

In this week's *Parashah*, we read about the Spies and their bad report about *Eretz Yisrael*. R' Meshulam Roth z"l (1875-1962; rabbi of Czernowitz, Romania; later a member of Israel's Chief Rabbinate Council) writes: *Ramban* z"l asks why the Spies are criticized. Doesn't Moshe Rabbeinu himself say later (*Devarim* 9:1-2), "Today you cross the Jordan, to come and drive out nations that are greater and mightier than you, cities that are great and fortified up to the heavens, a great and lofty people, children of giants . . .?"

R' Roth explains: We read (*Devarim* 7:17-18), "Perhaps you will say in your heart, 'These nations are more numerous than I; how will I be able to drive them out?' Do not fear them! Remember what *Hashem*, your *Elokim*, did to Pharaoh and to all of Egypt." R' Yitzchak Abarbanel z"l (1437-1508) comments: When you know your own weakness and place your trust in *Hashem*, you have no reason to fear the enemy. But, if you trust in your own strength, then you should worry. Therefore, writes R' Roth, Moshe wanted *Bnei Yisrael* to know that they faced a formidable enemy so that they would trust in *Hashem*. The Spies' sin was not in reporting the truth, it was in saying (13:31), "'We cannot ascend to that people for it is stronger *Mimenu*!" The word "*Mimenu*" can mean "than us," but it also can mean, "than Him," referring to *Hashem*.

R' Roth adds: We find seemingly conflicting teachings regarding a person's battle with the *Yetzer Ha'ra*. The *Gemara* (*Yoma* 38b) teaches that once most of a person's years have passed without sin, he can be confident that he will not sin. But, in *Pirkei Avot* (2:4) we read, "Do not trust in yourself until the day you die!" The answer, R' Roth writes, is that if a person attributes his not sinning solely to himself, he had better not trust in himself as long as he lives. On the other hand, if a person recognizes that *Hashem* assisted him in remaining righteous, then he can be confident that *Hashem* will continue to assist him and he will not sin. (*Raglei Mevasser*)

## Shabbat

"Bo'ee v'shalom" / "Enter in peace, crown of her husband, even in *Simchah* / joy and good cheer . . ."

(From the Friday night poem, *Lecha Dodi*)

R' Aryeh Finkel z"l (1931-2016; *Rosh Yeshiva* of the Mir Yeshiva in Modi'in Ilit, Israel) asks: Regarding all *Mitzvot*, we are commanded (*Tehilim* 100:2), "Serve *Hashem* with *Simchah*." And, the Torah foretells terrible punishments, G-d forbid, "because you did not serve *Hashem*, your *Elokim*, amid *Simcha* and goodness of heart" (*Devarim* 28:47). Why, then, do our prayers single out *Shabbat* as a time of *Simchah*?

R' Finkel explains: The unique *Simchah* of *Shabbat* relates to the fact that the day is "a taste of *Olam Ha'ba* / the World-to-Come." Our joy is not, however, over the reward that we will receive in *Olam Ha'ba*; after all, we are taught in *Pirkei Avot* (1:3), "Do not be like servants who serve the master in order to receive reward." Rather, our *Simchah* arises from the fact that *Hashem* loves us so much that He has promised us eternal reward for our *Mitzvot*.

R' Finkel continues: One of the foundations of our faith is the belief that *Hashem* keeps His promises, and *Shabbat* strengthens that belief by giving us a taste of the bliss we will experience in *Olam Ha'ba*. The Spies in our *Parashah* lacked that belief. *Hashem* had promised that *Eretz Yisrael* is better than any other land, a land flowing with milk and honey. He also promised them that they would be able to conquer the Land. But they did not believe, as *Hashem* says in our *Parashah* (14:11), "How long will this people provoke Me, and how long will they not have faith in Me, despite all the signs that I have performed in their midst?"

R' Finkel concludes: The fact that we are still around after 2,000 years of exile is proof that *Hashem* does keep His promises. The *Simchah* of which we speak in *Kabbalat Shabbat* is the joy of knowing that *Hashem* keeps His promises, and that He does so because He loves us. It is because of that love that He will bring about our redemption in this world and also reward us in *Olam Ha'ba*, as we say in *Lecha Dodi*: "Your G-d will rejoice over you as a groom rejoices over his bride."

(*Yavo Shiloh* p.481)

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**“So that you may remember and perform all My commandments and be holy to your Elokim.” (15:40)**

Rabbeinu Yonah Gerondi z”l (1210-1263; Spain) writes: *Midrash Sifrei* teaches that wearing *Tzitzit* increases a person’s holiness, as our verse says, “So that you may be holy to your Elokim.” Though one is not obligated to have *Tzitzit* if he is not wearing a four-cornered garment, and one who does not have such a garment is not obligated to buy one, nevertheless the *Gemara* (*Menachot* 41a) teaches that *Hashem* punishes a person in times of trouble (see below) for not coveting the beauty of the *Mitzvah* and its reward. Therefore, a person should buy a four-cornered garment so that he will be obligated to wear *Tzitzit*. (*Sha’arei Teshuvah* 3:22)

The *Gemara* (*Menachot* 41a) relates: An angel saw the sage Rav Ketina wearing a garment that was exempt from *Tzitzit*, and he said, “Ketina! Ketina! If you wear these garments, what will become of the *Mitzvah* of *Tzitzit*?”

Rav Ketina asked the angel, “Does the Heavenly court punish a person for neglecting a *Mitzvat Aseh* / positive commandment?”

The angel answered, “Yes, in a time of anger there is a punishment.” [Until here from the *Gemara*]

R’ Chanoch Zundel z”l (Poland; died 1867) explains: Ordinarily, *Hashem* does not punish a person for failing to perform a *Mitzvat Aseh*, for it is punishment enough that he will not receive the eternal, infinite reward that he could have earned. The scope of that reward is learned from the *Gemara* (*Chullin* 142a), which teaches that there is no reward for *Mitzvot* in this world, because, commentaries explain, this world is not big enough to contain the reward for a single *Mitzvah*. Nevertheless, some inkling of the greatness of the reward for a *Mitzvah* can be gotten from the *Gemara* (*Sanhedrin* 96a) which teaches that Nevuchadnezar merited to rule over most of the known world simply because he ran three paces in honor of *Hashem*. Notwithstanding the above, at a time when the Divine Attribute of Strict Justice reigns in the world because of our other sins, *Hashem* punishes also for failing to perform a *Mitzvat Aseh*. (*Etz Yosef*)

R’ Gershon Edelstein z”l (1923-2023; Rosh Yeshiva of the Ponovezh Yeshiva) writes: The primary complaint against one who does not go out of his way to wear a garment that obligates him in the *Mitzvah* of *Tzitzit* arises when he does go out of his way to seek out material pleasures. According to this understanding, the “time of anger” to which the *Gemara* refers is a time when one exhibits greater love for material pleasures than for *Mitzvot*. (*Peninei Chizuk Al Sha’arei Teshuvah*)

**“Moshe called Hoshea son of Nun ‘Yehoshua.’” (13:16)**

*Rashi* z”l explains: “Yehoshua” is a compound of “Kah” and “Hoshe’a” / “G-d may save.” In effect, Moshe prayed for him, “May G-d save you from the evil counsel of the spies.” [Until here from *Rashi*]

R’ Yisroel Garber z”l (1921-2019; New York and Yerushalayim) asks: Why did Moshe pray for Yehoshua and not for Calev?

We see, R’ Garber writes, that Yehoshua and Calev sometimes acted together, and sometimes separately. On the one hand, we read (14:6), “Yehoshua bin Nun and Calev ben Yefuneh, of the spies of the Land, tore their garments.” And they both said (14:7), “The Land is very, very good.” On the other hand, we read (13:30), “Calev silenced the people,” while Yehoshua is not mentioned. And, we read (14:24), “But My servant Calev, because a different spirit was with him . . .,” while Yehoshua is not described as having a different spirit. Why these similarities and differences?

R’ Garber answers: Moshe prayed for Yehoshua because Moshe understood that Yehoshua’s nature was to try to keep the “team” together for the sake of the *Tzibbur* / congregation. As such, Yehoshua was at risk of being influenced negatively by his sinful colleagues. In contrast, Calev had a “different spirit.” He was more of a loner, as evidenced by the fact that he left the group and went to pray at the graves of the Patriarchs. As such, Calev did not need Moshe’s prayers to protect him. In the end, both Yehoshua and Calev resisted the Spies’ plans and contradicted their reports, but they came to it differently--Yehoshua because of Moshe’s prayer, and Calev because of his “different spirit.” (*Tal Le’Yisrael*)

**“In this Wilderness Yitamu / they shall cease completely to be, and there Yamutu/ they shall die!” (14:35)**

R’ Moshe Chaim Luzzato z”l (*Ramchal*; Italy and Eretz Yisrael; 1707-1747) notes that the words “Yitamu” and “Yamutu” share the same Hebrew letters. He explains:

*Bnei Yisrael* in the desert were supposed to correct the sin of Adam Ha’rishon, thus returning the world to its original perfection. Indeed, they accomplished this at the time of the Giving of the Torah, but it did not last, and they soon made the Golden Calf. Had *Bnei Yisrael* succeeded in their mission, death would have been abolished forever, for death was introduced into the world only due to Adam’s sin. This is the significance of the fact that the words “Tam” (“תם”) / “complete” or “perfect” and “Met” (“מת”) / “deceased” share the same letters, but in reverse order.

As long as we have not returned the world to its original perfection, death must still exist. In this light, writes *Ramchal*, our verse can be read: “In this Wilderness Yitamu / they were meant to become complete, but instead, there Yamutu/ they shall die!” (*Tikkunim Chadashim* #28)