

OHR NET

SHABBAT PARSHAT SHLACH · 18 SIVAN 5768 · JUN. 21, 2008 · VOL. 15 NO. 37

PARSHA INSIGHTS

THE EYE OF THE BEHOLDER

“The Land of Israel is very good.” (14:7)

“I don’t know how you live in this country... You’re living in the Third World. It’s dirty and dangerous. It’s beyond my comprehension why someone with a decent standard of living would uproot himself and live in a Levantine slum.”

Why is it that to some people the Land of Israel seems so beautiful while others struggle to see its beauty and leave disappointed?

Once there was a beautiful princess who had many suitors for her hand in marriage. Obviously she could only marry one of them and so she devised a plan to select the more promising candidates. When a young man would come to woo her, her servants would usher him into an ante-chamber. On the table in front of him were some fruit and some books of Torah scholarship. The servants told him that the princess would be with him shortly. They bade him make himself comfortable and to help himself to some fruit. What the suitor did not know was that there was a spy-hole in the wall of the room. Through this, the princess would observe the aspiring groom.

If he took a piece of fruit and made a *beracha* with apparent concentration, or if he took up a book and began to learn intently, then she would emerge in her finest apparel and appeared as a rare beauty.

If, however, the suitor took some fruit and failed to make a *beracha* or idled his time away and didn’t use the opportunity to learn Torah, then she would put on torn rags, blacken her face and teeth and emerge looking like a hag.

Eretz Yisrael is that princess.

If a person comes to the Land looking for spirituality even the *physical* beauty of Eretz Yisrael will enchant him. On the other hand, if a person is not worthy, everything will seem dirty and dingy.

However, Eretz Yisrael will never embarrass a person. Rather than suffering the embarrassment of being rejected by the Land, Eretz Yisrael allows the person to think that *he* has rejected *her*.

BADMOUTH

“Send forth men, if you please...” (13:2)

One of the less felicitous expressions to enter the English language in the last thirty or so years is the verb ‘to badmouth’, to speak badly of someone. Consciously or not, however, the pedigree of such an idea goes back a couple of thousand years.

In this week’s *parsha* the Torah describes the mission of the spies to scout out the Land of Israel. We learn that the spies erred terribly by speaking slander about the Land.

Rashi asks why the *parsha* of the spies follows that of Miriam being punished with *tzara’at* for speaking *lashon hara* (lit. evil tongue) about her brother Moshe. He answers that the spies saw what happened to Miriam and they should have taken heed and not spoken evil about the Land of Israel.

Ostensibly, this is not an accurate comparison. Miriam spoke badly about her brother, about a person. How does that lesson transfer *automatically* to a country — to trees and stones? Maybe the Torah prohibition is limited to denigrating a

human being because we can damage a person with slander and gossip. But a land? Is a land sensitive to slurs?

And yet the implication is clear that the spies should have learned from what happened to Miriam and should have applied that lesson to their report on the Land of Israel.

The Torah prohibits us from doing evil not just for the effect that it creates on others, but because of the *effect is has on ourselves*. It’s true that words cannot harm sticks and stones. It’s *ourselves* that we damage when we speak slander.

The physical always mirrors the spiritual. The Torah calls the sin of slander *lashon hara* — ‘evil tongue’. Meaning that the tongue itself has been made evil. It’s not just that evil has been created in the world. Not just that we have let loose a poison arrow that can never be retrieved. Our very body has been corrupted. We have made our tongue evil; our mouth bad.

Sources: *The Eye Of The Beholder* - The Ramban writing to his talmidim from Eretz Yisrael; heard from Rabbi Nota Schiller in the name of Rabbi Yosef Tzeinwort

PARSHA OVERVIEW

At the insistence of *Bnei Yisrael*, and with G-d's permission, Moshe sends 12 scouts, one from each tribe, to investigate Canaan. Anticipating trouble, Moshe changes Hoshea's name to Yehoshua, expressing a prayer that G-d not let him fail in his mission. They return 40 days later, carrying unusually large fruit. When 10 of the 12 state that the people in Canaan are as formidable as the fruit, the men are discouraged. Calev and Yehoshua, the only two scouts still in favor of the invasion, try to bolster the people's spirit. The nation, however, decides that the Land is not worth the potentially fatal risks, and instead demands a return to Egypt. Moshe's fervent prayers save the nation from Heavenly annihilation. However, G-d declares that they must remain in the desert for 40 years until the men who wept at the scouts' false report pass

away. A remorseful group rashly begins an invasion of the Land based on G-d's original command. Moshe warns them not to proceed, but they ignore this and are massacred by the Amalekites and Canaanites. G-d instructs Moshe concerning the offerings to be made when *Bnei Yisrael* will finally enter the Land. The people are commanded to remove *challa*, a gift for the *kohanim*, from their dough. The laws for an offering after an inadvertent sin, for an individual or a group, are explained. However, should someone blaspheme against G-d and be unrepentant, he will be cut off spiritually from his people. One man is found gathering wood on public property in violation of the laws of Shabbat and he is executed. The laws of *tzitzit* are taught. We recite the section about the *tzitzit* twice a day to remind ourselves of the Exodus.

ISRAEL Forever

THE POWER OF FAITH

An entire generation of Jews forfeited their right to enter the Land promised to them because of their expressed doubts about whether it was for their benefit to inherit Eretz Yisrael. This is the sad account of the spies sent by Moshe to inspect the Land, which will be read in this week's Torah portion.

Almost forty years later, in reviewing this tragedy, Moshe chastises his people for failing to have faith in G-d regarding the Land despite all the wonderful miracles He performed for them.

One approach of the commentators is that the report of

the spies about the extraordinary size of the Land's inhabitants instilled in the people a fear that Eretz Yisrael was fit only for supermen and would prove counterproductive for ordinary humans. They were therefore rebuked for failing to appreciate that if G-d wanted to give them this Land He would surely give them the ability to prosper in it.

This message should be a source of comfort for Jews living today in Eretz Yisrael that if we maintain our faith in G-d and observe His Torah, He will enable us to overcome all of the obstacles to enjoying peace and prosperity in Israel forever.

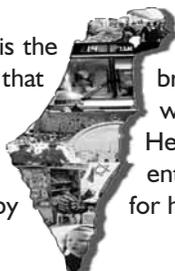
LOVE OF THE LAND - THE PLACES

Selections from classical Torah sources which express the special relationship between the People of Israel and Eretz Yisrael

ARIEL – TOMB OF A FAITHFUL SPY

Next to Ariel on the Trans-Samaria Highway is the village of Cheresh where tradition has it that Caleiv ben Yefuneh is buried.

Caleiv was one of the twelve spies sent by Moshe to inspect the Land promised to Israel by G-d. When ten of them tried to discourage the people by



slandering the Promised Land it was Caleiv who bravely defied them and tried to convince the people with the truth.

He was head of the Tribe of Yehuda when Jews finally entered Eretz Yisrael and inherited Chevron as a reward for his faithfulness.

OHRNET magazine is published by OHR SOMAYACH Tanenbaum College

POB 18103, Jerusalem 91180, Israel • Tel: +972-2-581-0315 • Email: info@ohr.edu • www.ohr.edu

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PARSHA Q&A ?

1. Why is the portion about the spies written immediately after the portion about Miriam's *tzara'at*?
2. To what was Moshe referring when he asked the spies "Are there trees in the land"?
3. Who built Hebron?
4. Which fruits did the *meraglim* bring back?
5. How many people carried the grape cluster?
6. Why did G-d shorten the *meraglim's* journey?
7. Why did the *meraglim* begin by saying the Land is "flowing with milk and honey"?
8. Why did the *meraglim* list Amalek first among the hostile nations they encountered?
9. How did Calev quiet the people?
10. Why did the Land appear to "eat its inhabitants"?
11. Besides the incident of the *meraglim*, what other sin led to the decree of 40 years in the desert?
12. On what day did *Bnei Yisrael* cry due to the *meraglim's* report? How did this affect future generations?
13. "Don't fear the people of the land...their defense is departed." (14:9) Who was their chief "defender"?
14. Calev and Yehoshua praised Eretz Canaan and tried to assure the people that they could be victorious. How did the people respond?
15. "How long shall I bear this evil congregation?" G-d is referring to the 10 *meraglim* who slandered the Land. What halacha do we learn from this verse?
16. How is the *mitzvah* of *challa* different from other *mitzvot* associated with Eretz Yisrael?
17. What is the minimum amount of *challa* to be given to a *kohen* according to Torah Law? Rabbinic Law?
18. Verse 15:22 refers to what sin? How does the text indicate this?
19. Moshe's doubt regarding the punishment of the *mekoshesh etzim* (wood-gatherer) was different than his doubt regarding the punishment of the blasphemer. How did it differ?
20. How do the *tzitzit* remind us of the 613 commandments?

PARSHA Q&A!

Answers to this Week's Questions!

All references are to the verses and Rashi's commentary unless otherwise stated.

1. 13:2 - To show the evil of the *meraglim* (spies), that they saw Miriam punished for *lashon hara* (negative speech) yet failed to take a lesson from it.
2. 13:20 - Were there any righteous people in the land whose merit would "shade" the Canaanites from attack?
3. 13:22 - Cham.
4. 13:23 - A cluster of grapes, a pomegranate and a fig.
5. 13:23 - Eight.
6. 13:25 - G-d knew the Jews would sin and be punished with a year's wandering for each day of the spies' mission. So He shortened the journey to soften the decree.
7. 13:27 - Any lie which doesn't start with an element of truth won't be believed. Therefore, they began their false report with a true statement.
8. 13:29 - To frighten the Jews. The Jewish People were afraid of Amalek because Amalek had once attacked them.
9. 13:30 - He fooled them by shouting, "Is this all that the son of Amram did to us?" The people quieted themselves to hear what disparaging thing Calev wished to say about the "son of Amram" (Moshe).
10. 13:32 - G-d caused many deaths among the Canaanites so they would be preoccupied with burying their dead and not notice the *meraglim*.
11. 13:33 - The golden calf.
12. 14:1 - The 9th of Av (Tisha B'av). This date therefore became a day of crying for all future generations: Both Temples were destroyed on this date.
13. 14:9 - Iyov.
14. 14:10 - They wanted to stone them.
15. 14:27 - That ten men are considered a congregation.
16. 15:18 - The obligation to observe other *mitzvot* associated with *Eretz Yisrael* began only after the possession and division of the Land. The *mitzvah* of *challa* was obligatory immediately upon entering the Land.
17. 15:20 - No fixed amount is stated by the Torah. Rabbinic Law requires a household to give 1/24 and a baker to give 1/48.
18. 15:22 - Idolatry. "All these commandments" means one transgression which is equal to transgressing all the commandments - i.e., idolatry.
19. 15:34 - Moshe knew that the *mekoshesh etzim* was liable for the death penalty, but not which specific means of death. Regarding the blasphemer, Moshe didn't know if he was liable for the death penalty.
20. 15:39 - The numerical value of the word *tzitzit* is 600. *Tzitzit* have eight threads and five knots. Add these numbers and you get 613.

A digest of the topics covered in the seven weekly pages of the Talmud studied in the course of the worldwide Daf Yomi cycle along with an insight from them

- Levite cities and how Jews sang at splitting of the sea
- The importance of serving G-d out of love
- Evidence or testimony required to prohibit a suspected adulteress to remain married
- Which things must be said in *Lashon Hakodesh* (Hebrew) and which in any language
- How the blessings and curses were delivered after entering Eretz Yisrael
- Why the declaration made along with *bikurim* is made aloud while the confession accompanying *ma'aser* is not
- Why prayer is not said aloud
- Sources for saying Shma, prayers and grace after meals in any language
- The language which angels do not recognize
- The miraculous crossing of the Jordan River
- All about Yosef in Egypt and his descendants in Eretz Yisrael

THE ORIGINAL LONG-RANGE MISSILE

In promising our ancestors Heavenly assistance in conquering the nations inhabiting the Land promised to them, G-d declared, "I will send the *tzirah* before you and will drive out the Chivite, Canaanite and the Chittite nations before you." (*Shmot* 23:28)

The *tzirah*, Rashi explains, was a flying insect that shot poison into the eyes of its victims and killed them.

Although it would seem that this secret weapon accompanied the Jewish armies in their invasion of Eretz Israel, we are informed in our *gemara* that it never crossed the Jordan River. The hint to this in the above-mentioned passage, explains Rashi, is that two of the nations mentioned – the Canaanites and Chittites – inhabited the lands of Sichon and Og on the eastern side of the Jordan. This, however, does not explain how the *tzirah* was employed against the

Chivites on the western side of the river. The answer to this is supplied by Rabbi Shimon ben Lakish who states that the *tzirah* stood on the eastern bank of the river and shot its deadly poison across the Jordan. Maharsha adds to this explanation the information that the Chivites were situated near the western bank of the river and therefore within range of the *tzirah*'s artillery.

Maharsha, however, challenges Rashi's approach based on the Chittites' location on the eastern side of the river because we find them mentioned both in *Bereishet* 23:3 and 27:26 in connection with the Patriarchs who lived in Chevron. He suggests another source (*Yehoshua* 24:10), which clearly indicates that the *tzirah*'s main area of operation was in the land of the two Emorite kings on the eastern side of the Jordan.

• *Sotah* 36a

What the SAGES Say

"Greater is one who serves G-d out of love than one who does so out of fear for the merit of the latter has an impact upon one thousand generations while that of the former two thousand."

• Rabbi Shimon ben Elazar - *Sotah* 31a

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BEGGING THE QUESTION

From: Jamie in Jerusalem

Dear Rabbi,

Is there any difference in Judaism between asking for charity and begging for it? Let me explain: I'm talking about people at religious sites like the Kotel who not only ask for charity but they persistently and sometimes rudely beg for money and they don't let you alone, or they even get angry if you don't give. Is that right, and should such people be allowed to be at those places? It seems hardly appropriate for such holy settings.

Dear Jamie,

I completely understand your question, and many people feel the same way you do about the situation. Still, allow me to give another perspective on the matter.

I'll say from the outset that it's not my intention to condone such behavior, nor shall I defend such behavior as befitting of the holy places. However, since neither you nor I can change those people or the situation, what I hope to do is change our way of looking at it and thus utilize it as an opportunity for growth.

In times of old, when poverty was more widespread and more acute, many people had at least minor bouts with, and often more long-term experiences with, poverty. This resulted in major differences regarding charity between those times and ours. For one, people were more sensitive to others' plight, often having felt poverty themselves in some way; and second, a greater part of the poor were normal, average people who simply suffered from bad times. As a result, charity was a more natural phenomenon where people who had also knew what it is not to have, and those who needed were not necessarily lacking stability of character.

Nowadays, in modern, western countries, most people are able to earn at least some kind of income and maintain a relatively decent, if simple, lifestyle. An average person who works hard will probably never be homeless or without food. The result is that the majority of those who end up having to turn to begging on the streets are usually the emotionally or men-

tally unstable individuals who aren't willing or able to hold a job; while those who "work hard for their living" aren't sensitive to the needy, looking upon them with disdain and indignation because of being begged.

To be sure, this is only a generalization. Many who have are generous, and many who beg are just "average" people in bad straits. Still, what I wrote above might be the reason behind what you describe as the difference between those who ask and those who beg: Your average poor person will not demand, nor will he curse if denied. Such behavior is probably an indication that the "beggar" is in the second category of those lacking personal stability and therefore should not be judged harshly, nor should one take personal offence at any inappropriate behavior.

Another idea to consider is that when we pray to G-d and beseech Him for our needs, we generally feel that G-d desires our prayer and our requests. And even if we are aware of our shortcomings and transgressions, we feel that if we truly pray and ask from our hearts, G-d will hear and accept. In this way, we the needy, in prayer, ask G-d for charity and mercy. But who is to say that the spiritual garments in which we appear before Him are presentable? And how do we know that our use of language, etiquette and demeanor are pleasant and appropriate in front of G-d? We might very well appear sullied, insolent and impetuous, audaciously begging and demanding handouts we don't "deserve". Can we say with certainty that vis-a-vis G-d we are different than the beggars who rudely grab hold of our arms, demand our alms and quibble with our qualms?

And yet, G-d overlooks our inappropriate begging, listens and gives. Should we not, then, have compassion on these souls, our brethren, whom we certainly resemble more than we resemble G-d. And if we view them with disdain, resent them in our hearts, wish they would go away and no longer bother us with their demands, how can we possibly go to these places to appear before G-d, beseech Him and ask, pray and plead that He grant us our needs and desires?

In this light, then, Jaime, we need those needy — and particularly in those places of prayer. They give us the opportunity to give. They enable us to learn tolerance, patience and compassion. And if, overcoming condescension, we give with compassion, they grant us the right to beg before G-d.

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A QUESTION OF PRIORITY

Question: An aged neighbor is in the hospital in weak condition. I have a sort of free night in which I could pay him a *bikur cholim* sick visit. On the other hand I could take care of some other pressing business that night and be free to visit him in the morning and help him put on his tefillin. What is the right thing to do?

Answer: Too many of us are guilty of putting off such things as sick visits or condolence calls until it is too late. In ordi-

nary circumstances, therefore, one should definitely seize the first opportunity to perform the sick call in accordance with the rule that one should never delay in fulfilling a mitzvah which comes one's way.

In your case, however, if you are certain that the patient cannot put on his tefilin by himself and there is no one else available to help him, it makes sense for you to postpone your visit till the morning and catch two *mitzvot* at one time.

THE HUMAN SIDE OF THE STORY _____

SHABBAT CANDLES AND MARTYR FIRES

“On Erev Shabbat, 27 Elul 5070 (1310), the saintly woman Adel, daughter of Rabbi Moshe Kiknish, sanctified the Name of G-d and martyred herself on behalf of the Jewish People, may G-d avenge her blood in this merit.”

Thus read a tombstone in the European town of Drohovitch. Behind this inscription is a moving story of heroism.

A dead Christian child was found in the home of Adel on Pesach eve and the gentile maid claimed that she had slaughtered the child at her mistress' command on behalf of the

Jewish community. In order to save the community from the tragic consequences of this blood libel, Adel decided to take the entire blame. The confession of the maid that she had lied failed to persuade the judges to change their verdict of death by the burning stake for Adel. Efforts by the priests to convince Adel to convert to Christianity and be spared proved futile.

The execution was scheduled for late Friday. Adel donned her fine Shabbat garments, lit Shabbat candles and went to her fiery death as a martyr for her people.

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