



Weekly Chizzuk by Rabbi Zev Reichman

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## Challenges Enable Greatness

This week's parsha tells of the spies that Moshe sent to the Land of Israel. When the Torah describes the path of the spies it seems to include extraneous information. In chapter 13 verse 22 we are told "*Vayaalu banegev vayavo ad Chevron visham Achiman Sheishai viTalmi yelidei ha'anak viChevron sheva shanim nivnasa lifnei Zoan mitzrayaim.*" "And they (the spies) went up from the Negev (which is in the south) and he (according to Rashi this is referring to Calev - one of the righteous spies) arrived in Chevron, the children of giants - Achiman, Sheishai, and Talmi were there, and Chevron was built seven years before Zoan of Egypt." This verse seems dedicated to mentioning the route the spies took to enter Israel, if so, why was it necessary to mention the presence of giants in Chevron and the date when Chevron was built? I think there is a simple reason for telling us of the giants. Later in the parsha the spies will report to the Jews about the giants so the Torah tells us where these giants were first found. However the question as to why the Torah mentions the date of Chevron's construction is more difficult. Rashi suggests that it is to enlighten the reader to the exalted nature of Israel. Chevron was not built before Zoan rather it was greater than Zoan: "There is no more terraced and hilly area in all of Israel than the city of Chevron. This is why it was used to bury the dead. In all of Egypt, there is no more luscious and fertile area than Zoan, this is where the kings lived, and Egypt is compared in scripture to the Garden of Eden. Chevron was seven times greater than Zoan." The words of Rashi are difficult. How could he tell us that Chevron is seven times nicer than Zoan? Zoan is luscious and fertile while Chevron is a rocky graveyard, in what way is Chevron superior? The Chassam Sofer offers the following explanation. Imagine a king who has two sons. One has the potential to be a future ruler, the other is too immature and irresponsible to ever rule. The king decided that the son who will never be a ruler need not suffer the rigors of a difficult lifestyle. He gave him many presents and he rarely rebuked him. However the son

who was destined to rule was treated strictly, his infractions were punished, for a time he was forced to live as a poor subject, and he was taught the rigors of aristocratic living. Only if the Crown prince is a fool would he complain and ask for his brother's lifestyle. Clearly he is given the more difficult upbringing as a prelude to the throne. He is punished for his infractions for he will be the future leader and as a leader he cannot set a poor example. He is made to suffer deprivations to appreciate the lives of his subjects who suffer material need. He is challenged often in order to train him in the rigors of leadership and he must be an aristocrat for all his subjects will eventually respect an individual with a royal bearing. This son will inherit the king's entire kingdom, and therefore he must prove himself to his father and his future subjects. So it is with the land of Israel. Israel is a tough land. Chevron, the initial seat of king David, is a hilly and rocky area. Yet, Chevron is greater than the luxuries of Egypt. The luxuries of Egyptian rulers and the ease of their life is a tell tale sign of their filling the role of the prince who will not rule. Israel with its challenges and trials is the place where the crown prince is tested. In Israel he proves his mettle, and eventually merits inheriting the entire kingdom of Heaven. This is why the Torah includes this information in this verse. When seeing giants in Israel, one is reminded of the difficulty life in Israel entails. That is the time to remember that Chevron is greater than Zoan. A place of hardship- the land of trying climate and difficult neighbors is greater than a land of ease and comfort. In Chevron the crown prince of the Ultimate King, the Jewish nation, will prove that it can shoulder hardship and maintain faith. Through such trials we will merit to inherit the entire kingdom - the rewards of the world to come.

Shabbat Shalom

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