

OHRNET

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PARSHA INSIGHTS

THE FORTY-DAY TRIPPERS

“Moshe sent them forth...at G-d’s command; they were all distinguished men; heads of the Children of Israel...” (13:3)

There are two ways you can go through life. As a tourist or as an inspector. A tourist goes looking to be impressed. An inspector goes looking for trouble.

As a child, few things were more impressive than the prospect of a day-trip to the seaside. Off we would go from King’s Cross Station in a bright red carriage. Even the wheels of the train seemed to echo our excitement, “Going to the sea... to the sea ...to the sea ...the sea ...the sea...” they chattered away incessantly.

And at the end of an endless day we would return, red as lobsters, clutching our treasures: sea shells that spoke of ancient mariners, starfishes that would languish in some saucer over the sink until they would putrefy, and, of course, the mandatory stick of rock proudly proclaiming its heritage “Southend” imprinted into its very heart.

There’s a lot to be said for being a tourist. It’s certainly better than being an inspector.

An entire generation of the Jewish People perished as the result of the incident of the spies.

Ostensibly, however, it’s difficult to reconcile the punishment with the crime. True, the Jewish People showed a lack of trust in G-d’s ability to bring them safely into the Land, but that was only after the spies caused panic amongst the people with their negative report.

Moreover, before the spies set out, the Torah emphasizes that they were all great people, righteous to a man.

Why, then, were the people punished *en masse*, and what corrupted these great men?

In principle, G-d was not opposed to the spies entering the Land, as we see from the subsequent foray of Yehoshua and Calev. However, the trip of the spies to Eretz Yisrael was supposed to be no more than an excursion, sufficient to breathe the holy air of the Land, absorb its sanctity, and return refreshed and invigorated. At the beginning of their journey the spies were untainted; they were embarked on an appropriate enterprise sanctioned by G-d.

It was the people who wanted the Land checked out, not the scouts. They were not content that these spies be mere day-trippers returning with a few souvenirs and glowing memories.

They wanted an inspection.

They wanted chapter and verse, an in-depth survey: Is the Land fertile or barren? Is it possible to make a living? Are the locals going to be difficult to deal with?

These are things that G-d decides, not man.

The demands of the nation set up the spies to stumble and fall. Thus when G-d’s anger flared, it encompassed the entire people and they found themselves on the longest day-trip in history — forty years, each year corresponding to the forty-day trip of the spies.

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PARSHA OVERVIEW

At the insistence of *Bnei Yisrael*, and with G-d's permission, Moshe sends 12 scouts, one from each tribe, to investigate Canaan. Anticipating trouble, Moshe changes Hoshea's name to Yehoshua, expressing a prayer that G-d not let him fail in his mission. They return 40 days later, carrying unusually large fruit. When 10 of the 12 state that the people in Canaan are as formidable as the fruit, the men are discouraged. Calev and Yehoshua, the only two scouts still in favor of the invasion, try to bolster the people's spirit. The nation, however, decides that the Land is not worth the potentially fatal risks, and instead demands a return to Egypt. Moshe's fervent prayers save the nation from Heavenly annihilation. However, G-d declares that they must remain in the desert for 40 years until the men who wept at the scouts'

false report pass away. A remorseful group rashly begins an invasion of the Land based on G-d's original command. Moshe warns them not to proceed, but they ignore this and are massacred by the Amalekites and Canaanites. G-d instructs Moshe concerning the offerings to be made when *Bnei Yisrael* will finally enter the Land. The people are commanded to remove *challa*, a gift for the *kohanim*, from their dough. The laws for an offering after an inadvertent sin, for an individual or a group, are explained. However, should someone blaspheme against G-d and be unrepentant, he will be cut off spiritually from his people. One man is found gathering wood on public property in violation of the laws of Shabbat and he is executed. The laws of *tzitzit* are taught. We recite the section about the *tzitzit* twice a day to remind ourselves of the Exodus.

ISRAEL Forever

THE BLINDING EFFECT

One of the great tragedies of Jewish history was the condemnation of an entire generation to miss out on living in Eretz Yisrael.

The Torah portion that will be read this week teaches us that this was the result of virtually an entire nation giving credence to the slanderous report about the Promised Land that was delivered by the tribal leaders sent by Moshe as spies.

But was the motive of these spies, described by the Torah as highly ranked figures in their respective tribes, to discourage their people from inheriting the Land promised to them

by G-d?

The answer given by our Sages is that they feared entering the Land might bring about a reorganization of authority, which would cause them to lose their positions.

When we sadly view politicians in the Israel of today who are accused of placing their interest in holding on to their seats of power above the national interest, we cannot help wondering if this is not a repetition of an old tragedy.

What is desperately needed is leadership — not blinded by self-interest. Only then can we protect Israel forever.

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LOVE OF THE LAND

VOLUME ONE - THE GLADSTONE EDITION

PARSHA 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?
6. Why did G-d shorten the *meraglim*'s journey?
7. Why did the *meraglim* begin by saying the Land is "flowing with milk and honey"?
8. Why did the *meraglim* list Amalek first among the hostile nations they encountered?
9. How did Calev quiet the people?
10. Why did the Land appear to "eat its inhabitants"?
11. Besides the incident of the *meraglim*, what other sin led to the decree of 40 years in the desert?
12. On what day did *Bnei Yisrael* cry due to the *meraglim*'s report? How did this affect future generations?
13. "Don't fear the people of the land...their defense is departed." (14:9) Who was their chief "defender"?
14. Calev and Yehoshua praised Eretz Canaan and tried to assure the people that they could be victorious. How did the people respond?
15. "How long shall I bear this evil congregation?" G-d is referring to the 10 *meraglim* who slandered the Land. What halacha do we learn from this verse?
16. How is the *mitzvah* of *challa* different from other *mitzvot* associated with Eretz Yisrael?
17. What is the minimum amount of *challa* to be given to a *kohen* according to Torah Law? Rabbinic Law?
18. Verse 15:22 refers to what sin? How does the text indicate this?
19. Moshe's doubt regarding the punishment of the *mekoshesh etzim* (wood-gatherer) was different than his doubt regarding the punishment of the blasphemer. How did it differ?
20. How do the *tzitzit* remind us of the 613 commandments?

PARSHA Q&A!

Answers to this Week's Questions!

All references are to the verses and Rashi's commentary unless otherwise stated.

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?
3. 13:22 - Cham.
4. 13:23 - A cluster of grapes, a pomegranate and a fig.
5. 13:23 - Eight.
6. 13:25 - G-d knew the Jews would sin and be punished with a year's wandering for each day of the spies' mission. So He shortened the journey to soften the decree.
7. 13:27 - Any lie which doesn't start with an element of truth won't be believed. Therefore, they began their false report with a true statement.
8. 13:29 - To frighten the Jews. The Jewish People were afraid of Amalek, because Amalek had once attacked them.
9. 13:30 - He fooled them by shouting, "Is this all that the son of Amram did to us?" The people quieted themselves to hear what disparaging thing Calev wished to say about the "son of Amram" (Moshe).
10. 13:32 - G-d caused many deaths among the Canaanites so they would be preoccupied with burying their dead and not notice the *meraglim*.
11. 13:33 - The golden calf.
12. 14:1 - The 9th of Av (Tisha B'av). This date therefore became a day of crying for all future generations: Both Temples were destroyed on this date.
13. 14:9 - Iyov.
14. 14:10 - They wanted to stone them.
15. 14:27 - That ten men are considered a congregation.
16. 15:18 - The obligation to observe other *mitzvot* associated with *Eretz Yisrael* began only after the possession and division of the Land. The *mitzvah* of *challa* was obligatory immediately upon entering the Land.
17. 15:20 - No fixed amount is stated by the Torah. Rabbinic Law requires a household to give 1/24 and a baker to give 1/48.
18. 15:22 - Idolatry. "All these commandments" means one transgression which is equal to transgressing all the commandments - i.e., idolatry.
19. 15:34 - Moshe knew that the *mekoshesh etzim* was liable for the death penalty, but not which specific means of death. Regarding the blasphemer, Moshe didn't know if he was liable for the death penalty.
20. 15:39 - The numerical value of the word *tzitzit* is 600. *Tzitzit* have eight threads and five knots. Add these numbers and you get 613.

A digest of the topics covered in the seven weekly pages of the Talmud studied in the course of the worldwide Daf Yomi cycle along with an insight from them

- The *yivamah* that got married on the basis of giving birth but the child died within 30 days
- The *kohen* who marries a pregnant or nursing woman before end of required waiting period
- The status of the dubious *mamzer*
- The “provisional wives” of the Sages
- The inheritance dispute between the certain heirs and the dubious one
- The “lost road” dispute with neighbors of a field
- The assets of the widow waiting for *yibum*
- Status of the *yivamah* divorced after *yibum*
- Which brother makes *yibum*
- Which is preferred – *yibum* or *chalitzah*?
- Inheritance of deceased’s assets when *chalitzah* is made and when there is a surviving father
- The rabbinical ban on marrying relatives of a *chalutzah* and how far it extends
- When one of the brothers makes *kiddushin* with a sister of the widow awaiting *yibum*
- The three month waiting period before *yibum* or *chalitzah* and before marriage with a divorcee or widow
- Marriage with a pregnant or nursing woman
- The significance in the order of the *mishnayot*
- The mourning period of the widow and its impact on her ability to marry

THE SILENT TREACHERY

One should not marry a woman whom he intends to divorce. This statement, quoted in our *gemara* in the name of Rabbi Eliezer ben Yaakov, is based on what is written (*Mishlei* 3:29) that “one should not secretly plot evil against another who trusts him enough to live with him.”

The commentaries, however, refer us to another *gemara* (*Meshechta Gittin* 90a) in which this passage is applied by the Sage Rava to forbid a man to live with his wife if he is secretly plotting to divorce her. The children born from a union with such a thought in mind are

adversely affected and are referred to (*Mesechta Nedarim* 20b) as “the offspring of one with divorce in his heart”.

What is most interesting is the word in the above-mentioned passage that is the verb describing the act of betrayal of a “trusting wife”. *Tacharosh* literally means “to plow”. How it applies to the man secretly plotting divorce is understood in two different ways.

Rashi explains that just as one who plows the earth to prepare it for planting, so does the plotter prepare the ground for carrying out his scheme. Maharsha, however, prefers to relate this word to *cheresh*, which means silent or secret and which describes the thought of divorce this treacherous husband is concealing.

WHAT THE Sages SAY

“There is no comparison between the hunger of a man who has bread in his basket and one who has none.”

- An oft-quoted maxim ascribed in *Yoma* 74b to either Rabbi Ami or Rabbi Asi - *Yevamot* 37b

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THE WASSERMAN

TALMUDIGEST

SERIES

VOLUME ONE - THE COGUT EDITION

PRE-DETERMINED FREE WILL

From: Sandra in San Diego

Dear Rabbi,

If G-d knows everything that will be, then He knows what we'll choose before we do it, which means it's pre-determined what we'll choose, which means we have no free will. But created us with free will, didn't He?

Dear Sandra,

It's true that G-d is omniscient — all knowing — which includes His knowing the future decisions we will make. In a way, this seems to contradict our free will. As you put it, if He knows what we'll choose, then what we choose is pre-determined.

This can be phrased on a deeper level as well. Of the vast number of possible choices or decisions we “can” make, essentially none are alternatives except for the one that G-d foresees from the outset that we'll make. This is because as the juncture in time for us to make the decision approaches, theoretically, we'll either decide as foreseen by G-d or not. But since G-d's knowledge of what we'll choose must be right, practically speaking, we

have no choice but to choose what He knows we'll choose.

However logical this may seem, it is not correct. The fact that G-d has foreknowledge about what we'll decide does not preclude us from making the decision from our own free will. The seemingly logical difficulty your question raises is only relevant from our restricted perspective within time and space. Our notion of past, present and future misleads us to think of G-d's past foreseeing of the future to prevent our decision-making ability in the present.

But G-d, the Creator of time and space, is independent and outside of the realm of time and space. From G-d's perspective, then, past, present and future are simultaneously interfused in one eternal moment. G-d's foreseeing what we'll choose in the future is His observation of what's taking place in His “here and now”. Therefore, His “foreknowledge” in no way dictates what we choose.

Furthermore, from this perspective, the fact that the vast number of possible choices we can make are, practically speaking, limited to the one G-d knows we'll make, is not because He knows we'll make it, but rather because it is we who are choosing this one decision to the exclusion of all the others. We make this decision not because G-d is right, but rather G-d is right about our future decision that He sees us making in His present.

WHAT'S THE RIGHT THING TO DO?

REAL-LIFE QUESTIONS OF SOCIAL AND BUSINESS ETHICS

RESPONSIBILITY FOR ANIMALS

Question: I own an animal that sometimes goes out into a public area. Recently I was warned that I have a responsibility for any damage to others that my animal causes. What is the right thing to do?

Answer: We can gain a proper perspective on your concern from a story about the Chafetz Chaim.

While studying Torah away from his Radin home in nearby Vashilishok he was anxious to get a message to his wife back home. He asked a local wagon driver headed for a market day in Radin to deliver a letter to

his wife and to do so immediately upon arrival because it contained a very important message. Curiosity about what important business secrets might be in a letter given with such instructions overcame the driver and he opened the letter. This is what he read:

“Since we own a cow and are responsible for its actions, please be careful not to let the cow out into the streets on market day. Many wagons of non-Jews pass through on that day and our cow may grab a bit of straw from one of them. Such an act by our cow could turn us into thieves.”

THE HUMAN SIDE OF THE STORY

HEALTH OR LONG LIFE?

When the famous Gaon Rabbi Isser Zalman Meltzer was engaged to the outstanding daughter of a renowned and wealthy Jew he became seriously ill and offered to release her from her agreement to marry him. She defied the wishes of her family by

insisting on remaining loyal and the question was finally put to the Chafetz Chaim.

“Some people are healthy and others live long” was his prophecy, which was fulfilled as Rabbi Isser Zalman lived till eighty-four as one of the Torah giants of his generation.

LOVE OF THE LAND - THE PLACES

Selections from classical Torah sources which express the special relationship between the People of Israel and Eretz Yisrael

DALTON – TOMB OF THE GALILEE SAGE

While most of the Talmudic Sages are identified with the name of their father or simply with their own name, the exception is Rabbi Yosef Ha-Galili.

This colleague of Talmudic giants such as Rabbi



Akiva earned his surname through spending his early years in Galilee.

Tradition has it that his tomb is located in Moshav Dalton, some three miles north of Tsefat.

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