



THE TRAUMA OF THE SPIES AND ITS LESSONS

Optimism isn't naivete, the majority isn't always right, and modernity isn't an enemy. Lessons from the spies of Moses and Joshua.

TEACHER'S MANUAL



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Shluchim Office International

816 Eastern Parkway, Brooklyn,

NY 11213

718.221.0500

5783 - 2023

Founded in 2008 in memory of Rabbi Gabi and Rivky Holtzberg OB" M
Shluchim of the Rebbe to Mumbai India

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Moses sent spies to evaluate the defenses of the Land of Israel and how best to conquer the land. They return with their finding: It's not worth settling in Israel (Sources 1-2). The Jewish people collectively burst out in tears, the spies are punished and the Jews spend forty more years in the desert.

Forty years later, Joshua sends spies to scout out Jericho. They return from their mission reporting a clear path to conquering the land. (Source 3)

What was wrong with the report of Moses's spies? They reported exactly what they found! The Rebbe explains that their assignment wasn't to see if the mission was possible, but to find the best way to carry it out and conquer the Land.

B. Don't Ask 'If', Ask 'How' 12

Lessons from the spies:

A. When we embark on a Divine mission ,we must know that we can certainly fulfill the mission. We must adequately prepare and evaluate the most suitable way to carry it out.

Story: Guaranteed success

B. Don't wait for others to tell you what to do. Do it yourself! Go visit the place and see what needs to be done.

C. Sometimes, when we want to do something positive, the people around us laugh at us and tell us we're crazy. We need to recall the spies' lesson: the majority isn't always right.

Story: The drunk majority

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The Rebbe explains the mistake of Moses's spies in a deeper sense. They thought that life in the desert was perfect. They didn't need to concern themselves with material needs, they had manna from heaven, and they studied Torah all day with Moses himself. It was worth staying in the desert, they figured. They didn't understand that the purpose of creation and the giving of the Torah, is for people to live a material lifestyle, while being connected to G-d.

Today as well, we need to live within the physical world and use it for our spiritual objectives. Digital media must be used to advance positive information, and wealth should be used for charity.

Introduction

Two spies enter the Land of Israel and gather intelligence. They report their findings back to their superiors. The mission goes ahead and is successful. But 40 years prior, 12 spies attempted the same mission, with a disastrous outcome for the Jewish people.

A class on missions with a focus and our role in this world.

השיעור לפרשת שלח

משיחת ש"פ שלח, מבה"ח תמוז, ה'תשמ"ג
רשימת השומעים בלתי מוגה.
תורת מנחם ה'תשמ"ג חלק ג' עמ' 1660 ואילך.

A. The Successful Spies and the Failed Spies

Moses's Spies

Source 1 Numbers 13:17-23, 25-33

The Mission

Student's
pg. 3

Moses sent them to scout the Land of Canaan and told them "Go up in the south and climb the mountain. You will see what kind of land it is and the character of its inhabitants - are they strong or weak, few or many? What kind of land is it, good or bad? Are its cities fortified or not? Is the land bountiful or barren; does it have trees? Be brave and take from the fruit of the land." It was the season when the first grapes begin to ripen.

וַיִּשְׁלַח אֹתָם מֹשֶׁה לְתוֹר אֶת אֶרֶץ כְּנָעַן וַיֹּאמֶר אֲלֵהֶם, עֲלוּ זֶה בְּנֹגֵב וְעַלִּיתֶם אֶת הַהָר. וַרְאִיתֶם אֶת הָאָרֶץ מָה הוּא וְאֵת הָעָם הַיֹּשֵׁב עָלֶיהָ, הַחֲזָק הוּא, הַרְפָּה, הַמְעֻט הוּא, אִם רַב. וּמָה הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר הוּא יֹשֵׁב בָּהּ, הַטּוֹבָה הוּא אִם רָעָה, וּמָה הָעָרִים אֲשֶׁר הוּא יֹשֵׁב בְּהֶנָּה, הַבְּמֻחָנִים אִם בְּמִבְצָרִים. וּמָה הָאָרֶץ, הַשְּׂמֵנָה הוּא אִם רְזָה, הֲיֵשׁ בָּהּ עֵץ אִם אֵין. וְהִתְחַזְּקוּתֶם וּלְקַחְתֶּם מִפְּרֵי הָאָרֶץ, וְהִימִים יָמֵי בְּבוּרֵי עֲנָבִים.

Spying for Dummies

Source 1b Midrash Rabbah, 16:12

Student's
pg. 3

The character of its inhabitants - are they strong or weak, few or many? What kind of land is it...? How is their strength assessed? If they live in unfortified cities, they are strong and rely on their own strength. If they live in fortified cities, they are weak and cowardly.

וְאֵת הָעָם הַיֹּשֵׁב עָלֶיהָ הַחֲזָק הוּא הַרְפָּה הַמְעֻט הוּא אִם רַב. וּמָה הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר הוּא יֹשֵׁב בָּהּ, מִנֵּינָן אֹתָם יוֹדְעִין כַּהֶם? אִם בְּמֻחָנִים הֵם שְׂרוּיִין הֵם גְּבוּרִים, בּוֹטְחִין עַל כַּהֶם. אִם בְּמִבְצָרִים, חֲלָשִׁים הֵם וְלָבָם רָךְ.

A strong people doesn't surround itself with walls.

Execution

Student's
pg. 3

They went up and explored the land; from the desert of Tzin until Rechov at the entrance of Chamat. They went up to the south and he went to Hebron and encountered the giants: Achiman, Sheishai and Talmai. Hebron was built seven years prior to the city of Tzoan in Egypt.

וַיַּעֲלוּ וַיִּתְרוּ אֶת הָאָרֶץ מִמִּדְבַּר צִן עַד רְחֹב לְבַא חֲמַת. וַיַּעֲלוּ בְּנֹגֵב וַיָּבֵא עַד חֶבְרוֹן וְשָׁם אַחִימָן שִׁשַׁי וְתַלְמִי יְלִידֵי הָעָנָן, וְחֶבְרוֹן שִׁבְעַת שָׁנִים נִבְנְתָה לְפָנֵי צֶעַן מִצְרָיִם.

Student's
pg. 4

When they reached the Valley of Eshkol, they cut off a branch bearing a single cluster of grapes. They carried it on a pole, two of them, along with [one] from the pomegranates and [one] from the figs. . . After forty days they returned from exploring the land.

וַיָּבֹאוּ עַד נַחַל אֶשְׁכּוֹל וַיִּקְרְתוּ
מִשָּׁם זְמוּרָה וְאֶשְׁכּוֹל עֲנָבִים אֶחָד
וַיִּשְׂאֶהוּ בְמוֹט בְּשָׁנַיִם וּמִן הָרְמָנִים
וּמִן הַתְּאֵנִים. וַיָּשׁוּבוּ מִתּוֹר הָאָרֶץ
מִקֶּץ אַרְבָּעִים יוֹם.

Who went to Hebron, and why?

Rashi, Numbers 13:22

Student's
pg. 4

And he went to Hebron: Caleb went there alone to pray at the tombs of the forefathers that he not be tested like his fellows. Similarly, the verse says "To him I will give the land upon which he stepped," (Deuteronomy 1) and another verse states "And Caleb was given Hebron." (Judges 1)

וַיָּבֹא עַד חֶבְרוֹן. כָּלֵב לָבְדוּ הַלֵּךְ
שָׁם וַנְּשַׁתְּטַח עַל קְבָרֵי אֲבוֹת,
שֶׁלֹּא יִהְיֶה נִסָּת לְחֶבְרִיו לְהִיּוֹת
בְּעֵצָתָם, וְכֵן הוּא אֹמֵר (דְּבָרִים
א), "וְלוֹ אֶתַּן אֶת הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר
דָּרַךְ בָּהּ", וּכְתִיב (שׁוֹפְטִים א)
"וַיִּתְּנוּ לְכָלֵב אֶת חֶבְרוֹן" (סוּטָה
לד).

Due to the importance of this mission, Caleb wished to visit Hebron and pray for success at the tombs of the patriarchs. As a reward, he and his descendants were given the city.

The Debriefing

Student's
pg. 4

They went, and they came to Moses and Aaron and the entire Jewish people in the desert of Paran, in Kadesh. They brought them and the entire people a report, and they showed them the fruits of the land. They recounted to them: "We went to the land you sent us, and it flows with milk and honey, and these are its fruits. However, the inhabitants are mighty and live in large, fortified cities. We also saw giants there. Amalek dwells in the south and the Hittites, Jebusites and Emorites live in the mountains. The Cannanites dwell on the coast and along the Jordan river.

וַיֵּלְכוּ וַיָּבֹאוּ אֶל מֹשֶׁה וְאֶל אַהֲרֹן וְאֶל
כָּל עֲדַת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶל מִדְּבַר פָּאֲרָן
קְדֻשָּׁה וַיִּשְׁבּוּ אֹתָם דְּבַר וְאֵת כָּל
הָעֵדָה וַיִּרְאוּם אֶת פְּרֵי הָאָרֶץ. וַיְסַפְּרוּ
לוֹ וַיֹּאמְרוּ, בָּאֲנֹנוּ אֶל הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר
שָׁלַחְתֶּנּוּ וְגַם זָבַת חֵלֶב וּדְבַשׁ הוּא,
וְזֶה פְרִיָּהּ. אָפֶס, כִּי עַז הָעָם הַיֹּשֵׁב
בָּאָרֶץ וְהָעָרִים בְּצָרוֹת גְּדֹלוֹת מְאֹד
וְגַם יְלָדֵי הָעֵנָק רָאִינוּ שָׁם. עַמְלֵק
יוֹשֵׁב בָּאָרֶץ הַנֶּגֶב, וְהַחִתִּי וְהַיְבוּסִי
וְהָאֱמֹרִי יוֹשֵׁב בְּהָר, וְהַכְּנַעֲנִי יוֹשֵׁב
עַל הַיָּם וְעַל יַד הַיַּרְדֵּן.

If the spies wanted to convince the people not to settle in the land, why did they begin by praising it?

Rashi, Numbers 13:27

Student's
pg. 4

Flows with milk and honey: A lie that doesn't begin with a kernel of truth will not be believed.

זְבַת חֶלֶב וּדְבַשׁ הִיא. כָּל דְּבַר
שֶׁקֹּר שְׂאִין אוֹמְרִים בוֹ קֶצֶת
אַמֶּת בְּתַחֲלָתוֹ, אֵין מִתְקַיֵּם
בְּסוֹפוֹ.

Feeling Inferior

Student's
pg. 5

Caleb silenced the people before Moses and said, "We can certainly go up and possess the land, for we can overcome it. But the men who went up with him said, "We cannot go up against this nation for they are stronger than us." They spread a negative report about the land which they had scouted, to the Jews, saying, "The land which we scouted is a land that consumes its inhabitants and the people we saw are men of stature. We also saw the giants, and we were grasshoppers in our eyes and in their eyes."

וַיְהִי כִּלְבָב כָּל אֶת הָעַם אֶל מֹשֶׁה,
וַיֹּאמֶר עֲלֵה נַעֲלֶה וְיִרְשָׁנוּ אֶת־הָאָרֶץ
כִּי יָכוֹל נוֹכַח לָהּ. וְהָאֲנָשִׁים אֲשֶׁר
עָלוּ עִמּוֹ אָמְרוּ לֹא נוֹכַח לְעֵלּוֹת אֶל
הָעַם כִּי חָזָק הוּא מִמֶּנּוּ. וַיִּצִיאוּ
דְבַר הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר תָּרוּ אֶת־הָאָרֶץ
בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לֵאמֹר, הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר
עָבְרָנוּ בָּהּ לְתוֹר אֶת־הָאָרֶץ אֲכָלָת
יֹשְׁבֵיהָ הוּא וְכָל הָעַם אֲשֶׁר
רָאינוּ בְּתוֹכָהּ אַנְשֵׁי מְדוּת. וְשָׁם
רָאינוּ אֶת הַנְּפִילִים בְּנֵי עָנָק מִן
הַנְּפִילִים וְנָהִי בְּעֵינֵינוּ כַּחַגְבִּים וְכֵן
הָיִינוּ בְּעֵינֵיהֶם.

Why did the spies think the giants viewed them as grasshoppers?

Source 2 Sefat Emet, Shelach 5640

Student's
pg. 5

This, the midrash says, was their sin. Who told them they were like grasshoppers? Perhaps they were like angels? But it was correct, for because they looked at themselves as inferior, that's how they were perceived by others as well; for everything is dependent on how much we work on ourselves.

וּבְמִדְרַשׁ אֵיתָא הַחֲטָא שְׁלָהֶם, כִּי
מִי הִגִּיד לָהֶם? שְׁמָא הָיוּ אַנְגְּלִים
כְּמַלְאָכִים? עֵינֵי שָׁם. אָבָל הַכֹּל
אַמֶּת, כִּי עַל יְדֵי שֶׁהָיוּ שְׁפִלִים
בְּעֵצְמָם כַּחַגְבִּים, לְכֵן כֵּן הָיוּ
בְּעֵינֵיהֶם. כִּי הַכֹּל תְּלוּי בְּעִבּוּדַת
הָאָדָם.

Being like grasshoppers in the eyes of the giants was a result of the spies' own inferiority complex. It always works that way; our self-perception forms the image seen by those around us.

Joshua's spies

Source 3 Joshua 2:1-11, 15-16, 22-24

The mission

Student's
pg. 5

Joshua the son of Nun sent two men from Shittim to spy covertly, telling them, "Go and see the land and Jericho." They went and stayed at the home of an innkeeper named Rachav. The king of Jericho was told "Jewish people came here tonight to scout the land."

וַיִּשְׁלַח יְהוֹשֻׁעַ בֶּן נוּן מִן הַשְּׁטִים שְׁנַיִם
אֲנָשִׁים מְרַגְלִים חָרָשׁ לֵאמֹר, לָכוּ רְאוּ
אֶת הָאָרֶץ וְאֶת יְרִיחוֹ וַיֵּלְכוּ וַיָּבֹאוּ בֵּית
אִשָּׁה זוֹנָה וּשְׁמָהּ רַחַב וַיִּשְׁכְּבוּ שָׁמָּה.
וַיֹּאמֶר לְמַלְךְ יְרִיחוֹ לֵאמֹר הִנֵּה אַנְשֵׁים
בָּאוּ הַלַּיְלָה מִבְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לְחַפֵּר אֶת
הָאָרֶץ.

Rashi

Joshua ... sent: He sent them during the mourning period for Moses.

וַיִּשְׁלַח יְהוֹשֻׁעַ וְגו' עַל כְּרַחֲמֵי אָנִי
צָרִיךְ לומר שְׁבִתוֹךָ יְמֵי אֲבֵל מוֹשֶׁה
שְׁלָחֵם.

Moses passed away. Joshua was immediately appointed to lead the Jewish people. Joshua didn't waste a moment. Still in the days of mourning for Moses, he already sent spies to Jericho to scout the land and find the best way to lead the Jewish people in.

Complications

Student's
pg. 6

The king of Jericho sent a message to Rachav: "Evict these men who came to your house, for they came to scout the land." She took both men and hid them, and said, "Yes, men came and I did not know where they were from. When it was time to close the gates and it got dark, they left and I do not know where to. Pursue them quickly and you will find them." She had brought them up to the roof and hid them among stalks of flax laid out on her roof. They pursued them in the direction of the Jordan and through the fords, and the gates were shut after the pursuers left.

וַיִּשְׁלַח מַלְךְ יְרִיחוֹ אֶל רַחַב לֵאמֹר
הוֹצִיאִי הָאֲנָשִׁים הַבָּאִים אֵלֶיךָ אֲשֶׁר
בָּאוּ לְבִיתְךָ כִּי לְחַפֵּר אֶת כָּל הָאָרֶץ בָּאוּ.
וְתַקַּח הָאִשָּׁה אֶת שְׁנֵי הָאֲנָשִׁים וְתַצְפְּנֵנּוּ,
וְתֹאמְרִי בֶן בָּאוּ אֵלַי הָאֲנָשִׁים וְלֹא
יָדַעְתִּי מֵאֵין הַמָּה. וַיְהִי הַשַּׁעַר לְסָגוֹר
בַּחֹשֶׁךְ וְהָאֲנָשִׁים יָצְאוּ, לֹא יָדַעְתִּי אֲנִי
הֵלְכוּ הָאֲנָשִׁים, רָדְפוּ מֵהָר אַחֲרֵיהֶם כִּי
תִּשְׁיָגוּם. וְהִיא הִעֲלָתָם הַגְּגָה, וְתַטְּמִנְתָּם
בְּפִשְׁתֵּי הָעֵצִי הָעֹרְכוֹת לָהּ עַל הַגֶּגֶן.
וְהָאֲנָשִׁים רָדְפוּ אַחֲרֵיהֶם דְּרֹךְ הַיַּרְדֵּן
עַל הַמַּעְבְּרוֹת וְהַשַּׁעַר סָגְרוּ אַחֲרֵי כֵּאֲשֶׁר
יָצְאוּ הָרֹדְפִים אַחֲרֵיהֶם

Intelligence Gathering

Student's
pg. 6

Before they went to sleep, she came up to them on the roof. "I know that G-d has given you the land, and that your fear is upon us, and that the inhabitants of the land have melted away before you," she told them. "For we have heard how G-d dried up the Sea of Reeds before you when you went out of Egypt and what you did to the two Amorite kings on the other side of the Jordan, Sichon and Og, whom you destroyed. We heard and our hearts melted and no spirit rose again in anyone's heart before you; for your G-d is the G-d of the Heavens above and the earth below."

וְהָמָּה טָרַם יִשְׁכַּבּוּן וְהָיָא עֲלֵתָהּ עֲלֵיהֶם
עַל הַגֶּגֶן. וְתֹאמַר אֶל הָאֲנָשִׁים, יָדַעְתִּי
כִּי נָתַן ה' לָכֶם אֶת הָאָרֶץ וְכִי נִפְלְאָה
אִימַתְכֶם עָלֵינוּ וְכִי נִמְגְּוּ כָּל יִשְׁבֵי
הָאָרֶץ מִפְּנֵיכֶם. כִּי שָׁמַעְנוּ אֶת אֲשֶׁר
הוֹבִישׁ ה' אֶת מִי יָם סוּף מִפְּנֵיכֶם
בְּצִאתְכֶם מִמִּצְרַיִם וְאֲשֶׁר עָשִׂיתֶם לְשֹׁנֵי
מִלְכֵי הָאֲמֹרִי אֲשֶׁר בְּעֶבֶר הַיַּרְדֵּן, לְסִיחֹן
וְלֹעֹג אֲשֶׁר הִחְרַמְתֶּם אוֹתָם. וְנִשְׁמַע
וַיִּמָּס לְבַבְנוּ וְלֹא קָמָה עוֹד רוּחַ בְּאִישׁ
מִפְּנֵיכֶם, כִּי ה' אֱלֹהֵיכֶם הוּא אֱלֹהִים
בְּשָׂמַיִם מִמַּעַל וְעַל הָאָרֶץ מִתַּחַת.

Fleeing the City

Student's
pg. 6

Rachav's house was built in the city's walls, so she lowered them down through her window with a rope. "Go to the mountains so the pursuers don't harm you," she told them. "Hide there for three days until the pursuers return here and then go on your way." . . . They went to the mountains and stayed there for three days until the pursuers left. The pursuers looked for them on all the roads and couldn't find them.

וַתוֹרְדֵם בַּחֲבֵל בְּעַד הַחַלּוֹן כִּי בֵיתָהּ
בְּקִיר הַחוּמָה, וּבַחוּמָה הִיא יוֹשֶׁבֶת.
וְתֹאמַר לָהֶם הִהָרָה לָכּוּ פֶן יִפְגְּעוּ בְכֶם
הַרְדָּפִים וְנִחַבְתֶּם שְׂמָה שְׁלֹשֶׁת יָמִים
עַד שׁוֹב הַרְדָּפִים וְאַחַר תֵּלְכוּ לְדִרְכְּכֶם.
וַיֵּלְכוּ וַיִּכְאוּ הִהָרָה וַיִּשְׁבוּ שָׁם שְׁלֹשֶׁת
יָמִים עַד שָׁבוּ הַרְדָּפִים וַיִּבְקְשׂוּ הַרְדָּפִים
בְּכָל הַדֶּרֶךְ וְלֹא מָצְאוּ.

The Report

Student's
pg. 7

The two men went down the mountain and returned to Joshua and told him everything that had happened to them. "G-d has delivered the entire land into our hands and the inhabitants have melted away before us," they told Joshua.

וַיָּשׁוּבוּ שְׁנֵי הָאֲנָשִׁים וַיֵּרְדוּ מִהַר
וַיַּעֲבְרוּ וַיָּבֹאוּ אֶל יְהוֹשֻׁעַ בֶּן נֹון וַיְסַפְּרוּ
לוֹ אֶת כָּל הַמַּצָּאוֹת אוֹתָם. וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֶל
יְהוֹשֻׁעַ כִּי נָתַן ה' בְּיַדְנוּ אֶת כָּל הָאָרֶץ
וְגַם נִמְגְּוּ כָּל יִשְׁבֵי הָאָרֶץ מִפְּנֵינוּ.

>> The Rebbe

Moses's Spies Misunderstood Their Mission

The spies are clearly perceived as the bad guys in this story, as they spoke negatively about the land. But what was wrong with their report? They were sent to scout the land and report back whatever they saw, and that's what they did. Why were they—and the Jewish people—punished for doing their job?

Student's
pg. 7

There are a number of lessons that we can learn from the story of the spies as related in our Torah portion.

When we operate on a Divine mission, we must know what the goal of our mission is - which details fall under the scope of our mission, and which do not. This point is illustrated in our Torah portion. The goal of the spies' mission was to scout out the land to see what would be the best way to conquer it. The sin of the spies was that they went beyond the scope of their mission. Not only did they report about the situation in the Land of Israel, that the cities are well fortified—an important piece of information for deciding on a battle strategy—they also added their personal conclusion that the land is flowing with milk and honey, but we will not be able to conquer it because the locals are stronger than us. This was a departure from the charter of their mission: They weren't sent in order to determine if the Jewish people could conquer the land, they were sent to determine how to go about conquering it.

ובזה ישנם כמה פרטים שלמדים מהסיפור בפרשתנו אודות שליחותם של המרגלים:

יהודי שהולך בשליחותו של הקב"ה צריך לדעת מהי מטרתה של השליחות, כלומר, איזה פרטים נכללים בשליחותו, ואיזה לא. ולדוגמא - המסופר בפרשתנו: מטרת שליחותם של המרגלים היתה - לברר את טיבה של הארץ, באיזה אופן יהיה קל יותר לכבשה, וכיוצא בזה. חטאם של המרגלים היה - שהוסיפו על שליחות זו, כלומר, שמלבד הסיפור אודות המתרחש בארץ, "הערים בצורות גו" (שגם פרט זה נוגע למילוי שליחותם, כדי לדעת באיזה אופן לכבוש את הערים), הוסיפו ואמרו שמסקנתם היא: ש"זבת חלב ודבש היא וזה פריה", "לא נוכל לעלות אל העם כי חזק הוא ממנו". ובכך חרגו משליחותם - שהרי שליחותם לא נועדה כדי לקבוע *אם* יכולים לכבוש את הארץ אם לאו, כי אם לברר אודות מהותה של הארץ וכיוצא בזה, ותו לא.

*The spies weren't asked to decide if they could conquer the land. They were asked to figure out **how** to conquer the land. Their role as spies was to gather intelligence, not to offer their personal analysis and conclusions. When a spy forgets their role and starts making the decisions, it is*

a recipe for disaster. The spies presented to the Jewish people a report that didn't just include information, but also their personal conclusion, that the mission was impossible. They departed from their charter and sabotaged their mission. That is why they were punished.

Joshua's Spies Understood Their Mission

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The spies that Joshua sent—about whom we read in the haftarah—conducted themselves differently than Moses's spies did in this regard. We read both stories on the same Shabbat in order to learn the lesson from their differences.

Joshua's spies carried out their mission properly, as we read in the haftarah: "The spies said to Joshua, G-d has delivered the entire land into our hands and the inhabitants have melted away before us." This was per the charter of their mission: They had been asked to investigate if the locals had already begun to fear the Jews, after hearing about the many miracles G-d performed for them, or if it was still necessary to intimidate and frighten them. The reason the spies hid for three days was so that they could return to Joshua and report the completion of their mission. By contrast, Moses's spies didn't act properly, because they added their personal conclusions, which was beyond the scope of their mission.

Joshua's spying expedition almost failed. The spies were almost caught, and they needed to spend three days in hiding. But that didn't thwart their mission. They still returned with the necessary information to help Joshua make decisions. They didn't offer their own conclusions or provide information they weren't asked for. That is why they were successful.

וזוהו החילוק בין המרגלים ששלח משה למרגלים ששלח יהושע (כמסופר בהפטרה של השבת הזו) - שאת הסיפור אודות שני סוגי המרגלים קוראים ביחד (בשבת זו), כדי ללמוד הוראה מההבדלים שביניהם:

המרגלים ששלח יהושע התנהגו באופן המתאים ומילאו את שליחותם כראוי, כמו שכתוב בהפטרה: "ויאמרו אל יהושע כי נתן ה' בידינו את כל הארץ וגם נמוגו כל יושבי הארץ מפנינו" - בהתאם לשליחותם לברר האם כבר נפל פחדם של בני ישראל על יושבי הארץ (לאחרי ששמעו אודות ריבוי הנסים שעשה הקב"ה לבני ישראל), או שעדיין יש צורך להטיל עליהם אימה ופחד (ומה שהיו צריכים להתחבא שלושה ימים (כמסופר בהפטרה) - הרי זה כדי שיוכלו לשוב ליהושע ולמסור לו אודות מילוי שליחותם). לעומתם - המרגלים ששלח משה לא התנהגו כראוי - מפני שהוסיפו ואמרו את מסקנתם האישית, שלא לשם כך נועדה שליחותם, כנזכר לעיל.

B. Don't Ask 'If', Ask 'How'

>> The Rebbe

Positive Attitude

Student's
pg. 9

The lesson we learn from this is clear: When we are working on a Divine mission we must realize that we certainly have the ability to complete it. In the words of our Torah portion, "We can surely go up and take possession of the land, for we can overcome it." Rashi comments on "we can surely go up" that "even if it is in the heavens, and Moses tells us to make ladders and climb up, we will succeed in anything he instructs us." When we are given a mission, even one which seems beyond reach—like climbing to the heavens—we are also certainly given all the capabilities necessary to complete it. Since we are acting with the power of our Principal, we will certainly succeed in completing every aspect of the mission.

Thorough Preparation

Student's
pg. 9

What we need to do is "scout the land" and see what the specific issues in this place require correction. In simple terms: When we see that in this particular place there is a deficiency in the observance of family purity, kosher, Shabbat candle lighting, or something similar, we know that we need to get to work on this specific issue.

וההוראה מזה - מובנת בפשטות: כאשר יהודי הולך בשליחותו של הקב"ה - עליו לדעת שאין כל ספק בכך שבוודאי יוכל למלא את השליחות, ובלשון פרשתנו: "עלה נעלה וירשנו אותה כי יכול נוכל לה", וכפירוש רש"י: "עלה נעלה - אפילו בשמים, והוא אומר לנו עשו סולמות ועלו שם, נצליח בכל דבריו", כלומר, גם כאשר הדבר נראה רחוק מן המציאות - לעלות לשמים - הרי כאשר נותנים ליהודי שליחות זו, בוודאי שנותנים לו את כל הכוחות הדרושים למילוי שליחות זו, ומכיון שהולך בכוחו של המשלח, הרי בוודאי שמצליח בכל פרטי השליחות.

ומה שעליו לבדוק - הרי זה רק מה הם הענינים המיוחדים שצריכים לעסוק בהם במקום זה, וכמו שכתוב "ויתורו את הארץ", היינו, לתור ולראות מהו הענין הכי נחוץ שצריכים לתקן - לכל לראש - במקום זה ובפשטות: כאשר רואה שבמקום זה ישנה חלישות בשמירת טהרת המשפחה, או חלישות בשמירת הכשרות, הדלקת נרות שבת קודש, וכיוצא בזה, יודע הוא שצריך להתחיל לעסוק בענין פרטי זה. ועל דרך "בקעה מצא וגדר בה גדר".

The verse states, "see what the land is like . . . is it fertile or poor?" These details are relevant in order to determine what we need to do in this land. If it is a fertile land then we need to bring the choice first fruits (*bikurim*) as an offering to G-d, but if the land is poor then there are no *bikurim*.

וזהו מה שנאמר "וראיתם את הארץ מה היא... השמנה היא אם רזה וגו'", שכל זה נוגע כדי לדעת את פרטי העבודה שבהם צריכים לעסוק בארץ זו, כלומר: אם זוהי ארץ שמנה - שאז צריכים להביא ממנה ביכורים (מן המובחר), או שהיא ארץ רזה שאין מביאים ממנה ביכורים.

Preparing for Our Personal Mission

The same applies to the personal mission that each of us have. When we find ourselves in a particular place, we must investigate the circumstances of that place and its residents. If it is a poor land in the material sense, then we need to advance the mitzvah of charity, and if it is a poor land in the sense of Jewish literacy, then we need to start with teaching them the basics of Judaism. If the place is rich in Jewish literacy, then we need to build on that and raise the level of Jewish knowledge even higher.

ועל דרך זה מובן בנוגע לשליחותו של כל אחד ואחד מישראל - שבהיותו במקום מסוים עליו לברר את טיבה של הארץ ותושביה, אם היא ארץ רזה, שאז צריכים לעסוק במצות הצדקה, וכיוצא בזה, וכן בנוגע למצבם הרוחני של יושבי המקום: אם הם נמצאים במצב של עניים בדעת בעניני יהדות - צריכים להתחיל עמהם בלימוד האל"ף בי"ת של יהדות, ואם יש להם כבר עשירות בדעת בעניני יהדות - צריכים להוסיף בזה באופן נעלה יותר.

Different people will carry out the same mission in different ways. A natural optimist will be certain that everything will go smoothly, everything will work out. They're ready to begin right away. They don't need to consider it, or take time to think about it. It'll all be OK.

But some people have a more realistic approach. Like the joke goes, a pessimist is an optimist with experience ... They want to look into it, they need to sleep on it, consult with others, and often they doubt the viability of the initiative. Only after they feel sufficiently certain are they "in."

When it comes to the missions assigned by our Creator, our purpose in this world, we need to take the good of both approaches. We learn from the optimist that this mission is within our abilities and we can fulfill it. If G-d gave us a challenge, we can certainly meet it.

We must also learn from the second type of person and prepare properly. Faith in G-d that the mission will be successful doesn't mean we can approach it with a lackadaisical attitude. We need to prepare responsibly and find the best way to accomplish our mission.

Story Guaranteed success

Rabbi Norbert Weinberg was an educator in New York. He became despondent when his efforts weren't seeing success. After meeting with the Rebbe, he came out with a completely different perspective. This is his story:

I shared my dilemma with the Rebbe, explaining to him that not seeing any success with my students makes me feel despondent. Perhaps I should leave the teaching profession and study medicine or law?

"You are asking me," he replied, "what importance it is to teach these children. These young kids are guiltless, they're just starting out in life. Each of them could become the greatest people, the greatest of Jews. You're asking me if it's worthwhile to teach them?! Even a murderer on the way to execution would have to make a blessing on a cup of water the same way a saintly person has to. How, then, can you deny this child the opportunity to recite a blessing? To teach a child to make a blessing – what can be greater?"

I was absolutely stunned. During all my time in education, such a perspective had never, ever, occurred to me.

As we were leaving, his final words of advice to me were: "Don't worry about it – don't worry about what they will or won't do. You just try your best with them and their mitzvos will have strength of their own."

That audience with the Rebbe made a huge difference in my life, it gave me the strength to go on. When I realized that any mitzvah that I could plant in the children would have a force of its own, as the Rebbe had said, I knew that my effort would not be wasted. A rabbi doesn't have an easy life. As Moses put it, "A little longer and they will stone me!" It's not an easy thing. And yet, it doesn't matter anymore to me because I know that any mitzvah I can plant in them is going to have a force of its own and it'll do what it has to do.

Do it Yourself!

Student's
pg. 10

The basic directive here is that we must “scout the land” ourselves. We can't wait for a Divine voice or a prophet to call out to us and instruct us to act in a certain area. We need to go ourselves and “scout the land” to see what are the most important matters for us to occupy ourselves with in this place.

Student's
pg. 11

As explained, the mission of “scouting the land” is only to investigate the circumstances of the place in order to know which matters need to be dealt with first. It isn't our job to determine whether we have the ability to succeed, because knowing that this is G-d's mission and we are acting with His power, it is certain that “we can surely go up and take possession of the land, for we can overcome it.”

וכללות ההוראה בזה היא - שהיהודי בעצמו צריך “לתור את הארץ”, היינו, שאין לו להמתין עד שישמע “בת קול” או שישמע דבריו של “נביא” שבמקום זה צריכים לעסוק בענין פלוני, אלא הוא בעצמו צריך “לתור את הארץ” ולראות מהו הדבר הכי נחוץ שצריכים להתחיל לעסוק בו במקום זה.

וכאמור - השליחות “לתור את הארץ” היא רק לקבוע את מצבה של הארץ כדי לדעת באיזה ענין צריכים לעסוק בראשונה, ולא כדי לראות אם יש לו סיכויים להצליח במילוי השליחות - כי בודעו שזוהי שליחותו של הקב"ה, ויש לו את כוח המשלח, הרי בוודאי ש"עלה נעלה וירשנו אותה כי יכול נוכל לה”.

Ignore the Cynics

Student's
pg. 11

There is an additional lesson for us here. Even when we hear from a group of ten people—a full quorum—that “we can't go up against those people; they are stronger than we are” we shouldn't be concerned. We have been given the ability not to be influenced by the words of the spies, just like Joshua was protected, as the verse states “Moses renamed Hosea the son of Nun, Yehoshua,” and Rashi explains that “he prayed that G-d (y-h) should deliver you from the conspiracy of the spies.”

ועוד לימוד והוראה בזה: אפילו כאשר שומע מעשרה אנשים - עדה שלימה - ש"לא נוכל לעלות אל העם כי חזק הוא ממנו", אין לו להתפעל מכך, ויש לו נתינת כוח מיוחדת שלא יושפע מדבריהם של המרגלים, כפי שמצינו בנוגע ליהושע: "ויקרא משה להושע בן נון יהושע", ובפירושו רש"י: "התפלל עליו י-ה יושיעך מעצת מרגלים”.

Even after the ten spies expressed their opinion that it would be impossible to conquer the land because the locals are too powerful and their cities are too well fortified, Caleb was able to single-handedly attract the attention of the entire nation to his words. As the verse states, "Caleb silenced the people before Moses and said, 'we can surely go up and take possession of the land, for we can overcome it.'" Had the spies not intervened after that, the people would have merited to enter the land immediately, and wouldn't have had to wander in the desert for forty years.

יתירה מזו: אפילו לאחרי שאותם העשרה הביעו את דעתם ואמרו שאין אפשרות לכבוש את הארץ מפני ש"עז העם היושב בארץ והערים בצורות גו" - הצליח כלב לבדו (בתור יחיד) להפנות את תשומת לבו של העם כולו לדבריו הוא, כמו שכתוב "ויהס כלב את העם אל משה ויאמר עלה נעלה וירשנו אותה כי יכול נוכל לה", ולולי התערבותם של המרגלים לאחרי כן - היו זוכים להיכנס לארץ תיכף ומיד, ולא היו צריכים להיטלטל ארבעים שנה במדבר!

The Majority Isn't Always Right

This is the response to those who argue that we need to reckon with the position of the majority who aren't particular about observing all elements of Torah and its commandments. What weight can the majority opinion carry when it represents only their personal opinions, against the opinion of an individual who isn't expressing his personal opinion, but G-d's words, as related to Moses?

וזהו גם המענה לאלו שטוענים שצריכים להתחשב בדעת הרוב שאינם מקפידים על קיום כל עניני התורה ומצוותיה: מה ערכה של דעת הרוב כאשר זוהי דעתם האישית - לגבי דעתו של היחיד כאשר (אינו מביע את דעתו האישית, כי אם) אומר את דבריו של הקב"ה שנאמרו למשה רבינו!

In other words, we shouldn't care about the numerical majority/minority, rather we should focus on the substance. Fulfilling G-d's will is preferable over listening to the personal opinions of human beings!

כלומר: אין להתחשב בעדיפות מציאות הרוב ביחס למיעוט (כמות), כי אם בתוכן הדברים (איכות), היינו, העדיפות לקיום רצונו של הקב"ה תמורת שמיעת דעתם האישית של בני אדם!

We all sometimes find ourselves in situations where the people around us tell us we're mistaken, but in our hearts we know we're right. You want to give charity, but your family says it's too much and during these times you ought to be saving. You want to study Torah, but your friends laugh and ask you if you've suddenly become religious ... Maybe they are right, you might think; I am not an objective party here, and they outnumber me! We need to remember the lesson of the spies: the majority isn't always right.

Story The drunk majority

A Jewish folk story: A person tells his friend, "Recently, I was returning from an important trip. On the way, the driver handed out generous shots of vodka to the passengers so we'd be warm and comfortable. The driver also took a swig from the leftover vodka.

"When we arrived at a crossroads, an argument broke out over the correct way to turn. Most people said to turn left. I was one of the only passengers who didn't drink. I was absolutely certain that we needed to turn right. I ask you, my friend, should I have conceded to the majority? They were all tipsy and their judgment was impaired. Should I have insisted on my opinion?"

Oftentimes, the trending values are plain wrong. Even if the upstanding moral people are few in number, they will still insist on following the right way.

Jews never played the numbers game. We have always been the smallest nation. We aren't right because of our numbers, but because of our morals.

C. In The Material World

Until now, we examined the Torah reading on its literal level. Chassidic teachings explain a deeper meaning. Behind the spies' words lay hidden agendas and deep spiritual yearnings.

>> The Rebbe

The Spies Wanted to Stay in a Spiritual Atmosphere

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There is an additional lesson for us to learn from the story of the spies. Chassidut explains that the spies' logic was that they didn't want to enter the Land of Israel where they would have to occupy themselves with material matters. They argued that it would be better to stay in the desert where they were free of material concerns. The mistake of the spies and their generation was that G-d actually wanted them to be involved in worldly matters, and to act properly within the material world.

ישנה הוראה נוספת שלמדים מסיפור המרגלים: מבואר בדרושי חסידות שטענתם של המרגלים היתה שאינם רוצים להיכנס לארץ מכיון ששם יצטרכו לעסוק בענינים גשמיים כו', ולכן - טענו - מוטב להישאר במדבר, היינו, להיות מופרשים ומובדלים מעניני העולם. ובוזה התבטא חטאם של המרגלים - דור דעה - מכיון שרצונו של הקב"ה הוא שיעסקו בעניני העולם, ושם גופא יתנהגו באופן המתאים.

The spies didn't merely make a technical blunder, expressing an uncalled for opinion. Their entire worldview, their understanding of the meaning of life and their destiny was flawed.

The spies felt that living in the desert was perfect. The Jews didn't have to bother with menial daily activities, they were disconnected from materialism. Their sustenance, the manna, rained down from heaven, their water came from Miriam's well, the air was pure, their clothing fixed itself, they studied Torah all day with Moses himself. It was paradise on earth!

Going to scout the land, they were shocked to see normal life, something they'd long forgotten. The farmers go out to work at dawn and work until exhaustion in order to feed their families. The spies look at this with fear, wondering how they could survive this. How could they work so hard and at the end of the day still have the energy to study Torah? How could they observe the mitzvot? They concluded that they must remain in the desert. It would be better to stay enveloped in their spiritual lives.

But the spies forgot the idea behind Creation. In the lofty spiritual worlds, there are plenty of angels. The reason for creating the world and giving the Torah was for physical people to live physical lives—with everything that implies—dealing with challenges, disappointments, and pitfalls, but still remaining connected with G-d.

Don't Run From the World

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The lesson from this is clear:

Our role is not to be aloof from worldly matters. On the contrary, we are tasked with using worldly matters for holy pursuits. For example, the existence of radio technology needs to be utilized for broadcasting Torah classes in the local language, with publicity. The same applies to all other worldly matters. Similarly, when G-d blesses us with more money than we need, we shouldn't run away from it because wealth is a difficult test. On the contrary, we should embrace it and use the money to give charity to educational institutions and the like.

וההוראה מזה מובנת בפשטות:

תפקידו של יהודי הוא לא להיות מופרש ומובדל מעניני העולם, אלא אדרבה, לנצל את עניני העולם לקדושה. ולדוגמא; מציאות הרדיו בעולם צריכה להיות מנוצלת לשם אמירת שיעורי תורה, בשפת המדינה, באופן של פרסום, ולכן כאשר יש לו רדיו, עליו לנצל זאת לשמיעת שיעורי תורה, וכיוצא בזה בשאר עניני העולם. וכמו כן כאשר הקב"ה בירכו בממון מיותר מכפי המוכרח לו - אין לו להתנער מזה בחשבו על הניסיון שבעשירות, אלא אדרבה; עליו לנצל זאת כדי לתת לצדקה עבור מוסדות חינוך, וכיוצא בזה.

We don't even have the ability to remain in the desert. We were born into a fast-paced existence and one who doesn't fit in finds themselves on the sidelines. But we can repeat the spies' blunder in our own lives. The world continues to evolve year after year, with advances in technology bringing everything to our fingertips. Radio, television, internet, artificial intelligence, and so on. With such abundance, we have so many more opportunities to become wealthy, live well, tour the world, order products from anywhere to our doorstep and go places our ancestors could only have dreamed of.

We might tell ourselves that these advances are fraught with danger. How will we learn Torah? Contact with the outside world brings so much temptation that it might be better to cut it off completely. Digital media is so dangerous that it's better to remain cloistered away in the synagogue and study Torah to protect our spiritual lives.

Chassidic wisdom informs us that this was precisely the spies' mistake. We need to learn from them to do the opposite. Instead of barricading ourselves and fleeing from the world, we need to live in the world and use all advances in technology for spiritual gain. Doing so, we won't be "grasshoppers"; we will "conquer the land" and transform the world into a better place.

משיחת ש"פ שלח, מבה"ח תמוז, ה'תשמ"ג

רשימת השומעים בלתי מוגה.

תורת מנחם ה'תשמ"ג חלק ג' עמ' 1660 ואילך.