

# OHRNET

SHABBAT PARSHAT SHLACH • 18 SIVAN 5765 • JUNE 25, 2005 • VOL. 12 NO. 38

## PARSHA INSIGHTS

### THE BIGGEST BRIBE IN THE WORLD

*"These are their names..." (13:4)*

Look at the order in which the Torah lists the spies in this week's parsha. Calev is listed fourth and Yehoshua is listed fifth. The Ramban says that the Torah lists the spies according to their greatness. In other words, it cannot be that what saved Calev and Yehoshua from the mistake of the other spies was their greatness, for at least two of the spies were greater people than them, and they still failed. What was it then that allowed Yehoshua and Calev to avoid the disastrous pitfall of the sin of the spies?

Calev was married to Miriam, and one of the best protections that a man can have is a righteous wife. Yehoshua had the advantage that Moshe prayed for him to be spared from the spies' conspiracy. Moshe changed Yehoshua's name from Hoshea by adding a *yud* at the beginning of his name. This made the first two letters spell one of G-d's names. It also changed the meaning of his name to "G-d will save." However, maybe Yehoshua and Calev had more than just these advantages going for them.

One of life's amazing facts is that that two people can hold diametrically opposed opinions and yet cite the identical fact as proof to their opposing opinions. How is it that we can look at the world so totally differently from one another? How was it that Yehoshua and Calev saw a Land that was "very, very good" (14:7) whereas the other spies saw a "Land that devours its inhabitants"? Surely both cannot be true.

The Rambam says that the first mitzvah is to know and believe that there is a G-d. How is it possible to command belief? To whom is this mitzvah addressed? If someone already believes, then he doesn't need a commandment, and if someone doesn't believe, all the commanding in the world isn't going to make him believe. Another thing. Judaism expects every 13-year-old boy and 12-year-old girl to believe in G-d. How is it that, at their tender ages and with their limited intellects, they are expected to accomplish something that even Aristotle, one of the all-time brightest people who ever lived, wasn't able to attain? The Rambam says that Aristotle was on such a high intellectual level that he was just one step below being a prophet. And yet,

Aristotle, for all his brilliance, was not able to arrive at a belief in G-d. So how can we expect the comparatively feeble mind of a teenager to achieve belief in G-d?

The answer is that belief in G-d isn't something that requires tremendous intellect. There once was an atheist who challenged Rabbi Akiva: "Who created the world?" "G-d," replied Rabbi Akiva. "Prove it!" said the atheist. "Who wove your cloak?" asked Rabbi Akiva. Replied the other, "The weaver." "Prove it!" said Rabbi Akiva. Just as the cloak testifies to the existence of the weaver, so too the world testifies to the existence of G-d.

So if belief in G-d is something so obvious, what stops so many people from believing?

Bribery.

The Torah tells us "*a bribe blinds the eyes of the wise*". Even the wisest person loses his objectivity when faced with a bribe. Obviously the degree of bias will vary depending on the intellect of the person and the attractiveness of the bribe. However, even the smallest bribe has some kind of influence on even the greatest intellect. What's the biggest bribe in the world? The biggest bribe in the world is to do what I want to do when I want to do it without the slightest feeling of guilt. Judaism says that your life isn't your own. You were born against your will and you'll die against your will. Our lives are not our own. Ah, but if I don't believe in G-d then my life is mine! I can do exactly what I want! (Provided of course that I don't get caught.) And I don't have to worry about some "Celestial Big Brother in the Sky" watching every move I make and every step I take.

Atheism isn't logical. It's psychological.

If there were a mitzvah in Judaism that you had to travel around the world eating at the best *treif* restaurants in the world, a lot more people would be observant.

The spies knew that they would very possibly lose their positions as leaders when the Jewish People entered the Eretz Yisrael. It was this unconscious bias that caused them to speak unfavorably about the Land. Rather than say what they saw in the Land, their eyes 'saw' the subconscious prior agenda that they had already dictated for themselves. Their eyes saw the agenda of their mouths, for a bribe blinds the eyes of even the wisest and the greatest.

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

### NO SUCH WORD IN DIVINE DICTIONARY

Jews in Israel are often faced with problems for which it seems there are no solutions. Sometimes it is the implacable hatred of our neighbors and sometimes it is the bitter dissension within our people over political issues.

As we listen this Shabbat to the reading of the week's portion about the scouts whom Moshe sent to spy out the Land promised to the Jewish people, it is important for us to internalize the lesson to be learned from it. Our ancestors lost the privilege of entering this Land and were forced to wander for forty years in the wilderness because they gave credence to the slanderous report of those scouts.

But why was their report considered to be slanderous? Did they not say that it flowed with milk and honey and did

they not display its rich fruits? The answer lies in one word – *effes*. This is the word they used as an introduction to the military reconnaissance side of their report. *Effes* means it is impossible to overcome the mighty forces and fortresses of the inhabitants of the Land.

In the dictionary of the Divine there is no room for such a word because He is capable of everything. Ascribing to the Omnipotent One a lack of ability to overcome any obstacle is heresy and both the scouts and their misled audience paid a heavy price for doing so.

Despite all the problems which face us, we must never sink to the despair of *effes* and retain our faith in Heavenly protection for Israel forever.

## THE HUMAN SIDE OF THE STORY

### SURPRISE FOR THE POLICE

Responsibility for communal funds was always a prime concern of the late *mashgiach* of Yeshivat Slobodka in Bnei Brak, Rabbi Moshe Tokatsinsky. During a fundraising visit to London on behalf of the yeshiva, he was the victim of a robbery while traveling in the "Underground". He reported the incident to the local police and provided them with precise descriptions of the robbers who were soon apprehended along with the cash they had stolen.

Here came the catch that stood in the way of a happy ending. The police asked the rabbi to prove that the money found on the robbers really was stolen from him.

To their surprise the rabbi pulled out a piece of paper on which were listed the serial numbers of all the bills which people had given him for the support of the yeshiva. He had foresightedly anticipated the possibility of such a scenario and had taken the precaution which probably no one else would have thought of.

## 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.

## TALMUDigest

## SHABBAT 51 - 57

- Insulating cold water to keep from getting warm
- What is permissible to allow an animal to wear in the public thoroughfare on Shabbat
- Tale of a miracle and of exceptional modesty
- What is forbidden to allow an animal to wear in the public thoroughfare on Shabbat
- The ribbon on the horns of Rabbi Elazar ben Azaria's cow
- The responsibility of reproof
- Why the righteous died during destruction of Beit Hamikdash
- Is there suffering and death not as a result of sin?
- Second look at the "sins" of figures in Scripture
- What a woman may wear on Shabbat in the public thoroughfare

### RESPECT FOR ANOTHER SAGE

**A**lthough our Sages prohibited insulating a pot on Shabbat itself even with materials that do not add heat, this ban does not apply to insulating a vessel with water or food in it to prevent it from becoming warmed by the sun. The reason for the prohibition on insulating to retain warmth is the fear that one who sees that his pot of

food is not as warm as he would like it to be may forget himself and actually put it on the stove to heat it, a fear which does not exist in regard to insulating against heat.

When the Sage Rabbi (Rabbi Yehuda the Nassi) initially ruled that even insulation against heat was forbidden, he was told by Rabbi Yishmael that his father, Rabbi Yossi, had ruled that it was permitted. Rabbi's reaction was to retract his own ruling as he declared "The senior Sage has already issued his ruling!"

Upon learning of Rabbi's declaration, Rabbi Papa expressed admiration of the loving respect which the Sages showed to one another. Had Rabbi Yossi been alive he would certainly have been subservient to Rabbi who was the Nassi (head of the Sanhedrin and thus the head of the Jewish community). Nevertheless, Rabbi showed deference to the Sage who was once his teacher and conceded to his position.

Tosefot suggests that the subservience which Rabbi Yossi would have shown his former disciple was because Rabbi had already surpassed his teacher in Torah knowledge. The deference he showed to his former teacher's position gained Rabbi Papa's admiration of his loving respect for another Sage.

• *Shabbat 51a*

## WHAT THE Sages SAY

"Whoever has the ability to protest against the wrongdoing of his family and fails to do so bears responsibility for the guilt of his family; if he has the ability to protest against the wrongdoing of his city he bears responsibility for the guilt of his city; if he has the ability to protest against the wrongdoing of the entire world he bears responsibility for the guilt of the entire world."

• *The Sages Rav, Rabbi Chanina, Rabbi Yochanan and Rabbi Chaviva Shabbat 55b*

## OHR BITS

### Witty Advice for Circling Life

"You make a living by what you get. You make a life by what you give."

• *Winston Churchill*

## REVISITING ANGELS

**From: Al Allen in Atlanta**

Dear Rabbi,

*In response to your weekly question/answer regarding angels, I was wondering why G-d needs angels in the first place. Is their job solely to carry out G-d's orders? If so, why does G-d need assistance when He's capable of doing everything Himself? Also, how do angels become angels? Are they angels in perpetuity? Are the angels that we have now the same ones that have been there since the beginning of time? I have a hard time with the concept of angels. It seems very Christian to me ... but I bet you'll say that the Christians borrowed the concept from the Jews! Thank you in advance for your response.*

Dear Al,

The Hebrew word for angel is “*malach*”. The word “*malach*” is related to the word “*melacha*”, which means “task”. Hence, a *malach* is a force that acts as an agent or vehicle to accomplish G-d's will. Thus, the primary function of angels is to carry out G-d's orders.

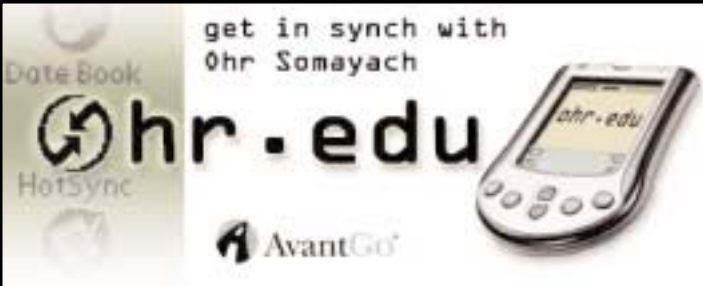
If we were to understand that angels are independent creatures “separate” from G-d, we might wonder why G-d needs the assistance of an emissary. However, in Judaism, not only are angels not to be envisioned literally as scantily dressed winged beings, they are not even considered as independent spiritual beings per se. Rather, angels are an extension of G-d Himself, their being spiritual manifes-

tations of His will, as He realizes that will.

Since G-d's providence over all existence is not static and distant but rather dynamic and intimate, His will in maintaining everything is constantly being modified. Therefore the forces through which He executes His will are constantly changing accordingly. Most angels, then, are limited, finite forces realizing G-d's will each moment as He purveys a myriad of considerations. This is what is meant by angels being created, fulfilling one specific task, and being destroyed. Nevertheless, many angels have “universal” tasks such as Gavriel, the manifestation of G-d's corrective strength, or Raphael, the extension of God's health-giving powers. These angels will last for the duration of the world as we know it.

Are the angels that we have now the same ones that have been there since the beginning of time? Targum Yonatan, a translation of the Torah into Aramaic by Yonatan ben Uziel who was the greatest of Hillel's students, circa 165 CE, paraphrases “And G-d said to the ministering angels who had been created on the second day of the Creation of the World, Let us make man”. According to the above explanation, this expresses the idea that before G-d created time and space, there was nothing else in existence to act upon that would require an expression of G-d's will. Once creation was fixed, G-d initiated the aforementioned dynamic through which His will is directed upon Existence.

Many people have a hard time with the concept of angels — particularly with the popular Christian concept. I hope our description of the authentic Jewish concept, while admittedly somewhat deep, will help make things easier for you.



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## WHAT'S THE RIGHT THING TO DO?

REAL-LIFE QUESTIONS OF SOCIAL AND BUSINESS ETHICS

### KOSHER KEEPING PETS

**Question:** I recently heard that there is an American company which produces kosher food for dogs and cats. I keep kosher but I can't understand why my pet has to keep kosher. What's the right thing to do?

**Answer:** Your pet certainly does not have to keep kosher — but you do! This includes not deriving any benefit from those foods which the Torah has prohibited us to eat and to derive benefit from.

In regard to pet food, you must be careful not to feed your pet anything which has a blend of meat and dairy ingredients, something fairly common in commercial pet foods. Since many pet foods have grain in their ingredients and are therefore *chametz*, you must be careful not to feed them to your pet on Pesach or even to have them in your possession.

In conclusion, keeping kosher is not only what you feed yourself, but what you feed your pet as well.

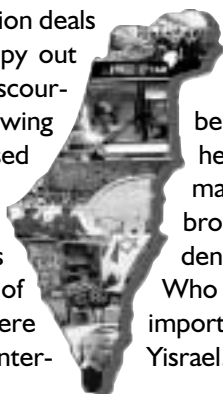
## LOVE OF THE LAND - THE LEGENDS

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

### SELF-INTEREST VS. NATIONAL INTEREST

The main subject of the week's Torah portion deals with the scouts which Moshe sent to spy out Eretz Yisrael. They did their utmost to discourage our ancestors from inheriting the "Land flowing with milk and honey" which G-d had promised the Patriarchs.

Among the explanations given for their motivation in doing so is the one which points out that these high ranking representatives of their respective tribes were concerned that there would be a reshuffling of appointments upon enter-



ing the Land and that they would lose their positions.

This should serve as a powerful reminder that behind the patriotic declarations of a politician that he is only doing what is best for the people, there may be lurking a personal interest. Such self-interest brought upon our ancestors the tragedy of being denied entry into the Land for an entire generation. Who knows what impact the self-interest of people in important positions today can have on the future of Eretz Yisrael.

לע"נ

ר' מרדכי בן ר' וולף בער ז"ל  
ומרת רחל בת ר' צבי הירש ע"ה

ת.נ.צ.ב.ה.