Points to Ponder

Shelach 5780

**שְׁלַח לְךָ֣ אֲנָשִׁ֗ים Send for yourself (13:2) - Rashi** notes that Hashem was not in agreement in the process of sending the Miraglim.  But why would Hashem allow Bnei Yisrael to fall into such a trap? Doesn’t He WANT us to be successful in our goal of serving Him? **Rav Ovadiah Yosef ztl.** explains that if you follow the timeline, Bnei Yisrael would have had only a short amount of time to learn Torah from Moshe Rabbeinu before moving into and conquering the land of Israel and settling it. Ultimately, this could either have been helpful to the people as they would have achieved their destiny or hurtful to the people insofar as they would have lacked a certain fortification of their values and beliefs due to limited contact with the Torah. Sending the Miraglim, especially when it was not the will of Hashem, served as a great test to see if the people really knew what their next step was and if they were ready for it.

**לְהוֹשֵׁ֥עַ בִּן־נ֖וּן יְהוֹשֻֽׁעַ Moshe called Hosheiya Yehoshua (13:16) - Rashi** cites the Gemara that Moshe saw that Yehoshua would need extra protection and added the Yud as a reminder that Hashem should save him from the advice of the Miraglim. Kalev too, went to daven in Chevron to be saved from the situation. **Rav Gershon Edelstein Shlita** explains that when the mob is strong, one needs to work extra hard to have the heavenly assistance not to get swept up in the hysteria.

**וַנְּהִ֤י בְעֵינֵ֨ינוּ֙ כַּֽחֲגָבִ֔ים וְכֵ֥ן הָיִ֖ינוּ בְּעֵֽינֵיהֶֽם And we were like grasshoppers in our eyes and that is how we were in theirs (13:33)** - Why did they compare themselves to grasshoppers? Why not ants? We have pointed out that ants are associated with hard work. When we roll up our sleeves and work at something, with Hashem’s help we can make anything happen. Unfortunately, the Miraglim were more grasshopper-like, didn’t see their own destiny coming to fruition and simply stopped trying. When one believes in himself, no matter how small s/he may be, s/he knows that s/he can accomplish anything with Hashem’s help..

**בַּמִּדְבָּ֣ר הַ֠זֶּ֠ה יִפְּל֨וּ פִגְרֵיכֶ֜ם In this desert you will die and there you will perish (14:29)** - Why is it that the punishment for the Miraglim was more severe than the Avoda Zara of the Eigel? It seems lop-sided -- the sin of Avoda Zara should have been seen as worse? **Rav Elyashiv ztl** explained that in Tehillim we read that the people despised “Eretz Chemda” and thisi s why they were punished. It was not the beauty of the land -- the Zavas Chalav U’Devash that they despised. It was the Eretz Chemda. Chemda or desire comes not only from the physical comforts that the land provides. It comes from the desire for holiness. When the people were not willing to lay their lives down for Kedushas HaAretz but were for milk and honey, this was a serious basic flaw in themselves and they did not deserve the land.

**כִּתְרוּמַ֣ת גֹּ֔רֶן כֵּ֖ן תָּרִ֥ימוּ אֹתָֽהּ Like the Terumah of the silo you shall separate the Terumah(15:20)** - Why does the Torah say that it is Hafrashas Terumah but Hafrashas Challah should be a stand alone Mitzva? The **Meshech Chochma** notes that sometimes the people think about cheating on their Terumos and Maaseros but that the fact that doing so involves a public awareness usually stops them. The Torah here is telling us the same should be so for Challah -- one should separate that too -- eventhough you can technically hide cheating it from the public.

**וְלֹֽא־תָת֜וּרוּ אַֽחֲרֵ֤י לְבַבְכֶם֙ Don’t follow after your heart (15:39)** - The Gemara (Berachos 12) says this refers to Minus -- heresy. But why does heresy become associated with the heart? Shouldn’t it be closer associated with the brain?  **Rav Elchanon Wasserman ztl HyD** explains that intellectual Emunah is relatively easy to achieve -- provided that the person’s heart is open to it. Heresy becomes a challenge when the heart is not open to hearing it.

**אֲשֶׁ֨ר הוֹצֵ֤אתִי אֶתְכֶם֙ מֵאֶ֣רֶץ מִצְרַ֔יִם I am Hashem...who has taken you out of the land of Egypt (15:43)** - The **Rambam** does not include the Mitzva of remembering Yetzias Mitzrayim as a Mitzva -- one of the 613. Why? **Rav Schachter Shlita** explained in the name **of Rav Soloveitchik ztl** that Zechiras Yetzias Mitzrayim is part of the Mitzva of Shema. That Mitzva, says Rav Soloveitchik is the Mitzva  of accepting the yoke of Heaven based on what the Jewish nation experienced at the time of Yetzias Mitzrayim. In other words, all three sections of Shema are biblical -- and why we mention Yetzias Mitzrayim in this section of Shema is because it is a fundamental part of Kabbalas Ol Malchus Shomayim.

**Haftara: וַ֠יָּבֹ֠אוּ בֵּ֣ית־אִשָּׁ֥ה זוֹנָ֛ה וּשְׁמָ֥הּ רָחָ֖ב They went to the house of a woman who was a zonah (Yehoshua 2:1)** - Why did they choose the home of a house of ill repute? Why did Rachav choose to change so dramatically to become a virtuous savior of Am Yisrael? **Rav Binyamin Eisenberger Shlita** explains that the spies this time were not merely conducting reconnaissance on the physical conquerability of the land, they were also focused on its spiritual conquerability. The Torah warns us that we need to be different or the land will vomit us in the same way it did to others before us. They went directly to the source of the Tumah -- a harlot. As they were able to destroy the Tumah at the source, Rachav’s goodness was able to become apparent and she had a strong desire to join up with the Jewish people. This became a good beginning to a future wherein we would conquer the land spiritually first and then ultimately physically too.