

OHRNET

SHABBAT PARSHAT SHLACH LECHA • 22 IYAR 5779 – JUNE 22 2019 • VOL. 26 NO. 39

*In Israel: Shlach Lecha is read this week and Korach next week
*Outside of Israel: Beha'alotcha is read this week and Shlach Lecha next week

PARSHA INSIGHTS

by Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair

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 Fenchurch Street 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 had 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. Therefore, when G-d’s anger flared, it encompassed the entire nation, and it found itself on the longest day-trip in history – forty years, each year corresponding to the forty-day trip of the spies.

TALMUD TIPS

by Rabbi Moshe Newman

Beha'alotcha: Erchin 2-8

ZIMUN FOR WOMEN

“Women make a *mezuman* for themselves.”

In this *beraita* on our *daf*, Rashi and Tosefot explain that three or more women who ate together may make a *mezuman* for themselves, but a woman who ate with two men will not serve to complete the minimum required number of three people eating together that is needed to form a quorum for the mitzvah of *zimun*. The reason for this inability to combine, they explain, is that the texts of the Birkat Hamazon for women and men are different. The Birkat Hamazon for men contains two elements that are not said by women since they are not relevant to women: the mitzvah of *brit milah* and the allotment of the Land of Israel that G-d gave to our Forefathers as an inheritance. The Mishna Berurah, however, states a different reason: women and men do not combine for this purpose since Chazal did not command women to make a *mezuman*; and even if they would want to complete the required number for making a *mezuman* with men, this combining in order to constitute a basic unit for *zimun* is not considered an appropriate union. (Orach Chaim 199:6:12)

It appears evident that the Mishna Berurah offers a different reason than the one stated by Rashi and Tosefot since the halacha is that both men and women in fact say the very same text for the *berachot* of Birkat Hamazon despite the two factual differences mentioned by Rashi and Tosefot.

A few words of introduction to the mitzvah of *zimun*: When three or more people have eaten together they become obligated in the mitzvah of *zimun*. One person of the group leads the others, inviting them in a prescribed manner to say Birkat Hamazon together. The group's leader is known as the *mezamen* – “the one who invites.” The group is called a *mezuman*.

According to most authorities the mitzvah of *zimun* was instituted by our Sages and is not a mitzvah of the Torah.

What is the reason for this mitzvah? In general, a person can make a *beracha* for someone else only if they form a single unit – as if they are one body. There is a very special pleasure derived by the diners when eating together as a group of three, a pleasure that binds them together as if they were one body. Therefore, it is correct that they also give praise to G-d in gratitude for their sustenance in this same combined manner of togetherness.

The Maharal of Prague explains the significance of the number three as being the “minimum of a multitude” that combine to form a single unit. We see this in geometry. If one takes one or two straight lines he cannot join them together to produce a closed form. However, with three lines he can make a triangle – a closed unit.

In Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim 199:7 the halacha states: “Women may make a *mezuman* for themselves (i.e. they are not obligated to do so but have permission to do so). But when women meet together with (a *mezuman* of) men, they are obligated in the mitzvah of *zimun*.” What is the reason for *zimun* being merely permitted when they eat by themselves, as opposed to being an obligation when they eat with at least three men?

Two reasons are offered. One reason is that Chazal did not want to impose upon them the obligation for *zimun* when they eat by themselves because it was not certain that they would be sufficiently expert in the knowledge of the *beracha* of *zimun*. (Despite the quality of education for women having immeasurably improved since the time of initial decree of the mitzvah, there has been no change in the status of the application of this halacha.) A second reason for women not having an obligation on their own involves the halacha that the preferred manner for saying Birkat Hamazon when three people eat together is to say it over a cup of wine. (O. C. 182:1) Halacha considers it inappropriate for a woman to be drinking a cup of wine in this manner.

However, when women have eaten with a *mezuman* of men they are truly obligated in the mitzvah of *zimun*. When there is a *mezuman* of men there is no longer an issue of doubt as to whether the leader will know the text of the *beracha* of *zimun* and also a man will hold and drink the cup of wine. Some forty years ago I heard from Rav Chaim Pinchas Scheinberg (*zatzal*) that when a woman has eaten with a *mezuman* of men, thus having a *zimun* obligation, it is important for the men to be sensitive to her obligation. This entails an obligation on them to call for her if she is busy away from the table when they are ready to say the *beracha* of *zimun*, and they also wait a reasonable amount of time for her to return so that she may fulfill her obligation along with them – an obligation that is identical to theirs.

Erchin 3a

PARSHA Q & A

Questions

1. Why is the portion about the *meraglim* written immediately after the portion about Miriam's *tzara'at*?
2. To what was Moshe referring when he asked the *meraglim* "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?

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

Answers

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.

ASK!

Your Jewish Information Resource – www.ohr.edu

By Rabbi Yirmiyahu Ullman

The Marranos: Part 2 of 2

From: Marta

Dear Rabbi,

Who were the Marranos? What does that term mean?

Are there Marranos anywhere in the world nowadays?

Are they considered to be Jewish?

In the previous installment of this fascinating and unfortunate episode in Jewish History we explored who the Marranos were and possible sources and meanings of the term. This installment will cover whether there are Marranos nowadays and their status as Jews.

The vast majority of Spain's Conversos abandoned Judaism and simply assimilated into Spain's dominant Catholic culture. As mentioned earlier, this is borne out by the apparent high percentage of modern-day Spaniards with Jewish genetic ancestry. However, the Conversos or New Christians were suspected of "Marranism" by the Spanish Inquisition. And although the wealthier among them tried to bypass the discriminatory *Limpieza de Sangre* (Clean Blood) Laws, they nevertheless constituted a significant portion of the over three thousand people executed for heresy by the Spanish Inquisition.

In this climate, many of the Jewish New Christians who continued to secretly practice their former religion felt threatened and persecuted by the Inquisition, which continued to actively persecute heresy. Some of these chose to leave Spain in bands or as individual refugees to three general areas: Europe, Muslim Lands, and Latin America.

These New Christians began to leave Spain in the wake of the mass conversions of 1391. This tide of emigration ebbed and flowed from both Spain and Portugal throughout the centuries that followed. To slow the continuing exodus and to ensure that they would remain Christian, both countries prohibited New Christians from emigrating. These decrees were frequently evaded, however, and Marranos regularly left the Peninsula clandestinely or secured permission to take business trips abroad from which they never returned. There were even cases of Marranos leaving for the ostensible purpose of making a pilgrimage to Rome.

In fact, Italy, despite it's being Catholic, served as an acceptable destination for Jews and Marranos. Unlike Spain's centralized

Inquisition, Italy was divided into many small kingdoms. This lack of centralized rule enabled Jews to settle in relatively non-hostile enclaves within this Catholic realm. In addition, compared to the Church in Spain, the Church in Italy under the popes of Medici and Borgias was more liberal than zealous. Thus, many Marranos settled in the Jewish communities of Rome, Florence, Venice and Pisa. Other European destinations for the Marranos were the Protestant countries of Germany, England and the Netherlands, which were natural havens for those fleeing Catholicism.

Similarly, the Muslim countries of North Africa, as well as the Ottoman Empire, were a natural refuge for Marranos seeking to live openly as Jews since the Muslims were enemies of the Christians, particularly of Spain and Portugal. Morocco was a haven for both Jews and Conversos at the end of the 14th century. By the 15th and 16th century, many Jews and Marranos were attracted to the Ottoman Empire. In fact, the Sultan derided King Ferdinand for expelling the Jews, thereby impoverishing Spain and enriching the Ottoman Empire. Jewish and Marrano communities in the Ottoman Empire were located in Constantinople, Damascus, Tzefat, Jerusalem and Cairo. In Salonika, the number of Marranos exceeded the Jews and non-Jews as well.

Despite restrictions on the emigration of New Christians, there were exceptions to which the authorities closed their eyes, particularly regarding Latin America where their skills and enterprise were desperately needed. And the New Christians also found Latin America to be an attractive option. For New Christians wishing to live fully as Catholics, the distance from the Peninsula and the sparseness of the population of most of the territories aided in the obliteration of the record of their Jewish origins. On the other hand, it was these very same factors which enabled the Marranos to practice Judaism while remaining in a familiar Spanish culture.

Therefore, in the case of Latin America, New Christians fleeing the Iberian Peninsula to escape persecution and to seek religious freedom during the 16th and 17th centuries ironically found refuge in Spanish and Portuguese territories where the Inquisition was active. These included Colombia, Cuba, Puerto Rico, Mexico and Peru. Many in such communities were crypto-Jews, who had generally concealed their identity from the authorities. It is estimated that some even reached the northern areas of Colombia, which at the time was known as New Granada. While nearly all of these people assimilated into Colombian society, some continue

to practice traces of Sephardic Jewish rituals as family traditions till today.

Regarding the Jewish status of the early Marranos and crypto-Jews, Rambam opined that those who continued secretly to observe the precepts of Judaism as much as possible after their conversion were not regarded as voluntary apostates. He wrote that although one should submit to death rather than abandon one's faith in times of persecution, nevertheless, if he transgressed and did not choose the death of a martyr, although he has annulled the positive precept of sanctifying the Name and transgressed the injunction not to desecrate the Name, since he transgressed under duress and could not escape he is exempted from punishment (Yesodei HaTorah 5:6).

Consistent with this, many rabbis ruled that those New Christians who remained in their countries because they were unable to escape and flee, if they conducted themselves in accordance with the precepts of Judaism, even if only privately, were full Jews. Their *shechita* could be relied upon, their testimony in law cases accepted and their wine was considered kosher.

Some authorities ruled, however, that if some Marranos of a certain locality succeeded in fleeing to a country where they could return to Judaism, while others remained in order to retain their material possessions, the latter would no longer be regarded as kosher Jews. Other rabbis expressed more lenient views, and held that no one was to be deprived of his rights as a Jew as long as he was not seen to transgress the precepts of Judaism when there was no longer danger involved. Rabbi Moses Isserles also ruled that even those Marranos who are able to flee but delay because of material considerations and transgress Judaism publicly out of compulsion while remaining observant privately, are still reliable Jews (Y.D. 157:1).

However, as suggested above, this discussion pertained only to the early Conversos. But those Marranos or crypto-Jews who continued to live among the gentiles for centuries eventually assimilated and intermarried, with the result that their descendants are presumed to be non-Jewish unless it can be proven that their mothers are Jewish.

Sources:

- Wikipedia.org, "Marrano"
- JewishVirtualLibrary.org, "Christian-Jewish Relations: Marranos, Conversos & New Christians"
- JewishHistory.org, "The Marranos"

LOVE OF THE LAND

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

King David's Clothing

"King David grew old and the garments which covered him failed to give him warmth." (Melachim I 1:1)

This is how *Sefer Melachim*, the first Book of Kings, begins.

An interesting explanation is provided by our Talmudic Sages as to why Heavenly intervention denied David the material warmth which clothes supply. Anyone who shows a lack of respect for clothes, they state, will in the end not benefit from them.

This is a reference to an incident preceding David's reign as king. Fleeing from King Saul, who saw him as a rival, David found refuge in a cave in the wilderness area of Ein Gedi. When Saul

entered that very cave alone for relaxation, David had an opportunity to slay his royal adversary. He contented himself instead with secretly snipping off the edge of the king's coat in order to later prove that such an opportunity had been waived out of loyalty.

It was this lack of respect for the dignity of clothes which boomeranged against him at the end of his days.

WHAT'S IN A WORD?

Synonyms in the Hebrew Language
by Rabbi Reuven Chaim Klein

Indulging in Pleasure

Rabbi Shlomo Pappenheim of Breslau (1740-1814) writes that *eden* and *oneg* both refer to pleasure. He notes that both terms speak about enjoyment, regardless of whether that pleasure is ultimately beneficial. The difference between these terms is that *eden* refers primarily to physical pleasure, while *oneg* refers primarily to spiritual pleasure. Physical pleasures are those experienced by the five senses: taste (tasty food), hearing (a beautiful voice), smell (a pleasant scent), vision (a beautiful sight), and touch (intimacy, bathing, anointing). Spiritual – i.e. abstract – pleasures refer to things which only the soul enjoys. These include authentic understanding, comprehending a complex idea, achieving wealth, receiving honor or prestige, experiencing love, exacting revenge on enemies, living in peace and seeing friends be successful. These are spiritual, or intellectual, forms of satisfaction, which involve the mind and the emotions and not just the body.

Ever the philosopher, Rabbi Pappenheim digresses from this discussion to sharpen the interplay between physical and spiritual pleasure. He writes that there are some things which the body enjoys but the soul does not, such as sleeping (which replenishes the body but dulls the mind) or drinking when already intoxicated (which again might be physically enjoyable, but dulls the mind). Similarly, sinning may result in some physical, tangible enjoyment, but pains the soul.

The converse is true as well. There are some things which bring joy to the soul but are not pleasurable for the body. For example, working very hard physically to accrue wealth brings intellectual/emotional satisfaction but not physical pleasure. Likewise, consuming a needed but foul-tasting medicine is physically unpleasant but provides the intellectual/emotional pleasure of doing something to cure one's ailment. Similarly, there are *mitzvot* which bring spiritual ecstasy but not necessarily physical pleasure.

There are also physical pleasures which bring about spiritual/intellectual pleasure. Examples of this include consuming a tasty medicine, which both tastes good physically and provides the intellectual satisfaction of doing something with health benefits. Similarly, enjoying food on Shabbat and Yom Tov, or engaging in intimacy when it is a *mitzvah* to do so, provides both physical and spiritual pleasure. Nevertheless, Rabbi Pappenheim points out that the converse does not hold true. There is no such thing as a spiritual pleasure which brings about a physical pleasure.

Based on this, Rabbi Pappenheim explains that *eden/edna* refers to physical pleasure, even when such pleasure also leads to spiritual/intellectual pleasure. Accordingly, the term *Gan Eden* – the Garden of Eden – denotes both the physical pleasures of that utopian paradise, and the intellectual nirvana associated with that place.

Rabbi Pappenheim explains that the root of *eden/edna* is the two-letter string AYIN-DALET, which refers to “joining/connecting disparate entities.” Other derivatives of that root include *ad* (“until”), which joins together everything included in, say, a chronological or geographical set: *yaad* (“destination”), which joins a traveler with where he wants to go; *eidah* (“congregation”) or *vaad* (“council”), whose members join together for a joint purpose; *moed* (“set time for meeting”), which denotes the joining together of various parties; and *eidut* (“testimony”), which connects a crime to a specific wrong-doer. In that spirit, *eden/edna* refers to physical pleasure which essentially creates a “connection” between the one experiencing the pleasure and the object which gives said pleasure.

A careful look at the usage of *eden/edna* in the Bible reveals that it almost exclusively refers to the senses of taste and touch. *Maadanim* refer to pleasant foods or delicacies which are served at the king's table (see Ps. 36:9, Jer. 51:34, and Lam. 4:5). Indeed, the Tribe of Asher was blessed that they would “provide the *maadanei melech*” (Gen. 49:20) – the king's “delectables”. When Sarah was told that she would yet bear a child, she laughed, rhetorically asking, “After I have become worn out, I shall have *edna*?” (Gen. 18:12). Targum Onkelos translates *edna* as “youthfulness,” eliciting Radak to write that *edna* refers to the smooth skin of “youth,” while Ibn Ezra takes it to mean the pleasures or enjoyment of “youth.” Rabbi Yehuda Chalava (son of the famous 13th century scholar Maharam Chalava) explains that *edna* refers specifically to physical pleasure enjoyed from conjugal relations. (It is possible that some of these sources associate the term *edna* with the Aramaic *idna*, meaning “time”, and understand that it relates to youthfulness, which is viewed as a “bygone time.”)

In any case, *edna* refers to taste/touch-related pleasures. This fits with Rabbi Pappenheim's understanding that *eden/edna* is derived from the root meaning “joining/connecting” because of all the five senses only in the senses of taste and touch does the object of pleasure come into direct contact with the sensory

organ. Something which is *adin* or *adinah* (see Isa. 47:8) is something sensitive, delicate, or dainty – it is susceptible to being over-stimulated by sensory overload. (Interestingly, *Adina* appears nowhere in the Bible or *Chazal* as a proper name, but does appear twice in the quasi-Midrashic work *Sefer HaYashar* as the names of Lavan and Levi's respective wives.)

While *eden* refers to pleasures which are primarily physical, the word *oneg* refers to spiritual pleasure, even if rooted in a physical pleasure. For example, the concept of *oneg Shabbat* (Isa. 58:13) calls for one to “enjoy” Shabbat primarily in a spiritual/intellectual way, but that enjoyment might come about through eating delicious foods. A pampered person is called an *anug* (Deut. 28:54) because his spiritual (i.e. intellectual and/or emotional) well-being requires him to be coddled with physical pleasures. Nonetheless, *oneg* also refers to spiritual/intellectual/emotional pleasure that is divorced from any physical pleasure, such as enjoying peace (Ps. 37:11), enjoying love (Song of Songs 7:7), enjoying honor (Isa. 66:11), and even enjoying G-d Himself (Ps. 37:4, Iyov 22:26). All of those are purely abstract “spiritual” pursuits.

Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch (1808-1888) explains *oneg* differently, as the state of being surrounded by favorable and pleasant conditions. He compares this to the word *anak* (“necklace”), an object that surrounds the neck of the wearer.

Similarly, *anak* can also mean “a grant,” as we find when the Torah commands a Hebrew bondsman's master to “grant him a *ha'anakah*” (Deut. 15:14) when his term of service is finished. In explaining the etymological basis of that word, Rabbi Yaakov Tzvi Mecklenburg (1785-1865) writes that the KUF of *anak* can be interchanged with a GIMMEL to produce *oneg* – a reference to the gift which the newly-freed bondsman can enjoy.

The third word which might refer to “pleasure” is *pinuk*. It is a *hapax legomenon*, as it appears only once in the Bible, when warning a master not to be *mifanek* his slave lest his slave come to rule over him (Prov. 29:21). This means that a master should not overindulge his slave or flatter him too much for his efforts because then the slave will become accustomed to such treatment and expect it from his master.

Rabbi Pappenheim claims that *pinuk* does not mean “pleasure” but rather refers to “playfulness” and “flattery.” While this position fits well with *pinuk's* context in the Bible it does not account for its usage in the Targumim, which consistently use *pinuk*-related words as Aramaic translations of *oneg* and *eden* (which clearly mean “pleasure”). For example, the word *anug* (mentioned above) is translated as *mifanak/mifunak*, and the term *maadanei melech* (also mentioned above) is translated as *tafnukei malkin*. Interestingly, *Mah Yedidot* – customarily sung on Friday night – uses the phrase *tafnukei maadanim*. According to what we have learned, *tafnukei* and *maadanim* actually mean the same thing (“delicacies”), albeit in different languages. (I once thought that the English word *finicky* is derived from the Hebrew/Aramaic *pinuk*, but after looking into it I see that *finicky* is actually based on the English word *fine*. Go figure!)

- For questions, comments, or to propose ideas for a future article, please contact the author at rcklein@ohr.edu

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.

LETTER AND SPIRIT

Insights based on the writings of Rav S.R. Hirsch
by Rabbi Yosef Hershman

Avenues of Exploration

At the very end of the *parsha*, in the context of the commandment to wear *tzitzit* (fringes), the Torah instructs: *and you shall not go exploring [taturu] after your own heart and after your own eyes, [and] following them, become unfaithful to [G-d]*. This language echoes the words used in the very beginning of the *parsha* to send the spies on their mission: they were sent to “explore.” (*vayaturu, latur*; 13:2, 16).

The juxtaposition encourages us to understand these references in concert. The failure of the spies, who ‘explored’ the land and came to rebel against G-d, stands as a reminder to us not to similarly ‘explore’ after our hearts and eyes, so that we will not repeat their mistake.

Exploration is a cognitive activity, whereby one seeks to know whether someone is right or wrong, good or bad, useful or useless. The heart forms our wishes and desires, and the eyes seek the means to gratify those wishes. When a person is left to himself, it is only the ego which shapes his wishes and wants. The eye perceives what appears to be sensually pleasing. When the exploration is in the *service of the heart and eyes*, the mind is employed to distinguish between the ‘good’ (whose sensual qualities will bring satisfaction to the heart) and the ‘bad’ (whose sensual qualities block that satisfaction). When the exploring mind is used in the service of heart and eyes, the mind is not free to make its own judgments of objective value. It is not free to contemplate G-d and His Torah. Rather, all is evaluated from the standpoint of what will bring those wishes of the heart into fruition. By contrast, when we put the heart and eyes in service of that mind which has subordinated itself to G-d, then we

“explore” things in consideration of their value for satisfying G-d’s Will. Intellectual and sensual greatness no longer have objective worth – greatness and power lie with G-d and His morality. In turn, this results in the transformation of our whole emotional and sensual being – our wishes, hopes and fears are redefined.

The spies explored the Land *after their hearts* – to gratify their own desires; and *after their eyes* – their judgment of how to achieve the gratification of those desires was based on what they saw with their sensual eyes. On this basis they drew their conclusions. The loyal Caleb, by contrast, is described as *following after G-d*. This was the single yardstick by which the spies were supposed to measure the Land and its inhabitants. Had G-d and His Will been the yardstick for all of the spies, they would have understood that G-d alone directs actions and guides fate, and they would have examined whether and how they could be worthy of His support. Instead, because they *explored after their own hearts and eyes* they lost sight of G-d. In doing so they lost sight of their own power and worthiness, and viewed themselves as powerless grasshoppers next to the inhabitants of the Land. Through this lens, what G-d rejected came to seem ‘good’ in their eyes, and what G-d had promised came to seem ‘bad.’

We are reminded at the end of this *parsha* to ensure that our minds are not similarly commandeered by our hearts and our eyes. Only then are we free to follow *after G-d*.

- Sources: Commentary, Bamidbar 16:39-41