

# Toras Aish

## Thoughts From Across the Torah Spectrum

**RABBI SHLOMO RISKIN**

### Shabbat Shalom

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

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

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

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

Apparently, something has changed during the intervening year between the splitting of the Reed Sea and the proposed conquest of the Promised Land. As we have seen in last week's commentary, the Hebrews have intensified their complaining, not only asking for water - an existential need - but now by lusting after a

more varied menu, from meat to fish and from cucumbers to garlic (Numbers, 11:4,5)!

Moses is at his wits' end; can it be that the Hebrews - after all the trials that they have successfully overcome - are now whining for the stinking sardines which they used to gather at the foot of the Nile during the period of their persecution and enslavement (ibid, 11:5)? He feels totally inadequate to deal with them, preferring death at G-d's hands to responsibility for leading such an ungrateful people (ibid, 11:11-15).

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

But then, in this week's Biblical portion, Moses seems to make a gross miscalculation by sending out a reconnaissance mission, either initiated by G-d as an initial foray in order to map out the Israelites' route towards conquest (Numbers, 13:1,2), or instigated by the people who wanted a report about what kind of enemy awaits them on their way to Israel (Deuteronomy 1:22). Moses apparently felt that this "new" Israelite mentality of kvetching and lusting was indeed impelled, even inspired, by food. He therefore exhorts them, as they survey the terrain of the land and of the nature of the enemy - to "strengthen themselves, and take from the fruits of the land," to show to the Hebrews (13:20). Hopefully, the nation will be so excited by the huge and luscious grapes that they will embark on their conquest with alacrity! Apparently, what is actually now grabbing their attention is a gourmet diet. What Moses fails to appreciate, I believe, is that the real problem lies not with an Israelite drive for nutritional pleasure but with his own form of "distance" leadership - whether from the lofty heights of Mount Sinai or the inner sanctum of the "Tent of Communion" You will remember that Moses had initially rejected G-d's offer of leadership because, "I am a man who is heavy of speech and heavy of tongue" (Exodus, 4:10). This cannot simply mean that he stuttered and stammered - because G-d immediately answers by saying, "Is it not I who gives [or takes away] speech?" Nevertheless, Moses continues to reiterate his problem of being afflicted by "stopped-up lips" ("aral sfatayim"). I would maintain that Moses is actually saying that he is a man of heavy speech rather than

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friendly small talk, a prophet who is in almost constant contact with the Divine in issues of theology and law, morality and ethics. Moses is not a man of the people, a man of small talk and infinite patience who can "sell" G-d's program to the Israelites by sugar-coating it. As the Bible itself testifies, "The Israelites did not listen to Moses because of his [Moses'] lack of patience ("kotzer ruah") and difficult Divine service" (Rabbi's interpretation to Exodus, 6:9). Moses, the "man [or husband] of G-d" (Deut. 33:1) as well as the "servant of the Lord," remains "distant" from the people; he is a prophet for all the generations more than a leader for his generation.

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

The kvetching is not because they really want the leeks and the onions; it is because they don't know what they want. As they prepare to enter the Promised Land, they actually need - as we all need - a mission, a purpose for being. This, however, will have to await a new leader, who may be less a man of G-d but more a man of the people. © 2011 Ohr Torah Institutions & Rabbi S. Riskin

**CHIEF RABBI LORD JONATHAN SACKS**

## Covenant & Conversation

**T**he spies sent by Moses to explore the land came back with a wholly misleading report. They said "We are not able to go up against the people, for they are stronger than we... The land through which we have gone as spies is a land that devours its inhabitants, and all the people whom we saw in it are men of great stature" (Num. 13:31-32).

In fact, as we later discover in the book of Joshua, the inhabitants of the land were terrified of the Israelites. When Joshua sent spies to Jericho, Rahab told them "A great fear of you has fallen on us, so that all who live in this country are melting in fear because of you." When the people heard what G-d had done for the Israelites, "our hearts melted in fear and everyone's courage failed because of you" (Josh. 2:9-11).

The spies should have known this. They themselves had sung at the Red Sea: "The people of Canaan melted away; terror and dread fell upon them" (Ex. 15:15-16).

The spies were guilty of an attribution error, assuming that others felt as they did. They said, "We were like grasshoppers in our own eyes, and so we were in their eyes" (Num. 13:33). But as the Kotzker Rebbe noted, they were entitled to make the first claim but not the second. They knew how they felt. They had no idea how the people of the land felt. They were terrified of the Canaanites and failed to see that the Canaanites were terrified of them.

But there are two obvious questions: First, why did ten spies make this mistake? Second, why did two of them, Joshua and Caleb, not make it?

Stanford University psychologist Carol Dweck has written a fascinating book, *Mindset*,[1] on why some people fulfil their potential, while others do not. Her interest, she says, was aroused when she observed the behaviour of 10-year-old children when given puzzles to solve. Some, when the puzzles became difficult, thrived. They relished the challenge, even when it proved too hard for them. Others became anxious. When the puzzles became hard, they were easily discouraged.

She wanted to understand why. What makes the difference between people who enjoy being tested and those who don't? What makes some people grow through adversity while others become demoralized? Her research drove her to the conclusion that it is a matter of mindset. Some see their abilities as given and unalterable. We just are gifted or ordinary, and there is not much we can do about it. She calls this the "fixed" mindset. Others believe that we grow through our efforts. When they fail they don't define this as failure but as a learning experience. She calls this the "growth" mindset.

Those with a fixed mindset tend to avoid difficult challenges because they fear failure. They think it will expose them as inadequate. So they are reluctant to take risks. They play it safe.

People with the growth mindset react differently. "They don't just seek challenge, they thrive on it. The bigger the challenge, the more they stretch." When do people with the fixed mindset thrive? "When things are safely within their grasp. If things get too challenging... they lose interest."

Parents can do great damage to their children, she says, when they tell them they are gifted, clever, talented. This encourages the child to believe that he or

she has a fixed quantum of ability. This discourages them from risking failure. Such children say things like, "I often feel that my parents won't value me if I'm not as successful as they would like."

Parents who want to help their children should, she says, praise them not for their ability but for their effort, their willingness to try hard even if they fail. A great basketball coach used to say to his players, "You may be outscored, but you will never lose." If they gave of their best, they might lose the game but they would gain and grow. They would be winners in the long run.

The fixed mindset lives with the constant fear of failure. The growth mindset doesn't think in terms of failing at all.

Apply this logic to the spies and we see something fascinating. The Torah describes them in these words: "All were men [of standing]; they were heads of the Israelites" (13:3). They were people with reputations to guard. Others had high expectations of them. They were princes, leaders, men of renown. If Dweck is right, people laden with expectations tend to be risk-averse. They do not want to be seen to fail. That may be why they came back and said, in effect: We cannot win against the Canaanites. Therefore we should not even try.

There were two exceptions, Caleb and Joshua. Caleb came from the tribe of Judah, and Judah, we learn in the book of Bereishit, was the first baal teshuvah. Early in life he had been the one who proposed selling Joseph into slavery. But he matured. He was taught a lesson by his daughter-in-law, Tamar. He confessed, "She is more righteous than I am." That experience seems to have changed his life. Later, when the viceroy of Egypt (Joseph, not yet recognised by the brothers) threatens to hold Benjamin as a prisoner, Judah offers to spend his life as a slave so that his brother can go free. Judah is the clearest example in Bereishit of someone who takes adversity as a learning experience rather than as failure. In Dweck's terminology, he had a growth mindset. Evidently he handed on this trait to his descendants, Caleb among them.

As for Joshua, the text tells us, specifically in the story of the spies, that Moses had changed his name. Originally he was called Hoshea, but Moses added a letter to his name (Num. 13:16). A change of name always implies a change of character or calling. Abram became Abraham. Jacob became Israel. When our name changes, says Maimonides, it is as if we or someone else were saying, "You are not the same person as you were before" (Mishneh Torah, Laws of Repentance 2:4). Anyone who has experienced a name-change has been inducted into a growth mindset.

People with the growth mindset do not fear failure. They relish challenges. They know that if they fail, they will try again until they succeed. It cannot be coincidence that the two people among the spies who had the growth mindset were also the two who were

unafraid of the risks and trials of conquering the land. Nor can it be accidental that the ten others, all of whom carried the burden of people's expectations (as leaders, princes, men of high rank) were reluctant to do so.

If this analysis is correct, the story of the spies holds a significant message for us. G-d does not ask us never to fail. He asks of us that we give of our best. He lifts us when we fall and forgives us when we fail. It is this that gives us the courage to take risks. That is what Joshua and Caleb knew, one through his name change, the other through the experience of his ancestor Judah.

Hence the paradoxical but deeply liberating truth: Fear of failure causes us to fail. It is the willingness to fail that allows us to succeed. © 2011 Chief Rabbi Lord J. Sacks and torah.org

**RABBI DOV KRAMER**

## Taking a Closer Look

**“Y**ou can send men to investigate the Land of Canaan, which I (G-d) am giving to the Children of Israel; one man per ancestral Tribe shall you send, each of them a leader of [his respective Tribe].” Although the nation had requested that advanced scouts be sent (Devarim 1:22), this verse (Bamidbar 13:2) informs us that G-d acquiesced to their request, albeit with certain conditions: there should be twelve of them (not just two as had been planned, see Ramban and Rabbeinu Bachye), one per Tribe, and they should be recognized leaders. The Sifre Zuta (at the beginning of our Parasha) says that these advance scouts were representatives of the nation, and it was therefore considered as if each member of the nation had actually gone on the mission themselves.

Rabbi Yitzchok Sorotzkin, sh"lita (Rinas Yitzchok), asks whether each scout represented his own Tribe, or if all twelve, as a group, represented the entire nation as a whole. He points out that either way is problematic: If each scout only represented his own Tribe (with no connection to anyone from any other Tribe), only those Tribes whose scouts had sinned by saying bad things about the Promised Land should have been punished; the Tribes of Yehudah and Efrayim, whose representatives (Kaleiv and Yehoshua) did not sin, should not have been punished. The fact that everyone was punished indicates that each scout did not only represent their own Tribe, but they all represented the entire nation. On the other hand, Ramban and Rabbeinu Bachye explain that G-d wanted twelve scouts, one per Tribe, so that everyone would share the same fate; if the mission was successful everyone would get credit for it, and if it wasn't, they would all suffer the same consequences. If having only two scouts for everyone (as Ramban and Rabbeinu Bachye contend was the nation's original plan) would not make everyone equally responsible for what happened, each scout must have represented only their Tribe. If each scout only represented their Tribe, why

were Kaleiv and Yehoshua's Tribes punished? And if the twelve scouts represented the entire nation, why weren't two scouts enough? (Rabbi Sorotzkin leaves this question unanswered.)

The question posed by Rebbi Yishmael in the Sifre Zuta that lead to his saying it's as if each individual went on the mission because the scouts were their representatives ("sh'luchim") was based on the wording of the text. The nation had to wander in the desert for forty years, "corresponding to the number of days that you scouted the land-forty days-one day for each year" (14:35). The scouts themselves died shortly thereafter (14:37), so this punishment only applied to the rest of the nation. Yet, the verse says "you" will have to wander in the desert for forty years because "you" scouted the land for forty days, even though none of those being addressed actually scouted the land. Therefore, Rebbi Yishmael says that the scouts must have been the representatives of the nation, and it is considered as if everyone did actually scout the land.

If this punishment was meted out based on the length of time of the mission, it would seem that it was the mission itself that was problematic. If the problem was the result of the mission (the bad report), how long the mission took shouldn't matter-the punishment should correspond to the consequences of the mission, not to the mission itself. This is supported by the way Chazal (Tanchuma Sh'lach 5/7, Bamidbar Rabbah 16:7, Yalkut Shimoni 742) describe what G-d was angry about; G-d had already told them that the land was good (Shemos 3:17), yet they wanted to verify it for themselves. The Midrash compares it to a king who told his son that he found the perfect girl for him to marry, but the son didn't believe him and wanted to meet her himself. The king got angry at his son for not trusting him, and wouldn't let him marry her. Nevertheless, so his son wouldn't think that he didn't let him meet her because she really wasn't as great as was described, the king first let him meet her and then told him that he couldn't marry her. Similarly, once the nation asked that scouts be sent to verify that the Promised Land was good, G-d decided not to let them live there (only their sons, starting from the next generation), but allowed them to send scouts so that they would see that G-d had not mislead them. They compounded their sin when, upon hearing what the scouts said, they didn't believe they could conquer the land, which is why G-d threatened to wipe them out (Bamidbar 14:12). This part was rescinded after Moshe prayed on their behalf, but the decree not to let that generation make it to the Promised Land had already been issued-even before the scouts embarked on their mission.

Even though according to Chazal the nation committed two sins-sending the scouts and accepting their report (three, if you count not repenting after G-d's "glory" appeared by the Mishkan; see Yalkut Shimoni 643 and <http://RabbiDMK.posterous.com/parashas-shelach-5770>), the sin that the Sifre Zuta is addressing

is the first one. The entire nation is considered having scouted the Land because they all wanted it to be scouted, including the Tribes of Yehudah and Efrayim. Even if their scouts didn't sin, the people already had sinned by requesting that they go. It could therefore be said that each scout represented only his own Tribe (at least in regards to investigating the nature of the Promised Land) even if two of the scouts didn't sin.

However, this only works if sending the scouts in the first place was problematic. Ramban is of the opinion that the nation only asked for military scouts, in order to determine the best way to conquer the Land. Whether this was appropriate-because we can't rely on miracles (as Ramban initially says), or if it was problematic because they saw G-d work wonders for them and should have just followed the "anan hakavod" (cloud of glory) wherever it led them without worrying about military strategy (as Ramban later suggests), it cannot be considered as problematic as not believing that the Land was good. Nevertheless, since the source of the scouts literally representing the nation is the Sifre Zuta, and Ramban's approach is inconsistent with Chazal's (Soteh 34b, which Ramban references, does not tell us what the problem with sending the scouts was, only that G-d didn't command them to go, just gave them permission to), there is no need to reconcile it with Ramban's assertion that they were originally going to send two spies. Even if each scout did not only represent his Tribe, and the two scouts that would have been sent represented the entire nation, G-d may have wanted each Tribe to send a scout so that no Tribe could later claim that had their Tribe sent a scout, he would have come back with a different report. Yehudah and Efrayim certainly could not point to their scouts' positive report in order to avoid being included in the decree, as they also cried that night and complained to/about Moshe and Aharon regarding going to the Promised Land (14:1-3).

There is one more issue that Rabbi Sorotzkin raises (leaving it unresolved as well)-how could the scouts have represented the people if we have a rule that "ain sh'liach l'd'var averia," one cannot represent someone else when sinning. Even though normally when a representative is appointed, it is considered as if the person who appointed him did what was done by the representative, this is not true if what was done is a sin. If going on the mission was a sin, how could it be considered as if those who sent them committed the sin?

Had the Sifre Zuta not continued to discuss real cases where those who appointed a representative were considered having actually done what the representative did, I might have suggested that Rebbi Yishmael was only applying the concept to explain the wording of the text, but didn't literally mean that it was as if the entire nation actually went on the mission. However, the context of the Sifre Zuta indicates that the halachic concept is being employed.

Rebbi Yishmael ends his statement by adding words not included in any of the other eight proof-texts brought to show that something done by a representative is considered as if it were done by the person who appointed him: "in all cases." It is therefore possible that Rebbi Yishmael doesn't limit the attribution of actions to cases where the action isn't a sin. There might be another possibility as well.

The rationale given for why a sin is not attributed to the person who appointed another is that the possible representative was given instructions by two entities; the person appointing him asked him to sin, while G-d commanded him not to. Who should he listen to? Obviously, he should listen to G-d and ignore the instructions of the person attempting to appoint him as his representative. If he did it anyway, his actions are only attributed to himself, not to anyone else. But this is only true if there are divine instructions. In the case of the scouts, there was no prohibition against advance scouting; normally (as the Ramban shows) advance scouting is both necessary and warranted. True, checking out whether the Promised Land is as good as G-d described is a big no-no, but there was no explicit prohibition against doing it. If the nation positioned the advanced scouting in a military context, even if their real intent was to verify how good the Land was, the act of scouting itself wasn't the sin, it was the reason they wanted scouts. Without a direct commandment prohibiting it, and without the act itself necessarily being sinful, it is possible that the mechanism that normally prevents a sin from being attributed to the person who requested it is not in place, and the action is attributed to him. It's not just when something positive is done that an act done by a representative is attributed to the person who appointed him, but in "all circumstances" (or at least those where there is no direct divine commandment not to do it). Therefore, without an explicit prohibition, sending scouts that could operate in a purely military capacity was considered as if the scouting was done by the entire nation. © 2011 Rabbi D. Kramer

**RABBI MORDECHAI KAMENETZKY**

## Chicken Yiddle

“**T**he sky is falling!” they shouted. Well not quite, but when the ten spies who went to examine the Land of Israel brought back tales of horrific stories of mighty and formidable enemies they threw a confident nation into sheer terror. It is almost inconceivable that a nation that saw a sea split and Egypt humbled would shirk in utter terror—because of reports of giants and fortified cities in their new country. The Medrash details the episode. Upon returning to the Jewish camp the ten spies dispersed amongst their own families and began to bemoan their fate. “Woe is to us!” they cried. “Our daughters will be taken captive, our sons murdered, and our possessions looted!”

Neighbor to neighbor, the tales spread, and within hours, the entire nation was in a rebellious uproar, ignoring the positive reports that Calev and Yehoshua brought back. They even besieged Moshe, demanding to return to Egypt.

The Torah details the Jews' mordant reaction to the malicious tales of gloom. Yet, it seems that it was not the tales of fortified cities or the sight of mutated-looking giant fruits or even the actual giants themselves that caused the Jews to lament. The way the story is related, the actual wailing and rebellion occurred only after an interesting detail. The spies described the giant men whom they encountered and the way they felt during that experience. “And there we saw the sons of giants; we felt in our own eyes like grasshoppers next to them” (Numbers 13:33). Immediately, the next verse tells us, “The entire assembly raised up their voices and wept that night, saying if only we had died in the land of Egypt or in the wilderness!” (Numbers 14:1-3) It seems that the final words of the spies, “we felt in our own eyes like grasshoppers next to them,” set up this tragic and futile reaction. Why?

My brother, Rabbi Zvi Kamenetzky, a rebbe in Skokie Yeshiva, loves telling the following story: Yankel, one of Warsaw's poorer folk, received a first-class train ticket from a wealthy cousin to visit him in Lodz. Yankel arrived at the station clutching his ticket tightly. He never took a train before and had no idea where to go. He spotted some well-dressed individuals and just knew he was not sitting with them. Then in the far corner of the waiting room he noticed a group of vagrants with packs on their shoulders, their eyes shifting back and forth. Yankel meandered toward them, figuring that their place was his. The first class passengers began to board but the vagrants still waited. All of a sudden, the whistle blew and the train began to move. The vagabonds quickly jumped aboard the baggage car, Yankel following in pursuit. He slithered into the dark car and lay with them underneath a pile of suitcases, still clutching his ticket in fear.

He endured the bumps and heat of the baggage car and figured that such was his fate until the door of the baggage compartment flew open and a burly conductor flanked by two policemen entered. They began moving suitcases and bags until they spotted poor Yankel and some of his new-found friends cowering in a corner.

The large conductor loomed over them and asked with a sneer in his voice, “can I see your tickets?”

Yankel looked up from his coat to see the officers staring at him. He emerged from the group, shaking, and presented the sweat-infused ticket that he had been clutching ever so tightly during the entire ordeal.

The conductor looked at it carefully and then began to laugh hysterically.

“Young man,” he barked, “you have a first-class ticket! What are you doing here lying with these dregs in

the baggage compartment? When you have a first-class ticket you ought act like a first-class passenger!"

The Jewish nation had no fear of giant fruit or giant men. They knew they had leaders that could overcome any obstacle. After all, Moshe led them across the Red Sea. Yehoshua and Chur helped defeat Amalek. But when they heard the ten spies - princes of the tribes—claim that they felt like insects they knew that they had no chance to conquer the land of Israel. They had nothing left to do but cry. Because if you are holding the first class ticket but act as if you are a itinerant then your ticket is worthless.

The giant fruit, fortified cities and powerful giants - all tiny acorns compared to the power of the Almighty - suddenly loomed large. And the sky began to fall on a self-pitying nation that was led by self-pitying leaders. And with the falling sky, fell the dreams, hopes, and aspirations of a generation that once yearned to dwell in the land of their forefathers. The Jewish nation was left to ponder that message for 40 years in the desert and perhaps thousands of years in the Diaspora.

That is what happens when mighty princes with first-class tickets to paradise think that they are tiny grasshoppers holding tickets to nowhere. © 1997 Rabbi M. Kamenetzky & Project Genesis, Inc.

#### **RABBI BEREL WEIN**

### **Wein Online**

I have often felt and even publicly stated that the relationship of Jews to the Land of Israel, just as their relationship to the Torah itself, is the litmus test of being Jewish - not necessarily strict fulfillment of observances per se but being Jewish and faithful to one's people. It is ironic in the extreme that the two noisiest factions within the Jewish world today - the leftist, liberal and completely acculturated section of Jewish society on one hand and some of the rigorously observant section of Orthodoxy on the other - are both in agreement that Jewish sovereignty in the Land of Israel is somehow not a good thing for Jews or the world generally.

Apparently opposition to the State of Israel makes for strange bedfellows. There are many conflicting causes to this state of affairs. But the bottom line is always the bottom line - opposition to the existence of the State of Israel as a Jewish state.

This week's parsha with its description of the bitter opposition by the leaders of the tribes of Israel in the desert to the planned entry of the Jewish people into the Land of Israel points out how this attitude of negativism spelled tragedy for the entire people of that generation.

Midrash and Talmud advance compelling arguments as to what these leaders thought and how they justified their error to themselves. But again, righteous self justification is not a valid reason for

standing in opposition to Jewish control over the Land of Israel. Lack of faith, lack of judgment, personal conflicts of interest, fear of the unknown, misplaced theology and the inertia of exile all combined to push these previously great leaders of Israel over the brink of rebellion and despair. This week's parsha is one of the saddest in the entire Torah.

The idea of the importance of avoiding slander and not speaking evil about others is expanded in this week's parsha to include the prohibition of slandering the Land of Israel as well. Just as evil speech is forbidden even if it be true but is of no purposeful or permitted purpose, so too does this injunction against evil speech apply to the Land of Israel.

The Land of Israel is an inanimate object not capable of feeling the hurt that evil speech causes when directed against fellow human beings. Nevertheless, such speech against it is forbidden for it damages the speaker and not only the object about which he or she spoke..

In last week's parsha we read about Miriam and Aaron speaking about Moshe. If the greatest people of Israel fall victim to engaging in such speech then others feel a right to do so as well, as this week's parsha makes clear. Israeli governmental policies can be scrutinized and criticized. Leadership can be challenged and changed. But the basic right of the Jewish people to live in the Land of Israel under Jewish sovereignty is not given to discussion and argument. I think that this is the clear message to be derived from even a cursory reading of this week's parsha. © 2011 Rabbi Berel Wein-Jewish historian, author and international lecturer offers a complete selection of CDs, audio tapes, video tapes, DVDs, and books on Jewish history at [www.rabbiwein.com](http://www.rabbiwein.com). For more information on these and other products visit [www.rabbiwein.com](http://www.rabbiwein.com)

#### **RABBI YISSOCHER FRAND**

### **RavFrand**

*Transcribed by David Twersky;*

*Technical Assistance by Dovid Hoffman*

There is a very interesting and fascinating Targum Yonasan ben Uziel in this week's Parsha. The Torah tells us that before the Spies were sent out, Moshe changed the name of Hoshea to Yehoshua. Rash"i cites the statement of Chaza"l, our Rabbis, that this was a message: "May G-d save you (Yoshiecha) from the peril of the Spies." The Targum Yonasan ben Uziel adds an editorial comment here. He says, "When Moshe Rabbeinu saw the humbleness of Hoshea, he felt compelled to change his name to Yehoshua".

What does the Targum mean? Isn't humility a desirable quality?

The Avnei Shoham gives a powerful interpretation: The Tosefta in Tractate Shabbos [17:4] brings an argument between Beis Shammai and Beis Hillel [the school of Shammai, and the school of Hillel] as to what one can or must do with bones that are left

on the table after a Shabbos meal. Beis Hillel says they are not muktzeh [forbidden to be handled on Shabbos or Yom Tov] and you are allowed to pick them up and discard them like you do regularly during the week. Beis Shammai say you must remove the entire table or tablecloth and shake it off, thus getting rid of the bones.

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

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

The Caesar agreed and sent an animal with this Jew, requesting that it be offered on the Altar. The Jew went ahead and secretly blemished the animal, knowing that it would then have to be rejected.

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

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

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

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

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

Therefore, the Targum says that when Moshe saw that Yehoshua needed a 'booster shot' of internal strength (shtark-keit), Moshe changed his name and gave him a Blessing—that G-d give him the fortitude, strength and courage that if the situation called for it he would be able to stand up and say "No". This was the Blessing of "May G-d save you from the plan of the Spies". © 1996 Rabbi Y. Frand & Project Genesis, Inc.

#### RABBI AVI WEISS

## Shabbat Forshpeis

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

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

Still others suggest that the tzitzit remind us to commit to G-d's mitzvot. The numerical value of tzitzit, coupled with the number of knots and strings used to make these fringes, is 613, equal to the number of commandments. Beyond feeling G-d's presence, one, through the wearing of tzitzit, has a constant awareness of responsibility to G-d's law. Yet another thought comes to mind. The tzitzit remind us of the first garment recorded in the Torah, the one made by G-d for Adam and Eve after they ate from the tree in the Garden of Eden. Indeed, Adam and Eve disobeyed G-d, following the temptations of their eyes and heart. (Genesis 3:6) Here, G-d commands the wearing of fringes in order to avoid being seduced by our own hearts and eyes. (Numbers 15-39)

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

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

It can be added that the prayer shawl has a different intent than the fringed garment worn all day.



Wrapping ourselves with the prayer shawl helps us to feel G-d's love, G-d's protection and G-d's embrace.

With the establishment of the State of Israel, the tzitzit has impacted upon our national psyche as well. David Wolfsohn records in his memoirs that during the first Zionist Congress, it was unanimously decided that the Israeli flag be blue and white, the same colors as the tzitzit. He writes, "This talit is our coat of arms, our emblem. Let us take out the talit and unfurl it before the eyes of Israel, before the eyes of all the nations © 1999 Hebrew Institute of Riverdale & CJC-AMCHA. Rabbi Avi Weiss is Founder and Dean of Yeshivat Chovevei Torah, the Open Orthodox Rabbinical School, and Senior Rabbi of the Hebrew Institute of Riverdale

**SHLOMO KATZ**

## Hama'ayan

**"S**ee the land—how is it? And the people that dwells in it - is it strong or weak?" (13:18)

Rashi writes: Moshe gave them a sign—if the people dwell in open cities, they are strong, thus they rely on their strength for protection. If they live in walled cities, they are weak.

R' Elya Meir Bloch z"l (20th century; rosh yeshiva of Telshe in Cleveland) comments: Some Jews believe in withdrawing from society and having no dealings with the outside world. Others do the opposite, attempting to be positive influences on their surroundings. To outward appearances, the first group, in its fortress of Torah and mitzvot, appears to be stronger, but maybe this is not so. Perhaps such withdrawal is a sign that a person is unsure of his spiritual strength. (Peninei Da'at)

On the other hand:

We are taught in Pirkei Avot (2:4), "Do not believe in yourself until the day you die." When Hillel made this statement, he had in mind the case of Yochanan Kohen Gadol who, after serving in the Bet Hamikdash for 80 years, suddenly became influenced by Greek culture and became a heretic. (Me'am Lo'ez)

But on the other hand: R' Levi Yitzchak of Bereditchev z"l (late 18th century) writes that the statement, "Do not believe in yourself until the day you die," is part of the statement that comes before it, i.e., "Do not separate yourself from the community." Chazal promise that a person who causes others to do mitzvot will be protected from spiritual harm. "Do not separate yourself from the community;" rather, attempt to teach them. Only in this way can you be spiritually secure. (Quoted in Vayaged Yaakov)

"Kalev silenced the people..." (13:30)

R' Moshe Feinstein z"l observes: Hashem considered this to be a great act, as it is written (14:24), "But my servant Kalev, because a different spirit was with him and he followed Me wholeheartedly..." We can learn several lessons from this.

First, we can learn that a person is obligated to speak or act when G-d's honor is at stake, even if he will not make an impact (just as Kalev is praised even though his rebuke was not heeded). Perhaps even one person will listen.

Second, we can learn that, just as we are obligated to do everything possible to lengthen another person's life even if we know that that person has only a short time to live, so, too, we are obligated to lengthen a person's spiritual life, even if it will be short-lived. This is what happened here, where the spies retorted to Kalev's words by repeating the same thing they had said before; apparently, Kalev swayed his listeners briefly—for which the Torah praises him—and the spies had to repeat their attack on the Land. (Darash Moshe)

"Kalev silenced the people towards Moshe, and said, 'We shall surely ascend...' " (13:30)

What does it mean "towards Moshe"? R' Meir Simcha of Dvinsk z"l (20th century) explains as follows:

In last week's parashah, two of the elders prophesied that Moshe would die and Yehoshua would lead Bnei Yisrael into the Land (see Rashi to 11:28). This left Bnei Yisrael dispirited, for they believed that all of the miracles that Hashem had performed were only in Moshe's merit. Kalev silenced the people "towards Moshe," i.e., regarding Moshe. He told them, "We shall surely ascend, even without Moshe."

This explains why it was Kalev and not Yehoshua who rebuked the people. Had Yehoshua spoken up, Bnei Yisrael might accuse him of having his own interests in mind. (Meshech Chochmah)

"The land through which we have passed, to spy it out, is a land which devours its inhabitants." (13:32)

R' Meir Leibush Malbim z"l (19th century) writes: The spies told the truth, they just did not understand what they had seen. The fact that Eretz Yisrael appeared to be devouring the Seven Nations is a sign of the Land's holiness. Eretz Yisrael was created for Bnei Yisrael, and only for Bnei Yisrael. (Eretz Chemdah) © 1998 S. Katz & torah.org

