

In this week's *Parashah*, we read about the sin of the Spies. *Rashi* z"l asks: Why does the section dealing with the Spies follow the section (at the end of last week's *Parashah*) dealing with Miriam's punishment for speaking *Lashon Ha'ra*? To show the grievousness of the Spies' sin--they witnessed Miriam's punishment, but failed to learn a lesson from her experience. [Until here from *Rashi*]

R' Avraham Zvi Kluger *shlita* (*Chassidic Mashpia* in Bet Shemesh, Israel) asks: How could the Spies be expected to learn from Miriam's experience, which involved speaking *Lashon Ha'ra* about a living human being, that they should not speak ill of an inanimate piece of land? The answer is that it is wrong to think of *Eretz Yisrael* as an inanimate piece of land. Rather, we are expected to relate to the Holy Land the same way we are expected to relate to another Jew.

What led the Spies to speak *Lashon Ha'ra* about *Eretz Yisrael*? R' Kluger explains that their sin originated from a lack of *Emunah*/belief that *Hashem* really would take them into a land "flowing with milk and honey." That lack of faith is what precipitated their desire to reconnoiter the Land in the first place, and it is what led them to put a negative spin on everything they saw. (See, for example, *Rashi* to 13:32). They did not simply wake up one morning and decide to speak *Lashon Ha'ra*.

R' Kluger notes that the same thing is true when a person speaks *Lashon Ha'ra* about, or shows disrespect to, another person. Such acts do not happen in isolation. Rather, they arise from a failure to value other people in general--an attitude that can be so subtle that even Rabbi Akiva's students failed to detect it in themselves. (*Uri Devorah* p.2-3)

Shabbat

"And the seventh day is *Shabbat* for *Hashem*, your *Elokim* . . ." (*Shmot* 20:10)

R' Aharon Lewin z"l *Hy"d* (the *Reisher Rav*; killed in the Holocaust) writes: The reason the Torah adds the words "to *Hashem*, your *Elokim*" is to teach that *Shabbat* is not merely a day of rest from work. All week long, a person toils to support his family and does not have time for the more frivolous things in life. One might have thought, therefore, that the Day of Rest is a time to engage in such pursuits. No, says the Torah, the seventh day is *Shabbat* for *Hashem*--a time to pursue the spiritual perfection one does not have time for during the workweek.

R' Lewin continues: We read (*Yeshayah* 56:2), "Praiseworthy is the man who does this and the person who grasps it tightly--who guards the *Shabbat* against desecration and guards his hand against doing any evil." The prophet praises a person who not only observes *Shabbat*, but also takes care not to wile away the day in improper behavior. This, writes R' Lewin, is also the meaning of the *Gemara* (*Shabbat* 118a): "Whoever observes *Shabbat K'hilchato* / as it was meant to be observed has all of his sins forgiven." The *Gemara* refers to not just observing *Shabbat* in a technical way, but observing it as it was meant to be observed.

Midrash Rabbah makes a startling statement: "You might have thought that I, *Hashem*, gave you *Shabbat* to your detriment. No! I gave it to you for your benefit!" R' Lewin explains that this *Midrash* is teaching the same idea: *Shabbat* was not given to us as a day to get ourselves in trouble, but rather as a day to improve ourselves. (*Ha'drash Ve'ha'iyun: Shmot* 167)

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“It shall constitute *Tzitzit* for you, that you may see it and remember all the commandments of *Hashem* and perform them.” (15:39)

R' Moshe ben Yosef Trani z"l (1505-1585; rabbi of Tzefat, *Eretz Yisrael*; known by the acronym “*Mabit*”) asks: Our Sages teach that every Jew is commanded to observe 613 *Mitzvot*. But how can any one person perform all 613 commandments? Some *Mitzvot* are only for *Kohanim*, some are only for *Levi'im*, some are only for *Yisraelim*, and some are for specific people, such as a king or a *Nazir*. Many *Mitzvot* are only for men, while a few are only for women. Finally, some *Mitzvot* can be performed only in *Eretz Yisrael*, and some only when the *Bet Hamikdash* is standing.

The *Mabit* answers: There are two ways that a person can be credited with performing all of the commandments. First, we are taught, “*Kol Yisrael areivim zeh b'zeh*” / “All Jews are guarantors for each other.” As such, each Jew has an obligation to encourage and assist others to perform *Mitzvot* and to rebuke them appropriately when they fail to perform *Mitzvot*. For example, if one Jew accepts a vow to be a *Nazir* and then violates that vow, another Jew who rebukes him for his violations is credited with performing the *Mitzvot* associated with being a *Nazir*. Similarly, if one shows respect to a *Bet Din* / court of Torah law, he is considered to have sat on the *Bet Din* and performed the *Mitzvot* associated with that position, for without the support of the general populace, the rulings of the *Bet Din* would be unenforceable.

Also, a person can be credited with observing a *Mitzvah* by studying its laws and accepting upon himself to observe it should the opportunity ever arise--even though, in practice, the opportunity will never arise. This is alluded to in our verse: “Remember all the commandments of *Hashem* and perform them.” Because you “remember” them, you will be credited with “performing” them. (*Kiryat Sefer: Hakdamah* ch.7)

Midrash Tanna D'vei Eliyahu (ch.29) relates: Following the decree that *Bnei Yisrael* would die in the desert because of the sin of the Spies, *Hashem* told Moshe to appease them. Specifically, says the Torah (15:2-4), “Say to them, ‘When you will come to the Land of your dwelling places that I am giving you . . . the one who brings his offering to *Hashem* shall bring a meal-offering.” [Until here from the *Midrash*]

R' Avshalom Garsi *shlita* (*Kiryat Sefer*, Israel) asks: How are these words meant to appease *Bnei Yisrael*? They were just told that the Generation of the Exodus will not enter *Eretz Yisrael*, and now they are being given a *Mitzvah* to perform when they enter the Land, which they never will do! If anything, this is rubbing salt in their wounds!

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“He said to them, ‘*Alu zeh ba'Negev* / Ascend here in the south and climb the mountain’.” (13:17)

Rashi z"l writes: The *Negev* (the southernmost part of *Eretz Yisrael*) is the worst part of the Land. Moshe instructed the Spies to reconnoiter that area first because such is the way of merchants--they first show a prospective purchaser their inferior goods, and afterwards they show their best goods. [Until here from *Rashi*]

R' Gedalyahu Rabinowitz z"l (*Chassidic Rebbe* of Linitz, Ukraine; died 1803) writes in the name of R' Yaakov Yosef Hakohen of Polnoye z"l (1710-1784; author of the first *Chassidic* work and a primary source for the teachings of the *Ba'al Shem Tov*): The word “*Negev*” (נגב) has the same letters as “*Ganav*” (גנב), which means “thief.” The verse is hinting that one who wants to “ascend” in his service of *Hashem* must act furtively, like a *Ganav*, This means that, as much as possible, one should serve *Hashem* discreetly, without publicity. Also, one must sometimes practice trickery--specifically, one must fool the *Yetzer Ha'ra*. This is what King David meant when he wrote (*Tehilim* 119:59), “I considered my ways, and returned my feet to Your testimonies.” David would make plans to engage in some activity of which the *Yetzer Ha'ra* would approve. Then, at the last moment, he would “change” his plans and head for a *Bet Midrash* to study Torah.

(*Teshu'ot Chen: Bereishit* 28:3)

“They have tested Me these ten times and have not heeded My voice.” (14:22)

Based on this verse, the *Mishnah* (*Pirkei Avot* 5:6) states that *Bnei Yisrael* tested *Hashem* in the desert ten times.

R' Yehuda Lerma z"l (1580-1642; Chief Rabbi of Belgrade, Serbia) writes that *Bnei Yisrael's* intention was to test a different one of the Thirteen Articles of Faith each time. (He explains elsewhere that Korach tested the remaining three.)

For example, at the *Yam Suf*, *Bnei Yisrael* said (*Shmot* 14:11), “Were there no graves in Egypt that you took us to die in the Wilderness? What is this that you have done to us to take us out of Egypt?” There, they seemed to be testing whether there exists a G-d that could save them.

In our *Parashah*, *Bnei Yisrael* do not question whether G-d exists, but only whether He is more powerful than the Canaanites. This effectively was testing whether *Hashem* is the Creator--for the Creator is necessarily more powerful than His strongest creation. (*Lechem Yehuda*)

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R' Garsi answers, based on the *Mabit's* words above, that the appeasement was as follows: It is true that because of the sin of the Spies, you (the Generation of the Exodus) will never see *Eretz Yisrael* and will never be able to perform those *Mitzvot* that can be performed only in that Land. Nevertheless, let us study some of those laws together, for then it will be as if you had performed those *Mitzvot*.

(*Sefer Ha'hakdamah Im Be'ur Derech Ha'kadim* p.68)