

THE COMMUNITY Parasha Sheet



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RABBI JONATHAN TAWIL

DIRECTOR
TAL



WHY AM I SEEING THIS?!

Moshe had a special mission cut out for twelve individuals. They had to be hand picked and were going on a national mission to search out the land of Israel.

The twelve spies set out to search the land of Israel.

It seemed like an important mission, yet the repercussions proved dire.

Did Moshe choose the right people? Were these people men of stature? When and why did they go wrong?

The Torah relates (Bamidbar 13:3) that when the spies (Meraglim) were chosen, they were all "Anashim," - esteemed and righteous at the time. (Rashi)

After all, Yehoshua the future leader of Israel was amongst them.

So where did they go wrong?

Let's take a closer look at Rashi one of the foremost commentators on the Torah.

There seems to be a startling contradiction between two comments of Rashi.

In Pasuk 2, Rashi asks why this weeks Parasha is juxtaposed to last weeks.

He states that last week we learnt about Miriam and how powerful 'bad' words of Lashon hara could be. These great men should have looked on and learnt from Miriam not to speak badly and yet they never learnt. In the end they spoke terribly about the beautiful land of Israel.

The next Pasuk (3) Rashi comments (Kulam Anashim) they were men of importance and at that time - Keshirim Hayu - they were righteous.

Which was it? On the one hand Rashi seems to imply that they were righteous at that time, yet at the same time he states they were 'Reshaim' and should have learnt from Miriam?

Similarly the Gemara Sotah (35a) expounds the verse, "And they went, and they returned" (Bamidbar 13:26), and says that "just as the Meraglim returned with evil plans, when they departed they already had evil intentions."

How can Rashi's explanation be reconciled with the Gemara which says that they were evil from the outset?

The Ohr HaChaim explains that in the eyes of Moshe, they were Tsadikim, but in the eyes of Hashem - who sees to the depth of mans heart, they were Reshaim from the outset. Hence the verse (Bamidbar 13:2) says that Hashem told Moshe Rabenu, "Send men for you" ("Shelach Lecha Anashim"), implying that the Meraglim were "Anashim" only in the eyes of Moshe Rabenu but not in the eyes of Hashem.

Thus when Rashi states that they were righteous that must be referring to Moshe's understanding of them. When Rashi relates that they were Reshaim, that refers to how Hashem understood them to be.

I would like to share with you another fascinating answer.

The Gemara in Sotah (2a) questions why the laws of Sotah and Nazir are juxtaposed in the Torah (Bamidbar 6).

A Sotah is a woman whose husband had suspicions about her and warned her not to seclude herself with a certain man. If two witnesses testified that she violated her husband's warning and secluded herself with that person, then the husband would take her to the Bet Hamikdash, where she was given special waters to drink. If she had committed an adulterous act, then the waters would kill her, by causing her body to burst.

Immediately following this section, the Torah proceeds to discuss the laws of a Nazir, a person who makes a vow to abstain from wine.

What is the connection between the two?

The Gemara explains that the Torah connects the two, because a man who witnesses the spectacle of a Sotah in the Bet Hamikdash will respond to seeing this experience by taking upon himself the status of Nazir.

"A person who sees a Sotah in her disgrace will distance himself from wine." ►

> MAZAL TOV

Natasha Laufer & Avishai Ginsberg
on their engagement

Natalie & Josh Kanter
on the birth of their baby boy



THE WEEKLY QUOTE

"Sometimes you win
sometimes you learn."

> UPCOMING EVENTS

• FRIDAY NIGHT DINNER ST JONHS WOOD
15th June (More info check online)



DVAR TORAH

Why am I seeing this?
RABBI JONATHAN TAWIL

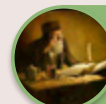
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He saw so he needs to become a Nazir and separate from wine grapes etc.

Why?

The Baal Shem Tov gives us an awesome insight. When you see something happening in life, it's not just haphazard, it's happening in front of your eyes, because (for whatever reason) Hashem wants you to see it and learn/improve from it.

There is nothing 'chance' in life. If this person witnessed a Sotah, it's for a reason. Therefore he takes upon himself to act, and he separates himself from wine/grapes that can lead to bad behaviour.

We find a similar idea expressed regarding the Ephod.

When the Torah lists the Ephod as part of the Kohen Gadol's garments, Rashi - (one of the greatest Torah commentators) is mystified.

The Torah states: And they shall make the Ephod... It shall have its two shoulder-pieces joined at its two edges... (28:6-8).

Rashi comments - 'I haven't heard nor have I found in the Talmud an explanation of [the Ephod's] form. My heart

tells me that it is tied on the back, its width the width of a person's back, its form like the apron worn by princesses when they ride horses...'

"My heart tells me" is an uncharacteristic phrase for Rashi, who usually relates the simple meaning of the verse without citing sources or telling us how he arrived at a particular meaning.

The Baal Shem Tov explained, "Everything that a person sees or hears should serve him as a lesson in His service of G-d."

Perhaps, Rashi one day happened to come across a party of noblewomen on horseback, and wondered as to what purpose divine providence had shown him this apparently meaningless scene. Then, when he was struggling to describe the form of the Ephod, he realized that this was the model that fit its biblical description.

Rashi saw and realised everything that is put in front of him is for a reason.

We can now understand the differences in Rashi's statements to our Parasha.

Rashi states that at that time they were Tsadikim, they were men of stature. But the minute they saw what happened to Miriam - and didn't learn from it - then they were Reshaim.

Life is about being aware about surrounding circumstances, constantly taking in information and bettering our status.

The spies should have learnt from Miriam, they should have said if Hashem is showing us this, there must be something that we can apply to our lives.

They missed the message, and fought contrary to its meaning.

Life brings with it many challenges. We all go through many different experiences. Yet we should always cling to the Baal Shem Tov's words of wisdom

"Everything that a person sees or hears should serve him as a lesson in his/her service of G-d." ■ **Shabbat Shalom**

RABBI BENJAMIN STONE - MAGGID SHIUR - MI K'AMCHO

DVAR
TORAH



TO "KNOW" AND TO "FEEL"

In response to the B'nei Yisrael's decision to listen to the negative reports of the spies Hashem asks :

"Until when will this people anger me and until when will they not believe in me given all the signs I have brought about in their midst (Bamidbar 14:11)".

Rashi explains that Hashem is referring to all the miracles he had wrought for the Jews and the complaint was that they should have believed in His ability to bring them to Eretz Yisrael as promised.

Now it is well established that the greatest revelation that the B'nei Yisrael ever experienced was the giving of the Torah at Sinai. That meeting between Hashem and his people was to serve as the bedrock for our faith for all the generations to come. It is surprising therefore that when Hashem explains why he would have expected the B'nei Yisrael to have more faith he refers only to the "miracles" that they had witnessed. The reference to "miracles" would appear to include only spectacular episodes such as the

ten plagues, the splitting of the sea, the manna and the other aspects of the Jewish people's unnatural existence in the wilderness. But why no mention of mattan Torah? Surely in pointing out the reasons why the B'nei Yisrael were expected to have more faith reference should have been made to the giving of the Torah - the ultimate revelation of Hashem's relationship with the Jewish people?

In the aleinu prayer which we say three times a day we refer to a verse in Devarim in which after reflecting on the uniqueness of the Sinai experience and the fact that no other nation has ever witnessed a revelation of that sort Moshe commands the B'nei Yisrael:

"And you should know it today and place the knowledge in your heart that Hashem is G-d in heaven above and on the earth below - there is no other" (Devarim 4:39)

It seems that this is a double-layered instruction. First the B'nei Yisrael need to "know" about Hashem's existence and unity. They then need to "place that knowledge" on their hearts. What does it mean to "place the knowledge on your heart"?

We consider ourselves maaminim b'nei maaminim - believers in Hashem just as our parents were believers. However how often does it happen that we find ourselves in a stressful situation and are overcome with worry and desperation? At times like this what happens to our belief in Hashem and the fact that he controls every aspect of our lives? Can it be that

we stop believing temporarily as we sink into a sea of anxiety?

Certainly not; Human nature is such that we can accept concepts or facts intellectually but fail to absorb those concepts or facts into our bones. Our emotions do not reflect our knowledge without adequate training. To "know" something is not difficult. But to "place that knowledge on our heart" takes more effort.

That is why in addition to receiving the Torah at Sinai it was essential for the B'nei Yisrael undergo a process of education which would enable that experience to impact on their emotions. This education involved experiencing many miracles both before and after mattan Torah. In particular the manner in which the B'nei Yisrael were sustained in the barren desert, with food, meat and water via the well served to slowly show the people both their complete reliance on Hashem and also that they could trust in Hashem for all their practical needs.

This idea explains why when chastising the B'nei Yisrael Hashem did not refer to the experience of mattan Torah when giving reasons why the B'nei Yisrael should have had more faith in him. It was expected that mattan Torah would only provide an intellectual appreciation of Hashem's existence. It was the miracles which predated and followed mattan Torah however which were supposed to have taught the people to trust in Hashem and at this point in time the people showed that they had not yet learned the lessons of those miracles. ■ **Shabbat Shalom**

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OUR CHACHAMIM

RABBI ELIEZER BEN HYRCANUS

It is written, "Rabban Yochanan ben Zakai had five [outstanding] disciples. ... He used to enumeration their praiseworthy qualities: 'Rabbi Eliezer ben Hyrcanus – a cemented cistern which does not lose a drop'" (Perkei Avoth 2:9).

In the Holy Land, rainwater is collected during the rainy season in well-cemented basins called cisterns. This is done in order to conserve the water and have it ready for all needs during the dry season, when sources of water dry up. The teacher, Rabban Yochanan ben Zakai, compared his student to such a cistern, into which water from the sky falls, and which doesn't lose one drop that it receives of the source of life. All the Torah and knowledge that Rabbi Eliezer had received from his teacher was well retained by him and never lost.

It was not that Rabban Yochanan ben Zakai wanted to praise the great and faultless memory of his disciple. There are people who possess a great memory and accumulate a great deal of useless information, and on the other hand there are people whose memory is not particularly good, but through a love of knowledge they know how to greatly increase it. It was in this way that the contemporaries of the Chatam Sofer, who was known throughout the world for his immense knowledge, said concerning him that he had "a worked-on memory," which means that he increased and reinforced his memory with the help of his infinite willpower.

It is in a similar way that we should understand the praise that Rabban Yochanan bestowed upon Rabbi Eliezer. Because Rabbi Eliezer greatly loved wisdom, and because Torah was more precious to him than riches, he accepted with the greatest love everything that he received from his teachers. This is also why he learned not only that which pleased them and himself, but that he did everything, everything with the greatest attention. And all that he learned in this way made a great impression on him and definitely stayed in his memory. As it is written, "Your testimonies are wonders, therefore my soul has guarded them" (Psalms 119:129). The one who sees a miracle with his own eyes will never forget

it. It is precisely in this way that every word, every Halachah makes an indelible impression.

This explanation thus explains why Rabban Yochanan said, "A cemented cistern which does not a drop," when we would have expected him to say, "A cemented cistern which does not a drop." This is because the term implies a loss by utter destruction, whereas can refer to a loss by simple misplacement. If we think about it on a superficial level, memory may seem like a faculty that does not depend on our will. One person has a good memory, another has a bad memory; one person retains what he has learned well, another forgets it soon afterwards. However there are things that make such an impression on an individual that, even one with a bad memory will never forget them. If one loves Torah with a fervent and infinite love, each of its sayings will make an impression on him and remain. Those who learn and forget Torah demonstrate by this that they do not embrace Torah with the love that it is due. They believe that they have mistakenly lost small drops of holy wisdom from their memory, whereas in fact they have, so to speak, destroyed them one by one.

We could also say that the addition of the words "which does not lose a drop" is superfluous, since this fact is already understood from the words "a cemented cistern." All the same, we should mention that stagnant water, gathered in a cistern, has many disadvantages to it. It easily becomes turbid and acquires the taste with which the cistern is sealed. This is why Rabban Yochanan adds the words "which does not lose a drop." It is only in this respect that Rabbi Eliezer is like a cemented cistern: Not only does he not lose a drop, but the water that is drawn from the well of his wisdom is clear, pure and good tasting.

This idea is specifically mentioned in a passage in the Talmud. Once during Rosh Chodesh Rabbi Eliezer came to see his teacher, Rabban Yochanan, who told him, "You, a well filled with water purified of all bad things, why do you need Rabban Yochanan ben Zakai?"



HALACHOT

RABBI ELI MANSOUR

SHOULD THE FATHER WEAR TEFILLIN AT A BERIT MILA?

There is a well-documented custom that a father wears a Tallit – and recites the Beracha of "Le'hit'atef Be'sisit" – at his son's Berit Mila. This custom is mentioned by the Kaf Ha'haim (Orach Haim 25:96). When it comes to wearing Tefillin, however, we find divergent customs. The practice of Ashkenazim is that the father wears Tefillin at a Berit Mila; he either keeps his Tefillin on, if the Berit takes place immediately after Shaharit, or, if the Berit takes place later, he puts the Tefillin on again, with a Beracha.

Among Sepharadim, however, the preferred custom is not to wear Tefillin at a Berit. As noted by the Hid"ra (Rav Haim Yosef David Azulai, 1724-1807), in his work Mar'it Ha'ayin, Tefillin has the status of an "Ot" (a sign of our covenant with God), and Berit Mila is likewise considered an "Ot." By wearing Tefillin at a Berit Mila, one appears as though he belittles the Berit's status as an "Ot." Thus, the Hid"ra writes, just as we do not wear Tefillin on Shabbat, because Shabbat is considered an "Ot," one should also not wear Tefillin at a Berit Mila. Accordingly, Hacham Ovadia Yosef, both in Yabia Omer (vol. 3, p. 13) and in Soba Semahot (7:2), rules that Tefillin should preferably not be worn at a Berit Mila. This was also the position of Hacham Baruch Ben-Haim, who noted that there is often a lot of mingling that takes place just prior to a Berit, and it is thus inappropriate to wear Tefillin, which requires focus and concentration.

Nevertheless, one should not object to those who wear Tefillin at a Berit, even among Sepharadim, because there are documented accounts of great Sephardic Sages who followed the practice of wearing Tefillin. It is reported, for example, that Hacham Ben Sion Abba Shaul (Israel, 1923-1998) put on Tefillin when he served as Sandak for his grandson, and the great Sadik Hacham Mansur Ben Shimon also wore Tefillin at Beritot. Therefore, notwithstanding the ruling of Hacham Ovadia, those who have a family tradition to wear Tefillin at a Berit may do so, and others should not object.

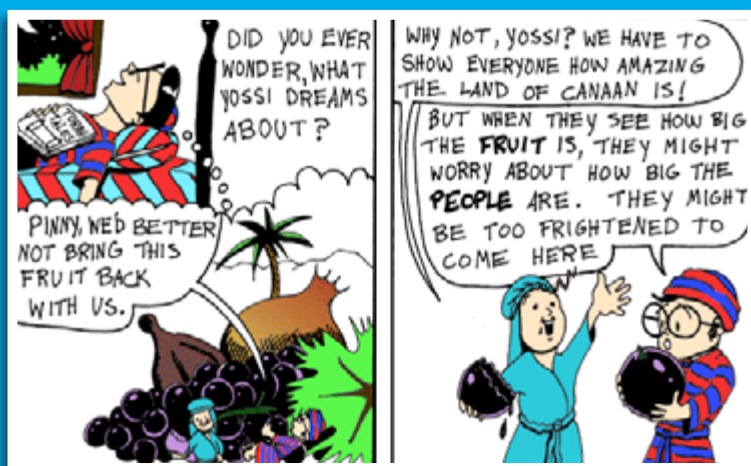
According to all opinions, however, if a Berit Mila takes place on Rosh Hodesh, when the Tefillin is removed before Musaf, one should not put the Tefillin on again after the prayer service for the Berit. Since the Tefillin is removed before Musaf, it should not be worn again afterward for the Berit, according to all views. This point is made by the Kaf Ha'haim (ibid.) as well as by Hacham Ovadia Yosef, in Yabia Omer (ibid.).

Finally, Hacham Ovadia adds that it is proper for the father to recite before the Berit the special prayer composed by the Hid"ra for this occasion, which appears in his work Abodat Ha'kodesh and is also printed in some editions of the Siddur.

Summary: The custom among Ashkenazim is that a father wears Tefillin during his son's Berit Mila, but Sepharadim should not wear Tefillin at a Berit unless one has a family tradition to do so. It is proper for the father to recite before the Berit the special prayer composed by the Hid"ra for this occasion, which is printed in some editions of the Siddur. ■



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STORY

LADDERS TO HEAVEN

Mom, I'm home.
Chaim it's so good to see your smiling face. How was school?
Great.
Come, have some lunch now.
Thanks, Mom. I hope you don't mind but I have to eat quickly because I have a lot of studying to do.
Do you have a test tomorrow Chaim?
Yes I do, Mom. It covers a lot of material so I have to study very hard.
Chaim, you give me so much nachas. You are such a dedicated student. I am very proud of you.
Thanks Mom. I have to go now.
With that, Chaim hurries to his room to begin studying.
One hour later, his mother softly knocks on the door.
Chaim, may I come in?
Sure, Mom.
I brought you some cookies and milk. How is your studying going?
No so good Mom. There is so much to learn. How will I ever have the time to finish?
Don't get discouraged Chaim. Rabbi Yisrael Salanater was the great Rav who founded the mussar movement. It stresses working on perfecting ones self. He used to say that there is no sickness worse than despair.
I am feeling discouraged Mom. Can you help me?
Let me tell you a story about another time in history when the entire Jewish people were feeling discouraged. It was the time of the Meraglim (spies).
I know that story, Mom. The Jewish people were about to enter the Land of Israel. They sent spies to check out the land first.
Very good Chaim! What did the spies find?
Ten of them brought back a bad report about the land. It would be too difficult to conquer.
Excellent, Chaim. The people became very discouraged when they heard this. Two spies Calev and Yehoshua, saw

the good in the land. Calev tried to encourage the people. "Go up and up and inherit the land because you are surely able to." Rashi comments that he was telling them that they would be able to build ladders and go up to heaven, if need be. Success was theirs.
Really Mom? Ladders to heaven? Ladders do not reach to heaven. If they were able to reach heaven, it would be a miracle. If G-d performed a miracle for them, they would not need ladders.
Chaim, you are really on the ball today. You have asked the same question that the great Torah leader, Rav Moshe Feinstein, asked.
What's the answer?
The Torah is teaching us that we must show G-d how much we want something. Of course, it is impossible to climb up a ladder to heaven. But that does not mean that we do not have to try. G-d can make the impossible happen. He can work miracles. But he will only do that for us if we show Him how much we want the miracle to happen.
How do we show Him?
By trying our hardest. Rav Moshe Feinstein writes about Torah learning as an example. Hashem gave us a whole big Torah to learn. How can we ever hope to know it all?
That is how I feel about my test, Mom.
Rav Moshe is speaking to you, Avi. Show Him how much you want to learn and know the Torah. He will then give you a nice big present.
Really?
Yes. You will learn and know much more Torah then you ever thought possible. All you have to do is try. Some of our greatest Rabbis were not the smartest boys in the class. But they were the hardest workers.
Mom, you have really helped me. I'm not giving up. I'm going to try my hardest and study me best for this test.
Avi, your ladders are already reaching up to heaven.

TEST YOURSELF - Q&A

- 1 Why is the portion about the spies written immediately after the portion about Miriam's tzara'at?
- 2 To what was Moshe referring when he asked the spies "Are there trees in the land?"
- 3 Who built Hebron?
- 4 Which fruits did the meraglim bring back?
- 5 How many people carried the grape cluster?

Answer

- 1 13:2 - To show the evil of the meraglim (spies), that they saw Miriam punished for lashon hara (negative speech) yet failed to take a lesson from it. 2 13:20 - Were there any righteous people in the land whose merit would "shade" the Canaanites from attack?
- 2 13:22 - Cham. 3 13:23 - A cluster of grapes, a pomegranate and a fig.
- 3 13:23 - Eight.

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