

Toras Aish

Thoughts From Across the Torah Spectrum

RABBI LORD JONATHAN SACKS ZT"l

Covenant & Conversation

The twelve men 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 God 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. God 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. *Covenant and Conversation is kindly supported by the Maurice Wohl Charitable Foundation in memory of Maurice and Vivienne Wohl zt"l ©2024 The Rabbi Sacks Legacy Trust rabbisacks.org*

RABBI SHLOMO RISKIN

Shabbat Shalom

“**A**nd God spoke unto Moses saying, ‘Send out men for yourself to spy out the Land of Canaan, which I give unto the children of Israel; of every tribe of their fathers shall you send a man, every one a prince among them.’” (Numbers 13:2) As the portion of Shelach opens, we read how God commands the Israelites to send ahead men to spy out and explore the Land of Israel.

And we know the tragic results of this “spy” mission. The report, which emerged from ten out of twelve, was a negative and discouraging one, which only served to divert the Israelites from their God-given mission of the conquest of the land of Israel. Hence the agonizing question which this portion evokes is: Why did God command the sending of scouts in the first place? Why risk a rebellion in the ranks by requesting a committee report which may well go against the divine will to conquer and settle Israel?

A totally different perspective, not only as to why God commanded Moses to send out the scouts but much more profoundly as to how God operates in the world and why, is to be found in a remarkable interpretation given by Rabbenu Tzadok HaKohen of Lublin (1823–1900), a great Hasidic master, in his commentary on the Torah, called Pri Tzaddik. He points out a striking analogy between the incident of the scouts and the gift of the second tablets which came as a result of the sin of the Golden Calf, both conceptually as well as textually: in both cases the Almighty saw the necessity of involving – even to the extent of establishing a partnership with – the people, the nation of Israel.

In what way were the second tablets an improvement on the first tablets which Moses smashed, and which God congratulated him for smashing (Exodus 34:1, Yevamot 62a)? What was “built into” the second tablets which would be more likely to prevent a fiasco of the proportion of the sin of the Golden Calf, which occurred only forty days after the gift of the first tablets? The fact that the first tablets had been “written with the finger of God” (Exodus 31:18), and were in actuality the very “script of the divine,” whereas the second tablets were “hewn out” by Moses (Exodus 34:1) and thereby were created as a result of human involvement, suggests the difference: the first tablets were the product of divine creativity alone; the second tablets involved human cooperation, setting the stage for rabbinical interpretation, decrees, and enactments which are such a major portion of what we call the “Oral Law.” The Oral Law not only accepts but requires the direct participation of rabbinical leadership, and even the involvement of the masses of committed Jews (Pri Tzaddik on Exodus, Ki Tissa 3, and on Numbers, Shelach 2).

Of course, we believe that the major principles and salient laws of the Oral Torah were also given by God. However, the sages of each generation must actively interpret the Torah and often plumb from its depths great innovative concepts necessary for the needs of that generation. Indeed, in a stunning Talmudic passage, the rules of rabbinical exegesis can even cause the Almighty Himself to accept a decision of the majority of the sages, causing Him (as it were) to cry out “My children have conquered Me” (Bava Metzia 39b). The very words with which God commands Moses to “hew out” the second tablets, “psal lekha” (Exodus 34:1), also contain a nuance: you, Moses, have the authority

and the obligation to determine whether an activity or object is pasul (improper and invalid). The sages are given the power to add decrees and enactments (gezerot and takkanot) to the body of the Torah, many of which – such as lighting candles on the eve of the Sabbath and festivals, the kindling of the Chanukka menorah, and the reading of the Purim Megilla – have become major expressions of our Torah commitment and lifestyle (Deut. 17:8–11). Moreover, no such decrees or enactments can become part and parcel of the Torah of Israel without the endorsement of the majority of the committed people who have the right of acceptance or rejection. The masses of committed people, the hoi polloi or hamon ha'am, have also initiated customs throughout the generations which assume the status of Torah law (minhag Yisrael din hu, the customs of Israel are law).

All of this suggests a Torah which is not the product of ossified paternalism – as divinely perfect as such a Torah might be – but is rather the result of a living partnership between God and His people. Apparently, the Almighty believed – after the tragic trauma of the Golden Calf – that only a Torah which would involve the active participation of the Israelites could survive the seductive pitfalls of idolatry and immorality.

Fascinatingly enough the phrase “psal lekha” (Exodus 34:1) parallels the words God uses to command the scouts, “Shelach lekha,” send out for yourselves, in the beginning of our portion. God apparently understood that a mission as important as the conquest of Israel could not take place without the enthusiastic approbation and active participation of the people.

Of course, opening up the process – be it Torah interpretation or the appointment of a reconnaissance committee – is fraught with danger. But it was a chance that God understood had to be taken if He desired His nation to be more than marching robots. He didn't want us to receive a Torah on a silver platter or to be brought into the Promised Land on eagles' wings; He realized that despite the inherent risk which came from involving the people, excluding them would be a more likely prescription for disaster. Just as a wise parent and a sagacious educator understand that children/students must be “involved in the process” so that hopefully they will continue the path even after they achieve independence, the Almighty set the stage for our continuous devotion to Torah and our third return to Israel – despite our many setbacks – by insisting on the participation of His people!

One might also argue that in the words of Rabbenu Tzadok lies the pivotal reason for the ten scouts' rejection of Moses' goal as well as for God's higher plan for his people in history. Throughout the Egyptian and desert experience, God had acted in a thoroughly paternalistic manner, as it were, bringing about miracle after miracle and providing food, shelter, and protection for the desert wanderers. In effect, the Israelites were in a “Kollel for the masses,” with the

divine Rosh Yeshiva providing manna (they didn't even have to go to the bank to cash the Kollel checks), housing, and directions as to their comings and goings, with a cloud by day and a fire by night. They didn't have to work and they were spared the major battles against the Seven Nations. Is it any wonder that the majority of the tribal princes wished to prolong this rarefied, ethereal Kollel-desert experience and rejected the responsibility-ridden decision-inducing war-perpetrating entrance into Israel?!

God, on the other hand, expected the Israelites to enter a new phase in their development, to begin to become engaged in directing their own destiny, in accepting the challenges and confrontations involved in conquering a land, irrigating the swamps, fertilizing a desert, forging a society. And God also saw that the response He received after all His steady support and committed care was kvetching and complaining, carping and criticizing – no real appreciation, and certainly no mature acceptance of responsibility. And so God commanded the reconnaissance mission as the next stage of Israel's development, the stage in which the members of this covenantal people must begin to stand on their own feet, make their own decisions, take responsibility for their failures, and – with the divine guidance to be found in the Torah and the divine guarantee that not only will they never be destroyed but also that they will eventually prevail – direct their own destiny.

Rabbenu Tzadok goes on to teach that when the scouts were initially commanded to “be of good courage, and bring of the fruit of the land” (Numbers 13:20), this was an allusion to the initial fruit which brought disaster upon humanity, the fruit of knowledge of good and evil. The problem with the Garden of Eden was that everything had been provided by the Almighty; had we remained in Eden, there would have been no risks, no challenges, and no real involvement. The repair (tikun) for this primordial transgression – a transgression which was really inevitable given the paternalistic reality of the situation – is the human production of fruit in partnership with God in the Land of Israel. We can only return to the Garden of Eden if we ourselves remake the world into an Eden with our own blood, sweat, and tears, with humanity assuming the risks and overcoming the obstacles.

The scouts were not yet ready for the challenge. Are we? What can greatly help us in our decision-making is the knowledge that God believes in us and has faith that we can and eventually will do it! And the first step is for Jews of the Diaspora to come home – to the only Jewish homeland. As for those of us living in Israel, we must especially strengthen ourselves, and take from the fruits of the Torah of Zion with an open and cupped hand, always ready to give out what we have; hence we must truly become a kingdom of priests who will export God's ways and God's will to all corners of the earth. What

Rabbenu Tzadok is teaching is that we dare not wait for the Messiah; the Messiah is indeed waiting for us! © 2024 Ohr Torah Institutions & Rabbi S. Riskin

RABBI BEREL WEIN

Wein Online

This week's parsha raises the age-old issue of human behavior – altruism over personal interest and gain. While we all pay lip service to the concept and ideal of altruism when dealing with public affairs and the general good, we all remain human beings and the Talmud long ago posited that “a human being is first and foremost closest and prejudiced to one's own self and interests.”

The conflict between the general good of many and the private benefit to the few or even to one individual is the stuff of politics, government, power and influence. It is the basic motif in all human existence and history. Our sense of rectitude and conscience is constantly buffeted by self-interest and personal factors and reckonings. We are born as selfish grasping individuals and the challenges in life that follow all revolve about our ability to recognize and modify this basic human instinct.

One may say that all of the commandments and laws of the Torah come to enable us to counter this instinct that is part of us from the moment of our birth. This is what the rabbis meant when they taught us that the “evil instinct” - the innate selfishness and purely self-interested nature of humans – is with us from our first breath on this earth. The struggle to include others – family, community, fellow Jews and human beings generally – into our worldview is the story of our lives and existence.

The Torah attributes Avraham's victory in this struggle and it is he, above all others, who is seen as our father and role model, the founder of God's people.

One of the explanations offered by the commentators to the negative behavior and damning report regarding the Land of Israel is that the spies – who were the leaders of their tribes – were aware that when the Jews entered the Land of Israel, new leaders were to be chosen and they, the Jews, were in jeopardy of losing their titles and positions of power and influence. This awareness preyed upon their minds and prejudiced their view of the Land of Israel.

Their perceived personal gain and position overwhelmed the general good of the people they were supposed to serve. This has always been a plague of communal leadership, when hubris and self-service dominate the sight of the leadership so that one is unable to distinguish between public good and one's private interests.

Even worse, many times the private interest of the leader is disguised as being the public good. Dictators have always stated that “I am the state!” The great prophet Shmuel is characterized in the same

category as Moshe and Aharon because of his selflessness in leading the Jewish people. The tragedy of the spies, and of the Jewish people of that generation generally, is this inability to rise over personal interests and view the general picture of Jewish destiny and accomplishment.

Like many a leader blinded by one's own agenda of ideas and events, the spies soon descended into falsehoods and slander to make their case. The tragedy in cases such as this is that the people often follow this flawed leadership, bringing calamity upon one and all. We should always be wary of the true motives of those who profess to lead us for the alleged public good. © 2024 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. For more information on these and other products visit www.rabbiwein.com

RABBI AVI WEISS

Shabbat Forshpeis

The story of the spies is viewed as an episode revealing the Jews' basic lack of faith in God (Numbers 13, 14). This is similar in its underlying theme to the golden calf story, which describes the Jews' lack of faith (Exodus 32, 33).

Throughout the Book of Numbers, the narrative reveals a pattern of events that parallels what occurred when the Jews left Egypt. To wit:

- The Jews begin to murmur that they do not have meat to eat (Numbers 11:4). This corresponds to the longing of the Jews “for the fleshpots” in Egypt, resulting in the giving of the manna (Exodus 16:3).

- After the Jews complain that they lack water, Moses hits the rock instead of speaking to it, and water comes forth (Numbers 20:3–13). So too in the Exodus story did Moses hit the rock after the Jews militated for water (Exodus 17:1–7).

So similar are the stories in these two narratives that the Bechor Shor insists that the water stories are one and the same, positing that the latter is a more detailed account of the former.

But a closer look reveals an interesting pattern. In each of the narratives, the consequences escalate in their seriousness in the Book of Numbers.

- Unlike the manna story in Exodus, the request for meat in the Book of Numbers resulted in the Lord “smit[ing] the people with a very great plague” (Numbers 11:33).

- Only after Moses hits the rock in the Book of Numbers is he given the severe punishment of not being allowed to enter Israel (Numbers 20:12).

As it relates to Parashat Shelach, only after the spy incident – not after the episode of the golden calf – does God decree that the generation that left Egypt must die in the desert (Numbers 14:29).

Why are the consequences greater in the Book of Numbers, when the transgressions seem so similar?

First, the events in the Book of Exodus occur either prior to Sinai or, in the case of the golden calf, prior to the construction of the Tabernacle. With the Sinaitic teachings and the Tabernacle in place, the Jews should have known better than to falter again.

Second, to err once is forgivable and even sometimes understandable. The same transgression committed again deserves to be treated much more harshly.

So the patterns of the narratives may be similar, but the message is clear: God understands that we will fall. But we ought to take the lessons we learn from our mistakes and improve. God always gives us opportunities to repent. And yet, we are given just so many chances to make the same mistake before the penalties intensify. ©2024 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

RABBI JONATHAN GEWIRTZ

Migdal Ohr

They arose early in the morning and ascended the mountaintop, saying, "We are here and ready to ascend to the place Hashem said, for we were wrong." (Bamidbar 14:40) Following the negative report of the meraglim, the Jews cried about how they were doomed. Hashem told Moshe that because of this they would have to remain in the Wilderness for forty years, one year for each day the spies were scouting the land. When Moshe told them the news, the Jews were shocked and rocked with grief. The next morning, they crested the mountain, ready to begin the conquest of the promised land, but it was too late.

Hashem had already decreed that all those counted from twenty and above would die in the Wilderness and it would not go away. The fact that the Jews recognized their error wasn't sufficient. The meforshim explain that simply acknowledging they were wrong was not enough. Hashem knows what's inside our hearts and they were afraid of what happened to the spies, who died a horrible death. They weren't repenting because they loved Hashem and wanted to fulfill His will, but because they were scared of punishment. That kind of Teshuva doesn't reverse the damage.

There's a further nuance here to be garnered, as well. The Jews said, "Hinenu," we are here. This was the answer of Avraham when Hashem called him, but he meant that he was ready to do whatever Hashem asked of him, even if it was difficult or painful. They certainly were not in that space.

Their comment of being ready now, belies a misconception. The Jews took a fatal misstep by lamenting the report of the spies. Simply changing their minds would not take them back in time as if they'd never made the error.

What the Jews needed to enter Eretz Yisrael

before the spies' sin was not what they needed afterwards, because they were different people. Now they were people who had sinned and repented, and each choice we make changes who we are. Therefore, what would have worked previously would no longer work.

Whereas before they merely had to follow Hashem's guidance, now they required an atonement before they could move forward. They needed a lesson in watching what they said and did, and that their actions have consequences. They would have it.

Thinking they could just "take it back" was a foolhardy mistake, and Moshe warned them to desist. Sadly, 30,000 men didn't listen, and they were killed, just as Hashem had warned. We must learn from this story that what we need is different for each person and each time in our lives. Regardless of what we need, Hashem sends it to us, and if we get the message the first time, we won't have to go through a harder lesson.

A journalist in Israel was writing an article about Baalei Teshuva, people who chose to come closer to Hashem and learn about their Jewish heritage. After a class, he stopped one of the men who was leaving and posed this question: "Who do you think will get more reward, you, or someone who has been religious his entire life?" He thought the man would refer to the dictum of Chazal that "in the place where penitents stand, even the completely righteous cannot."

Without hesitation the man replied, "Surely, one who has always been observant will get more reward." He explained. "They will be rewarded because they think there is something better out there, yet they don't pursue it. I know that the world without Torah and without G-d is empty. For me, coming here is the only logical response, so why do I deserve reward?" ©2024 Rabbi J. Gewirtz & Migdal Ohr

RABBI DOV KRAMER

Jewish Geography

The location from where the מרגלים (scouts, or spies) were sent has been the topic of much discussion, for several reasons. For one thing, the name usually used – קדש ברנע (Kadesh Barneya) – doesn't even appear in our Parasha. It's eventually used whenever the מרגלים are referred to (Bamidbar 32:8, Devarim 1:19/9:23 and Yehoshua 14:7), and elsewhere (e.g. Devarim 1:2/2:14), but it's called מדבר פארן when the nation arrived there (Bamidbar 12:16), when the מרגלים were sent (13:3), and when they returned (13:26) – although for the latter, "קדשה" (to Kadesh) is added. When Moshe lists the encampments (33:18), he calls it רתמה. Why does the Torah use different names for the same location?

The southern boundary of Eretz Yisroel runs south of קדש ברנע (Bamidbar 34:4, Yehoshua 15:3). Since Moshe never entered E"Y, how could the nation have camped there? [Because of this question, Chizkuni

suggests there were two Kadesh Barneyas, one on the southern border and one next to it, beyond the border. However, besides the unlikelihood of two locations with the same name being right next to each other, how could the southern border be described as passing south of קדש ברנע if it's north of the other קדש ברנע?]

מדבר צן קדש is in מדבר פארן, while קדש ברנע (Bamidbar 20:1, 27:14, 33:36 and Devarim 32:51). Since the location in מדבר פארן is also called "קדש" (Bamidbar 13:26 and Devarim 1:46), the assumption is that קדש and קדש ברנע are the same place. Rashi (Devarim 1:46) says the nation returned to Kadesh 19 years later, implying that they are one and the same. But if קדש and קדש ברנע are the same place, how could they be in two different deserts?

[Get ready for a series of paragraphs, each one trying to make a point that will hopefully work together to answer these questions.]

Atlas Daat Mikra says מדבר צן is the northern section of מדבר פארן. Yoel Elitzur (whose father, Yehuda, was one of its editors) agrees, based on the מרגלים being sent from מדבר פארן yet starting their mission in מדבר צן (Bamidbar 13:21). However, why does the Torah alternate between calling it מדבר פארן and מדבר צן? It seems more likely that they're two separate deserts, with the nation camping in מדבר פארן, and מדבר צן being the first place in Eretz Yisroel that the מרגלים scouted.

Gur Aryeh (Bereishis 14:7) says Rashi doesn't mean the nation returned to the exact same exact spot 19 years later, but the same general area. He says מדבר קדש is one big desert, within which was קדש (on the border of Edom), and קדש ברנע (from where the מרגלים were sent). When Rashi says they returned to קדש, he means the desert called קדש, even though it was to a different location within that desert. Although this solves the issue Gur Aryeh is trying to address (which doesn't need addressing, since the conquering kings returned from קדש to איל פארן, which could therefore be the קדש near Edom as opposed to קדש ברנע in מדבר פארן), it seems strange for "מדבר קדש" to include parts of both מדבר צן and מדבר פארן.

Or Hachayim (Bamidbar 14:25) explains how G-d told Moshe to leave "tomorrow" if they stayed for 19 years, suggesting that they did leave the next day, wandered for 19 years, then returned to that same place (in מדבר פארן), where they stayed for 19 years. Therefore, the קדש next to Edom need not be the same place the מרגלים were sent from, even if they returned to the latter 19 years later. Despite Rashi (Devarim 1:46) saying they stayed in Kadesh for 19 years before saying they wandered for 19 years and returned to Kadesh – implying that the 19 years in Kadesh came first – the Seder Olam (8) he's based on has the 19 years of wandering first; Rashi may have mentioned the 19-year stay in קדש first because that's what the verse he's explaining is referring to.

The first time the Torah mentions קדש ברנע

(Bamidbar 32:8), Rashi tells us there were two places called "קדש." The straightforward understanding is that the two places he's referring to are the קדש where Moshe hit the rock (near Edom, first mentioned in Bamidbar 20:1) and קדש ברנע. Most commentators (e.g. Ramban on Bamidbar 12:16 and Ibn Ezra on 20:14) agree that they're two separate places, with one in מדבר פארן and the other in מדבר צן – although Ibn Ezra thinks קדש ברנע is the name of the desert, referred to in Tehillim (29:8) as "מדבר קדש." He includes קברות התאוה and חצרות as part of קדש ברנע (Bamidbar 33:16), meaning there was a significant overlap between the desert called קדש ברנע and מדבר פארן, which seems unlikely.

[Sha'aray Aharon (Bamidbar 13:21) says קדש and קדש ברנע must be far from each other, since there were so many encampments between the two, but he isn't taking into account that they went south from קדש then back north to קדש before going back south again to go around Edom. Nevertheless, from the description of the southern boundary, which starts on the east at the Dead Sea and has two more boundary markers before קדש ברנע, it's clear they're not so close to each other.]

According to Sefornu (Bamidbar 12:16 and 13:26), the מרגלים didn't leave from קדש ברנע, they left from the part of מדבר פארן opposite קדש ברנע. קדש ברנע itself is in Eretz Yisroel, but Moshe never entered it, only getting close to it – "עד קדש ברנע" (Devarim 1:19). Similarly, Netziv (Bamidbar 20:1) says the nation camped outside חצרות and outside קדש without entering them. Although he doesn't say this about קדש ברנע, the concept can be applied there as well. [When the Torah says the מרגלים were sent from קדש ברנע, it must be referring to where the מרגלים started their mission in Eretz Yisroel.] Because the part of מדבר פארן where they camped didn't have a name (yet), the Torah refers to it as מדבר פארן.

Although Rashi (Bamidbar 33:18) gives a reason why this location was subsequently called רתמה, Yoel Elitzur (Places in the Parasha, page 445) says the name "is certainly derived from the word 'rotem,' referring to the broom bush, because of the high concentration of these plants in that location," which he tentatively suggests is three miles west of Ain el-Qudeirat. [Most identify Ain el-Qudeirat with קדש ברנע.]

The specifics of the southern boundary of Eretz Yisroel are related twice. In Bamidbar (34:3-5), it starts in the southeast with מדבר צן "which is next to Edom," but restarts with the Dead Sea, passes south of עקרבים before passing through צן (assuredly referring to the desert by that name) and then going to its southernmost point, קדש ברנע. Four more locations are then given, with the last one being the Mediterranean Sea. In Yehoshua (15:1-4), similar boundaries are given. Yechezkel (47:19 and 48:28) has a shortened version, with just three locations; in the southeast, the southwest and in between. The middle one is "מי מריבות קדש," which

normally refers to the קדש next to Edom, but that's too close to the eastern boundary to be the middle marker. Rashi says it refers to מדבר צין, i.e. that entire desert, which, based on קדש ברנע being in מדבר צן and not מדבר פארן, likely refers to קדש ברנע. In other words, מדבר צן is being referred to as the קדש within which Moshe sinned, i.e. מדבר קדש. Rashi says this explicitly in Yehoshua (1:4), telling us the desert referred to in the southern part of Eretz Yisroel is "מדבר קדש מדבר צין, which is next to Edom, in the southeast corner." This might be what the Torah is alluding to when it says "they camped in מדבר צן which is קדש" (Bamidbar 33:36); not that they were in the city of קדש which is in the desert of צן, but that they were in the desert of צן which is also known as the desert of קדש.

If מדבר קדש is another name for מדבר צן, we can understand why the Torah tells us the מרגלים came back to "מדבר פארן קדשה," as the nation was in the part of מדבר פארן that's next to קדש. Similarly, when they stayed in "קדש" for 19 years (Devarim 1:46), it was next to קדש ברנע, which is in מדבר קדש, where the מרגלים started their ill-fated mission. ©2024 Rabbi D. Kramer

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A Minyan of Ten

Translated by Rabbi Mordechai Weiss

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

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

This involves a bit more exegesis. The word "*edah*," which is used in the story of Korach, is also used in reference to the ten spies who spoke badly of the Land of Israel, as we read (*Bamidbar* 14:27), "How much longer will that wicked community (*edah*) keep muttering against Me?" We see that the definition of a community is ten. Thus, the community within which we sanctify G-d's name must be similar to the spies (not in their sinfulness, of course, but in being free, adult males).

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

RABBI DAVID LEVIN

Yehoshua & Calev's Message

The story of the meraglim, the twelve spies that were sent into the Holy Land to report on the land is a sad part of our history. The spies were great leaders, each representing his tribe, and the expectation should have been that they would return with a glowing picture of the land. Ten of the spies disappointed the B'nei Yisrael and only brought them a negative picture of a "land that devours its inhabitants." Two of the spies, Calev and Yehoshua, gave an honest picture that was meant to encourage the people to enter the land immediately. Unfortunately, the people listened to the majority and turned against the good report.

The Torah tells what happened after the people gave credence to the negative report and wished to return to Egypt: "Yehoshua bin Nun and Calev ben Yephuneh, of those who spied out the land, tore their garments. They spoke to the entire assembly of the B'nei Yisrael, saying, 'The land that we passed through to spy it out – the land is very, very good. If Hashem desires us, He will bring us to this land and give it to us, a land that flows with milk and honey. But do not rebel against Hashem! And you will not fear the people of the land, for they are our bread. Their protection has departed from them; Hashem is with us. Do not fear them!' But the entire assembly said to pelt them with stones – and the glory of Hashem appeared in the Tent of Meeting to all the B'nei Yisrael."

The Ohr HaChaim explains that the Torah had to tell us that Yehoshua and Calev were part of those who spied out the land, because the people would have said, "Who are you to mourn when our leaders, Moshe and Aharon are not mourning?" Stating that they were part of the spies enabled us to understand that they did not act out of a sense of superiority, but instead, because they had seen the beauty of the land and were pained that the people believed the negative report over theirs. Yehoshua and Calev believed that if they tore their garments as a sign of mourning, the people might realize their sin and accept Yehoshua and Calev's testimony instead of the words of the ten who gave a negative report.

Yehoshua and Calev spoke before all the people and told them that the land was very, very good. The double statement of “very, very” was used for emphasis. The Ramban suggests that this was to counter the statement from the other spies that this was a “land that devoured its inhabitants.” Yehoshua and Calev indicated that the other spies had misinterpreted the deaths that they witnessed, because the air was clear and good, and it was a “land flowing with milk and honey.” Sforno suggests that their words were to indicate that the land was “very, very good” even before it was cultivated by the B’nei Yisrael. The Ohr HaChaim explains that even the bad spies reported that the land was a “land flowing with milk and honey,” but their words of truth here were to give credibility to their negative report which followed. Yehoshua and Calev’s purpose in using these words was to ultimately praise Hashem for bringing the people into such a good land.

The Torah continues with the next part of Yehoshua and Calev’s message to the people, “If Hashem desires us, He will bring us to this land and give it to us, a land that flows with milk and honey.” The Ohr HaChaim explains that the people misinterpreted this message to believe that there was uncertainty as to whether Hashem would fulfill His promise and bring the people into the Land. But that was not their message. The real meaning of the word, “im” is not “if,” but “when.” Thus, the sentence is clearer and means that when Hashem is pleased with the people, He will fulfill His promise. HaRav Hirsch explains that their message was that the B’nei Yisrael had to remain worthy of Hashem’s promise, and it would be fulfilled.

The final statement of Yehoshua and Calev was that the people had nothing to fear because Hashem was their partner. “And you will not fear the people of the land, for they are our bread. Their protection has departed from them; Hashem is with us. Do not fear them!” This message was meant to counteract the message of the other spies who said that the people of the land were strong and that the B’nei Yisrael were like “grasshoppers” in comparison to the people of the land. Yehoshua and Calev told the people not to be afraid, for as long as they were loyal to Hashem, He would protect them and destroy their enemies before them.

The phrase used, “ki lachmeinu heim,” because they are our bread” is an unusual expression. HaRav Hirsch describes this phrase, saying, “(it) expresses the complete lack of resistance and importance of these people -- spiritually and morally degenerate and demoralized, and only imposing in their material physique – against the godly, spiritual, and moral principles which are to combat them in Israel. “Their protection (literally, ‘protective shadow’) has departed from them, they only continue to exist for as long as they remain in safety, hidden in the shade of being left alone. But with us, Hashem and His Truth and His Justice intervening for the salvation of mankind comes to them.

And in the light of that Truth and Justice, the protecting shade vanishes and their depravity appears in the full clear light, and in that depravity, they are condemned and destroyed – fear them not!” The Ramban states that the shield that protected them were their few righteous men who had died. These were the numerous deaths that caused the other spies to say that this was a “land which devours its inhabitants.”

The final sentence gives us the unfortunate answer from the B’nei Yisrael which sealed their fate of forty years of wandering in the desert and dying without entering the land. The Torah gives us their answer: “But the entire assembly said to pelt them with stones – and the glory of Hashem appeared in the Tent of Meeting to all the B’nei Yisrael.” According to HaRav Hirsch, the fact that the entire population rebelled against the words of Yehoshua and Calev left Hashem with only one place to remain, and that was within the Tent of Meeting. Hashem would have destroyed all the people for their abandonment, had it not been for the pleas of Moshe.

Unfortunately, we see a generation of some young Jews today who, mostly through ignorance and an acceptance of a “moral” code which is not based on Torah values, have chosen to abandon Israel and religion, and replace both with wokeism, which demands that abandonment. May they learn the same lesson that the B’nei Yisrael were forced to learn, namely, that abandonment of Hashem results in wandering in the desert for many years. Theirs will be the desert of direction in life, purpose for their actions, and a desert short of hope and meaning. May we all accept the guidance from Hashem for our direction and purpose in life. © 2024 Rabbi D. Levin

