

In this week's *Parashah*, we read about the sending of the Spies, their evil report about *Eretz Yisrael*, and *Hashem's* decree that *Bnei Yisrael* would wander in the desert for 40 years--one year for each day of the Spies' mission. R' Yitzchak Aryeh Wormser z"l (1768-1847; Germany; known as the "*Ba'al Shem* of Michelstadt") notes that commentaries identify different possibilities for what *Bnei Yisrael's* sin was, each of which implies a different understanding of our obligations of *Emunah* / faith and *Bitachon* / trust in *Hashem*.

R' Levi ben Gershon z"l ("*Ralbag*"; 1288-1344) writes: One of the lessons this incident teaches is that one should place his trust in *Hashem*, especially when *Hashem* has already made known that His plans are exactly the same as what the person wants. Look at the bad that befell *Bnei Yisrael* when, despite the wonders of *Hashem* that they had already witnessed, they nevertheless sent spies rather than relying on *Hashem's* promise that they would inherit the Land! [Until here from *Ralbag*]

According to *Ralbag's* understanding of *Bnei Yisrael's* sin, writes the *Ba'al Shem*, it is improper for a person to expend any effort of his own to implement an express promise by *Hashem*. However, notes the *Ba'al Shem*, others understand that sending the Spies was not inherently sinful. They apparently hold that even when *Hashem* makes a promise, He nevertheless expects us to do our share to implement it. According to this view, *Hashem's* promise means only that, after we have done whatever we can, He will fill in what we are unable to do.

- Continued in box inside -

Shabbat

R' Eliyahu Menachem Margaliot z"l (Yerushalayim; died 2022) writes: In the prayer *Atah Chonantanu* recited on *Motzai Shabbat*, we address *Hashem* as "*Avinu Malkeinu*" / "Our Father, our King," which is not a title we use elsewhere in the *Shemoneh Esrei*. What makes that description of *Hashem* appropriate to use specifically on *Motzai Shabbat*?

R' Margaliot explains: We have two relationships with *Hashem*--that of children and that of servants. Because of our souls, which Kabbalists refer to as a "piece of G-d above," we are His children and He is our Father. Our bodies, on the other hand, are made of earthly substances, not spiritual ones. When the physical body nevertheless subjugates itself to *Hashem*, we are His servants and He is our King.

Shabbat is called the "day of the soul." On *Shabbat*, a person receives a *Neshamah Yeteirah* / an "extra soul" that illuminates his entire being. During the week, on the other hand, our relationship to *Hashem* is that of servants to a Master, a relationship characterized by subjugation, not elevation. On *Motzai Shabbat*, we transition from being *Hashem's* children to being His servants, and He transitions from being *Avinu* / our Father to being *Malkeinu* / our King. That is why we address Him by both terms as *Shabbat* departs.

The difference between our two types of relationships with *Hashem* is reflected in the wording of our *Tefilot* / prayers. On *Shabbat*, we do not recite the middle blessings of the *Shemoneh Esrei* with their requests for all types of material things. Making requests is characteristic of a servant; thus, it is a weekday activity. A child, in contrast, simply basks in the presence of his parent and feels elevated and exalted by the experience, as we read (*Yeshayah* 1:2), "Children have I raised and exalted." Thus, on *Shabbat*, we do not make requests.

(*Emunat Eliezer: Shabbat*, Introduction)

Hamaayan / The Torah Spring

10815 Meadowhill Road, Silver Spring, MD 20901 / 301-775-9623

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HaHakham Yosef HaLevi ben Aura Faur z"l

“Bnei Yisrael were in the wilderness, and they found a man gathering wood on the Shabbat day.” (15:32)

R' Moshe David Valle z"l (Italy; 1697-1777) asks: Why does the Torah say, “They found a man,” instead of, “There was a man”?

He answers: The Torah is conveying that it was a wonder and a novelty to *Bnei Yisrael* that a person could be found to be transgressing *Shabbat*. After all, *Bnei Yisrael* had been very careful to observe *Shabbat* ever since they first received the *Mahn* (even before the Torah was given). It was particularly a shock to find someone transgressing *Shabbat* in public.

How, then, did this happen? R' Valle explains: Because “*Bnei Yisrael* were in the wilderness (desert)”--a place where, say Kabbalists, the *Yetzer Ha'ra* has a stronger influence. (Shivtei Kah)

- Continued from front page -

The *Ba'al Shem* continues: If sending spies was justified, what then was their sin? He answers: The Spies were afraid that *Bnei Yisrael* would sin before entering *Eretz Yisrael* or during its conquest and, therefore, would not merit the fulfillment of *Hashem's* promise. This was wrong, because *Hashem* had made an express promise to them.

But, asks the *Ba'al Shem*, didn't *Hashem* promise Yaakov that He would protect him, yet Yaakov was afraid of Esav because, perhaps, he (Yaakov) had sinned (see *Bereishit* 32:8)? He answers: Perhaps Yaakov was not subject to the same high expectations as *Bnei Yisrael* because they were protected by the merit of the multitude, while he was not. Or, perhaps the difference is that *Bnei Yisrael* had already experienced *Hashem's* wonders, while Yaakov had not.

The *Ba'al Shem* concludes: The most correct explanation of *Bnei Yisrael's* sin, however, is that they accepted the *Lashon Ha'ra* / evil tidings of the Spies about *Eretz Yisrael*--in particular, the Spies assessment that they would be unable to conquer the Land. Perhaps man's intellect could not perceive how they would conquer such a land. Nevertheless, the *Gemara* (*Shabbat* 88a) relates that when *Bnei Yisrael* said, “*Na'aseh ve'nishma*” / “We will do and we will hear,” a *Bat Kol* / Heavenly Voice proclaimed, “Who revealed this secret to My children?” [Until here from the *Gemara*.] To what “secret” was the Heavenly Voice referring? The *Ba'al Shem* explains: It refers to the secret that a human being is capable of accomplishing that which his intellect tells him is impossible. Just as, at the time of the Giving of the Torah, *Bnei Yisrael* accomplished the logically impossible feat of accepting a Torah they had not yet learned, so they should have believed that they could conquer *Eretz Yisrael* even if their intellects told them it was impossible.

(*Ba'al Shem Mi'Michelstadt* p.256)

“So they said to one another, ‘Let us appoint a leader and let us return to Egypt!’” (14:4)

R' Yaakov Moshe Charlap z"l (1882-1951; rabbi of Yerushalayim's Sha'arei Chessed neighborhood and *Rosh Yeshiva* of Yeshivat Mercaz Harav) writes: Every redemption of the Jewish People consists of two parts--the spiritual and the physical. Thus we say in the blessing at the end of the *Maggid* section of the *Pesach Haggadah*, “For our redemption and for the liberation of our souls.”

R' Charlap elaborates: The soul or spirit, being supernatural, can be redeemed instantly, without the need for any process or progression. The body, however, is of this world and can only be redeemed step-by-step, as any natural process would develop. When we read (*Devarim* 16:3), “With *Chipazon* / haste you departed from the land of Egypt,” we refer to the emancipation of *Bnei Yisrael's* spirits from slavery in Egypt. However, their bodies retained the memory and attitudes of slavery, which explains why, so many times during their journey through the desert, they suggested turning back to Egypt.

Similarly, writes R' Charlap, we read of the future redemption (*Malachi* 3:1), “Suddenly, the Master whom you seek will come to His sanctuary.” The future spiritual redemption will occur suddenly; sons will return to their Father in Heaven in a wondrous *Teshuvah* movement full of complete love for *Hashem*. Even those most distant from *Hashem* and His Torah will crown Him as their king. The physical redemption, however, will be a slower, less dramatic, step-by-step process.

(*Haggadah Shel Pesach Mei Marom* p.54)

“When you come to the Land to which I bring you: It shall be that when you will eat of the bread of the Land, you shall set aside a portion for Hashem. The first of your kneading, you shall set aside (literally, ‘elevate’) ‘Challah’ as a portion . . .” (15:18-20)

R' Moshe Wolfson z"l (1925-2024; *Mashgiach Ruchani* of Yeshiva Torah Vodaath in Brooklyn; he passed away this week) writes: The idea of setting aside the first of the kneading as a portion for *Hashem* alludes to the preciousness of the period of youth. One must take great care to protect one's youth, to elevate it, for during the period of youth one establishes the foundation for his entire life.

As a nation, we also experienced youth, *i.e.*, the period following the Exodus, about which we read (*Yirmiyahu* 2:2), “So said *Hashem*, ‘I remember for you the kindness of your youth, the love of your bridal days, your following after Me in the wilderness, in a land not sown.’” Because it was our youth, everything *Bnei Yisrael* did in the desert had a profound impact on our future, R' Wolfson writes. (*Emunat Itecha* 5757)