

# Toras Aish

## Thoughts From Across the Torah Spectrum

**RABBI LORD JONATHAN SACKS ZT"L**

### Covenant & Conversation

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

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

Kevin Haley and Dan Fessler tested students on the so-called Dictator Game, in which you are given, say, ten dollars, together with the opportunity of sharing any or none of it with an anonymous stranger. Beforehand, and without realising it was part of the experiment, some of the students were briefly shown a pair of eyes as a computer screen saver, while others saw a different image. Those exposed to the eyes gave 55 per cent more to the stranger than the others. In another study researchers placed a coffee maker in a university hallway. Passers-by could take coffee and leave money in the box. On some weeks a poster with watchful eyes was hanging on the wall nearby, on others a picture of flowers. On the weeks where the eyes were showing, people left on average 2.76 times as much money as at other times.<sup>1</sup>

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

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

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

Nazorayan's conclusion is that 'Religion is more in the situation than in the person,'<sup>2</sup> or to put it another way, what makes the difference to our

Norenzayan, *Big G-ds: How religion transformed cooperation and conflict*, Princeton University Press, 2013, 13-54.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 39.

<sup>1</sup> This and the following paragraphs are based on Ara

behaviour is less what we believe than the phenomenon of being reminded, even subconsciously, of what we believe.

That is precisely the psychology behind the mitzvah of tsitsit in this week's parsha: This shall be your tsitsit and you shall see it and remember all the Lord's commandments and keep them, not straying after your heart and after your eyes, following your own sinful desires. Thus you will be reminded to keep all My commandments, and be holy to your G-d. (Num. 15: 39)

The Talmud<sup>3</sup> tells the story of a man who, in a moment of moral weakness, decided to pay a visit to a certain courtesan. He was in the course of removing his clothes when he saw the tsitsit and immediately froze. The courtesan asked him what was the matter, and he told her about the tsitsit, saying that the four fringes had become accusing witnesses against him for the sin he was about to commit. The woman was so impressed by the power of this simple command that she converted to Judaism.

We sometimes fail to understand the connection between religion and morality. Dostoevsky is said to have said that if G-d did not exist all would be permitted.<sup>4</sup> This is not the mainstream Jewish view. According to Rav Nissim Gaon, the moral imperatives accessible to reason have been binding since the dawn of humanity.<sup>5</sup> We have a moral sense. We know that certain things are wrong. But we also have conflicting desires. We are drawn to do what we know we should not do, and often we yield to temptation. Anyone who has ever tried to lose weight knows exactly what that means. In the moral domain, it is what the Torah means when it speaks of "straying after your heart and after your eyes, following your own sinful desires."

The moral sense, wrote James Q. Wilson, "is not a strong beacon light radiating outward to illuminate in sharp outline all that it touches." It is, rather, "a small candle flame, casting vague and multiple shadows, flickering and sputtering in the strong winds of power and passion, greed and ideology." He adds: "But brought close to the heart" it "dispels the darkness and warms the soul."<sup>6</sup>

Wittgenstein once said that "the work of the philosopher consists in assembling reminders."<sup>7</sup> In the case of Judaism the purpose of the outward signs – tsitsit, mezuzah and tefillin – is precisely that: to assemble reminders, on our clothes, our homes, our arms and head, that certain things are wrong, and that even if no other human being sees us, G-d sees us and will call us to account. We now have the empirical

<sup>3</sup> Menachot 44a.

<sup>4</sup> He did not say these precise words, but said something similar in *The Brothers Karamazov* (1880).

<sup>5</sup> Commentary to Berakhot, introduction.

<sup>6</sup> James Q. Wilson, *The Moral Sense*, Free Press, 1993, 251.

<sup>7</sup> *Philosophical Investigations*, §127.

evidence that reminders make a significant difference to the way we act.

"The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked; who shall know it?" said Jeremiah (Jer. 17: 9). One of the blessings and curses of human nature is that we use our power of reason not always and only to act rationally, but also to rationalize and make excuses for the things we do, even when we know we should not have done them. That, perhaps is one of the lessons the Torah wishes us to draw from the story of the spies. Had they recalled what G-d had done to Egypt, the mightiest empire of the ancient world, they would not have said, "We cannot attack those people; they are stronger than we are" (Num. 13: 31). But they were in the grip of fear. Strong emotion, fear especially, distorts our perception. It activates the amygdala, the source of our most primal reactions, causing it to override the prefrontal cortex that allows us to think rationally about the consequences of our decisions.

Tsitsit with their thread of blue remind us of heaven, and that is what we most need if we are consistently to act in accordance with the better angels of our nature. *Covenant and Conversation is kindly supported by the Maurice Wohl Charitable Foundation in memory of Maurice and Vivienne Wohl zt"l* ©2015 Rabbi Lord J. Sacks z"l and rabbisacks.org

#### **RABBI SHLOMO RISKIN**

## **Shabbat Shalom**

"**A**nd God spoke to Moses saying 'Send men to scout the land of Canaan, which I am giving to the Israelite people...' (Numbers 13:1-2) In the process of becoming a nation, the Jewish people committed any number of sins, but one in particular, as recorded in this week's portion, Shelach, dwarfs all others.

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

To understand the nature of their sin, we have to look more closely at the events recorded in the portion of Shelach. The report's opening phrase evokes the splendor of the promised land. "Indeed, it's a land of milk and honey," (Numbers 13:27), an expression that

has virtually become synonymous with the land of Israel. Displaying the enormous fruits of the land, we can safely conclude from their opening words that the spies had no doubts about the land's fertility. One would be hard-pressed to find in their entire report something against the land itself. True, "the people living in the land are aggressive, and the cities are large and well-fortified. We also saw the giants there" is what they say (13:28), but are these words against the land?

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

If we cannot pin their rebel-lion against the land or against God, then what are we left with? A clue can be found if we take a look at the verse which speaks of the land consuming its inhabitants: "They began to speak badly about the land that they had explored. They told the Israel-ites, '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 can-not produce people strong in stature. Implicit in Nachman-ides' words is that the land is not for average people.

And this is the heart of the problem.

Notice the sequence: "There we saw the giants. We felt like grasshoppers," is followed by "That's all we were in their eyes." What this points to is a common phenomenon – how we see ourselves determines how others end up seeing us. If you're a grasshopper in someone else's eyes, obviously he'll crush you without a second thought, and once you think of yourself as a grass-hopper, 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 de-spised, dependent creatures. How could they have possibly believed in themselves? And if one doesn't believe in one-self, one usually assimilates, gives oneself over to a higher power, decides either to return to Egypt – which Datan and Aviram always wanted to do – or to remain paralyzed and inactive in the desert. In accepting defeat rather than displaying defiance, the Jew is meekly and passively surrendering to fate as it "hops" all over him.

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

In this century, we've taken giant steps toward rectifying this distorted vision; but apparently more work needs to be done before the self-image of the grasshopper is gone. Then, even if we live "in a land that consumes" its inhabitants, it only acts as a curse for those who live passive 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 BEREL WEIN**

## Wein Online

**W**e are taught by a Mishnah in Avot that the Jewish people, as represented by the generation of the Sinai desert, tested the Lord 10 times. The idea of testing God is a difficult one to understand and appreciate. This is particularly so when we can see that this generation did not learn from experience. Each test in turn failed to achieve anything other than harming that generation and dooming it to destruction, never to enter the land of Israel.

The sending of the spies to discover and report back on the condition of our promised country and its population at the time is a prime example of this type of test. As Rashi points out, the Lord told Moshe: "I am not ordering you to send spies to report on the land of Israel. I have told you that this land is your destiny and that it is a land of spiritual and physical greatness and prosperity. However, if you wish, you have the option of sending spies". Implicit in this choice, given from heaven, is that the option will be of great consequence if it is exercised. It is also a repetition of a test that the Torah has recorded for us many times, when the people ask themselves: "Is the Lord truly within our community or not?" If, after all the miracles that this generation experienced, the people could still bring themselves to ask: "is God within us or not?", it must have been obvious that the people's relationship with the creator was dysfunctional and that they did not share His program for their future.

The commentators have advanced many reasons over the ages as to what directly motivated the leaders of Israel to create such a crisis of faith within their people. However, the basic problem -- as recorded

repeatedly -- is the fact that the people's trust in God, no matter how many miracles and victories they experienced, was very weak and fragile.

Faith is one of the strongest emotions that a person can have. However, it is also something that can be hard to acquire but quite easy to abandon or lose. When faith wanes, the process of testing God, so to speak, begins anew; for it is in the nature of human beings to learn very little from their previous experiences. There will always be excuses. We can say the previous test went wrong but now, with a test involving the right people on the right issue and with greater clarity, this will somehow help us. In their relationship to the land of Israel, the Jewish people have always had to struggle. It was never easy to see the true purpose of the land of Israel for Jewish life, especially since the Jews could prove to be so successful outside of the land of Israel. Yet the centrality of the land of Israel to Judaism has always been one of the prime beliefs and national messages of the Torah regarding the survival and destiny of the Jewish people. Jews should not again fall into the trap of testing God regarding the land of Israel. ©2022 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](http://www.rabbiwein.com). For more information on these and other products visit [www.rabbiwein.com](http://www.rabbiwein.com)

#### RABBI AVI WEISS

### Shabbat Forshpeis

**A**fter scouting out the land of Israel, the spies report that it will be impossible to conquer the land. The spies claim they saw giants and exclaim, "We were in our sight as grasshoppers and so were we in their sight" (Numbers 13:33). One wonders, how did the spies know how they were viewed by the Canaanites?

On its simple level, the phrase may consist of two independent thoughts. The spies note that, compared to the giants, they felt like grasshoppers. Independent of their own feelings, says the Talmud, they actually heard the inhabitants say, "There are grasshoppers on the ground." In the words of Rashi, "We heard them [the giants] saying, there are ants who look like humans in the vineyard" (Sotah 35a).

Another thought comes to mind. Perhaps the two clauses can be viewed as a single unit with the latter phrase emerging from the former.

Indeed, the way we see ourselves often prompts our feelings about others' perceptions of us. For example, a person who feels lowly may sense that others look down upon him or her. Conversely, if we feel good about ourselves, we perceive others to see us in the same light.

With this principle in mind, we can understand the verse. The spies, as a matter of fact, proclaimed, "We were in our sight as grasshoppers," and as a consequence, "and so were we in their sight."

The Book of Proverbs takes this concept a step further when it proclaims, "As face answers to face in water, so does one person's heart to another" (Proverbs 27:19). Rashi explains that if one is pleasant and gracious, so is one's reflection, and such is what others reflect back to us as well. And if one is pained and angry, the reflection is such (Rashi, Yevamot 117a).

Thus, what we feel about ourselves is not only what we perceive others feel about us, but in fact is what they will feel about us. Feeling negative about oneself thus becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy. If we lose confidence in ourselves, others ipso facto will lose confidence in us.

It must also be stressed that self-confidence is not conceit. Rabbi Yosef Dov Soloveitchik makes this point when he distinguishes between *ga'avah* (haughtiness), which is negative, and *ge'ut* (self-confidence), which is a positive characteristic.

The spies lacked the latter, which is reflected not only in their self-perceptions but also in others' perceptions. ©2022 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

#### ENCYCLOPEDIA TALMUDIT

### A Minyan of Ten

*Translated by Rabbi Mordechai Weiss*

**A** *minyan*, the presence of ten men, is required for those parts of the prayer service that are deemed *Devarim She-bikdushah* (literally, words of sanctifying). These include *Kaddish*, *Barchu*, *Kedushah*, the repetition of the *Amidah*, and (according to some) the reading of the Torah, the reading of the *Haftarah*, and the priestly blessing. This rule is derived from the verse, "I will be sanctified **among** the children of Israel" ("*Ve-nikdashiti be-toch Bnei Yisrael*") (*Vayikra* 22:32). How do we know that the number referred to here is specifically ten, neither more nor less?

One way of arriving at ten is through a *gezeirah shavah*. (This is a method of rabbinic exegesis in which a similar word appearing in two different contexts is used to infer that the details of one context apply to the other.) The word "*toch*" ("among") appears in the verse about sanctifying G-d, and in the story of Korach's rebellion. Regarding the latter, the Torah states (*Bamidbar* 16:21), "Separate yourselves from **among** (*mi-tokh*) this community (*edah*)." However, there the Torah is referring to a group of 250 people. How is it useful for arriving at the number ten?

This involves a bit more exegesis. The word "*edah*," which is used in the story of Korach, is also used in reference to the ten spies who spoke badly of the Land of Israel, as we read (*Bamidbar* 14:27), "How much longer will that wicked community (*edah*) keep muttering against Me?" We see that the definition of a

community is ten. Thus, the community within which we sanctify G-d's name must be similar to the spies (not in their sinfulness, of course, but in being free, adult males).

It should be noted that the above is not a combination of one *gezeirah shavah* with another (*toch-toch* and *edah-edah*), which would possibly break a rule of exegesis. Rather, we learn from the case of the spies in Parshat Shelach that the definition of the word "*edah*" is ten everywhere it appears. This includes the verse in Parshat Korach, where the word "*toch*" is associated with ten (through the word "*edah*"). And a *gezeirah shavah* (*toch-toch*) connects that verse with the verse about sanctifying G-d. ©2017 Rabbi M. Weiss and *Encyclopedia Talmudit*

#### **RABBI DAVID LEVIN**

## **The Sin of the People**

**T**he sending of the spies into the Land that Hashem had promised them demonstrated a distrust and lack of faith in Hashem and His promises. It was no surprise then that ten of the spies came back with a report which they twisted to show the dangers of entering the land. In spite of the urging of Calev ben Yefuneh and Yehoshua bin Nun, the people lost faith in Hashem and listened to the frightening reports of the ten negative voices. Hashem punished the people with wandering in the desert for forty years, one year for each day that the spies carried out their mission. But what sin did the people do which warranted such a harsh punishment? It is clear that the spies should have been punished, but did the people deserve such a punishment for listening to bad advice?

Let us look at the words of the rebellion as stated in the Torah. After the report of the spies and the positive report of Calev and Yehoshua, the Torah states: "The entire assembly (*eidah*) raised up and issued its voice; the people (*am*) wept that night. All the B'nei Yisrael murmured against Moshe and Aharon, and the entire assembly (*eidah*) said to them, 'if only we had died in Egypt. Or if only we had died in this wilderness. Why is Hashem bringing us to this Land to die by the sword? Our wives and our young children will be taken captive. Is it not better for us to return to Egypt?' So they said to one another, 'Let us appoint a leader and let us return to Egypt.'"

There is a notable reversal which takes place in the first two p'sukim. In the first pasuk it appears that the initiation of the action comes from the *eidah*, the assembly, which is then followed by an action from the *am*, the people. The Ramban and HaRav Shmshon Raphael Hirsch explain that the *eidah* is the gathering of the ten spies who brought back a negative report. Rashi uses the term "Sanhedrin" to describe this assembly. HaRav Zalman Sorotzkin explains that the spies each returned to their tents and began to wail, "Woe are we, woe are our wives and our children."

When their neighbors heard their cries, they too began to wail and cry. Soon the entire tribe had heard the wailing and joined in. HaRav Sorotzkin mentions that night was the time when voices carried the most, when fears expanded, and when a person who heard the cries of his neighbor would join him both in sympathy for his neighbor and for fear that his neighbor's tragedy would spread to him.

In the second pasuk, we find that the B'nei Yisrael, the *am*, initiated the action of murmuring against Moshe and Aharon. Only after they had begun did the *eidah* speak up and voice their complaints out loud in front of the entire nation. The spies had waited to see the attitude of the nation, whether the nation was siding with their evil report or whether they had decided to listen to Moshe and Aharon and the good report that came from Calev and Yehoshua. The spies' words to Moshe referred to dying in the desert or in Egypt. They had already dismissed the idea of attempting to enter the Land.

HaRav Sorotzkin emphasized the horror of dying in the desert. "It is difficult to die in the desert where no one will remember where one's remains are buried." When one dies in a village or settlement, normally there is a marker so that others will know and preserve that area in one's memory. Perhaps this was the reason for the deaths during the forty years in the desert. There, on the anniversary of that night, the people would dig a large ditch and all would sleep there that night. In the morning, those that did not wake were buried in that ditch. This was clearly a punishment in response to their argument.

We have seen that Rashi used the term "Sanhedrin" to describe the assembly. The Sanhedrin was comprised of the seventy elders of the B'nei Yisrael. HaRav Sorotzkin explains that these were the same elders who had prophesied in last week's parasha. These men had been in direct contact with Hashem, and yet they succumbed to the negative report of the spies. This was almost as difficult to explain as the Golden Calf after the people had heard directly the voice and power of Hashem. What makes this worse is the fact that these were the elders, people with experience and judgment, people who should not have been so easily persuaded and influenced by bad advice. Had these elders questioned the negative report and advised the people properly, perhaps this tragedy would not have occurred.

We are left with the final question, who is at fault for the punishment that the B'nei Yisrael received? Certainly, we can berate the spies whose opinion of the B'nei Yisrael caused them to view their likelihood of success as small. The B'nei Yisrael also bear blame as they rebelled against Moshe and Aharon so often that Hashem finally decided to erase an entire generation. One must also lay blame on the elders whose experience and closeness to Hashem should have

prevented them from joining this rebellion. Each group must shoulder its own responsibility.

There is an interesting Midrash about the B'nei Yisrael's punishment for accepting the negative report from the meraglim. The punishment which they received directly was that anyone over the age of twenty would die in the next forty years in the desert. That meant that their Olam HaZeh, their life in this world, was forfeited. Hashem was not satisfied with that punishment because the people had rebelled nine times previously in the desert and this was the straw that broke the camel's back. Hashem decided that they would also lose their Olam HaBa, their afterlife in the World to Come.

The saddest part of this whole incident was the response of the Sanhedrin who had prophesied from Hashem yet now were weak in support of Him. We see in this a danger for ourselves. We can never be complacent with our faith and must constantly renew and increase it. If they can fall, so can we. May we take the time daily to renew our faith and trust in Hashem. ©2022 Rabbi D. Levin

#### RABBI JONATHAN GEWIRTZ

### Migdal Ohr

**"M**oshe sent them from the desert of Paran, according to Hashem... (Bamidbar 13:3) The Torah isn't a history book. Why do we need to know where Moshe sent the spies from? Especially since the last posuk of Behaaloscha told us they camped in the desert of Paran, wouldn't we have assumed that the spies were sent from there when that's the last place mentioned before this incident?

The Kli Yakar offers us two fascinating insights which teach us an extremely deep lesson.

He explains that we know the sending of the spies was NOT at the behest of Hashem. Though Hashem acquiesced to letting Moshe send them, it was not Hashem's idea or desire. (Interestingly, in verse 2, the Kli Yakar says that even when allowing the spies to be sent, Hashem suggested sending women, and not men. See there for more.)

However, what WAS "al pi Hashem" was the sending of them from Midbar Paran! Hashem didn't want spies sent, but due to the badgering of the Jews for them to be sent, Hashem allowed it. Now, Paran was their first journey from Chatzeros. They would have many more travels (42 in total) before going into Eretz Yisrael. Why not wait until a future encampment, when they would be closer to Canaan?

The Kli Yakar says Hashem had two very calculated reasons. First of all, the story with Miriam speaking ill of Moshe happened in Chatzeros. Hashem wanted that memory fresh in their minds so they would learn from her not to speak negatively. However, He knew that they would not take this lesson to heart, which leads us to the second, astounding, reason.

Going from Midbar Paran would be a lengthy journey, which would take forty days. Thus, when the spies came back and gave their negative report, and Hashem would "punish" them with forty more years in the wilderness, the men who were twenty years of age and up would be able to live until the age of sixty, considered a "ripe" old age.

Essentially, Hashem did not approve of the idea of sending the spies, yet he allowed the Jews to push their agenda. Nevertheless, He orchestrated events to give them the best opportunity to avoid sin, and simultaneously prepared a compassionate consequence, by arranging that they would not die young.

We learn of Hashem's love for us, that even when we defy Him and do wrong, He looks for ways to soften the blow, and also that the events that happen around us are intended to guide us in the proper direction. By seeing the misbehavior of others, we are to recognize it for what it is, and realize that we should behave differently. Hashem may not stop us from choosing evil, but He will try to send us warning signs beforehand.

If we miss them, we will have to suffer the consequences of our actions, and will have no one to blame but ourselves.

*As the flood waters raged higher, the man was forced to his balcony, and finally to his roof. He stood on top of his home unperturbed. "I know you will save me L-rd, I am not afraid."*

*Soon a canoe paddled by and offered him a ride to safety. "G-d will rescue me, I do not need your help." The waters rose to his waist and a motorboat pulled up. The man refused to get into the boat, saying, "G-d will save me, you may go."*

*Finally, the waters reached his neck and a helicopter hovering overhead lowered a rope. "Go on your way," said the man. "I have complete faith that G-d will save me." The waters rose higher and the man drowned.*

*When he arrived in Heaven he questioned G-d. "I had faith that You would save me, what happened?" Replied the L-rd, "I sent you two boats and a helicopter, can't you take a hint?!"* ©2022 Rabbi J. Gewirtz and Migdal Ohr

#### RABBI LABEL LAM

### Dvar Torah

**"T**his shall be fringes for you, and when you see it, you will remember all the commandments of HASHEM to perform them, and you shall not wander after your hearts and after your eyes after which you are going astray. So that you shall remember and perform all My commandments and you shall be holy to your G-d." (Bamidbar 15:39-40)

"and you shall not wander after your hearts': The heart and eyes are the spies for the body. They are

its agents for sinning: the eye sees, the heart desires and the body commits the transgression." -- Rashi

Now here is a puzzle. The verse versus Rashi! The Torah tells us, and we say this every day, not to go exploring after the heart and the eyes. Rashi spells out the anatomy of a sin and outlines the dynamics of the process. First the eye sees and then the heart desires, and after that the body is drawn into the grip of sin. The verse cautions against going after the heart first and Rashi starts with the eyes. Who's right? What's right? Who is the criminal in this case? Which is to blame? Is the heart the instigator or are the eyes the troublemakers?

The Sifri, which is the Midrash on Bamidbar gives a definitive answer. It lays the responsibility directly at the feet of the heart. The heart in the Torah lexicon does not refer to that organ in the center of our chest that pumps blood throughout our body. It means the mind! LEVAV...with a double BEIS is both intellect and emotion combined. The Midrash tells us that the heart is responsible for having sent the eyes to spy. If the heart doesn't want it the eyes won't see it.

A young Frum woman in Lakewood was amazed by the scene she witnessed while checking out of a grocery store. The lady in front of was obviously or apparently not Jewish and she had her child sitting in the grocery store wagon as her order was being processed at the register. At one moment the child started to agitate and reach for a chocolate bar or a bag of chips that had been placed strategically in the impulse buying section. "I want it! I want it!" The mother told her, "It's not Kosher!" In the parking lot the Frum woman asked her politely, "I am curious, do you keep Kosher? Are you Jewish?" "No!" replied the lady, "I see that it works for you people!"

Once a Jewish child realizes it is not Kosher, he doesn't want it. It's like he doesn't see it. It's not for him. We can wire our brains and our feelings accordingly. I was working in a school for a number of years with older teenage girls. Now, every job has its occupational hazards and I realized that I needed to make some boundaries in my mind. I decided in one clear moment that I would never look at any of these girls any differently than I would look at my own daughters, and I never did. Not once! The secretary would complain to me, "Did you see how so and so was not dressed appropriately today?" Then she would say, "You don't see it because you're a man but Rabbi Ploney can't teach the class because of the way she's dressed. I'll speak to her!" I understand why this one cannot teach. It makes perfect sense and for that reason we have standards for modest dressing but it is possible not to see.

I would ask kids who were sent to my office for fighting or using bad language why they did it. It was always because somebody said or did something to them. So, I would ask them a series of follow up

questions. "Who gave you permission to hit him?" The shoulders would shrug and the questions would continue. Who thinks in your mind? Who speaks out of your mouth? Who moves your hands? Once they agreed that the answer to those three questions is "ME!", then I could explain to them what the Mishne in Bava Kama says, "Adam Muad L'Olam! -- A person is responsible for what he does!"

Everything we do flows from thought to speech into action. Even in the world of thought, there is the thought of thought and the speech of thought and the action of thought. That is where actions, whether for good or bad, are planted and nourished. The difference between a crazy person and everyone else is that crazy people say what others might only be thinking and they act out what others would only say. The filter between the thought speech and action is broken. When those boundaries are established in the mind, then then nothing gets past the thought of thought or the speech of thought without permission. This is the way of responsibly establishing and maintaining healthy filters. Because we can, we are responsible. ©2022 Rabbi L. Lam and torah.org

#### SHLOMO KATZ

### Hama'ayan

In this week's Parashah, we read of the first instance of someone transgressing the laws of Shabbat.

According to one opinion among the Sages, that man's sin was carrying in the public domain (where there was no Eruv).

Why is carrying prohibited on Shabbat? Indeed, what is the idea underlying the 39 prohibited categories of Melachah / "work"? Dayan Isidor Grunfeld z"l (1900-1975; London, England) explains as follows based on the teachings of R' Samson Raphael Hirsch z"l (1808-1888; Germany):

The 39 categories of Melachah form a cross-section of all the main types of human productive activity. Through these activities, man is engaged in a constant struggle to gain mastery over G-d's creation, to bring nature and the environment under man's control. While doing so, man tends to forget that the very powers he uses in his conquest of nature are derived from his Creator, in Whose service his life should be conducted.

In a world increasingly forgetful of G-d, Yisrael was entrusted with the task of preserving this all-important truth. G-d willed, therefore, that the Jew, while subduing and controlling his environment (as does every other human being), must recognize, and show that he recognizes, that his powers are derived from One higher than himself. He expresses this recognition by dedicating one day in every week to G-d, and by refraining on that day from every activity that signifies human power over nature and one's environment.

On Shabbat, explains R' Hirsch, we renounce every exercise of intelligent, purposeful control over natural objects and forces; we cease from every act of human power, in order to proclaim G-d as the Source of all power.

In light of this exposition, Dayan Grunfeld writes, one can easily see how senseless is the oft-repeated argument that it is no exertion to switch on an electric light or to write a word. Is using electricity any less a conquest of nature and the environment because it happens to be effortless?!

What of carrying, however, which requires no intelligent effort and in which no productive process is involved? Dayan Grunfeld explains that, while the other prohibited Melachot / activities relate to man's relationship with nature and his environment, carrying is the most basic form of "work" by which man interacts with human society. By refraining from carrying on Shabbat, we acknowledge Hashem as our Master in the sphere of human society as well. (The Sabbath, ch.2)

"Calev silenced the people toward Moshe and said, 'We shall surely ascend and conquer it, for we can surely do it!' But the men who had ascended with him said, 'We cannot ascend to that people for it is too strong for us!'" (13:30-31)

How could Calev and Yehoshua, on the one hand, and their ten fellow spies, on the other hand, see things so differently? R' Shlomo Wolbe z"l (1914-2005; a pre-eminent figure in the Mussar movement) explains:

We live in a world that seems relatively secure. Most people have steady jobs, access to healthcare, a government that provides security and basic social services, etc. Even when things do not go well, most people have some type of safety net. Seemingly, then, all that most people need to worry about are catastrophes such as a war, an earthquake, or another natural disaster.

However, R' Wolbe writes, our Sages tell us that this view is mistaken. King Shlomo writes, for example (Kohelet 9:11), "Once more I saw under the sun that the race is not won by the swift, nor the battle by the strong, nor does bread come to the wise, riches to the intelligent, nor favor to the learned; but time and death will happen to them all." Everything that seems certain in our life, all the things in which we place our trust--our Emunah/ faith tells us not to rely on them.

This does not mean, continues R' Wolbe, that the Torah expects us to ignore our intellects. A person must try to understand the world around him and use his intellect to make decisions. However, he should not rely on his own decisions as the final word. His reliance should be on Hashem.

Two people can look at the same facts--one from a perspective of closeness to Hashem, and the

other from a perspective of distance from Hashem--and they will see two very different things, R' Wolbe adds. This is what happened to the Spies, he explains. Calev and Yehoshua said (14:8), "If Hashem desires us, He will bring us to this Land and give it to us, a Land that flows with milk and honey." The other spies saw the same land as a land that consumes its inhabitants and is unconquerable. Why? Calev and Yehoshua looked at the Land through a lens of closeness to Hashem, and that enabled them to place their trust in Him. The other spies were great men, but they felt slightly less Dveikut / attachment to Hashem than people on their level should have had. As a result, they relied on their intellects, not on Hashem, and that led them astray. (AleI Shur II p.576)

"Then the nations that heard of Your fame will say, 'Because Hashem lacked the ability to bring this people to the Land that He had sworn to give them, He slaughtered them in the Wilderness.'

"And Hashem said, 'I have forgiven because of your words.'" (14:15-16, 20)

R' Yosef Albo z"l (Spain; 1380-1444) writes: In general, there are three reasons to hope for Hashem's salvation: His kindness, His honor, and His promise. [R' Albo elaborates on each. Regarding trusting because of Hashem's honor, he writes:]

When someone regularly helps another person, he should continue to help, even if the recipient is not deserving, lest it appear that he is unable to help. That would bring dishonor to the one who did not help. Thus, we read in Tehilim (79:9), "Assist us, G-d of our salvation, for the sake of Your Name's glory." We mean: You have been our salvation in the past; save us again for the sake of Your Name. We are not making this request because You owe us anything, nor because we are deserving. It is only for Your honor, so that the nations do not question Your ability to save us, as the next verse says, "Why should the nations say, 'Where is their G-d?'"

This, continues R' Albo, was the nature of Moshe's prayer here. And, Hashem answered him, "I have forgiven because of your words"--i.e., so that My Name will not be desecrated. By the same token, Hashem continues (verse 21), "As I live--the glory of Hashem shall fill the entire world," and Bnei Yisrael will be punished for this sin. (Sefer Ha'ikkarim IV 47) ©2022 S. Katz and torah.org

