

SHABBAT PARSHAT SHLACH · 23 SIVAN 5773 - JUN. 1, 2013 · VOL. 20 NO. 36

PARSHA INSIGHTS

TOURIST TRAP

“And they cut from there a vine with one cluster of grapes, and bore it on a double pole, and of the pomegranates and of the figs...” (13:23)

It always struck me as somewhat bizarre that the Israeli Ministry of Tourism should have chosen as its symbol the Spies carrying a massive cluster of grapes. True, it’s a powerful and recognizable symbol, but the Spies’ entire agenda was to denigrate the Land of Israel. One would think that a tourist board whose whole *raison d’être* is to market the land would find the image rather inappropriate.

Maybe the early Zionists saw the Spies as forbears of their *chalutzim*, the early Zionist settlers. At any rate, they would have done well to have read the Torah a little bit more closely; something not particularly evident in most of their propaganda and activities.

Thank G-d we have more ways of repairing the damage of the Spies’ evil words than mere marketing. The mitzvah of *Bikkurim* — the bringing of the first fruits up to Yerushalyim — was given to us as atonement for the Spies. The Spies showed revulsion for the Land, and in the times of

the Holy Temple, the mitzvah of the First Fruits gave us the opportunity to show our love of the Land. It was for this reason that the mitzvah of the First Fruits was only applicable to the seven species for which the Land is praised: wheat, barley, grapes, dates, figs, olives and pomegranates.

The Mishna explains the mitzvah of *Bikkurim* thus: “A person going down to his field and seeing the first fig or the first grapes or the first pomegranate ties a reed around the fruit and says ‘These are *Bikkurim*’.”

It’s interesting that out of the seven species for which the Land is praised, only three are mentioned in the Mishna. It’s not by coincidence. For it was just those three species that the Spies brought back with them from the Land: grapes, pomegranates and figs.

Those very fruits that the Spies used for their smear campaign against the land became the subject of a mitzvah whose whole purpose was to show the dearness of the Land.

Remembering Rav Weinbach

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Love of the Land, What's the Right Thing to Do?, The Human Side of the Story written by Rav Mendel Weinbach, zt"l

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PARSHA OVERVIEW

At the insistence of *Bnei Yisrael*, and with G-d's permission, Moshe sends 12 scouts, one from each tribe, to reconnoiter 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.

LOVE OF THE LAND

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

FIG – THE TORAH SYMBOL

When King Shlomo compared Torah to the fig (*Mishlei* 27:18), he conveyed an important message about gaining and retaining Torah knowledge.

Rabbi Chiya bar Abba quoted Rabbi Yochanan (*Eruvin* 54a) as to why the comparison was made:

"Just as one constantly finds figs when he approaches the tree (since they do not all ripen at the same time, there are always some available for eating - Rashi), so too will one always find a new taste in the Torah he is studying."

If this message about gaining Torah knowledge is derived from the comparison to the fig tree itself, there is

another message from the words of this passage regarding the protection of that fig tree which yields fruit for its protector.

"One who sees a fig tree in a dream," say our Sages (*Berachot* 57a) "it is a message from Heaven that his Torah knowledge is retained and protected in him."

The fig tree thus conveys the double message of gaining Torah knowledge by appreciating the new thrill which comes with every step of learning, and the need to retain and protect that knowledge through constant review so that we can enjoy the fruits of our study even if we are not lucky enough to see a fig tree in our dreams.



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LOVE of the LAND

A compendium of selections from Torah and historical sources which express the special relationship between the People of Israel and the Land of Israel.

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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 *challah* different from other *mitzvot* associated with Eretz Yisrael?
17. What is the minimum amount of *challah* 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 *challah* 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.

ERUVIN 86 - 92

“Rebbie (Rabbi Yehuda the Nasi) honored the wealthy; Rabbi Akiva honored the wealthy.”

a) Why did they show special honor to those who had wealth? The *gemara* on our *daf* explains that they honored the wealthy who used their wealth to show kindness and supply food for the needy (Rashi). The *gemara* quotes Rava bar Mari as deriving from a *passuk* in Tehillim (61:8) that the existence of the world is sustained by merciful acts of the rich providing food for the poor.

b) Why is Rebbie mentioned before Rabbi Akiva if Rabbi Akiva lived before Rebbie? The Ben Yehoyada writes that Rebbie was very wealthy – as opposed to Rabbi Akiva — and was also the Nasi, a descendant of other leaders — and nevertheless honored the wealthy. The fact that even he honored them is more notable and significant.

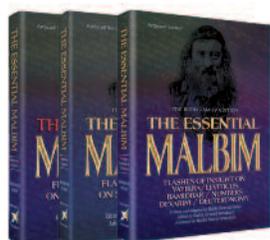
c) The Gilyon Hashas on our *daf* cites the Maharil who heard from Maharam Segel that Rebbie made a special effort to show honor to the wealthy for yet another reason. Since Rebbie was wealthy, when he exhibited special honor to others who were wealthy, it was as if to say, “Look! It is correct to honor them for their wealth alone!” In this way he hoped that people who showed honor to him would do so likewise, due to his own wealth and not because of his Torah greatness. Rebbie did not want to “use the crown of Torah” for his own personal gain.

d) Does our *gemara* imply that only the wealthy are to be honored? The Meiri says that our *gemara* does not mean to limit expressing honor to the rich. Rather, if a person is smart he should honor not only the wealthy, but also the wise, the righteous, and virtually anyone who possesses a positive and aspect to his character and way of life. The case of wealth in our *gemara* is merely an example of honor that is due for a wide variety of worthy reasons.

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GIVE IT ALL YOU GOT

From: Melissa

*Dear Rabbi,
I am challenged by giving. I know it's right to help others and to be charitable. But I always have this gnawing feeling that by giving to others I'm depleting my time or money from myself. Could you please help me with this?*

Dear Melissa,

In truth, we believe that everything that we have is ultimately from G-d. And G-d bestows upon us what we have in order to use it according to His will. So since G-d certainly wants us to share with others what He has given us, doing so will not deplete what He's given; actually it will justify His giving us even more.

Furthermore, since our resources are granted to us from G-d, and G-d's resources are limitless, we will never deplete our blessing by giving according to His will. Surely, He defines in the Torah to whom we are to give, when and how much. And one who gives irresponsibly and indiscriminately will not be extended such Divine credit. But generally, one who gives of his time and wealth to others according to the teachings of the Torah need not be concerned.

One well-known teaching on the subject notes that the word "v'natnu" (Ex. 30:12), referring to the requirement to contribute to the Tabernacle, is spelled the same way forward and backward: *vav-nun- taf-nun-vav*. This indicates that when one gives according to the will of G-d, he actually gets back from G-d in return.

Similarly, the Torah makes a very enigmatic statement (Num. 5:10): "Everyone's holy things shall belong to him; whatever a man gives to the *kohen* shall be his (i.e., the giver's)". How are we to understand this? Clearly, if a person gives what he's supposed to give to the *kohen*, it then belongs to the *kohen*. Why does the Torah assert that it still belongs to the giver?

One answer is that while the object is certainly acquired by the *kohen*, the giver receives full reward for having given it. Why? Because it was actually never his. Rather, it was deposited by G-d into his possession for the purpose of giv-

ing it to the *kohen*. Therefore, only after giving it can it be considered "his" – meaning his mitzvah of giving. In fact, if he were to withhold this relatively small amount which is due to the *kohen*, Rashi tells us that G-d would see to it that the rest of his wealth would actually be depleted such that what belongs to the *kohen* is all he'd have left.

This implies a very powerful message. All we really have is what we've been given to give to others. If we give it, it becomes ours in the sense that we get the reward for having given it. If we withhold it, it becomes ours in the sense that it's all we'll be left with - but even then it really belongs to someone else.

A rabbi and advisor to the ruler once expressed this idea to another advisor who was a rabid anti-Semite. Capitalizing on what he thought was a great opportunity, the evil advisor questioned the rabbi's fidelity to the king and challenged him to ask the rabbi about the quantity of his wealth. The king later inquired of the rabbi, who, after thinking for a while, replied with a relatively modest sum. After the anti-Semite demonstrated to the king that according to royal records the rabbi was worth much more than he declared, the king instructed the rabbi to report to the torture chamber of the palace to ask the torturer if he had fulfilled the king's orders. Little did the rabbi know that this was actually a signal to the torturer to execute the one being sent, i.e. the rabbi.

On his way to the chamber, the rabbi received a pressing message requesting him to perform a *brit mila* in the community, which, given the urgency of the request, he decided to do. After some time, the anti-Semite, gleefully anticipating the results of his machinations, went to the dungeon in order to inquire whether the torturer had fulfilled the king's orders – at which point he summarily seized the anti-Semitic advisor and executed the orders as signaled.

When the king heard of this unusual turnabout, clearly indicating Divine intervention, he realized the rabbi must have been innocent. But he nevertheless challenged him to explain why his declared worth was so short of the royal records. The rabbi explained that one should not consider his properties and possessions as his – what a person really owns, and therefore what he answered, was a tally of all the charity he had given. That, he declared, is a person's true wealth!

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WHAT'S THE RIGHT THING TO DO?

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BAD NEIGHBOR POLICY

Question: A friend of mine is planning to buy an apartment in a particular building. I am aware that his immediate neighbor in that building is a very difficult person. What is the right thing to do?

Answer: The Talmudic Sage Netai of Arbel counsels in *Pirkei Avot*: "Place a distance from a bad neighbor." One of the commentaries calls attention to the fact that this Sage did not say "Stay away from a bad neighbor" which would have sufficed as advice for personally avoiding a problematic neighbor. By instead phrasing it as he did, another message

was intended – place a *distance* between your friend and a bad neighbor!

There is no need to hesitate doing so out of fear that you may be transgressing the laws of *lashon hara* because it is not only permissible to reveal something which may harm another but is even the right thing to do.

As regards your friend's hesitation to accept your warning, our Sages have already ruled that even if one refuses to believe a bad report about another person, he must nevertheless exercise the caution such a warning warrants.

THE HUMAN SIDE OF THE STORY

NOT ANOTHER 9/11!

It is hardly headline material when a person is released from a hospital. But when Ilana Benhuri came out of the New York hospital where she had spent a month undergoing major surgery and several skin grafts, it was a news item that brought relief to the residents of the Big Apple.

Benhuri, a 50-year old Iranian Jewess, was the victim of a freak accident on October 11th. New York Yankee pitcher Cory Liddle and his flight instructor were in a small plane that crashed into the 30th floor of the Upper East Side building in which she lived. Her housekeeper, Eveline Reategue, rushed into the room where Benhuri was doing some paperwork, and warned her that a plane was headed their way. As

they ran from the four-bedroom apartment the plane smashed through the wall and set off a massive explosion. Although both the pitcher and his instructor were killed, Benhuri and Reategue managed to crawl out from the debris and go down the stairs.

Coming only a month after the fifth anniversary of the September 11th attack on the World Trade Center, this accident shocked New York. This time, however, there were no fatalities (aside from the occupants of the plane). Of the 23 people injured, including 14 firefighters, only Benhuri was hospitalized. Her miraculous recovery brought a happy end to a tragic event.

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Abarbanel ON PARSHAT SHLACH

By Rabbi Pinchas Kasnett

This Parsha presents numerous obvious difficulties. The nation is poised to enter the Land of Israel, a fertile and bountiful Land promised to their forefathers hundreds of years earlier. They have experienced one miracle after another as G-d has taken them out of Egypt and sustained them in a barren desert. Why does G-d tell Moshe to send Spies to check out the Land? What could they possibly discover that would make any difference to them?

Abarbanel maintains it was the people themselves who wanted to send the Spies and have the Spies report back to the people directly. G-d knew that if they were prevented from sending Spies they would be suspicious the Land was not suitable. At the same time, if G-d allowed them to bypass Moshe and send the Spies themselves, this would be seen as a rebellion against their leader. Therefore, Moshe, as G-d's prophet, would send them and they would report directly back to him.

In any case, there clearly was no need to send Spies and it was evident that the faith of the people was not strong enough to deal with the looming challenge. The people knew that the direct Divine intervention that they had been experiencing, such as the pillars of cloud and fire that directed them and the manna which sustained them, would cease once they entered the Land. The responsibility to conquer the Land sustain themselves in it would be in their hands. They couched their request in purely military terms, which was more acceptable, but their real

concern was much deeper. Their emphasis on tactics and strategy was merely a subterfuge for their more fundamental lack of trust in G-d about the worth of the Land in all respects and their own worthiness to benefit from it. If their motivation was simply to prepare for a successful military campaign, one or two nameless Spies would have been sufficient and prudent. But since Moshe understood their true motivation, he made sure to appoint respected leaders from each of the diverse tribes. In this way each tribe would be able to look out for its own unique interests. For this reason Moshe did not send a representative from the tribe of Levi, since they had no inheritance in the Land.

Their fundamental lack of faith in the desirability and importance of the Land of Israel is clearly evident from the initial words of the Spies when they return from their mission: "We came to the Land to which you sent us." They should have said, "...which G-d gave to us," or "to the Land which G-d promised to our forefathers." It was their opinion that they were not worthy of this gift and did not have an overwhelming desire to go and see it in the first place.

This fundamental disconnect from their unique connection to the Land of Israel clouded all of their perceptions and interpretations of what they saw and experienced during their forty days in the Land.