

# The Narrow Bridge

## גשר צר מאוד

### PARSHA PERSPECTIVES

#### Short Divrei Torah on Parshas Shelach

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רפואה שלמה פעסל בת גאלדא / לזכות חילינו

#### **DIFFERENT PATHS, SAME DESTINATION**

##### Lubavitcher Rebbe

*"Send out for yourself men who will scout the land of Canaan that I give to the Children of Israel." (13:2)*

The intrinsic unity of the Jewish people derives from the common Divine mission we all share: to make the world into G-d's home. The Jewish people is divided into twelve tribes because there are different ways in which this one goal must be accomplished. G-d gives each of us, as individuals, specific powers and characteristics that suit the part of reality that Divine providence has charged us to transform. At the same time, however, we should pursue our individual goals in the context of our general goal as a nation.

It was in order to express our common Divine mission that G-d instructed all twelve tribal representatives to walk the length and breadth of the entire land, rather than having each representative only scout out his tribe's specific territory. At the same time, the fact that all twelve tribes were represented signified that this overall unity of purpose should permeate daily reality, in which we must emphasize our individual identities and their accompanying differences in purpose and approach. (Sefer HaSichot 5751, vol. 2, pp. 626-627) - Rabbi Moshe Yaakov Wisnefsky

#### **INTERNALIZING THE MESSAGE**

##### Rabbi Moshe Kormornick

*"Send out for yourself men who will scout the land of Canaan that I give to the Children of Israel." (13:2)*

Chezky was a good learner in yeshivah; he kept the mitzvos stringently and had been offered many marriage suggestions over the years, but it seemed that no one was good enough for him. Even the Rosh Yeshivah's daughter was someone who Chezky felt was "below" him. Realizing that his problem was haughtiness, Chezky's Rabbi suggested that he learn the Mesillas Yesharim's chapter dealing with humility. After learning it diligently, Chezky's Rabbi re-suggested the Rosh Yeshiva's daughter.

Chezky was shocked: "Before I knew how to be humble, she wasn't up to my standards... now that I mastered the trait of humility and become an even bigger tzaddik, you think I'm going to take her?!"

The reason why the spies allowed themselves to speak badly of the Land, explains Rashi, is because they did not internalize the lesson from Miriam's punishment after she spoke badly of Moshe. How could these great and righteous men not have learned from what happened to Miriam (each one was righteous as testified by Hashem Himself; Medrash Tanchumah, Shelach 4)? And how would mussar have helped them?

Rabbeinu Yonah (Shaarei Teshuvah 3:3) explains that whereas "knowledge" is a person's retention of information, "mussar" is the internalization of these details and forming it into one's being. For instance, someone can know that a sin is wrong, but until he is repulsed at the thought of doing it, he may come to stumble in that sin. Whereas someone who is disgusted with the sin is never likely to go near transgressing it.

In the case of the spies, the Zohar (3:158a) explains that the spies foresaw that they would lose their prestigious positions upon entering Eretz Yisrael, and deep down - without them even realizing it - their desire for honor clouded their judgment. If the spies would have been able to internalize the mussar from Miriam's punishment, however, this lesson would have been incorporated into their being and would have created an intolerance to speaking lashon hara despite the risk of losing their coveted positions.

When discussing the spies' sin, we cannot fathom their level of greatness and their subsequent fall, but the lessons of the Torah are for us to take mussar from and internalize their message. If the greatest leaders of the greatest generation can succumb to sin for not internalizing Hashem's message, how much more do we need to take the knowledge that we have learned and make it a part of our being.

Unlike we saw from the story above with Chezky, let us take our knowledge of how to act and move it from our head to our heart.

## **WITH HASHEM IN MIND**

### **Lubavitcher Rebbe**

*“Send out for yourself men who will scout the land of Canaan that I give to the Children of Israel.” (13:2)*

G-d wants us to understand as clearly as possible the goals of our Divine mission and the methods by which He wants us to carry it out, for this helps us fulfill it more enthusiastically. Moshe therefore thought that it was proper to send out scouts to spy out how best to conquer the land. That way, the people would be more enthusiastic about entering and conquering the land.

The spies' error consisted of going beyond the scope of their mission and drawing conclusions. Moshe only asked them to see how the land should be conquered, not if it could.

The lesson we learn from the spies' error is that even when we employ our own understanding in fulfilling our Divine mission, we must keep in mind that we are doing so because G-d wants us to - that we are doing so on His behalf.

This way, we can be sure that we are using our intellect solely to arrive at the objective truth, rather than to supply ourselves with evidence that bolsters some conscious or subconscious subjective agenda. (Likutei Sichot, vol. 23, pp. 92-95) - Rabbi Moshe Yaakov Wisniewsky

## **EARNING OUR PORTION**

### **Reb Levi Yitzchak of Berditchev**

*“Send out for yourself men who will scout the land of Canaan that I give to the Children of Israel.” (13:2)*

Many commentators have noted the glaring difficulty in understanding the import of the words “for yourself” (לך). To me it appears that G-d's primary objective was to send men who were G-d-fearing and perfectly righteous, whose whole purpose in life was to serve G-d. Their mission was not, G-d forbid, to inspect the physical quality of the land. Rather, G-d commanded Moshe to send ahead servants of G-d in order to make an impact upon the land through their Divine service, their Torah study and prayer, and to thereby draw down Divine vitality and bounty from the “Heavenly Land” of Israel into the “lower Land” of Israel. In this way, the lower land itself would desire the arrival of the offspring of Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov.

This, then, is the deeper meaning of the word “send” (שלח), which denotes drawing out” or “extending,” as in the verse (Shemos 2:5) “and she sent out (ותשלך) her maidservant,” which our Sages interpret (Sotah 12b) to mean that Pharaoh's daughter miraculously extended her arm to an abnormal length. In other words, G-d wanted to draw the natural corporality of their humanness out of the spies, so that they could achieve the level of Moshe.

This, then, is the deeper meaning of the passage “Send out (שלח) for yourself men (אנשים),” implying that their humanness (אנושותם) should be drawn out (שלח) from them - they should be divested of their physicality until they reach “yourself” - the level of Moshe, a spiritual level on which their entry into the land of Canaan would not be for the sake of ascertaining its physical properties, G-d forbid, but for the purpose of, immediately upon arriving there, studying Torah and engaging in Divine worship. This is alluded to by the verse's following term, “and they will scout” (ויתרו), which is phonetically similar to the word “Torah” (תורה).

The main point is that when the Jewish people are involved in the study of Torah and the observance of mitzvos, they acquire for themselves a portion in the Land of Israel aside from the one that they inherit from their forefathers, for in addition, they earn a portion in the land on account of their spiritual effect on it caused by the Torah they study and the mitzvos they perform.

This is the deeper significance of the verse's next words, “Which I am giving to the Children of Israel,” using the verb in the present tense. This suggests that when the Jewish people engage in the study of Torah and the observance of mitzvos, G-d continuously gives the Holy Land to the Jewish people.

This, however, was not the perspective of the fools who thought that Moshe sent the spies to discover the physical properties of the land. This is why Moshe prayed, regarding Yehoshua, “May G-d save you from the counsel of the [other] spies,” meaning that Yehoshua should not join the spies in their materialistic mission. Rather, his objective should remain principally “and they will scout” (ויתרו), which is phonetically similar to the word “Torah” (תורה).

## **HUMBLE BUT PERSISTENT**

### **Imrei Emes**

*“And Moshe called Hoshea the son of Nun, Yehoshua.” (13:16)*

[Moshe called him Yehoshua] because he prayed: “May G-d save you from the counsel of the spies!” (Rashi)

Humble people will not stubbornly persist in their own views but are ready at any time to defer to another opinion. Seeing that the spies were princes of their respective tribes and enjoyed immense public esteem, and knowing that Yehoshua was a humble man, Moshe feared that Yehoshua may be led to defer to their opinion. This is why he prayed on behalf of Yehoshua: “May G-d save you from the counsel of the spies!”

Of course, when it comes to the observance of Judaism, it isn't always proper to act the part of the humble person. Indeed, persistence may be imperative there. But to know when to persist in one's own opinion and when to defer to the views of others - this truly requires Divine support.

## PRAYING FOR CONFIDENCE

### Kozhnutzer Maggid

*"And Moshe called Hoshea the son of Nun, Yehoshua." (13:16)*

[Moshe called him Yehoshua] because he prayed: "May G-d save you from the counsel of the spies!" (Rashi)

When Moshe Rabbeinu saw that Yehoshua became angry with Eldad and Meidad, the two elders who continued their prophecy after the others had concluded, saying, "Moshe will die and Yehoshua will bring Bnei Yisrael into the land" (Rashi, Bamidbar 11:28), he realized just how great was the humility of Yehoshua, since he fled from honor and did not want to lead the people.

Moshe was afraid that, because of this humility, he would agree with the spies so the people could remain in the desert under Moshe's leadership. In that case they would not have to go into the Holy Land, where Yehoshua was to lead the people. Moshe therefore prayed for Yehoshua to be saved from the counsel of the spies.

## KNOW YOUR STRENGTH

### Reb Noson of Breslov

*"And Moshe called Hoshea the son of Nun, Yehoshua." (13:16)*

When the spies saw the bnei ha'nefilim (fallen angels), they were frightened (see Rashi on Bamidbar 13:33). These fallen angels are jealous of human beings and continually prosecute and deter man from serving G-d. They act this way because they know that man has the potential to ascend beyond the level of the angels. But the spies thought much less of themselves. They said, "We felt like grasshoppers, and that's what we were to them" (Bamidbar 13:33), because they felt they would never be able to overcome such adversaries.

Yehoshua, however, was not frightened by these angels, because he knew that Moshe's strength was enough to overcome them. Yehoshua merited to this knowledge because he was Moshe's disciple, and Moshe himself alluded to Yehoshua's strength when he changed his disciple's name from Hoshea (הוֹשֵׁעַ, Hosea) to Yehoshua (יְהוֹשֻׁעַ, Yehoshua) and prayed for him. Had the other spies learned from Moshe's disciple, they, too would have known about Moshe's strength to battle the angels. But jealousy and the desire for honor kept them from learning from their colleague. This caused their downfall.

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Moshe prayed for Yehoshua to be saved from the evil counsel of the spies. The name Yehoshua (יְהוֹשֻׁעַ, Yehoshua), is similar to Y-ah yoshiakha (י-ה יוֹשִׁיעָךְ, may G-d save you [from the conspiracy of the spies]). (Rashi)

Prayer is the main means of salvation. We use a similar phrase, Hoshana (הוֹשַׁעְנָה), during Succos and Hoshana Rabbah in order to arouse ourselves with prayer for G-d's salvation. (Likutey Halakhot III, p. 90)

## TIME TO TAKE A STAND

### Reb Menachem Mendel of Rimanov

*"And Moshe called Hoshea the son of Nun, Yehoshua." (13:16)*

When Moshe saw that Hoshea was humble, he changed his name to Yehoshua, for he prayed that Hashem should save him from the plot of the spies (Rashi).

There are two types of Tzaddikim. There are some who will do battle with insincere leaders because they are not concerned for themselves and are not worried that there are many who oppose them. Then there are those who, due to their humility, do not wish to rock the boat and will step aside and not get involved.

Moshe was concerned that a moment might arise when Yehoshua's strength was needed but he would step aside. So Moshe prayed that Hashem should save him from being humble.

(Similarly, the Gerrer Rebbe teaches: One of the characteristics of a humble person is to be compromising, to be ready to forgo his own views. Moshe knew that the spies were people of note. Therefore, he was concerned that Yehoshua might give in to the views of the others.

We find the same with one's religious behavior, for there are times that one must be uncompromising, and the help of the Almighty is needed.)

## INFLUENTIAL PROTECTION

### Rabbi Moshe Schochet

*"And Moshe called Hoshea the son of Nun, Yehoshua." (13:16)*

Rashi comments that Moshe added the letter *yud*, which represents Hashem's name, to Yeshua's name. The *yud* symbolizes the tefillah that Moshe davened to Hashem to protect Yehoshua from being influenced by the words of the meraglim.

Rav Yaakov Kaminentsky (Emes L'Yaakov) asks what many meforshim wonder: Why does Moshe daven on behalf of Yehoshua but not on behalf of Calev?

Rav Yaakov provides a powerful answer. He explains that Calev was married and under the influence of Miriam, who was both a *neviah* and *tzaddekes*. Moshe knew that Calev would be protected from the evil effect of the spies because of the impact his wife Miriam had on him. Therefore, Calev was not in need of any extra tefillos to protect him.

Rav Yaakov is communicating an important lesson. Each of us has the responsibility to have a positive influence on our spouses and families. Our influence on those around us can have a far-reaching impact, even in moments when they are not with us. If we are successful in creating that positive influence, then we too can make sure that we and our families will not only be protected from negative influences but also surrounded by a positive environment.



## **ELEVATING SPARKS**

### **Reb Levi Yitzchak of Berditchev**

*“Go up to the Negev and climb the mountain; see what the land is, and the people who inhabit it...” (13:17-18)*

The underlying mystical principle here is as follows: When you want to elevate a spark, it is necessary for a person to cleave to G-d's primary attribute which is loving-kindness (Zohar 3:223a). This is the deeper significance of the word “south,” since the south symbolizes kindness (Tikkunei Zohar 69, 106b).

Alternatively, in order to elevate a spark, a person must break the craving of his evil impulse, as explained elsewhere on the verse “Each of Your commandments makes me wiser than my enemies, for it is always mine” (Tehillim 119:98).

In other words, a person should tell his evil inclination, which is his true enemy: “You are trying to seduce me to satisfy your craving, but the intent of your craving is that I have pleasure. Now, isn't the highest pleasure obtained from serving G-d? So it is better to worship G-d! The main difference between the two sources of pleasure is that when one serves G-d, the pleasure is everlasting, whereas your pleasure is fleeting.”

This, then, is the import of the words “my enemies,” referring to the evil inclination. The remainder of the verse thus means, “Your commandments make me wiser, for it, i.e., the pleasure derived from fulfilling the commandments, is always mine.” This is the allusion in the phrase “And climb up the mountain.” For the evil inclination is symbolized by a mountain, as our Sages say (Sukkah 52a), “When G-d will slay the evil inclination in the future, it will appear to the righteous like a mountain...” In other words, by sublimating the seduction of the evil impulse to enjoyment in serving G-d, a person elevates the spark and breaks the kelipah.

## **POWER OF RESOLVE**

### **Lubavitcher Rebbe**

*“See what the land is, and the people who inhabit it: are they strong or weak? Are they few or many?” (13:18)*

The phrase describing the people whom G-d had commanded the Jews to conquer - “are they strong or weak” - can be read, “if they are strong, they will become weak.”

This teaches us that in our conquest of the materiality of the world, no matter how strong and overwhelming this materiality (our “enemy”) appears to us, if we dedicate ourselves fully to the battle, the enemy will sense this and be weakened by our resolve.

This is why Moshe mentioned “are they strong” before “are they weak.” We have to be ready to oppose the powers of negativity no matter how formidable they appear, and then, they will be rendered weak, and much easier to subdue. - Rabbi Moshe Yaakov Wisniewsky

## **FROM DESERT TO MOUNTAIN**

### **Rebbe Nachman**

*“Go up to the Negev and climb the mountain; see what the land is, and the people who inhabit it...” (13:17-18)*

The Negev desert is a relatively unattractive part of the Land of Israel. Moshe told the spies to first scout out the less attractive areas of the Land, and then tour its more beautiful areas. (Rashi)

The “mountain” represents the Temple (Rashi on Devarim 3:25), which is analogous to a tzaddik's holy teachings. The “desert” represents the tzaddik's mundane conversation.

When a tzaddik wants to “go up” - that is, when he wants to raise people who are on a low spiritual level - he must first take them through the “desert,” speaking to them on mundane topics. In this way, he draws them to serve G-d. Eventually, he will bring them to the “mountain” of the Holy Temple, which indicates a great level of *da'at* (knowledge of G-d). (See Likutey Moharan I, 81:1)

Sometimes it happens that a tzaddik falls from his lofty spiritual level. When an ordinary person engages the tzaddik in mundane conversation - conversation about the “desert” - and the tzaddik gets pleasure from this, it inspires the tzaddik to rise and see the “mountains” - to return to his exalted level. Then the tzaddik can raise the ordinary person to *da'at*. (ibid., I, 81:3)

## **LAND OF GOODNESS**

### **Sefer HaZechus**

*“And how is the land in which it dwells, is it good or bad?” (13:19)*

Moshe said to the spies: Even if the land seems bad to you, it is good. Though it may be hidden, the sanctity of the land is always there. Hidden beneath its superficial disadvantages is all its good.

Once you have entered the Land, all the sanctity that was previously concealed will lie revealed before you.

(Similarly, the Kotzker Rebbe teaches: Moshe requested the spies to report the positive aspects of the land. Even if they detected aspects that were negative, they were to report the positive. If the land looked lean, it was to be seen as fertile.)

When it comes to the Land of Israel, even if one sees things that are negative, one must strengthen himself and not become depressed.)

## **HIGHER VANTAGE POINT**

### **Rabbi Moshe Kormornick**

*“And how is the land in which it dwells, is it good or bad?” (13:19)*

How could Moshe entertain the possibility that Eretz Yisrael could be bad in any way?

The Kotzker Rebbe answers that Moshe did not really consider that Eretz Yisrael could be bad in any way. However, he knew that the spies may not be capable of perceiving everything that they saw in a positive light. Therefore, Moshe wanted them to report to him first and tell him their impression of what they saw, and then he would show them how, in reality, everything that they experienced was actually very good, and not as they initially perceived it. (The best example of this was the many funerals that took place; everywhere they went, the spies witnessed the Canaanites burying their dead. To them, this phenomenon painted a very dangerous, undesirable picture of the Land. If they would have first consulted Moshe, however, then he would have shown them how the numerous deaths were in fact a miraculous act of kindness from Hashem, done in order to ensure the spies' safety.)

The greatness of our Torah leaders is their ability to see beyond the field of vision that we are capable of. The following story demonstrates this point very well. In 1939, as Germany invaded Poland, Reb Yitzchak Ginzman, the Pshevorsker Rebbe fled with many other Jews to Lemberg, which was under Russian control. Once in Lemberg, the Jewish refugees had to decide whether they should accept the Russian citizenship that they were immediately offered, or to reject it. No one knew what to do. Should they accept citizenship in order not to offend their new hosts, or remain in a state of limbo, waiting to see how the war would end? The question was posed to the Pshevorsker Rebbe who advised that citizenship should not be taken up. Although several families ignored his advice, many Jewish immigrants accepted the Rebbe's ruling and hoped for the best.

On the 23<sup>rd</sup> of Sivan the following year, the KGB stormed into Lemberg and arrested all the Jews who had refused citizenship a year earlier. These Jews were swiftly taken and placed in cattle cars heading to Siberia. There was anger and depression in the air and many people voiced their rage at the Pshevorsker Rebbe whom they held responsible for their fate - if they would have only accepted citizenship, they would still be at home, living normally!

The Pshevorsker Rebbe consoled them and reassured them that the date was the 23<sup>rd</sup> of Sivan, which was the day that Achashverosh revoked the letters that Haman had sent out ordering the massacre of the Jews. "Just like the 23<sup>rd</sup> of Sivan was a day of salvation for the Jews all that time ago," he explained, "so it will be a day of salvation for us too." The Pshevorsker Rebbe's words proved true for everyone who had been sent to Siberia. Soon after their deportation, the Germans invaded Lemberg and killed almost all of the remaining Jewish population there. Those in Siberia were far out of reach of the German army and were saved from almost certain death. In addition, their refusal to accept Russian citizenship meant that when the war ended, they were free to leave Russia, unlike those surviving Jews who had sworn allegiance to Mother Russia.

## **HAVE TO KNOW IT TO SEE IT**

### **Rabbi Moshe Kormornick**

*"And how is the land in which they dwell; is it good or bad?" (13:19)*

Rav Noach Weinberg used to recount the time when he met an irreligious tourist on his first trip to Israel.

"Rabbi," said the young man, "I've heard them describe this land as 'The Holy Land' but I have to tell you, I've been up to the north and down to the south and to both sides. I've been everywhere and I didn't see a drop of holiness in this Land!"

"If you were in all of Israel," asked Rav Noach with his trademark smile, "then let me ask you, how many Buffefists did you meet?"

"Excuse me?" asked the young man, "What is a Buffefist?"

"I did not ask you if you know what a Buffefist is, I asked you how many you met!"

"How am I supposed to know how many I met if I have no idea what a Buffefist is?" the young man responded, clearly irritated by the Rabbi's nonsensical question.

However, this was the exact response that Rav Noach had expected. "Tell me young man, do you know what holiness is to say that you haven't seen it in this Land? Were you expecting white angels walking barefoot in the streets? Or perhaps beautiful light emanating from the rocks? Without an understanding of what holiness is, how can you possibly know what to look for, and even if you find it, how would you recognize it?"

We see from Rav Noach's words that the key to experiencing the holiness of Eretz Yisrael is to first understand what holiness is. Yet, even if we develop a sensitivity to the concept of holiness, what can we do to actually experience it in Eretz Yisrael?

Rav Yisrael of Rozhin once compared the Holy Land to a feathered down-quilt - something that itself does not provide warmth yet keeps the person within it warm by trapping in his own heat. So too, explained Rav Yisrael, someone who is "cold" to holiness will not receive anything from Eretz Yisrael in return, but a person of fire and energy - specifically for Torah and mitzvos - will experience holiness and bask in the warmth of the Holy Land in return.

## **RELY ON HASHEM**

### **Reb Noson of Breslov**

*"They cut a vine with one cluster of grapes... They also took some pomegranates and some figs..." (13:23)*

Pharaoh dreamed about seven fat cows that were swallowed up by seven lean cows (Bereishis 41:4). Pharaoh represents the wealthy man who always craves more, as if he is always hungry and lacking. When Yosef interpreted his dream, he advised Pharaoh to "tax" the bounty at twenty percent.

Yosef the tzaddik advises the wealthy to “tax their wealth” by giving to charity, a mitzvah that protects one's wealth. (Likutey Halakhot II, p. 79a)

An insatiable desire for wealth was also the blemish of the spies. Several points in the two narratives hint at this connection. That the spies took the grapes, pomegranates and figs which were of an incredible size and bounty indicates their avariciousness. Additionally, Pharaoh's dream occurred after shnatayim yamim (literally, “two years of days”) (Bereishis 41:1), an unusual phrase indicating a connection between “years” and “days.” Similarly, the spies who slandered the Holy Land were punished with “a day for a year, a day for a year” (Bamidbar 14:34) - i.e., a year in the desert for each day they spent spying out the Land.

In fact, the Holy Land was more than bountiful, ready to give forth its produce to the Jewish people in a miraculous manner. But the spies wanted to conquer the Land in a “natural” manner, implying that they desired wealth without wanting to believe that G-d is the Provider.

Their true motives are revealed in their name. The Hebrew word meraglim (מרגלים, spies) comes from the root Regel (רגל, foot). Avaricious people travel constantly, always on the lookout for a “deal,” always seeking more money and possessions, never relying on G-d to provide for them where they live. (Likutey Halakhot II, p. 158)

## **FALTERING RETROACTIVELY**

### **Imrei Emes**

*“They [the spies] went and came to Moshe and Aharon...” (13:26)*

The intention here is to compare their “going” with their “coming” to Moshe. How was their coming to Moshe? With an evil plan. So, too, their leaving was with an evil plan. (Rashi)

In view of the fact that, in his commentary on pasuk 3, Rashi himself states that “they sinned later, but at that time (i.e., when Moshe sent them out) they were still worthy men,” this comment seems difficult to understand.

However, these two statements, contradictory though they seem, can be readily reconciled.

The Sages say that [while Hashem counts a good thought as a good deed,] an evil thought or plan in itself is not counted as an evil deed. But once that plan is put into action, the thought is retroactively counted as a separate sin (Kiddushin 40).

Thus, at the time when the spies went on their mission with an evil plan, that evil plan was not counted against them, and they “were still worthy men.” But when, by “coming” to Moshe and Aharon with an unfavorable report, they translated their evil plan into evil action, their sinister plan became a sin in itself, and therefore Rashi now finds a basis for comparing their “going” forth on their mission with their “coming” back to Moshe.

## **POWER OF DESIRE**

### **Reb Noson of Breslov**

*“This is what they told him: ‘We came to the land you sent us to; it does indeed flow with milk and honey, and this is its fruit.’” (13:27)*

Eretz (ארץ, land) is similar to *Ratzon* (רצון, will or desire). One who wishes to enter the Holy Land must fortify himself with much longing and desire to reach his goal.

The spies knew this. But since they wanted to keep the Jews out of the Land, they spoke deceitfully. They said, “It is flowing with milk and honey, and this is its fruit” - meaning, with longing and desire for the Land (i.e., for holiness), we can ascend the ladder of spirituality. However, “The people who dwell in the land are strong” - meaning, the obstacles confronting us are greater than the strength of our desire.

Yehoshua and Calev did not succumb to the blemish of the spies. They said (Bamidbar 13:30), “Let us go up and we will conquer it!” Even if Moshe tells us to build ladders and ascend to Heaven (Rashi on Bamidbar 13:30), we will do so, for with the power of desire and will, we can overcome all obstacles. (Likutey Halakhot II, p. 132a)

## **SCHEMEFUL INSINUATIONS**

### **Rabbi Dovid Hoffman**

*“We came to the land you sent us to; it does indeed flow with milk and honey, and this is its fruit.” (13:26-27)*

There seems to be a contradiction in the way the spies reported their tale. First, the pasuk says: They brought word to them and to the entire congregation. The spies told over their report to a large group of people. The next pasuk, however, states: And they recounted to him, and they said... They told “him” - Moshe Rabbeinu, alone. How can we explain the fact that they began by telling all the people about the land, but then spoke only to Moshe Rabbeinu?

The Plotzker Gaon, Rav Aryeh Leib Tzintz zt'l (Melo Ha'Omer), explains that when the spies returned from Eretz Yisrael, they began by telling everyone that the land was wonderful. However, they made it clear that there was something that they wished to tell only to Moshe. This made people nervous; they were concerned that the righteous spies were hiding something about the land, and that all was not as wonderful as they were declaring publicly.

When the spies were seen going off with Moshe alone so that no one would hear what they had to say, the people began to suspect the worst, and they no longer desired to enter the land.

The same can happen when one wants to speak negatively about someone. He may try to appear as if he really does not want to speak against the person and pretend it is painful for him to say it, or that he is holding back and not saying everything he could.

How careful a person must be that not only what he says is free of any negativity towards others, but even what he does not say - what he only alludes to, the things he leaves unsaid, his gestures and facial expressions - does not leave others with mixed signals that will cause them to imagine the worst. This was the tactic of the meraglim, and we are still paying dearly for it today.

## **CONQUERING ALL HEIGHTS**

### **Reb Alexander Zusia Friedman**

*“Calev silenced the people toward Moshe, and said: ‘We can indeed go up and possess [the land], for we are well able to overcome it.’” (13:30)*

We can indeed go up. Even if the land were in heaven and if he (Moshe) were to say: “Make ladders and go up there,” we would listen to him because we would be successful in whatever he wants us to do. (Rashi)

Who would think of making ladders to reach the sky in order to go up to the Promised Land? The thought derives from the account in Devarim (1:28), where we read of the spies' report that the cities of the Promised Land were “great and fortified up to heaven.” This thought, according to Rashi, inspired Calev to declare that “even if Moshe would command us to make immense ladders on which to scale the sky-high fortifications of these cities, we would succeed in climbing to the very top and conquering them all.”

## **DESPITE ALL FEARS**

### **Rabbi Efreim Goldberg**

*“Calev silenced the people toward Moshe, and said: ‘We can indeed go up and possess [the land], for we are well able to overcome it.’” (13:30)*

The Yismach Yisrael of Alexander writes that the meraglim's fear was, in truth, legitimate. They were concerned that although Eretz Yisrael is a good land, full of potential, nevertheless, **אפס כי עז העם** (13:28) - there are hazards and risks. There are many benefits to living in the land, but there are also dangers. The meraglim, understandably, worried that Am Yisrael were not qualified to meet the challenges involved in living in the Land of Israel, and that instead of deriving immense benefit from the land, they would be endangered by it.

Why, then, were they wrong? What was the spies' sin, if they were legitimately concerned about the risks of living in Eretz Yisrael? After all, the Yismach Yisrael notes, Yaakov Avinu, too, was scared. As Eisav approached, Yaakov feared that he was unworthy of the special protection he would need for this dangerous confrontation (Bereishis 32:10). Why were the meraglim's fears unacceptable?

The Yismach Yisrael answers that Yaakov Avinu plowed ahead despite his fears, whereas the spies recoiled and despaired.

When Bnei Yisrael stood at the shores of the Yam Suf and saw the pursuing Egyptian army, they panicked, and considered turning around and returning to Egypt. But they succeeded in overcoming their fears and proceeded into the sea, placing their faith in G-d's promise. Now, however, when the meraglim returned with a frightening report, the people decided to return to Egypt instead of defeating their fears and moving forward.

It is perfectly acceptable to be afraid, to entertain doubts, to have concerns. To the contrary, before rushing into something, we need to pause, understand what's at stake, what risks are involved, and prepare accordingly before proceeding. The problem is when we just give up, when we assume that because of the risks and challenges, it cannot be done.

There are two kinds of people. Some, like Calev, say **עלה נובל וירשנו אותה כי יכול נובל** - Let us go up and take possession of [the land], for we can surely do it!” (13:30). And others, like the rest of the meraglim, say, **לא נובל לא העם לעלות אל העם** - We cannot go up against the people” (13:31). There are **יכול נובל** people, who believe that they can accomplish even in the face of challenge, even when there are legitimate concerns; and then there are **לא נובל** people, who right away assume that it cannot be done, who allow the voice of skepticism to prevail, and just give up before considering ways to overcome the obstacles.

Chazal teach that the name **כלב** alludes to **כולו לב** - “all heart.” Calev's heart was fully invested in the goal of settling Eretz Yisrael, and this passion and commitment is what led him to firmly proclaim, **יובל נובל לה** - that it can be done. If we really want something, we will find a way to make it happen. We will first affirm that it can be done, and then we will work patiently, diligently and responsibly to figure out how...

In all areas of our lives, we need to proceed with a **יובל לה**, **כולו לב**, with passion and determination, firmly believing that we can reach our goals, and then carefully figuring out how to make it happen.

## **A STEP AT A TIME**

### **Rebbe of Ostrowicze**

*“Calev silenced the people toward Moshe, and said: ‘We can indeed go up and possess [the land], for we are well able to overcome it.’” (13:30)*

We can indeed go up. Even if the land were in heaven and if he (Moshe) were to say: “Make ladders and go up there,” we would listen to him because we would be successful in whatever he wants us to do. (Rashi)

The spies argued that “the Land is a land that devours its inhabitants” (lit., “those who sit in it”), that the Promised Land is a land in which one cannot “sit” still in one place but must move onward and upward all the time, climbing up to ever higher heights of sanctity, for if one ever stops climbing, one must fall. This, of course, would be difficult.



Who, the spies wondered, would be equal to it?

To this, Calev replied: "We can indeed go up." Let's make ladders. We need not climb up to Heaven all at once; it is enough if we do it by degrees. Let us, therefore, endeavor to go up step by step, as on the rungs of a ladder, until we arrive at the highest level of holiness.

## **BEYOND REFUTE**

### **Meshech Chochmah**

*"Calev silenced the people toward Moshe, and said: 'We can indeed go up and possess [the land], for we are well able to overcome it.'" (13:30)*

Why did Calev, rather than Yehoshua, speak up?

The main cause for the panic that had taken hold of the Jews was Eldad's and Medad's prophecy that Moshe would die, to be succeeded by Yehoshua. Hearing this prediction, they could not imagine how - without Moshe's leadership - they would be able to conquer the giants and the huge fortified cities of which the spies had told them. It was for this reason that Calev "stilled" the frightened people by telling them that it would be an error to think that only Moshe was able to perform miracles. On the contrary, he told them, they themselves, the Jewish people, possessed those qualities that made them worthy of miracles, so that actually Moshe himself derived his greatness only from their sanctity.

This, then, is the interpretation of the pasuk in the Torah's text: "And Calev silenced the people toward Moshe" - Calev dissuaded the people from their belief that everything depended on Moshe - "and said: We can indeed go up and possess [the land], for we are well able to overcome it." Even without Moshe, we should be able to go up at once and conquer the Promised Land.

Calev, and not Yehoshua, had to be the one to tell them that. For had Yehoshua said it, the people - knowing Eldad's and Medad's prophecy - would have thought he was saying this only because he knew he would take Moshe's place and because he was eager for personal honor and glory.

## **SEEING THE WHOLE TRUTH**

### **Rabbi Dovid Hoffman**

*"The land through which we have passed to scout is a land which consumes its inhabitants." (13:32)*

When the meraglim reported on their findings, they described the Land of Israel as "a land that consumes its inhabitants." Rashi explains that they found people burying their dead wherever they went. Actually, Hashem had made this happen for the spies' benefit, so that the inhabitants would be otherwise occupied and not notice the spies. If that was so, ask many of the commentaries, what was their sin? They indeed said the truth; they witnessed many funerals taking place!

The famed Kotzker Rebbe, Rav Menachem Mendel Morgenstern zt'l, explains that just because something is "not a lie," it doesn't mean it's the truth.

A person can describe a specific item or incident the way he or she sees it, and it would not necessarily be called a truth. At the same time, it is not a lie either. A real man of truth looks at not only what his eyes behold; he looks at what is beyond the surface, searching the depth of the matter.

The spies allowed themselves to be misled by the external appearance of the natural world, despite all the promises given by Hashem that He would bring them to the Land. But the faith of Klal Yisrael does not depend upon what their eyes see.

What the spies said could not be called lies, but it also wasn't the absolute truth. They failed to attain a deeper understanding of what was going on. When they saw people burying their dead, they thought it was characteristic of the Land, but they didn't see that Hashem orchestrated these events for their benefit, in order that they should not be discovered. Only Yehoshua and Calev were able to truly perceive that message.

## **INCORPORATING THE TORAH**

### **Rabbi Shlomo Ressler**

*"The land through which we have passed to scout is a land which consumes its inhabitants." (13:32)*

While the stage was set for the Nesiim to bring the Jews into the Promised Land, Parshas Shelach describes the tragic negative report that condemned the Jews to the desert for forty years until the next generation was ready to claim their Promised Land.

As the Lubavitcher Rebbe asked, roughly a year after the miracles in Egypt, the splitting of the sea, the giving of the Torah, and many other miracles, how could the Nesiim suddenly doubt G-d's ability to help us occupy the land that was promised to us? The Jews' doubts are even more difficult to understand when considering Rachav's description of the fear Yericho's residents had of the Jews as they approached (Yehoshua 2:9-11).

The Rebbe answered his question by saying that the leaders didn't fear failure; they feared success in a new way of life. G-d was close and intimate with His people while they were wandering in the desert. The leaders knew that entering the land meant fighting battles, creating an economy, farming the land, and being confronted with other distractions.

However, perhaps what they didn't realize was that their success was easily attainable and right in front of them in the form of Torah, written precisely to enable them to thrive in society and serve as a moral guide to engage with the world. While being close to G-d alone in the desert is an amazing experience, using the Torah to help us navigate the world is its true purpose.



## **NEED FOR HUMILITY**

### **Reb Noson of Breslov**

*"The land through which we have passed to scout is a land which consumes its inhabitants." (13:32)*

The spies blemished by slandering the Holy Land; therefore G-d swore that they would not enter the Land (Bamidbar 14:21-23; see Erkhin 15a).

The Zohar teaches that the souls of the spies were rooted in a level far greater than the sanctity of the Holy Land. They were from the Dor Dei'ah (the Generation of Knowledge that followed G-d in the desert for forty years), while the Holy Land itself represents Malkhut (faith). As such, were the spies to enter the Holy Land, they would have had to give up their leadership positions and lead ordinary lives (Zohar III, 158a; see also Ari, Sha'ar HaPesukim, p. 119-123). Since their souls were much greater than the Land, why did G-d become so angry with them and swear that they would not enter?

A person is meant to recognize G-d. That recognition comes about through the tzaddik. No matter how much someone thinks he knows G-d, he cannot truly comprehend Him, because G-d is Infinite. On the other hand, no matter how far a person thinks he is from G-d, he is mistaken, because "The whole earth is filled with His glory" (Yeshayahu 6:3). Only the tzaddik can perceive and combine these two levels, helping those who think they are close to G-d realize how far away they still are, and helping those who are distant from G-d feel close to Him.

The greatness of Moshe, the true tzaddik, was actually his humility, for he was so humble that he could lower himself to the lowest level to instill G-dliness even there. (Likutey Halakhot V, p. 28-15a)

On their high level, the spies could not understand how they would be able to contain their intellect within the smaller parameters of faith offered by the Holy Land. They failed to see that the main objective is to combine the two levels, as the tzaddik does. That is, when one attains faith, he must strive for intellect. When he attains intellect, he must return to faith in order to strive for greater intellect.

The Zohar (III, 158a) states that the spies were unable to enter the Holy Land because of their arrogance. They knew that if they entered the Land, Moshe would find them unworthy and would appoint others as leaders of the Jews. Had they humbled themselves before Moshe, they would have received the ability to combine the lower and the upper levels, becoming true leaders. They would have also recognized that the Land could benefit them, too. But instead, the spies said, "We felt like grasshoppers, and that's what we were to them" (Bamidbar 13:33) - for they minimized their abilities and did not think that G-d could take delight in them. (Likutey Halakhot V, p. 28)

Though Calev also possessed a great soul, he humbled himself before the greatness of the tzaddikim such as the Patriarchs and Moshe. Therefore, Calev was able to enter the Land. (ibid., V, p. 20)

## **HOLY CONSUMPTION**

### **Rebbe Nachman**

*"The land through which we have passed to scout is a land which consumes its inhabitants." (13:32)*

A lower level of holiness is always nullified before a greater level. Just as a person can be "consumed" by the holiness of the Land of Israel, so too, an ordinary person can be "consumed" by the tzaddik and transformed into his substance - meaning, his good characteristics and righteous deeds. (See Likutey Moharan I, 135)

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It is good for a person to be attached to a tzaddik, even if he does not seem to receive much from him.

In the course of life, "that which is consumed is transformed into the consumer." For instance, when an animal ingests grass, the grass is transformed into the animal. A person who eats meat transforms the animal into part of himself.

The same concept applies to the Holy Land, which is called "a land that consumes its inhabitants." When one enters the Land, which is the concept of faith, he is consumed by it - that is, he is transformed into its substance, becoming a man of faith.

Similarly, when one is associated with a tzaddik, who is the concept of the Holy Land, he is consumed by the tzaddik and is literally transformed into the tzaddik's substance - i.e., his good characteristics and righteous deeds.

However, closeness to the tzaddik is of no benefit to someone who does not wish to come close to G-d. This is compared to food that cannot be consumed: if a person eats something that his body cannot tolerate, then it is neither digested nor transformed into nourishment. Instead, the body vomits it out. One whose motives are impure will not be "consumed" by the tzaddik, but will be rejected by him. So too, the Holy Land ejects those who do not pursue holiness, as it is written (Vayikra 18:28), "So the land will not vomit you out for defiling it, as it vomited out the previous nation." (See Likutey Moharan I, 129)

## **REVEALING THE CONCEALED**

### **Lubavitcher Rebbe**

*"It's a land which consumes its inhabitants..." (13:32)*

The spies' heightened but misdirected spiritual orientation led them astray. The spies wanted to experience life and pursue G-dliness unencumbered by the distractions of materiality. In the desert, the Jewish people were protected by the Clouds of Glory, sustained by the manna and the well of Miriam, and all their physical needs were fully attended to. All of their time was spent in the study of the Torah, in meditation, and in prayer. The spies were repulsed by the notion of entering the real world, where we must waste time working for our daily bread.

The vision of a life devoted to expanding our Divine consciousness unburdened by material distractions is of course praiseworthy. This vision has inspired us to yearn throughout history for the Messianic era, when the materiality of the world will no longer distort our spiritual focus.

Nonetheless, this yearning must be balanced with humble submission to G-d's plan. The purpose of life is to live within mundane reality, revealing the G-dliness concealed within it. Only by entering the material world can G-d's essence be found, through fulfilling His commandments on the physical plane. (Likutei Sichot, vol. 23, pp. 92; Sefer HaSichot 5751, vol. 2, pp. 617) - Rabbi Moshe Yaakov Wisniewsky

## HIGHER THAN ANGELS

### Lubavitcher Rebbe

*"There we saw the Nephilim, the sons of giants from among the Nephilim; we were like grasshoppers in our eyes and so we were in their eyes." (13:33)*

The Talmud informs us that the "fallen ones" referred to in this verse are the angels who, witnessing humanity's corruption before the great Flood, tried to convince G-d that they would be better stewards of the world. G-d gave them the chance, but they failed miserably and became even more corrupt than the human beings they had originally mocked.

By mentioning this incident, the spies tried to bolster their argument that living a holy life in a corporeal world is impossible: even angels cannot succeed.

To this Calev and Yehoshua answered, "If G-d desires us" - if G-d wants us to sanctify the physical world, then "He will bring us to this land and give it to us" - He has given us the power to do this. We have an advantage over the angels: our souls are "literally a part of G-d" (Iyov 31:2), and when we tap its potential, we can overcome the material world's inherent opposition to spirituality. (Likutei Sichot, vol. 28, pp. 91-92) - Rabbi Moshe Yaakov Wisniewsky

## IT BEGINS FROM WITHIN

### Rabbi Elimelech Biderman

*"We were like grasshoppers in our eyes and so we were in their eyes." (13:33)*

The Midrash states, "HaKadosh Baruch Hu forgave them (the spies) for saying 'We were like grasshoppers,' but Hashem didn't forgive them for saying, 'that's how they perceived us.' Hakadosh Baruch Hu told them, 'How do you know which impression I had them think of you? Perhaps they thought you are angels.'"

The Sfas Emes asks that the Gemara (Sotah 35a) states that the meraglim heard the Canaanites say, "We see people, they look like ants, crawling in the vineyards." It seems that it wasn't only the meraglim's imagination...

The Sfas Emes answers that the problem began with their negative self-perception. This influenced others to look down at them. "Since they were small in their own eyes, and they considered themselves like grasshoppers, this caused others to see them that way." Your self-perception has tremendous power.

## HEAVENLY IMPACT

### Baal Shem Tov

*"There we saw the Nephilim, the sons of giants from among the Nephilim; we were like grasshoppers in our eyes and so we were in their eyes." (13:33)*

Excessive humility is an obstacle, fooling us into believing that we do not draw Divine light to all the worlds through our prayer and study - whereas in truth even the angels are sustained from our efforts.

Believing that we are too insignificant to damage or improve the heavens or the earth leads to anarchy without oversight. Rather, we must recognize that we bond with G-d Himself with each positive deed we do.

If we would recognize our power, we would throw ourselves into G-d's service with tremendous joy; we would be in awe of our good fortune. We would be scrupulous with our every movement and word, paying attention to the statement of Dovid HaMelech: "If you lie between the borders" (Tehillim 68:14) - the word shefatayim, borders, is related to sefatayim, lips. G-d waits and watches our lips, eager to kiss them when we pronounce words of Torah and prayer with love and awe. Who can contemplate this thought without trembling? The great and awesome King of the universe is waiting and watching the lips of a truly lowly human!

Excessive humility undermines all this. Remember: We are "ladders with feet on the earth and heads in the heavens" (Bereishis 28:12). Our every movement and word influences the heavens. Surely we will ensure that our every activity is performed for the sake of heaven.

## BELIEVE IN YOURSELF

### Rabbi Moshe Schochet

*"There we saw the Nephilim, the sons of giants from among the Nephilim; we were like grasshoppers in our eyes and so we were in their eyes." (13:33)*

The meraglim returned from their ill-advised expedition with a negative report about the land of Israel. In addition to the size of the fruits and the numerous funerals taking place during their mission, they shared how they were perceived, by the inhabitant of the land, as grasshoppers.

The Sfas Emes provides a powerful insight into these words. He explains that the reason why the giants viewed the meraglim as grasshoppers was because that is how the meraglim viewed themselves. They felt insignificant, and, as a result, they were seen by others as unimportant.

If a person wants others to have confidence in him or her, then they need to possess confidence in themselves. If a person wants others to see their talents and strengths, they must be able to recognize and exude belief in their own capacities and abilities.

## **HEIGHTENED WISDOM**

### **Imrei Shefer**

*“Then Moshe and Aharon fell on their faces... and Yehoshua son of Nun and Calev the son of Yephuneh, who were among those who spied out the land, tore their garments...” (14:5-6)*

From earlier pesukim we already know that Yehoshua and Calev were among the spies who had been sent out to explore the Promised Land. Why, then, is this fact stated again here?

We also read that Moshe and Aharon fell upon their faces. They could have done so only for the purpose of praying, for, as the Sages (Taanis 14) put it: “A person should not prostrate himself unless he is sure that his prayer will be answered like that of Yehoshua had been.”

If, at this critical point, they prayed, it must have been an attempt on their part to prevail on G-d to set aside the evil decree He had ordained for His people. But we are told that while Moshe and Aharon were praying, Yehoshua and Calev tore their garments - a sign of mourning. Yehoshua and Calev were grief-stricken because they already knew that the decree had become final, and that prayer would be of no avail.

This is difficult to understand. How was it possible that Moshe and Aharon, surely on a higher level than Yehoshua and Calev, would have had no knowledge of what Yehoshua and Calev already knew?

To answer this question the Torah text reiterates that Yehoshua and Calev were “among those who spied out the land.” By virtue of the fact that they had actually trod upon the Promised Land's soil, they had grown so much in wisdom and holiness that they now knew more than either Moshe and Aharon, who had never set foot on the Land.

## **ENGAGING IN PHYSICALITY**

### **Lubavitcher Rebbe**

*“[Yehoshua and Calev said...] ‘The land is very, very good. If G-d desires us, He will bring us to this land.’” (14:7-8)*

In the desert, all the physical needs of the Jewish people were provided, enabling the people to study the Torah unencumbered by the distractions of mundane life.

The spies feared that even if the land could be conquered, it would still “conquer” the people, forcing them to work the land in order to wrest their livelihood from it.

Yehoshua and Calev gave the spies a twofold answer:

- The land is very, very good: Studying the Torah is indeed very good, but elevating mundane reality by performing G-d's commandments is “very, very good,” for this brings us to even higher spiritual levels. Thus, even from a “selfish” perspective, it pays to enter the land.
- If G-d desires: Moreover, entering the land is G-d's desire, and we should fulfill it with no second thoughts.

We, too, should not hesitate to engage the physical world, for doing so properly is both to our own advantage and G-d's true will. (Hitva'aduyot 5746, vol. 3, pp. 653-654) - Rabbi Moshe Yaakov Wisnefsky

## **WORTH THE EFFORT**

### **Lubavitcher Rebbe**

*“Just do not rebel against G-d, and you will not fear the people of the land, for they are our bread. Their protection has departed from them. G-d is with us; do not fear them.” (14:9)*

A lot of hard work is required to make a loaf of bread, from tilling the land and planting it all the way through grinding the flour and baking it. Yet, when the labor is complete, the end product is a form of food that is both a pleasure to eat and sustains us for longer than any other type of food. This is why we recite a special blessing before eating bread.

This is why Yehoshua and Calev referred to the inhabitants of the land as the people's “bread.” “There is no doubt that conquering the land will be difficult,” they declared, “but eventually you will thank G-d even for the difficulties, for through the effort you expended in overcoming them, you were able to acquire your ideal home and settle it.”

Similarly, all the difficulties we encounter lead us to a more fulfilling life. And in the grand scheme of history, we will soon thank G-d for all the hardships we had to overcome in making the world into His ultimate home. (Hitva'aduyot 5745, vol. 4, pp. 2300-2301) - Rabbi Moshe Yaakov Wisnefsky

## **A DELICATE SOUL**

### **Rebbe Nachman**

*“Moshe said to G-d, ‘Then Egypt - from whose midst You brought up this people with Your might - will hear...’” (14:13)*

Jewish souls emanate from an exceedingly high spiritual source. Anyone who is himself spiritually refined will recognize and appreciate the exalted holiness of the Jewish people's essence, and will understand that they truly have no connection to sin, which exists only on the material plane. Thus, Jewish souls are completely incapable of bearing the weight of their sins.

Because Moshe knew of the Jews' Divine source and the delicacy of their souls, he continually prayed for them. He prayed that G-d would grant them forgiveness and remove the burden placed on their souls by their sins.

## **CORRESPONDING ATTRIBUTES**

### **Rabbi Dovid Hoffman**

*"Now, please, let my Master's power be enhanced as You spoke, saying; Hashem, slow to anger and abundant in loving-kindness." (14:17)*

The Gemara (Sanhedrin 111a) relates how Moshe begged for mercy for Bnei Yisrael. Earlier, when he had gone up to Heaven to receive the Torah, he'd found Hashem writing the words, "Hashem, slow to anger." Moshe was told that these words would come in handy at a later time, and indeed they did, when he prayed for mercy after the sins of the Golden Calf and the Spies. Interestingly, Moshe added the word "*emes* - truth" to his tefillah when he prayed for Bnei Yisrael after the sin of the Golden Calf, but he deleted this word with the sin of the Spies.

Rav Yosef Shalom Elyashiv zt'l quotes the Zohar, saying that Hashem looks to forgive Bnei Yisrael only with those middos that they themselves maintain. When the spies spoke lies against the Holy Land, and by extension, Hashem Himself, Hashem could not employ the attribute of *emes* to forgive the people. Thus, the word "*emes*" was deliberately left out of Moshe's prayers.

## **DIVINE TRAITS**

### **Reb Levi Yitzchak of Berditchev**

*"Hsaheem, slow to anger..." (14:18)*

When the Jewish people sinned by making the Golden Calf, they transgressed against G-d. Here, when Moshe sent the spies, the sin of the spies violated the very stature of the Jewish people, as it showed a lack of belief that they had the power to reverse everything, even the most difficult matter, through their prayers.

In reality, G-d's attribute of compassion is based on His empathy with the lower worlds, similar to how a wealthy person, in showing compassion on a poor person, must first empathize with the poor person's plight in order to then show him compassion. The same applies, as it were, with G-d's attribute of compassion.

Similarly, G-d's attribute of graciousness is that we find favor - grace - in the eyes of G-d. The sin of the spies reflected a lack of belief in this attribute of compassion - that G-d empathizes with the plight of the Jewish people. It also expressed a disbelief in His attribute of graciousness, since their actions were prompted by their disbelief that we find favor in the eyes of G-d.

For this reason, in this verse, Moshe did not try to evoke either the Divine trait of compassion or the Divine trait of graciousness. Rather, Moshe began with the attribute of being "slow to anger."

## **CHILDREN'S MERIT**

### **HaKesav VeHaKabbalah**

*"...visiting the sins of the parents upon the children." (14:18)*

The Hebrew word *poke'd* (used here for "visiting") may also be translated in the sense of "missing" (as in *v'lo nefkad mimenu ish* [31:49]). The pasuk then could be construed to read: Diminishing the sins of the parents for the sake of the children, i.e., if parents have good children, their sins will be forgiven for the sake of their children's merits.

## **ONLY IF YOU WANT IT**

### **Meshech Chochmah**

*"Hashem, slow to anger and abundant in loving-kindness..." (14:18)*

Why doesn't the text here read "abundant in loving-kindness and truth," as in Shemos 34:6? The word "truth" had its proper place in parashas Ki Sisa, in which Moshe recalls the promise that G-d gave to our Fathers, to give the land to their descendants: "Remember Avraham, Yitzchak and Yisrael, Your servants, to whom You did swear by Your own self and all this land of which I have spoken will I give to your seed" (Shemos 32:13). There Moshe recalled G-d's attribute of truth so that G-d would fulfill His promise. But in the episode described in this part of Bamidbar, the Jews were not willing to accept the Promised Land. Normally, if someone is offered a gift and replies: "I don't want it," he certainly is not deserving of that gift. Accordingly, G-d was now freed from His promise and a mention of His attribute of truth would have been out of place.

## **ACCORDING TO THE EFFORT**

### **Reb Noson of Breslov**

*"G-d said, 'I have forgiven them in accordance with your word.'" (14:20)*

"According to your words" - according to the sincerity and effort you put into your words, you can effect forgiveness. (See Likutey Halakhos III, p. 218)

## **IMPACT OF THE TZADDIK**

### **Reb Levi Yitzchak of Berditchev**

*"G-d said, 'I have forgiven them in accordance with your word.'" (14:20)*

Rashi comments, "Because of what you [i.e., Moshe] said: 'Lest the people of the land from which you brought us out say, 'Because of G-d's inability to bring them to the land...'" (Devarim 9:28). What exactly is Rashi trying to tell us here?

It would appear that what Rashi had in mind was the following:



Moshe prayed to G-d on behalf of the Jewish people, arguing that to destroy the Jewish people would result in a desecration of His Name, as the verse says, "And Egypt will hear..." (Bamidbar 14:13). Now, this argument is problematic. All man's thoughts and ways are in the hands of G-d, to influence as He wishes. If so, He can easily alter the thoughts of the nations, so that they would not think that G-d destroyed the Jewish people because He was incapable of bringing them into the Land of Israel, and in this way there would be no desecration of His Name.

The explanation is as follows: The word of the tzaddik creates an impact both Above and below, as it says (Iyov 22:28; Taanis 23a), "You will make a decision, and it will be accomplished for you." This being the case, once Moshe said in his prayer to G-d that there would arise, G-d forbid, a desecration of His Name should G-d destroy the Jewish people, his very statement ensured that there would be a desecration of His Name.

This is what Rashi is alluding to in his remarks when he says, "Because of what you said." G-d told Moshe, "Your words will surely have an impact, and therefore the nations will surely say what you were concerned that they might say. But had you not said, 'Lest the people of the land from which you brought us out say, "Because of G-d's inability to bring them to the land,"' the non-Jews would not have said this. But once you said that they will say this, they will certainly say it," as it says, "You will make a decision, and it will be accomplished for you."

## **RECOGNIZING THE MIRACLES**

### **Lubavitcher Rebbe**

*"[G-d told Moshe, 'All those... who did not listen to My voice] will not see the land that I swore to their fathers.'" (14:23)*

(The overwhelming majority of the Jewish people accepted the other spies' conclusions, threatening to kill Calev and Yehoshua for differing. Since the people demonstrated that they lacked the faith in G-d necessary to enable them to conquer and live in the Land of Israel, G-d informed Moshe that this generation would have to die in the desert. Only the next generation would enter the Promised Land.)

The generation of the Exodus did not work hard enough to learn from the Divine miracles they witnessed. They therefore remained subject to their "slave mentality" - the assumption that reality is enslaved to the laws of nature, and that G-d is unwilling or incapable of overriding them whenever He chooses.

The spies and their followers therefore forfeited the privilege of entering the Promised Land, for in order to remain true to our Divine mission while leading material lives, we need to believe that this is indeed possible.

We, too, should take care to recognize the implications of all the Divine miracles we have witnessed, both throughout Jewish history and in our own personal lives.

Only then will we be capable of fulfilling our Divine mission of making the world into G-d's home. In this merit, we will experience our miraculous return to the Promised Land, led by Mashiach in the final Redemption. (Likutei Sichot, vol. 23, p. 112) - Rabbi Moshe Yaakov Wisnefsky

## **SPIRIT OF CONFIDENCE**

### **Rabbi Dovid Hoffman**

*"My servant Calev, because he possessed in him a different spirit, and followed Me fully..." (14:24)*

Mashal: A simple villager once purchased a watch in the big city and brought it home as a gift for his wife. All the neighbors came over to marvel at the new innovation. One lady became very jealous.

"How come you don't get me a watch also?" she complained to her husband.

He laughed. "Why would I want a watch like that that tells me what to do? When I want to eat, I eat. When I want to sleep, I sleep. I'm not dependent on a silly clock to decide for me when I have to do things!"

The lady thought this was brilliant and ran back to her neighbor who just got the watch. "See, now you are a slave to this silly little device. How foolish of you to constrain yourself all day!" She laughed and taunted her neighbor.

"I'm much smarter than that!" the neighbor shot back. "The watchmaker taught me how to turn the dials to set the watch. So I'm no slave, you see. If I want to eat lunch, all I do is turn the dial to the afternoon hours and I sit down to eat. In fact, I control the watch, not vice versa!"

Nimshal: Calev was a true leader, not a follower. He didn't allow others to dictate to him what he felt and how he should act. He believed in what he stood for and was prepared to fight for what he knew was the truth. This "different spirit" was what set him apart from the other spies who turned against Moshe and the Land of Israel.

## **SEEKING A LEADER**

### **Rebbe Nachman**

*"My servant Calev, because he possessed in him a different spirit, and followed Me fully; him will I bring into the Land..." (14:24)*

Every Jewish leader possesses an element of a spirit of prophecy. Even in our times, when prophecy has ceased, Jewish leaders have "a different spirit," a form of ruach ha'kodesh (Divine inspiration), by virtue of which they deserved to become leaders.

This spirit enables all who draw close to them to strengthen and rectify their faith. Therefore, one must do his utmost to seek and search after a true leader, and draw close to him. (See Likutey Moharan II, 8:8)

## **ELEVATING THE MUNDANE**

### **Lubavitcher Rebbe**

*“How long will this wicked community that complains against Me continue to exist? I have heard the complaints of the Israelites against Me.” (14:27)*

The spies' “sin” was their desire to remain in the holy environment of the desert - surrounded by the Clouds of Glory, being fed by the manna and Miriam's well, and being led and taught by Moshe and Aharon - rather than face the challenges of maintaining spiritual consciousness while working for their livelihood in the Land of Israel. Their mistake was that G-d appreciates what we accomplish in adversity more than what we accomplish in a protected spiritual environment.

Nowadays, a holy “environment” is created by an assembly, beyond the holiness that rests on each individual. This is why, for example, a quorum of ten Jewish men (a minyan) is required for the addition of certain passages to the prayer service.

Nonetheless, G-d does not intend for us to remain forever secluded in the holy environment of the synagogue; He wants us to venture into the outside world in order to refine it and elevate it, transforming it into His true home. (Likutei Sichot, vol. 33, pp. 85-87) - Rabbi Moshe Yaakov Wisniewsky

## **TAKING THE GOOD FROM THE BAD**

### **Reb Noson of Breslov**

*“How long will this wicked community that complains against Me continue to exist?” (14:27)*

We learn from this verse that an *eidah* (quorum) comprises ten men. (Sanhedrin 74b; Rashi)

The most common need for a quorum is public prayer. Why do we learn the details for such a holy purpose from wicked people?

There will always be people who oppose holiness and groups that cause damage to the community. We must learn from them that if their quorum can cause damage, how much more can a quorum of people engaged in spiritual building rectify others?! Thus, from the wicked, we learn the power of good. (Likutei Halachot I, p. 39a)

## **REROUTING...**

### **Rabbi Moshe Kormornick**

*“And your children will roam in the desert for forty years...” (14:33)*

A few verses before Hashem decrees that the Jewish People were to remain in the desert for another forty years, He tells Moshe “I have forgiven because of what you said” (Bamidbar 14:20). If Hashem had forgiven the Jewish People, why were they not allowed to go immediately into Eretz Yisrael?

To answer this question, we can use the example of a modern-day GPS Navigation System. Upon making a wrong turn, the GPS will not necessarily tell you to turn around and try again, it will find a more appropriate route instead.

So too, Hashem saw that the Jewish People made a “wrong turn” and decided that the best way for them to go was a different route, which, even though it would take a lot longer, would allow them time to regain the spiritual greatness that they had previously reached before arriving at their destination.

Similarly, the Daas Zekeinim says that despite their forgiveness, the Jewish People were at a low spiritual level, and if they would have entered Eretz Yisrael immediately, they would have put the Torah aside as a result of the physical work that they would have had to do in the fields and orchards. Therefore, by instilling the Torah within the Jewish People for an additional forty years, Hashem was ensuring that the Torah would never be forgotten, even when the Jewish People were faced with the challenge of settling in a foreign land (Shemos 13:17). (Rabbi Eli Glass)

## **FOLLOWING HASHEM'S WILL**

### **Yakar Mipaz**

*“You shall bear your iniquities - forty years - and you shall experience My withdrawal.” (14:34)*

Rashi states: “You have removed your hearts from following Me. The word ‘tenuah’ is an expression of removal.”

The spies were not ordinary people. They did not want to leave the desert. They ate food that came from the Heavens, drank from Miriam's well, and were surrounded by Heavenly clouds. It was a spiritual life and now they were asked to do manual labor, namely, to till the soil and other worldly tasks. To them it was as if they were to lower their spiritual standards.

Nevertheless, a true servant of Hashem follows His will, as a blind person follows the one who can see. That is the meaning of “You will experience My withdrawal” - though your intentions were good, it was a transgression because you removed yourselves from Me by using your own rationale.

That is why the pasuk (14:24) states: “But My servant Calev, because a different spirit was with him...” Though Calev agreed that dwelling in the desert was better for serving Hashem, he nullified his own feelings and performed the will of Hashem.

## **EFFECTING OUR SURROUNDINGS**

### **Rabbi Shlomo Ressler**

*“The men who brought forth the evil report about the land died in the plague before Hashem...” (14:37)*

After the spies' negative report about Israel, a plague kills them, except for Calev and Yehoshua, who "remained alive." Why does the Torah need to specify that Calev and Yehoshua remained alive when it had already been made clear earlier in the parashah?

The Gemara (Bava Basra 118a) explains that Calev and Yehoshua received the reward initially designated for the other ten tribal leaders. Rav Aharon Kotler suggests that not doing the right thing impacts not only the offender but also those around them, who must now pick up their slack. As a result of Calev and Yehoshua's added responsibilities in leading the nation, they were rewarded with the others' reward. Inversely, the wrongdoers could have learned from the righteous among them and avoided their misdeeds but instead adhered stubbornly to their beliefs and persisted with their damaging message.

Choosing between right and wrong is not just an individual choice. As the Torah highlights, what we choose affects everyone around us, giving us an opportunity to not only do what's right but inspire those around us to do the same.

## **INTRINSIC FAITH**

### **Lubavitcher Rebbe**

*"[Some of the Jewish people said,] 'We are ready to go up to the place that G-d said [He would give us], for we have sinned.'"* (14:40)

(After hearing of G-d's plan to keep them in the desert for 40 years, some of the Jewish people regretted doubting that the Land of Israel could be conquered. They organized their own army and attempted to enter the land on their own. But because they went against G-d's will and lacked Moshe's leadership, the nations who lived near the border of the land repulsed them.)

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

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

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

## **A PLACE FOR CHUTZPAH**

### **Rabbi Dovid Hoffman**

*"Why are you now transgressing the word of Hashem? It will not succeed."* (14:41)

Moshe Rabbeinu was bitterly disappointed in his people. In a moment unlike any other, he informed them that Hashem had turned against them and would not change the death sentence that was placed upon their heads. The people, however, responded by insisting, "Let us go up to the place that Hashem has said for us to do (Eretz Yisrael), for we have sinned." They were prepared to continue on their journey to enter Eretz Yisrael, even though Hashem had specifically informed them that they would not. Moshe saw their determination but waved them off, saying that they would not succeed; Hashem was not with them, and His decree was irreversible.

This seems to be an unusual exchange: Did the people actually think that they could do what they wanted, even if it was clearly not the will of Hashem?

Rav Tzadok Hakohen zt'l makes an eye-opening statement. The Gemara (Sanhedrin 105a) states that, "*Chutzpah* (arrogance) even aimed at Heaven can help." Just as the wicked Bilaam, through his persistence and brazen *chutzpah*, succeeded in having Hashem acquiesce to allow him to join Balak to curse the Jewish Nation, likewise, if one is insistent enough to pursue that which he feels strongly about even to the point of *chutzpah* - it is conceivable that he may accomplish what he wants.

In fact, Chazal tell us that it is this mindset of impertinence that will hasten the coming of Mashiach, for the attitude of *chutzpah* and gall will reign supreme in the time period before his arrival.

This was what the Jews in the desert attempted to do in their bid to dissuade Hashem from carrying out His judgment against them. They knew that Hashem had said they were doomed, but they refused to give up. They would pester and badger and even use *chutzpah* if that was needed to get their way. But to no avail. Moshe told them that Hashem would not budge this time, even though *chutzpah* can be a very successful tool at other times.

## **MULTI-FACETED LIBATIONS**

### **Reb Noson of Breslov**

*"Prepare a quarter-hin of wine as a libation..."* (15:5)

The *nesakhim* (libations) were offered upon an Altar constructed of earth, corresponding to gross materialism. From the fact that the Altar was hollowed out, allowing the libations to seep down into the abyss, we understand that the value of the libations was very great. For they were able to descend into gross materialism and reach down to those souls at the lowest depths, in order to raise them up from the abyss. (Likutey Halakhot VII, p. 154)

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Though the spies confronted seemingly great obstacles that blocked them from conquering the Land (i.e., attaining holiness), those obstacles could have been overcome with a strong desire. This point is reinforced by the way the Torah places the account of the libations for the meal-offering immediately after the account of the spies.

Rashi explains (Vayikra 2:1) that the meal-offering is a poor man's sacrifice. Though the person is poor financially, he is rich in his desire to bring an offering to G-d. The meal-offering represents strong judgments, yet with great desire, one can break them and overcome all obstacles to serve G-d. (Likutey Halakhot II, p. 264-133a)

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## **REFINING AND ELEVATING**

### **Lubavitcher Rebbe**

*"In accordance with the number [of animals] you offer up, so must you present [offerings of grain, wine, and oil] for each one." (15:12)*

(After the incident of the spies, G-d comforted the Jewish people by reminding them that their children would eventually enter and possess the Land of Israel. He did this by giving them some laws that would only apply once they would enter the land. The first of these laws was that their animal sacrifices would have to be accompanied by offerings of grain, oil, and wine.)

G-d gave the Jewish people specifically these laws because they counter the mistake of the spies. The spies wished to remain in the desert, studying the Torah without the distractions of material life. This one-sided focus on spirituality was similar to animal sacrifices, which ascended in smoke. In contrast, the oil and wine were poured down.

Thus, by instructing the Jewish people regarding the oil and wine offerings, G-d was telling them that the period of their spiritual "incubation" in the desert would eventually come to an end. Their children's entry into the Land of Israel would mark the Jewish people's descent into the physical world, in order to fulfill the purpose of creation by transforming it into G-d's home.

Similarly, whenever we feel unprepared or reluctant to tackle life's challenges, we should remind ourselves that our lives need to balance the need to rise above the world and the devotion to descend into it in order to refine and elevate it. - Rabbi Moshe Yaakov Wisnefsky

## **EQUALLY APPLICABLE**

### **Rabbi Shlomo Ressler**

*"When a convert sojourns with you... and he shall prepare a fire-offering, a satisfying aroma to Hashem..." (15:14)*

The Torah describes the supplements that are now to be brought with the sacrifices, including Minchah (meal offerings) and Nesech (wine).

Commentaries explain that this is to atone for the spies' unfavorable report. The Torah then qualifies that this rule applies to native Jews (15:13) and then contradicts that by including converts three times (15:14-16).

Rav Schwab suggests that because the new accompaniments were added as a direct result of the Jews' improper dismissal of the land and G-d's gift, converts may feel like it would not apply to them. Or, conversely, Jews may feel like some rules may not apply to converts.

The Torah is emphasizing that although rules have specific origins, their observance applies to everyone. This focus on equality helps people view each other as equals and encourages the sharing of burdens. We are stronger together, and finding ways to work as a team will only improve our collective future.

## **CONSTANT RENEWAL**

### **Lubavitcher Rebbe**

*"One rule applies to the community, to yourselves and to the resident convert; one rule applies throughout your generations for you as for the convert, before G-d..." (15:15)*

Just as G-d is re-creating the world constantly and giving us the Torah anew constantly, our spiritual identities are being recreated and renewed constantly.

This is the spiritual reason why the Torah emphasizes that there is no difference between a born Jew and a convert: spiritually, both received their current, complete spiritual identity one moment ago.

What this also means is that the quality of our past relationship with G-d (or lack thereof) has no bearing on the essence of our present relationship with G-d.

The past is there, and it may have to be reckoned with, but it cannot determine the nature of our present bond with G-d or limit its power. (Likutei Sichot, vol. 26, pp. 165-166) - Rabbi Moshe Yaakov Wisnefsky

## **EATING WITH PURPOSE**

### **Baal Shem Tov**

*"Upon your coming to the land to which I bring you..." (15:18)*

Man was created to eat and drink. If the Almighty wanted He could have created man to exist without nourishment. The purpose of eating and drinking is not to satisfy the desire but to remind us that we eat and drink to recall that Hashem created all.

When it comes to matters of the earth, "upon your coming to the land," one becomes hungry. Then one should remember: "It shall be that when you eat of the bread of the land" (Bamidbar 15:19), whenever you will eat, "you shall set aside a portion for Hashem," for its purpose is to bring you to recognize the Creator.



## **VALUING OUR EFFORTS**

### **Rabbi Shlomo Ressler**

*“And when you eat of the bread of the land, you shall set some aside as a gift to Hashem...” (15:19)*

The Torah describes the mitzvah of challah, the act of separating a piece of kneaded dough and donating it to the priest (15:17-21), distinct from the commandment to donate grain (Terumah). Why is this dough double-taxed (taxed first as grain and then as dough)?

Rav Hirsch posits that while donating grain exhibits our appreciation for the assets we've attained, the mitzvah of challah represents our efforts associated with those resources. Challah is created through man-made efforts, unlike grain, which grows naturally. So too, to be in a position where our efforts matter is just as much of a blessing. Challah demonstrates this recognition.

## **COMBINING THE PARTICLES**

### **Lubavitcher Rebbe**

*“Of the first of your dough, donate a loaf [to a priest]...” (15:20)*

Flour consists of thousands of small and independent pieces of grain, but when water is added, these pieces become a solid mass of dough. Just as water makes a unified entity out of the unconnected particles of flour, so does the Torah allow us to see the underlying unity and harmony of all existence.

Everything serves a unique purpose, but these purposes can often seem at odds with one another. The Torah reveals to us both the overall purpose of creation as a whole and each entity's specific contribution toward this overall purpose.

According to Jewish Law, after we remove the required portion of the dough, the flour that remains in the bowl after the dough is made is still under the obligation to have its required portion removed from it. This teaches us that even if we have illuminated certain aspects of reality with the light and holiness of Torah, we must not forget about the areas we have not yet touched. (Sichot Kodesh 5718, pp. 266-267) - Rabbi Moshe Yaakov Wisnefsky

## **STRICT QUALIFICATIONS**

### **Lubavitcher Rebbe**

*“From the first of your kneading dough you shall give a portion to Hashem, for your generations...” (15:20)*

The Torah grants the privileges and responsibilities of the priests only to the descendants of Aharon. To be sure, all Jews are of equal inherent value and equally deserve our love and respect. However, when dealing with the question of who can be a religious practitioner or authority - whether a priest or a rabbi - we must realize that G-d has determined who can and who cannot assume these titles.

Just as priests can only be descendants of Aharon, rabbis and teachers can only be individuals who have attained the necessary levels of knowledge, who are truly G-d-fearing, who observe all the dictates of the Torah, and who have absorbed the traditions transmitted through the generations.

Just as we require strict qualifications for those entrusted with guiding and facilitating our external religious lives, we should equally require strict qualifications for those inner voices that purport to tell us how to behave.

We should constantly question our inner voices, in order to be sure that we are being guided only by pure and positive motives. (Likutei Sichot, vol. 2, pp. 584-588) - Rabbi Moshe Yaakov Wisnefsky

## **NEVER TOO EARLY**

### **Rabbi Moshe Schochet**

*“From the first of your kneading dough you shall give a portion to Hashem, for your generations...” (15:20)*

The Torah commands us in the mitzvah of challah; we are instructed to take a piece of our dough and donate it to the Kohanim.

The Chasam Sofer explains this pasuk in a very different manner that provides us with fundamental advice in regard to raising our children. He suggests homiletically that instead of translating the word *arisoseichem* to mean “your kneading dough,” one can interpret the word to mean “your crib.”

The Torah is teaching us, based on the explanation of the Chasam Sofer, that we need to “*titnu la’Hashem*” - give our children to Hashem, by educating and inspiring them “*mireishis arisoseichem*” - from the beginning of their lives while they are in their cribs. As parents, we cannot wait until our children get older to begin to introduce them to the values and messages that our Torah provides. Instead, we must begin to expose our children from a very young age to the beauty of Torah, mitzvos and *yiras shamayim*.

The story is told about a couple who just had a child and asked the Chofetz Chaim when they should begin to educate and inspire the child. The Chofetz Chaim responded that they were already nine months too late. It is never too early to begin to facilitate an environment of growth and development for a Jewish child to be raised in.

Let us take this powerful message of the Chasam Sofer to heart and ensure that our homes are filled with meaning and spirituality from the very first moment that a child is born and brought into our home.

It is with this approach in mind that the Chasam Sofer explains we will be successful in ensuring that our children will be “*terumah l’doroseichem* - raised up [towards Hashem] for your generations,” as the pasuk states, with meaning and growth for years to come.

## **SIGN OF GRATITUDE**

### **Avnei Ezel**

*"And if you err and don't observe all these commandments..." (15:22)*

Why is the section dealing with the commandment of taking challah juxtaposed to that of idol worship? This is to teach that whoever observes the commandment of challah it is as if he has repudiated idol worship. (Midrash)

The most effective repudiation of paganism is the observance of the commandment to take challah. It demonstrates that one believes that all we have is derived from G-d, and that therefore the first portion of whatever we possess must be given to G-d as an offering of gratitude. It refutes the erroneous notion that "my own strength and the skill of my own hands have done all this for me," which is the most heathen idea of all.

As the Psalm (115:4) has it: "Their idols are silver and gold, the work of man's hands." Their idolatry is that they regard the silver and gold they possess as having been obtained through their own strength, by "the work of man's hands." These are the "idols" destroyed by observing the commandment to take challah from each mass of dough that is prepared.

## **THE TRUE SOURCE**

### **Lubavitcher Rebbe**

*"And if you err and don't observe all these commandments..." (15:22)*

The commandment to set aside part of our bread for the priest is followed by a discussion of idolatry. The reason for this is as follows:

The reality of our physical world is that we have to work hard to satisfy our needs. Because of this, it is easy to fall into the trap of feeling that our material success is dependent on the brutal laws of nature: the more and better we work, the more we earn. It is easy to feel that G-d is not involved - and this is a subtle form of idol worship. In truth, the forces of nature are only tools in the hands of the master Craftsman; they have no more influence on the world than a craftsman's tools have on his work.

In order to avoid this misconception, we are told to set aside some of the very first of our dough as a portion for G-d. This reaffirms our faith that it is indeed G-d who has granted us all that we have and that He is truly the source of our sustenance. (Likutei Sichot, vol. 18, pp. 183-186) - Rabbi Moshe Yaakov Wisniewsky

## **STEP-BY-STEP PROCESS**

### **Rabbi Moshe Schochet**

*"And they shall place on the tzitzis of each corner a thread of blue wool." (15:38)*

The Gemara (Chullin 89a) asks why blue was chosen as the color for the wool tzitzis strings. The Gemara explains that the blue serves to remind us of the sea that in turn reminds us of the sky that then reminds us of the throne upon which Hashem sits on.

Rav Moshe Feinstein (Darash Moshe) wonders why the Torah doesn't simply choose a color more similar to the throne of Hashem as the color for the tzitzis.

Why does the Torah select the color blue that is far removed from what we are ultimately supposed to be reminded of, which is Hashem's dominion over all of us? Why not choose a color that is more directly representative and symbolic of the throne?

Rav Moshe explains that the Torah and Gemara are highlighting the formula for one to be successful in avodas Hashem. One cannot expect to achieve a desired result in spirituality overnight. Instead, the Torah is teaching us that in order to accomplish goals as well as enhance one's spiritual level, we must engage in a step-by-step process that will help elevate our relationship with Hashem.

This is signified by the series of steps needed to connect the blue color of the tzitzis to the idea that Hashem sits on his throne and reigns over us.

Rav Moshe is teaching us a very powerful lesson regarding how to grow in our relationship with Hashem. While it is important to be ambitious in developing a stronger bond and connection with Hashem, we must develop a plan that is slow and steady. Instead of trying to accomplish too much too fast, we must ensure that we take realistic and reasonable steps in our avodas Hashem.

With this gradual and balanced approach, we will surely develop a deeper and more meaningful relationship with Hashem.

## **FRINGES OF PROTECTION**

### **Reb Noson of Breslov**

*"And it will be to you for fringes, and you will look upon it and you will remember all of Hashem's commandments, and you will perform them, so that you will not stray after your hearts and after your eyes, after which you stray." (15:39)*

Whenever a person thinks deeply about something, it is as if he sees it with his eyes. Therefore, just as one is not allowed to look at something that will entice him away from G-d, he may not think about it either. The mind has its boundaries which a person must be careful not to exceed.

Our Sages teach: "The walls of a person's house will give testimony about his sins" (Ta'anit 11a). What if someone sins outside his house, in the streets or the fields? The "walls" refer to the parameters of his mind, for they will give testimony about his thoughts. (Likutey Halachot VII, p. 326-164a)

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The thirty-two strings of the tzitzit (eight on each of the four corners), protect the heart from straying. This is because the word Lev (לב, heart) has the numerical value of 32. (Likutey Halakhot I, p. 70)

In and of itself, wearing tzitzit will not provide protection against following one's desires. A person must also pray to G-d to help him fulfill the mitzvah properly, to acquire its spiritual benefits. (Likutey Halakhot VIII, p. 22a)

## **MIDDLE OF THE ROAD**

### **Rabbi Nissim Dayan**

*"So that you will not stray after your hearts and after your eyes, after which you stray." (15:39)*

We are commanded, "And do not stray after your hearts." The word "לבבכם" - "hearts" is plural to include both the *Yetzer Hara* - Evil Inclination, and *Yetzer Hatov* - Good Inclination.

The lesson is that one must strive to take the middle road in life; obviously not to follow the path of evil and sin, but also not to lean too heavily to a life of austerity and fanatical religiosity. When one follows his heart a bit too fervently, even in a misplaced bid to over-achieve spiritually, he will only bring about his own downfall.

## **PROPER PRIORITIES**

### **Rabbi Dovid Hoffman**

*"And it will be to you for fringes, and you will look upon it and you will remember all of Hashem's commandments, and you will perform them." (15:39)*

The Gemara (Menachos 43) writes: "Seeing (ראיה) brings one to remember, and remembering brings one to (positive) actions." The Chafetz Chaim, Rabbi Yisrael Meir Hakohen zt'l learns from here that the mitzvah of tzitzis helps one to perform mitzvos. If one looks at his tzitzis many times a day - specifically when an impure thought or a feeling of anger towards another passes through him - it will subdue his desire for sin.

The great Rebbe, Reb Mordechai of Neshchiz zt'l, had longed for a *tallis katan* made of wool that was produced in the Holy Land. After much effort, he procured such a piece of wool and gave it to one of his students to fashion a *tallis katan* from it. Unfortunately, in cutting out the opening, the student folded the cloth one time too many, so that instead of one hole, there were two. When he realized that he had totally ruined the garment his Rebbe had craved, he showed Reb Mordechai the ruined wool with shaking hands.

"I'm so sorry I ruined the tzitzis," the student cried in sorrow, expecting a severe scolding for his negligence. Reb Mordechai looked at the cloth sadly, wiped away a tear from his eye, and smiled at the young man.

"It's quite all right," he said. "Do not fret. You see, this *tallis katan* was meant to have two holes. One is an opening for the head, and the second is to test Mordechai whether he will lose his temper."

Sometimes people intending to do mitzvos may be unaware that in their fervor to perform a mitzvah they may transgress other ones.

As important as the mitzvah of tzitzis may be, allowing one's anger to flare would extinguish the mitzvah. Reb Mordechai had his priorities set straight.

## **SERVING WITH LOVE**

### **Rabbi Shlomo Ressler**

*"And it will be to you for fringes, and you will look upon it and you will remember all of Hashem's commandments, and you will perform them." (15:39)*

Parshas Shelach ends with the commandment to wear tzitzis on all four-cornered garments to remind us of the six hundred and thirteen mitzvos. Rabbi Yochanan Zweig wonders how this mitzvah serves as a reminder to perform others if the mitzvah is entirely avoidable by not wearing four-cornered clothing in the first place.

Rashi explains that the numerical value of the word "tzitzis" plus the eight strings and five knots that make up the tzitzis, equals six hundred and thirteen, which alludes to the six hundred and thirteen opportunities to do mitzvos. Rabbi Zweig explains that the fact that we wear tzitzis is a reminder to look for other mitzvos to perform. Our choice to wear tzitzis demonstrates that our actions are initiated by our love for G-d.

Tzitzis remind us to look for creative ways to make a positive contribution to our world, not because of the commandment itself but because it's what we do for Whom we love. There are many ways to take initiative, express our devotion, and leave an impression on the world around us, if we just remember to look.

## **DON'T GO ASTRAY**

### **Rav Shamshon Raphael Hirsch**

*"So that you will not stray after your hearts and after your eyes, after which you stray." (15:39)*

The meraglim had been sent out to explore the land. However, by failing to discharge their mission properly, they came to openly defect from Hashem and dragged the people along with them.

This connects to the conclusion of the parshah, where the mitzvah of tzitzis comes to warn us every day not to go exploring "after your hearts and after your eyes after which you stray."

It was because the spies strayed after their own hearts and eyes, that they forgot about Hashem, Who guides our destiny and directs our actions.

## DUAL REMEMBRANCE

### Lubavitcher Rebbe

*“And it will be to you for fringes, and you will look upon it and you will remember all of Hashem's commandments, and you will perform them.” (15:39)*

Granted that we need the tassels to remind us of the 613 commandments, but why do we need the garment to which the tassels are attached? Why not just carry the tassels themselves?

The answer lies in the significance of garments. The difference between clothing and food - our two main necessities - is that food becomes a part of us when we eat it, while clothing always remains outside of us. Food therefore alludes to the aspects of the Torah that we can comprehend and “digest,” while clothing alludes to that which remains beyond our grasp.

The instruction to attach the tassels to a garment indicates that it is not sufficient simply to remember the commandments. Wearing such a garment helps us remember that the Torah and its commandments originate in G-d's wisdom, which transcends the limitations of human intellect. (Likutei Sichot, vol. 2, pp. 324-325) - Rabbi Moshe Yaakov Wisniefsky

## HAFTORAH

### VALUABLE CONTENTS

#### Chiddushei HaRim

*“Yehoshua son of Nun sent out of Shittim two spies secretly, saying: ‘Go view the land, and Yericho.’” (Yehoshua 2:1)*

They disguised themselves as potters and announced to passersby, “Here there are pots, here there are pots!” (Midrash)

According to the Torah, an earthenware vessel can become impure on the inside through its contents, but not on the outside. Any other material, by virtue of its intrinsic value, can contract impurity in any one of its parts. Earthenware, however, has no worth of its own and has value only to the extent that it serves as a container for some other substance. For this reason, the only valuable thing about an earthenware vessel is its contents.

The spies whom Yehoshua sent out to view the land remembered the fate of the spies whom Moshe had dispatched and who, instead of deferring to the one who had sent them, followed their own minds and their own will.

Therefore, Yehoshua's men made themselves be like earthenware pots that have no intrinsic value and have significance only according to the contents that others put into them. They set aside all their own personalities, subordinating themselves entirely to the mind and the will of Yehoshua who sent them on their mission. They did only what Yehoshua told them to do and for this reason their mission was crowned with success.

## TRUE MESSENGERS

### Rabbi Dovid Hoffman

*“Yehoshua son of Nun sent out of Shittim two spies secretly, saying: ‘Go view the land, and Yericho.’” (Yehoshua 2:1)*

Parshas Shelach discusses one of the greatest tragedies in Jewish history, the story of the meraglim, which was the source of many future national tragedies. But there is another episode involving spies which is told over in the haftorah from which we can learn precisely how one should properly carry out the privilege of being a *shaliach mitzvah*, a messenger sent to carry out a mitzvah.

Yehoshua ben Nun, Moshe Rabbeinu's successor as leader of the nation, sent spies out to the city of Yericho before the Jewish people entered Eretz Yisrael. The spies arrived in the city through a window in the house of a woman named Rachav, whose house was built into the outer wall of the city. Rather than denounce her guests to the king, she hid them while they carried out their duties. When the men left Yericho, they told her to tie a red thread in the window they had climbed in from, so that when the Jewish soldiers arrived she and her family would be spared.

The spies left Yericho and crossed the Jordan River back to where the nation was camped. Upon their return, they told Yehoshua everything that had occurred and confidently proclaimed that Hashem would deliver the entire area into their hands, as all of the inhabitants were terrified of them. Unlike Moshe's meraglim, these spies were praised for carrying out their mission with dedication and self-sacrifice.

The pasuk tells us that the spies went out from Shittim, “*cheresh*.” The midrash explains that in order to go unnoticed, they disguised themselves as they entered the land. Either they pretended to be deaf (*cheresh*), or they acted like *kli cheres* - earthenware vessels.

We learn from this midrash, explains Rav Yissocher Frand shlit'a, that if a person wants to properly carry out a mitzvah, he must make himself deaf and like an earthenware vessel. The difference between an earthenware vessel and other vessels is that other vessels become impure from direct external contact. Earthenware, on the other hand, is only affected when the impurity enters the vessel internally. External tumah has no power over it. Similarly, when a person goes to do a mitzvah, he cannot allow the “externals” of the mitzvah to deter him. If one does not feel that the person or the object involved befits his status or position, then he cannot truly be a pure *shaliach mitzvah*. On top of that, one must be like a *cheresh*, deaf to the negative remarks of others, when he believes that what he is doing is correct and proper in the eyes of Heaven.

Bearing this in mind, may we all merit to be true messengers of any mitzvah that we are sent to accomplish.

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