fearsome warriors. Moshe longs for entry into the Land of Israel and they are ready to return to Egyptian bondage. Moshe's confidence in the people and their erstwhile leaders is shattered. And Moshe's confidence in his own self and in his judgment of people and circumstances is now weakened and self-doubt creeps into his psyche. Moshe's frustration and disappointment is palpable in the parsha reading. Moshe's generation is doomed.

Every person in a position of leadership and responsibility, especially younger people who are in such positions, experiences the same pitfall that Moshe experienced in this week's parsha. I remember that as a fledgling young rabbi I attempted to bring a well known yeshiva into our community and establish a branch of its main institution. Our community then badly needed such an educational institution in its midst.

I presented the plan at a public meeting called by me to advance this plan. I thought to myself "Who could oppose a yeshiva, so desperately needed by our community?" So in my naivete I did not prepare adequately for the meeting nor did I make phone calls to the supporters of the yeshiva to show up and be prepared to fight the battle. I was supremely confident that everyone saw the issue my way and through my vision for the community.

I was therefore shocked to hear the torrent of verbal abuse and opposition to the yeshiva project voiced at the meeting and the whole plan collapsed. I had assumed that everyone would see the matter through my eyes and hold my vision to be correct. Years later and in a different community I was able to establish a yeshiva, also over many naysayers, but this time I was prepared and had a much better feel as to how true human nature works.

I could not assume that anyone else would see the situation quite as I did and therefore this time I prepared the meeting properly. Moshe assumed the best and was unprepared for what actually occurred. Naysayers always abound. We always have to prepare

properly to overcome them and their objections. © 2010 Rabbi Berel Wein- Jewish historian, author and international lecturer offers a complete selection of CDs, audio tapes, video tapes, DVDs, and books on Jewish history at www.rabbiwein.com. For more information on these and other products visit www.rabbiwein.com

RABBI AVI WEISS

Shabbat Forshpeis

A glimpse at the narrative in the book of Numbers reveals an almost parallel pattern of events to that which occurred to the Jews after their leaving Egypt. In Numbers, the Jews began to murmur that they did not have meat to eat. (Numbers 11:4) This corresponds to the longing of the Jews "for the fleshpots" in Egypt, resulting in the giving of the manna. (Exodus 16:3)

Also, the Numbers narrative states that after the Jews complained that they lacked water, Moshe (Moses) hit instead of spoke to the rock-and water came forth. (Numbers 20:2, 3, 8, 11) So too in the Exodus story, did Moshe hit the rock after the Jews militated for water. (Exodus 17:2, 6)

And the Numbers narrative includes several challenges the Jews faced from nations like Edom. (Numbers 20:14-21) This is much like the battle the Jews fought with Amalek after they departed Egypt. (Exodus 17:8-16)

Finally, the story of the spies which highlights this week's portion is viewed as an episode revealing the Jews' basic lack of faith in G-d. (Numbers 13, 14) This, of course, is similar in underlying theme to the Golden Calf story which seems to describe the Jews' lack of faith. (Exodus 32, 33)

So similar are the stories in these two narratives that the Bekhor Shor (a medieval French commentator) insists that the water stories are one and the same. The latter is a more detailed account of the former.

But a closer look reveals an interesting pattern. In each of the narratives the consequences escalate in their seriousness in the Book of Numbers.

Unlike the manna story in Exodus, the request for meat in the Book of Numbers resulted in the Lord "smit[ing] the people with a very great plague." (Numbers 11:33) Also, only after Moshe hits the rock in the Book of Numbers, is he given the severe punishment of not being allowed to enter Israel. (Numbers 20:12) And while Amalek was defeated with no mention of Jewish losses in Exodus, many Jews died when they were forced to go around the land of Edom. (Numbers 21:4, 6) Finally, only after the spy incident - not after the episode of the Golden Calf - does G-d decree that the generation that left Egypt must die in the desert. (Numbers 14:29)

Why are the consequences greater in the Book of Numbers, when the transgressions seem so similar? First, the events in the Book of Exodus occur either

prior to Sinai or, in the case of the Golden Calf, according to Rashi, prior to the construction of the sanctuary. With the Sinaitic teachings and the Tabernacle construction in place the Jews should have known better than to falter again.

Second, to err once is forgivable and even sometimes understandable. The same transgression committed again deserves to be treated much more harshly.

So the patterns of the narratives may be similar, but the message is clear: G-d understands that we will fall. But we must take the lessons we learn in our mistakes and redeem ourselves. G-d gives us opportunities for repentance, but we cannot address those opportunities as unlimited. Sometimes one is given just so many chances.

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CHIEF RABBI LORD JONATHAN SACKS

Covenant & Conversation

“The Lord said to Moses, 'Send some men to explore the land of Canaan, which I am giving to the Israelites. From each ancestral tribe send one of its leaders.' So at the Lord's command Moses sent them out from the Desert of Paran." (Numbers 13:1-3)

According to Moses in Deuteronomy, it was the people: "Then all of you came to me and said, 'Let us send men ahead to spy out the land for us and bring back a report about the route we are to take and the towns we will come to.' The idea seemed good to me; so I selected twelve of you, one man from each tribe." (Deut. 1:22-23)

Rashi reconciles the apparent contradiction. The people came to Moses with their request. Moses asked G-d what he should do. G-d gave him permission to send the spies. He did not command it; He merely did not oppose it. "Where a person wants to go, that is where he is led" (Makkot 10b) -- so said the sages. Meaning: G-d does not stop people from a course of action on which they are intent, even though He knows that it may end in tragedy. Such is the nature of the freedom G-d has given us. It includes the freedom to make mistakes.

However, Maimonides (Guide for the Perplexed III:32) offers an interpretation that gives a different perspective to the whole episode. He begins by noting the verse (Ex. 13:17) with which the exodus begins:

"When Pharaoh let the people go, G-d did not lead them on the road through the Philistine country, though that was shorter. For G-d said, 'If they face war, they might change their minds and return to Egypt.' So G-d led the people around by the desert road toward the Reed Sea."

Maimonides comments: "Here G-d led the people about, away from the direct route he had originally intended, because He feared that they might encounter hardships too great for their present strength. So He took them by a different route in order to achieve His original object." He then adds the following:

"It is a well known fact that traveling in the wilderness without physical comforts such as bathing produces courage, while the opposite produces faint-heartedness. Besides this, another generation rose during the wanderings that had not been accustomed to degradation and slavery."

According to Maimonides, then, it was irrelevant who sent the spies. Nor was the verdict after the episode-that the people would be condemned to spend 40 years in the wilderness, and that it would only be their children who would enter the land-a punishment as such. It was an inevitable consequence of human nature.

It takes more than a few days or weeks to turn a population of slaves into a nation capable of handling the responsibilities of freedom. In the case of the Israelites it needed a generation born in liberty, hardened by the experience of the desert, untrammelled by habits of servitude. Freedom takes time, and there are no shortcuts. Often it takes a very long time indeed.

That dimension of time is fundamental to the Jewish view of politics and human progress. That is why, in the Torah, Moses repeatedly tells the adults to educate their children, to tell them the story of the past, to "remember". It is why the covenant itself is extended through time-handed on from one generation to the next. It is why the story of the Israelites is told at such length in Tanakh: the time-span covered by the Hebrew Bible is a thousand years from the days of Moses to the last of the prophets. It is why G-d acts in and through history.

Unlike Christianity or Islam there is, in Judaism, no sudden transformation of the human condition, no one moment or single generation in which everything significant is fully disclosed. Why, asks Maimonides (Guide, III:32), did G-d not simply give the Israelites in the desert the strength or self-confidence they needed to cross the Jordan and enter the land? His answer: because it would have meant saying goodbye to human freedom, choice and responsibility.

Even G-d Himself, implies Maimonides, has to work with the grain of human nature and its all-too-slow pace of change. Not because G-d cannot change people: of course He can. He created them; He could re-create them. The reason is that G-d chooses not to. He practices what the Safed Kabbalists called *tzimtzum*,

self-limitation. He wants human beings to construct a society of freedom-and how could He do that if, in order to bring it about, He had to deprive them of the very freedom He wanted them to create. There are some things a parent may not do for a child if he or she wants the child to become an adult. There are some things even G-d must choose not to do for His people if He wants them to grow to moral and political maturity.

In one of my books I called this the chronological imagination, as opposed to the Greek logical imagination. Logic lacks the dimension of time. That is why philosophers tend to be either rigidly conservative (Plato did not want poets in his Republic; they threatened to disturb the social order) or profoundly revolutionary (Rousseau, Marx). The current social order is either right or wrong. If it is right, we should not change it. If it is wrong, we should overthrow it. The fact that change takes time, even many generations, is not an idea easy to square with philosophy (even those philosophers, like Hegel and Marx, who factored in time, did so mechanically, speaking about "historical inevitability" rather than the unpredictable exercise of freedom).

One of the odd facts about Western civilization in recent centuries is that the people who have been most eloquent about tradition-Edmund Burke, Michael Oakeshott, T.S. Eliot-have been deeply conservative, defenders of the status quo. Yet there is no reason why a tradition should be conservative. We can hand on to our children not only our past but also our unrealized ideals. We can want them to go beyond us; to travel further on the road to freedom than we were able to do. That, for example, is how the Seder service on Pesach begins: "This year, slaves, next year free; this year here, next year in Israel". A tradition can be evolutionary without being revolutionary.

That is the lesson of the spies. Despite the Divine anger, the people were not condemned to permanent exile. They simply had to face the fact that their children would achieve what they themselves were not ready for.

People still forget this. The wars in Afghanistan and Iraq were undertaken, at least in part, in the name of democracy and freedom. Yet that is the work not of a war, but of education, society-building, and the slow acceptance of responsibility. It takes generations. Sometimes it never happens at all. The people-like the Israelites, demoralized by the spies' report-lose heart and want to go back to the predictable past ("Let us choose a leader and go back to Egypt"), not the unseen, hazardous, demanding future. That is why, historically, there have been more tyrannies than democracies.

The politics of liberty demands patience. It needs years of struggle without giving up hope. The late Emmanuel Levinas spoke about "difficult freedom" -- and freedom always is difficult. The story of the spies tells us that the generation who left Egypt were not yet

ready for it. That was their tragedy. But their children would be. That was their consolation. © 2010 Chief Rabbi Lord J. Sacks and torah.org

RABBI SHLOMO RISKIN

Shabbat Shalom

“**A**nd you shall strengthen yourselves, and you shall take from the fruits of the land.' And the days were the season of the first grapes." (Numbers, 13:20)

Between the lines of the Bible, we glimpse the profound difficulties - and even tragedy - of Moses, the greatest prophet in history, as a leader who sees himself losing the fealty of the Hebrew nation. Moses feels that he is failing to direct the people he took out of Egyptian bondage toward the very goal of their exodus: the conquest of and settlement of the land of Israel. Where has he gone wrong, and why?

From the very beginning of his ministry, when the Hebrews were at the lowest point of their Egyptian oppression, G-d instructs Moses to raise their depressed and despairing spirits with five Divine promises: "Therefore say to the Israelites, 'I am the Lord. I will take you out from under the burdens of Egypt, I will save you from their slavery, I will redeem you with an outstretched arm... I will take you to Myself as a nation... and I will bring you to the land which I have sworn to give to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob; I shall give it to you as a heritage; I am the Lord.'" (Exodus, 6:6-8).

Now Moses has already succeeded - thanks to the Divine miracles - in fulfilling the first four Divine "redemptions." Only the final one is lacking: the entry of G-d's nation into His land. What causes the Israelites to delay and even demur in fulfilling this final stage of redemption? It cannot only be that the ten scouts - each princes of their respective tribes - were frightened by the superior strength of the Canaanite residents (Numbers, 13:31: "We cannot go forward against these people... they are too strong for us"), since a war against the Canaanites was no greater trial than standing up to the superior power and might of Egypt, or diving into the Reed Sea? If G-d (through Moses) had demonstrated His ability to deliver them from the hands of the Egyptians, why do they now balk at taking on the Canaanites?

Apparently, something has changed during the intervening year between the splitting of the Reed Sea and the proposed conquest of the Promised Land. As we have seen in last week's commentary, the Hebrews have intensified their complaining, not only asking for water - an existential need - but now by lusting after a more varied menu, from meat to fish and from cucumbers to garlic (Numbers, 11:4,5)!

Moses is at his wits' end; can it be that the Hebrews - after all the trials that they have successfully overcome - are now whining for the stinking sardines

which they used to gather at the foot of the Nile during the period of their persecution and enslavement (ibid, 11:5)? He feels totally inadequate to deal with them, preferring death at G-d's hands to responsibility for leading such an ungrateful people (ibid, 11:11-15).

G-d commands Moses to assemble 70 elders in the Tent of Communion, appointing them as his assistants in leading the people. G-d will cause some of Moses' spiritual energy to devolve upon them, enabling the greatest of prophets to share his awesome responsibility of leadership (11:16,17). At the same time, G-d will send quails to allay the people's lust for meat.

But then, in this week's Biblical portion, Moses seems to make a gross miscalculation by sending out a reconnaissance mission, either initiated by G-d as an initial foray in order to map out the Israelites route towards conquest (Numbers, 13:1,2), or instigated by the people who wanted a report about what kind of enemy awaits them on their way to Israel (Deuteronomy 1:22). Moses apparently felt that this "new" Israelite mentality of kvetching and lusting was indeed impelled, even inspired, by food. He therefore exhorts them, as they survey the terrain of the land and of the nature of the enemy - to "strengthen themselves, and take from the fruits of the land," to show to the Hebrews (13:20). Hopefully, the nation will be so excited by the huge and luscious grapes that they will embark on their conquest with alacrity! Apparently, what is actually now grabbing their attention is a gourmet diet.

What Moses fails to appreciate, I believe, is that the real problem lies not with an Israelite drive for nutritional pleasure but with his own form of "distance" leadership - whether from the lofty heights of Mount Sinai or the inner sanctum of the "Tent of Communion." You will remember that Moses had initially rejected G-d's offer of leadership because, "I am a man who is heavy of speech and heavy of tongue" (Exodus, 4:10). This cannot simply mean that he stuttered and stammered - because G-d immediately answers by saying, "Is it not I who gives [or takes away] speech?" Nevertheless, Moses continues to reiterate his problem of being afflicted by "stopped-up lips" ("aral sfatayim"). I would maintain that Moses is actually saying that he is a man of heavy speech rather than friendly small talk, a prophet who is in almost constant contact with the Divine in issues of theology and law, morality and ethics. Moses is not a man of the people, a man of small talk and infinite patience who can "sell" G-d's program to the Israelites by sugar-coating it. As the Bible itself testifies, "The Israelites did not listen to Moses because of his [Moses'!] lack of patience ("kotzer ruah") and difficult Divine service" (Ralbag's interpretation to Exodus, 6:9). Moses, the "man [or husband] of G-d" (Deut. 33:1) as well as the "servant of the Lord," remains "distant" from the people; he is a prophet for all the generations more than a leader for his generation.

Indeed, Moses never walked among the people in the encampment; instead, he dedicates his time to speaking to the Lord in the Tent of Communion, far removed from the encampment (Leviticus, 1:1; Numbers, 7:89). It is Eldad and Medad, the new generation of leader-prophets, who prophesy from within the encampment itself - and in the midst of the people (Numbers, 11:26). Moses' greatest asset - his closeness to G-d and his ability to "divine" the Divine will - is also his most profound tragedy, the cause of his distance from the people, his remoteness from the masses. A congregation needs to constantly be re-inspired and recharged with new challenges and lofty goals if they are to be above petty squabbles and materialistic desires.

The kvetching is not because they really want the leeks and the onions; it is because they don't know what they want. As they prepare to enter the Promised Land, they actually need - as we all need - a mission, a purpose for being. This, however, will have to await a new leader, who may be less a man of G-d but more a man of the people. © 2010 Ohr Torah Institutions & Rabbi S. Riskin

RABBI DOVID SIEGEL

Haftarah

This week's haftarah displays the power of perfect faith and its miraculous results. The haftarah begins with Yehoshua sending two special individuals on a secret mission to investigate the land of Israel. The Jewish people were camped directly facing the Promised Land and Yehoshua sought to determine the most strategic point of entry. This mission was extremely dangerous because the land's inhabitants natives were well aware of the pending Jewish invasion of their land.

Yehoshua instructed the spies to survey all of Eretz Yisroel but devote special focus on Yericho. They crossed the Jordan and went directly to Rachav's inn, the first one inside the city's walls. The king discovered them immediately and sent messengers to order Rachav to release the intruders. Out of the goodness of her heart, Rachav engaged herself in an unbelievable act of heroism. She swiftly hid the spies and then persuaded the king's messengers that the spies fled the city. Once the messengers were out of sight she informed the spies that everyone was awestricken by the Jewish nation and its Hashem. She then proclaimed her personal recognition of Hashem as master of the universe and her firm belief that He would easily defeat all in His way.

Chazal reflect upon this most unusual welcome and sharply contrast it with the disheartening experience of this week's parsha. Therein we read about ten men of distinction who were sent on a similar mission to survey Eretz Yisroel. Yet, their results were devastating and the spies ultimately convinced the

nation to reject Eretz Yisroel. Chazal reveal the fundamental difference between the two groups. The spies in Yehoshua's times were totally devoted to their mission. They were prepared to overcome every obstacle in their way and therefore met unbelievable success. Conversely, the spies in Moshe's times were not fully committed to their mission. This apparently tainted their vision and created their distorted impression of the land and its inhabitants. (see Yalkut Shimoni 8)

In truth, Eretz Yisroel presented extraordinary challenges to the Jewish people. Its inhabitants were far from friendly to its intruders and nothing short of an open miracle could secure the nation's safety. Moshe Rabbeinu's spies displayed grave concern over this. They observed the giant's towering stature and took note of their constant preoccupation in eulogies and funerals. The spies sadly succumbed to their well-grounded fears and forfeited their privilege of entering the land. Yehoshua's spies possessed perfect faith and total commitment to their mission. This inner strength dissuaded them from the influence of their frightening experiences and assisted them in their perfect fulfillment of their mission

This stark contrast serves as a profound lesson in total faith and trust in Hashem. From a practical standpoint, Yehoshua's spies stood no chance and faced guaranteed death. The Jewish nation was camped within earshot of Eretz Yisroel and this secret mission was bound to be discovered. Although, the spies disguised themselves as traveling salesmen it is hard to fathom that such pious men could truly pass as Canaanites. All they had going for themselves was steadfast faith and trust in Hashem. They bravely entered the "lion's den" and lodged in Rachav's inn. Rachav was fondly known throughout the land and enjoyed warm personal association with all the authorities. The results were no different than one would predict and the spies were discovered the moment they entered her inn.

However, with perfect faith in Hashem the events that followed were far from predictable. Chazal reveal a most startling display of Divine Providence and inform us that Rachav had recently embraced the Jewish religion. (see Yalkut Shimoni 9) Hashem had actually directed the spies to the only Jewish soul in the entire land of Canaan. Their faith proved rewarding and instead of delivering the spies to the king, Rachav extended herself in every way to her recently discovered Jewish brethren. She encouraged them with profound statements of faith and was ultimately a catalyst to deliver the Promised Land into Jewish hands. Hashem favorably rewarded her for her heroism and she subsequently merited to marry Yehoshua himself. Her new life was very fruitful and she became the mother of many Jewish prophets and priests. In retrospect, the spies' perfect faith resulted in securing the deliverance of the land into their Jewish brethren's hands. Instead of

immediate death the spies returned with total confidence that Eretz Yisroel would soon be theirs.

These are some of the unbelievable results of perfect faith. Let it be the will of Hashem that we continue our strides in faith and commitment serving as a special merit for us to return to our Homeland in peace and harmony. © 2010 Rabbi D. Siegel and torah.org

MACHON ZOMET

Shabbat B'Shabbato

Based on the Yismach Moshe edition of the Commentary by Or Hachaim as summarized by Boaz Ofan

“**T**hey are like bread to us; their shadow has turned away from them” [Bamidbar 14:9]. Couldn't Yehoshua and Kalev find stronger words to try to convince the people not to follow the scouts? What did they mean by the phrase, "they are like bread to us"?

In order to answer such dilemmas, Or Hachaim asks a different philosophical question: Why did G-d create man in such a way that he must always eat physical food? The pursuit of food is a source of contemptible craving, and in addition it forces mankind to be continuously involved in the search for food. Wouldn't it have been better for mankind to spend the same time in studying the Torah?

The simple answer to this question is that this effort provides its own reward? G-d wanted to give Yisrael merits, and He therefore gave them many mitzvot (see Mishna Makot 3:17; quoted at the end of every chapter of Avot). Most of these mitzvot involve food, such as teruma and maaser, etc. But this still leaves us with the same basic question: Why are so many mitzvot related to physical food?

The reply to the above question is known to the masters of mysticism. No physical element, no matter how lowly it is, will be able to exist unless there is a spark of holiness embedded within it. The holy task of a human being is to gather these sparks and to remove the waste that envelopes them. This is true about general behavior, and it is also true about eating.

When physical reality loses the holy spark it has moved away from its purpose and it therefore must leave this world. This is what happened to the descendents of the giants, who completed their task in this world. They therefore lost the Divine spark that gave them life, and they were destroyed.



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