Points to Ponder

Shelach 5779

**שְׁלַח לְךָ֣ אֲנָשִׁ֗ים  Send spies for yourself (13:2) - Rav Schachter Shlita** would often tell us of the Derasha of Rav Soloveitchik ztl who noted that Moshe didn’t want to send the spies but that he needed to, because the Bnei Yisrael were like a Chosson and Eretz Yisrael like a Kallah and it is forbidden to be Mikadeish a women until you see her. Hence, Hashem thought  it would be a simple visit and approval. Unfortunately the chosen spies had other plans.

**רָאשֵׁ֥י בְנֵֽי־יִשְׂרָאֵ֖ל הֵֽמָּה They were all men who were leaders of Bnei Yisrael (13:3)** - How could people who were identified with such greatness become people capable of such destruction and chaos? **Rav Shmuel Rozovsky ztl** explains that when a person sees himself as a fool then he does foolish things. That is the meaning of the Possuk Kee Dor Tahapuchos Heimah Banim Lo Eimun Bam. When we see ourselves in a backward, lowered, foolish position, we make mistakes -- BIG ones (compare to Rav Aharon Soloveitchik’s comment about grasshoppers).

**וְהִ֨תְחַזַּקְתֶּ֔ם And you will be strong (13:20)** - What does this extra instruction come to teach? **Rashi** explains that the people will need the strength in order to take the fruit which were expected to be large. **Ramban** argues that the strength would be needed in order not to be afraid to take the fruit lest they be recognized as spies because they took the fruit**. Rav Chaim Feinstein Shlita** offered a third possibility. The Gemara (Bava Basra 31a) notes that a person lacks the strength and Chutzpah to take fruit that are not his. Thus, the command to be strong is in order for the spies to realize that the fruit that they were to take was already theirs.

**סָלַ֖חְתִּי כִּדְבָרֶֽךָ: I have forgiven you just as you said (14:20)** - If Hashem forgave them then why did they have to die? **Rav Amital ztl.** noted that from this we learn that what we need to do is not always what ideally should be done; it is not always the ideal situation.  Rather, we need to ask ourselves whether we are on a sufficient level to merit doing what we propose. One has to be on a certain level in order to merit performing a mitzva.  If one has not yet achieved that level, then performance of the mitzva is not worthwhile, and may even be detrimental. Although they will not be punished for their sin, the Dor HaMidbar have shown that they are not on a sufficiently high spiritual level to enter the land and to live under "natural" conditions.  Thus, there is no choice but to let them die off in the desert and to look to the next generation. This is not a punishment, but rather the reflection of the fact that they are not worthy (in themselves, as shown by their sin) of entering the land

**כִּ֥י חָטָֽאנוּ Here we are and we will go to the place that Hashem said that we have sinned (14:40) -** It is interesting to note that Hashem forgave the people for the sin of Avoda Zara with the Eigel but not for the sin of not wanting Eretz Yisrael. Thus, we see that the sin of not wanting Eretz Yisrael is as serious as overt Kefirah. **Rav Elyashiv ztl**. noted that the sin is identified in tehillim as being part of the fact that the people were disgusted with Eretz Chemda. Rav Elyashiv noted that the term Eretz Chemdah refers specifically to the spiritual aspects of the land centered and anchored in the fact that the land is the home of the Beis HaMikdash. He added that the Miraglim were excited about the economic and physical attributes of the land (Zavas Chalav U’Devash Hee), but not the spiritual aspects therein.

**וְיַ֤יִן לַנֶּ֨סֶךְ֙ And wine for drink-offering, a quarter of a hin(15:5)** - Why was it necessary to focus on the Mitzva of Nesachim when they came into the land? Why this Mitzva? **Rav Moshe Feinstein ztl.** explains that when a person brings a Nedavah then s/he is obligated in Nesachim. When someone voluntarily decides to perform Mitzvos, we can be sure that s/he will continue to perform them. This needs to be the focus of each person and as such, the Nesachim were given preference here.

**רֵאשִׁית֙ עֲרִסֹ֣תֵכֶ֔ם חַלָּ֖ה The Mitzva of Challa (15:20) - Sforno** notes that after the sin of the Miraglim the people needed the Mitzva of Challa so that they would have the impetus for Beracha in their homes. **Rav Gifter ztl** adds that it was not enough to have them separate the Terumah and Maaser from the unprocessed grains, the people needed to take that which they had processed, in their homes, and instill the idea that even this is to be dedicated to Hashem. This would help build their faith.

**Haftara: Yericho (Yehoshua 2:1) - Rav Eliezer Melamed Shlita** noted the uniqueness of Yericho. He noted that Yericho was all that remained from the physical areas that Lot saw when he chose to live in Sodom. These areas provided physical beauty and the tastiest of fruit and it is this attraction to base physicality that excited the despised Canaanites who were especially devoid of any sense of spirituality. Removing that area by the walk 7 times which removed the seven layers of Chol that it surrounded itself with, allowed the Kedushat HaAretz to be apparent and displayed ridding Eretz Yisrael from that which is simple.