

# OHRNET

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BEHA'ALOTCHA OUTSIDE ISRAEL - SAVE THIS FOR NEXT WEEK

## PARSHA INSIGHTS

by Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair

### Impossible Objects

*"See the Land. How is it?" (13:18)*

In the twentieth century, artists began to play with perspective by drawing "impossible objects." These objects included stairs that always ascend or cubes where the back meets the front. Such works were popularized by the artist M. C. Escher and the mathematician Roger Penrose. Although referred to as "impossible objects," such objects as the Necker Cube and the Penrose triangle can be sculpted in 3D by using anamorphic illusion. When viewed at a certain angle, such sculptures appear as the so-called impossible objects.

In 1946, American scientist Adelbert Ames Jr. invented the "Ames room." When viewed through a peephole, the room appears to have normal perspective. However, all other viewpoints reveal that the room is constructed of irregular trapezoids. One of the most interesting effects of an Ames room is that the distorted perspective can make people and objects look much bigger or smaller than they really are. For this reason, Ames rooms are widely used in movies for practical special effects. A well-known example is the homes in the Shire from the Lord of the Rings and The Hobbit films. Using this forced perspective, the character of Gandalf appears much larger than the characters of Frodo and Bilbo, without the use of digital effects.

"I spy with my little eye..." is a guessing game where one player (the spy) chooses an object within sight and announces to the other players that "I spy with my little eye something beginning with....," and names the first letter of the object. Other players attempt to guess this object.

In truth, we all have 'little eyes.' Eyes that want to see – what they want to see. This world can be a world of anamorphic illusion. If we choose to rely on our own vision, we will blame the Creator for creating a world that makes no sense to us, a world of illusion. Hashem gives us 20/20 vision. But to see things as they really are, we must see beyond our little eyes and use the eyes of faith.

# 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.

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# COUNTING OUR BLESSINGS

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by Rabbi Reuven Lauffer

## THE AMIDAH (PART 14) – BLESSING OF RESTORATION OF JUSTICE

*“Prayer is not a miracle. It is a tool, man’s paintbrush in the art of life. Prayer is man’s weapon to defend himself in the struggle of life. It is a reality. A fact of life.”*  
(Rabbi Avrohom Chaim Feuer)

The eleventh blessing reads: “Restore our judges as in earlier times, and our counselors as at first. Remove from us grief and sighing, and reign over us – You, Hashem, alone – with kindness and compassion, and treat us charitably in judgment. Blessed are You, Hashem, Who loves righteousness and judgment.”

Our blessing opens with a request for the restoration of both judges and counselors. The Vilna Gaon (*Mishlei* 16:4) explains that the essence of the Written Torah is the *Chamischei Chumshei Torah*, the Five Books of Moses, and that the essence of the Oral Torah is the six Orders of the Mishna. Together there are *eleven* sections that anyone aspiring to be a judge needs to master before they can begin to adjudicate cases. For this reason our blessing is the eleventh blessing in the *Amidah*.

It is clear from the fact that we ask for judges *and* counselors that each one fulfills a different function and is vital to the Jewish People. According to Rabbi Shimon Schwab, the judges will take care of civil litigation, such as financial issues or damages to property. However, there is also a need for spiritual mentors to instruct us in the subtler dimensions of interpersonal relationships and how to live in harmony with all those around us. Therefore, we are asking for both judges and counselors who will raise us up to the spiritually exalted levels that once existed when there were prophets to lead us.

Our blessing’s underlying message is that the source of our troubles is that we lack the clarity of the leadership that once was. But, after the “great *shofar*” has been heard throughout the world, and we are again guided by leaders who are imbued with Divine

Inspiration, we will no longer be burdened by persecution and subjugation. We will no longer live in a state of sorrow. It will be truly a sublime existence. Our righteous judges and pious counselors will steer and assist us in our service of Hashem.

However, it is Hashem alone who will *reign* over us. We ask Him to judge us, “charitably in judgment.” This wording seems to be somewhat of a misnomer. “*V’tzadkeinu* – charitably” – means “*without* strictness,” whereas “*mishpat* – judgment” means “*with* strict justice.” A sign of a true ruler is being able to mete out strict justice that is tempered with compassion. In the Book of *Shmuel* (2 8:15), King David is described as being this type of a leader, “And David executed judgment and righteousness for all his people.” He ruled on all matters only according to the Torah’s dictates, never wavering from the truth. His judgment was one of strict justice, and he never allowed himself to be influenced by the personal situation of either litigant standing in front of him. The Talmud relates (*Sanhedrin* 6b) that if a rich man and a poor man came before him to have their case tried, he would rule only according to the truth. If that meant ruling against the poor man and causing him terrible financial hardship, so be it. In King David’s eyes there was no alternative to the truth. However, once the judgment had been passed and King David saw that it was impossible for the poor person to could pay the debt, King David would pay the debt from his own pocket! In the words of the Talmud, “This is the meaning of ‘judgment and righteousness.’ King David rendered judgment to this one and righteousness to the other.”

In truth, this is not a mitzvah reserved only for those holding communal or official positions. We are all commanded to emulate Hashem in blending together the attributes of judgment and righteousness. The Rabbis teach that this is essence of the mitzvah to judge others favorably. In Hebrew, the mitzvah of judging favorably is called “*kaf zechut*.” The word “*kaf*” literally means “spoon.” The Pnei Menachem used to say that judging someone favorably is similar to a person using a spoon to stir the contents of a pot carefully to find a choice morsel to fish out and eat. In the same way, he said, we

should dig and search to find ways to judge others positively.

Certainly it is not an easy mitzvah to perform, especially when it is a mitzvah that needs doing frequently. In fact, it is so difficult that the Kotzker Rebbe used to say that Hashem created people with the ability to think crookedly just so they should use that ability in order to give others the benefit of the doubt!

*To be continued...*

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## WHAT'S IN A WORD?

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by Rabbi Reuven Chaim Klein

### On Misers and Cheapskates

In each historical period of Hebrew, there was a different word used to refer to parsimonious and miserly people, often called “cheapskates” in English slang. In Biblical Hebrew, the word was *kilay/keilay* (Isa. 32:5, 32:7). In Mishnaic Hebrew, the word was *tzaykan*. And in post-Mishnaic Hebrew, the word was *kamtzan*. In this essay we delve into the etymologies of these three terms to get down to their core roots. In doing so, slight nuances will emerge between the different words for “cheapskates” in the various stages of Hebrew.

The word *kilay* appears in only two places in the Bible, both brought in the same chapter (Isa. 32:5, 32:7). Because in that passage *kilay* is juxtaposed to *shoa* and *nadiv*, who are especially “generous” individuals, the commentators (such as Radak there and in *Sefer HaShorashim*) understand that the *kilay* means just the opposite: The *kilay* person is very careful about how much he gives to others; he is miserly and stingy. Such a person expends money or effort only in an excessively measured fashion.

Radak and Ibn Janach in their respective *Sefer HaShorashim* trace the word *kilay* to the trilateral root KAF-YOD-LAMMED, seeing this word as the only one derived from that root. Alternatively, Radak suggests that *kilay* is derived from the root KAF-VAV-LAMMED, which generally means “a measured quantifiable amount.”

Rabbi Shlomo Pappenheim (1740-1814) traces the word *kilay* to the biliteral root KAF-LAMMED, which he defines as “all-encompassing.” The way he sees it, one of the offshoots of that root is the word *kele* (“jail”), which represents an “all-encompassing” imprisonment as a person’s entire body is detained and held captive. Rabbi Pappenheim explains that *kilay* connotes the cheapskate stingily “detaining” his own money and belongings to make sure that they are not used for others’ benefits.

Other words that Rabbi Pappenheim traces to this biliteral root include *kol* (“everything/all”), *kallah* (“bride,” who is typically decked in *all sorts* of jewelry/adornments), *kalkalah* (“sustenance,” i.e. providing for *all* of one’s needs), *makolet* (“grocery,” a store in which *all* necessary provisions are sold), *keli* (“vessel,” a receptacle into which things may be placed so that they are surrounded *all around* by the container), *heichal* (“hallway,” the antechamber which provides access to *all* the rooms within a manor), *kalot* (“finishing,” by which something has come into existence or been destroyed *in its entirety*), *achilah* (“eating,” because consuming food essentially *destroys* the foodstuff).

Ibn Ezra (to Isa. 32:5) writes that on an exegetical plane we may interpret the word *kilay* as a portmanteau of the phrase *ki yomar sheli sheli*, “when [a person says], what is mine, is mine.” This is a veiled reference to the Mishna (*Avot* 5:10) which states that there are four types of

people in the world: Those who say “what’s mine is mine and what’s yours is yours” are either like average people or like people from Sodom; those who say “what’s mine is yours and what’s yours is mine” are ignorant; those who say “what’s mine is yours and what’s yours is yours” are pious; and those who say “what’s mine is mine and what’s yours is mine” are wicked (see Rabbeinu Yonah there).

The truth is that *kilay* in the sense of “cheapskate” is a rather obscure and archaic Biblical Hebrew word, especially because it was seemingly not used in Mishnaic Hebrew. Despite this, the word experienced resurgence in Medieval Sephardic circles.

However, in Ashkenazic circles, this word was not really used for a very interesting reason: The Ashkenazic commentators understood the Biblical *kilay* as a derivative of the root NUN-KAF-LAMMED, “deceit/trickery.” They did not agree that *kilay* refers to a “cheapskate” but rather understood the term as referring to a “trickster.” This is evident from the respective commentaries to Isaiah written by Rashi, Mahari Kara and Rabbi Eliezer of Beaugency. They were all influenced by Menachem Ibn Saruk’s *Machberet Menachem*, which traces the word *kilay* to the biliteral root KAF-LAMMED, but categorizes it as related to words like *nochel* (Mal. 1:14), *nichleihem* (Num. 25:18), and *vayitnaklu* (Gen. 37:18) – all referring to “treacherous plotting”; according to the trilateralists, all these words derive from NUN-KAF-LAMMED. Rabbi Pappenheim connects NUN-KAF-LAMMED back to KAF-LAMMED by explaining that “treacherous plotting” reflects the final decisions after the *entire* process of planning and thinking has been completed.

Interestingly, Rashi (to *Sotah* 41b) offers another definition of *kilay*, explaining it as “a desirous person who always wants to drink wine.”

There is another fascinating point related to this word. The Midrash (*Bereishet Rabbah* 51:1) refers to an animal called a *kilay*, and there are several different ways of identifying what creature the Midrash is talking about. One explanation is that *kilay* is a sort of “snail.” This is the understanding preferred by the Maskilic writer Shalom Yaakov Abramowitz (1836-1917), better known as Mendele Mocher Seforim, in his scientific encyclopedia *Toldot HaTeva*. Dr. Alexander Kohut (1842-1894) also seems to favor this approach. Some write that *kilay* refers to a *Schildkröte* – the German term for “turtle.” Either way, there is something common to both the snail and the turtle in that both creatures carry with themselves a shell.

Based on this, Solomon Rabinowitz of New York (d. 1943) in his *Sefer HaMishkalim* draws a comparison between *kilay* as “snail/turtle” and *kilay* as “cheapskate.” He notes that just as the cheapskate retreats into himself and is not generous with others, so does the snail/turtle sometimes retreat into his shell instead of interacting with the world around him. Just as those creatures might lock themselves up in their shell, so does a cheapskate lock himself into his belongings and only come out when the coast is clear. Drawing on this connection, Rabinowitz conjectures that perhaps the Midrashic name of this insect was somehow influenced by the Biblical term *kilay*.

As mentioned in our introduction, another word for “cheapskate” is *tzaykan*. Although this word does not appear in the Bible, it does appear in the Mishna. The Mishna (*Pesachim* 7:8) lays down rules for getting rid of Paschal Meats that had become disqualified. If the sacrifice became ritually impure, either in totem or by majority, then those meats ought to be burnt within the Temple complex on fires that were fueled by wood belonging to the Temple. However, if only a minority of the Paschal Meat became impure, or if the Paschal Meat became disqualified because it was left over beyond the time allotted for eating it, the individual who owned the meats was responsible for burning them with fire fueled by his own wood. Nonetheless, the Mishna concludes that the *tzaykanim* would bring such meats to the Temple to be burned so that they could benefit from the Temple’s wood and not need to spend the money for the wood. Thus, the *tzaykan* is a “cheapskate” who would rather burn the disqualified meats on the Temple’s dime rather than spending his own money on the wood.

Rashi (*Pesachim* 81b) explains that *tzaykanim* were stingy, ungenerous people. In doing so, Rashi uses a cognate of the word *atzar* (“stop”) to denote their efforts in “stopping” their money from reaching others (see also Rashi and Rabbeinu Chananel to *Eruvin* 49a).

The etymology of the term *tzaykan* is not readily obvious. Rabbi Dr. Ernest Klein (no relation) theorizes that *tzaykan* is derived from the Biblical Hebrew term *tzuk/tzok* (“a narrow strait, pressure”) in the sense of the miser’s narrow-mindedness in terms of what causes deserve his monetary expenditure. Another possible etymology of this term lies in the Biblical Hebrew word *mutzak*, which refers to a hard metal. This hardness relates to the *tzaykan*’s hard-headed stubbornness in that he is not easily ready to part with his own money. (Rabbi Pappenheim, as is his way, sees both of these Biblical Hebrew terms as derived from the biliteral

TZADI-KUF root). Either way, the term *tzaykan* is a relatively rare word, but does come up in some places. For example, the classical Mussar work *Orchot Tzadikim* entitled his chapter on the virtue of frugality “*Shaar HaTzaykanut*.”

Finally, the post-Mishnaic Hebrew word for “cheapskate” is *kamtzan*. This word is still used nowadays in Modern Hebrew. The word *kamtzan* itself already appears in some versions of the Tosefta (*Sotah* 13:58) when relating the story of a Kohen who once took two portions of the Shewbread and still only received a bean’s worth. Cognates of *kamtzan* appear in various places in the Talmud, especially in verb form. In some of those places, Rashi again uses a permutation of *atzar* to explain the *kamtzan*’s actions (see Rashi to *Menachot* 86a and *Chullin* 46a, as well as Rashbam to *Bava Batra* 52b).

The word *kamtzan* is clearly derived from the Biblical Hebrew root KUF-MEM-TZADI, which appears seven times in the Bible. In all but one of those instances, this root refers to the *kemitzah* ritual performed on grain sacrifices (Lev. 2:2, 5:12, 6:8, Num. 5:26). Rashi (to Lev. 2:2, *Ketuvot* 8b, *Zevachim* 64b, *Menachot* 11a) explains that *kemitzah* entails using one’s middle three fingers to cover one’s palm and grab some flour, while brushing away with one’s thumb and pinky any excess flour ensuring that the quantity of whatever is inside the three fingers does not exceed the exact amount that can be held within those three fingers. Thus, the term *kemitzah* denotes “containment/storage” and “minimization of quantity.” Both of these qualities are related to the parsimonious behavior of the *kamtzan*, who both stores his own wealth without releasing it for others, and always strives to minimize the amount that others can benefit from him.

The only other place in the Bible wherein a cognate of KUF-MEM-TZADI appears is the word *l’kemzatim* (Gen. 41:47) used to describe how the Land of Egypt’s fecundity in producing extra food during the seven years of surplus. As Radak (in his commentary to Gen. 41:47 and in *Sefer HaShorashim*) explains it, this means

that from a minimal amount of seeds, the land was able to yield many three-finger loads of produce. This too relates to *kemitzah* in terms of the “minimization of quantity.”

Another word that seems to be derived from the root KUF-MEM-TZADI is the Aramaic word *kamtza*. This term is commonly used by Targum for rendering such Hebrew words as *arbeh* (Prov. 30:27), *yelek* (Nach. 3:15), and *chagav* (Num. 13:33, Isa. 40:22) – all of which are synonyms for “grasshopper” (see my essay “Army of Grasshoppers,” Jan. 2018). This perhaps relates to the concept of a *kemitzah* and *kamtzan* because single grasshopper out of an entire swarm of locust essentially reflects a smaller quantity from within a much larger pool.

A famous rabbinic dictum reads: “the *kometz* cannot satisfy the lion” (*Brachot* 3b, *Sanhedrin* 16a). One way of understanding this is that a *kometz* refers to a “pithy sustenance.” Such small quantities are not enough to provide for the lion’s share, hence the above dictum. The connection to *kamtzan* is obvious. Alternatively, the term *kometz* here means “grasshopper” and the rabbis mean that eating a single grasshopper is not enough to satisfy the lion’s hunger (see Rashi to *Sanhedrin* 16a, Rashi to *Ein Yaakov Brachot* 3b, and *Hagahot HaBach* to *Brachot* 3b for these two explanations).

Another famous Rabbinic dictum reads: “because of *Kamtza* and *Bar Kamtza*, the Holy Temple was destroyed” (*Gittin* 55b). In this case, *Kamtza* and *Bar Kamtza* are proper names for Jews who lived in the end of the Second Temple period. However, Rabbi Chaim of Friedberg (a brother of the Maharal) in *Sefer HaChaim* offers a homiletical interpretation of that dictum by explaining that it refers to intergenerational “stinginess” (*kamtzanut*), which caused the Jewish People to lose their Fear of Heaven and only care about themselves (see also Maharal’s *Netzach Yisrael* ch. 5 for more on the connection between *kemitzah*, *Kamtza/Bar Kamtza*, and grasshoppers).

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# TALMUD TIPS

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by Rabbi Moshe Newman

## Yevamot 79-85

### Our Family's Nature

King David said, "There are three characteristics that distinguish the Jewish People: they are merciful, bashful (i.e. ashamed of sin), and do many great acts of kindness."

When the Givonites came to King David to join the Jewish People, they demanded the execution of King Shaul's seven sons for causing them great suffering. King David outright refused to hear their claim. He considered them as being lacking in mercy and therefore not fit to become part of the Jewish nation. As he explained, "Only one who has these three essential Jewish characteristics (mercy, shame and kindness) is fit to be attached to our people."

There are two schools of thought in considering the perpetuation of these three essential and defining traits in the history and eternal identification of the Jewish nation.

One way of understanding the origin of these traits is taught by the Maharal of Prague. He writes that each of these traits was mastered and personified by one of our Forefathers, and subsequently passed down as an inheritance to each member of the Jewish People throughout history. Avraham Avinu embodied and exemplified the trait of *chesed* – loving-kindness. He is the father of every Jew in both a physical and

spiritual sense. In a similar way, Yitzchak Avinu personified the trait of awe of Hashem and fear of Hashem, which translates into a sense of shame and guilt felt when transgressing the will of Hashem. Yaakov Avinu's outstanding quality was that of *rachamim* – mercy. According to the Maharal, the three nation-defining characteristics are to be seen as an inheritance from Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaakov, and, so to speak, are all part of "Jewish DNA."

However, the Maharsha offers a different explanation for the presence of these traits in the Jewish nation. While it is true that Hashem testified that the Avraham Avinu would pass on to his posterity a legacy of *chesed*, the other two attributes were special gifts from Hashem to the Jewish nation. We see this in two verses in the Torah. "He will endow you with a capacity for being merciful" teaches that the quality of *rachamim* is a special gift from Hashem. (Devarim 13:18) Likewise, the quality of *bushah* and being in awe of Hashem was a unique gift from above that was given to the Jewish people with the giving of the Torah at Mount Sinai. (Shemot 20:17)

In any event – whether a particular characteristic is an inheritance of a gift – each person has the choice and free will whether or not to accept and fully apply each of these essential qualities in daily life.

▪ *Yevamot 79a*

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# LETTER AND SPIRIT

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

The nation finds itself in trouble yet again. This time, their provocation puts them at the verge of annihilation. Hashem is prepared to begin the nation anew, from Moshe Rabbeinu. In response, Moshe says two things. First, he argues that after the miraculous deliverance drew the attention of the nations, its annihilation will create a great disgrace and misconception among the nations. They will declare that Hashem has no power to overcome the prowess of the inhabitants of Canaan. The Divine objective of enlightening the nations through the Jewish People will have been defeated.

Second, Moshe beseeches Hashem, *And now, let the power of my Lrd be great, as You did once say it: Hashem, long-suffering and abundant in loving-kindness, lifting away crookedness and rebellion, yet He excuses nothing; He remembers the crookedness of parents for the children.... Please forgive the iniquity of this nation in accordance with your abounding kindness, as You have borne this people from Egypt until now.*" Now, says Moshe, is the time to demonstrate the greatness of Your power. It may be true that the people deserve to be destroyed, but there are countervailing concerns. This case, begs Moshe, calls for the exercise of Hashem's power in all its greatness. In this way, the power of Hashem will be great. All of the miracles and power shown thus far in Egypt and the desert will pale in comparison to the

power that will now be shown by forgiving the people. If, in the face of such defection, Hashem will act with such patience and kindness, still not excusing wayward behavior, but meting out educational punishment over generations, to ensure the continued and progressive development of mankind, then *this* will be the greatest exercise of power.

Sudden annihilation would demonstrate might, but pardoning and continuing to educate this nation, and, through them, the rest of the world will demonstrate power. Such power is manifest in His *patience*, giving man time to reconsider and mend his ways, to rise again after his fall; His *abundant loving-kindness*, which is not forfeited by wrongdoing; His *lifting away the crookedness and rebellion*, so they do not become entrenched as patterns. While in His great desire to save all from moral ruin, *He excuses nothing*, He will extend the opportunity for repentance *over many generations*.

The greatness of the power of Hashem lies in His patience. At every level, He provides the opportunities and the tools to cure our waywardness. Without explicitly directing our choices, He gently guides and scaffolds our development, educates us, and enables us to freely choose life.

▪ *Source: Commentary, Bamidbar 14:17*

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# PARSHA OVERVIEW

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**A**t the insistence of the 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 will not let him fail in his mission. They return 40 days later, carrying unusually large fruit. When 10 of the 12 scouts state that the people in Canaan are as formidable as the fruit, the people are discouraged. Calev and Yehoshua, the only two scouts still in favor of the invasion, try bolstering 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 the Bnei Yisrael will finally enter the Land. The people are commanded to remove challah, 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 is executed. The laws of tzitzit are taught. We recite the section about the tzitzit twice a day to remind ourselves of the Exodus.

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## PEREK SHIRA

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by Rabbi Shmuel Kraines

### THE SONG OF THE VEGETABLES OF THE FIELD

**T**he vegetables in the field say: "Its furrows You satiate, descending to its grooves, with raindrops You saturate it, its sprouts You bless." (*Tehillim* 65:11)

Vegetables require constant watering to maintain moisture and to provide for their rapid growth. Moreover, they are menaced by the attacks of countless insects that creep upon and within the soil. When Hashem waters them, and they ripen to plump fruition, they sing of His blessings. Their verse mentions "descending to its grooves," since the water descends deep into the soil in order to reach them. "Its sprouts You bless," for their rapid growth is clearly blessed by Hashem.

We need to only open our eyes to see that we, too, are fragile and constantly dependent upon Hashem. As much as we humbly accept that fact, the more we feel gratitude towards Him. There is reason enough to thank Him every day and every hour. He cares for our wellbeing and listens for our song.

▪ Sources: Malbim; Perek B'Shir

*\*In loving memory of Harav Zeev Shlomo ben Zecharia Leib*