

SOURCE OF DISSATISFACTION

by Rabbi Yosef Kalatsky

1. Understanding the Source of Dissatisfaction

The Torah tells us that the Jewish people complained about the Mann (Manna), "Who will feed us meat? We remember the fish that we ate in Egypt free of charge; and the cucumbers, melons, leeks..." The Torah continues, "Moshe heard the people weeping in their family groups, each one at the entrance of his tent and the wrath of Hashem flared greatly; and in the eyes of Moshe it was bad." The Torah could have simply stated that the "people complained"; rather, it says, "the people weeping in their family groups..." Rashi cites the Chazal that explains "the people weeping in their family groups..." is communicating to us that the people were not really complaining about their cuisine but rather they were disgruntled by the fact that they could no longer engage in forbidden relations.

Before Sinai there were many relationships that were not forbidden; however, after Sinai they were no longer permitted.

The Gemara tells us that a human being is motivated by stealing (accumulation of assets) and forbidden sexual relationships (the sexual drive). Although the Jewish people complained about the Mann, the Torah is revealing to us that the true underlying cause of their dissatisfaction stemmed the fact that they could no longer engage in forbidden relations. Since they did not have what they really wanted, they complained.

The Gemara in Tractate Sanhedrin states, "The Jewish people were involved with the Chet Ha'Aigel (Sin of the Golden Calf) only to be able to permit forbidden relationships." The Torah tells us that the Jewish people panicked and built an intermediary between them and G-d because they thought that Moshe had passed away on the mountain when he did not return at the time they had expected him. Nevertheless, Chazal tell us that bottom line the reason why the Jewish people assembled the Golden Calf was because they had serious conflicts of interest. Underneath all of their concerns and issues about Moshe's not returning and their need for a new leader, the Jewish people were actually motivated to engage in the Golden Calf because they wanted to continue to be able to have forbidden relationships. Rather than succumbing to their concerns about Moshe's return, the Jewish people could have believed that he was only delayed a short while. However, because of their conflict of interest regarding forbidden relations they chose not to see the situation in any other way. Often people have questions, which they believe demonstrate to them that Hashem is not involved

with the world on an ongoing basis. When asked about the effort they have taken to have these questions answered, these people usually respond in a manner that indicates that they actually have devoted little or no effort. If these are important questions, why did they not seek the answers? The answer is that these people do not want to have an answer because of their conflict of interest. Having an answer would imply that they needed to change their behavior in some way. This is something they are not prepared to do.

Many times things in life bother us and it is important for us to analyze and understand the true nature of our concerns. Often we may not even know the source of our problem. Since we have many conflicts of interest, Chazal instructed us to, "Make for yourself a Rav and take for yourself a friend." Rabbeinu Yona explains in Pirkei Avos (Ethics of our Fathers) that it is crucial for us to associate closely with a rabbi and a friend because they do not have our conflict of interest and they can advise us on the right course of action.

The entire Jewish people had the same conflict of interest. Deep down they really wanted to continue to engage in forbidden relations but they could not even verbalize this desire. The Jews therefore hid their true dissatisfaction behind their complaints about the Mann. This is what the Torah is telling us by the phrase, "the people weeping in their family groups..."

2. Are we G-d's Agents or do we act out of Self-Interest?

The Torah says, "Hashem spoke to Moshe saying, 'Send for yourself men and let them spy out the Land of Canaan that I give to the Children of Israel...'" The "men" that were being sent were people of stature who represented each of the tribes. Rashi explains that at the time that Moshe sent these individuals they were righteous. Only later when they were engaged in spying out the land did they become corrupted. Two of the twelve spies that were sent did not become corrupted. Hosheia Bin Nun had the letter "yud" added to his name by Moshe Rabbeinu to become Yehoshua. Moshe added the letter "yud" to his name (which represents one of the names of G-d) to indicate that Hashem should come to his aid. Calev, representing the tribe of Yehudah, also did not become corrupted because he went to Hebron to the tomb of the Patriarchs and prayed to Hashem that he should not be ensnared in the plot of the other spies.

The Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh asks- if these individuals were all initially righteous and went to scout out the land with Hashem's approval- what caused them to become corrupted? Secondly if Hashem knew that they were going to become corrupted why did Hashem approve this mission in the first place?

The Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh answers with a fundamental principle. When a person represents another individual as his agent he is in affected to some degree by the mindset and thoughts of the person that he is representing because he is acting totally in the capacity of the people who appointed him. Since the motive and intent of the Klal Yisroel was to be suspecting and distrusting of Hashem regarding the Promised Land, the spies were impacted by this negative intent. The

Jewish people who they were representing diminished these special people. Although the spies did have free choice (until the very end), their mission became more difficult because of the influence of those who they represented. We see from this that an agent's function is directly linked to the intent of the one who he represents.

The Sefas Emmes zt'l asks- if the spies were doomed to fail, then why did Hashem authorize and approve the spying of the land? The Sefas Emmes explains the reason why Hashem approved their mission was if they would act as agents of Hashem (to spy out the land) then the spiritual quality of the agency would protect them and cause them to see things clearly. However if their own agenda was primary and Hashem was a mere irrelevancy then they would have no chance to succeed. If one acts as Hashem's agent then Hashem supports and protects the person and he will definitely succeed. When Hashem authorized the spying He was giving the spies the option to make their mission an agency to perform a mitzvah. If the spies carried out their mission believing that they were agents of Hashem they would not have become corrupted. If on the other hand the spies went into the land representing themselves or Klal Yisroel then they did not merit Divine Protection.

In order for one to be the agent of Hashem one must negate themselves and their will completely to Hashem. Since the spies did not negate themselves and their will they were not Hashem's agents and consequently they became corrupted. The Sefas Emmes continues to say that the same is true for all Jews. The reason why we exist in this world is to be the agents of Hashem. Everything we do is supposed to be the carrying out of Hashem's Will. When we put on tefillin, observe Shabbos, and observe dietary laws etc. we do these things because we are agents of Hashem and our only function is to do His Will.

The question is do we will moment to moment as the agents of Hashem or do we perform mitzvos for our own benefit (e.g. reward, protection, etc.)? Hashem says that if we perform mitzvahs purely for His sake we will merit a completely different level of protection and reward than if we do the same exact actions with our own intent.

We find that Yehoshua sent Pinchas and Calev to scout out Jericho and the Torah says that they presented themselves as, "Kadorim (salesmen of earthenware vessels)." Why did Pinchas and Calev present themselves as salesmen of earthenware vessels? The value of a vessel usually is defined by its function as well as the material from which it is made. If a vessel is made of metal and it breaks or becomes unusable, the metal can be smelted into another vessel. However, the earthenware vessel, which is made of clay, becomes completely worthless if its function is impaired. The only value of an earthenware vessel is its function and it has no intrinsic value on its own. Pinchas and Calev were identified as Kadorim because their agency was purely to carry out the Will of Hashem. They had no intent of their own and like an earthenware vessel their entire existence rested on their function as agents of Hashem. They negated themselves to such a degree that they were able to enter into a brothel of Rachel without succumbing to temptation.

We need to ask ourselves - "Who am I representing?" If the answer is "I am only representing Hashem" then the person merits Divine Assistance. However if we perform mitzvos with other intentions or self interest then we will not merit Divine Assistance and thus the value of our actions is diminished .

3. Understanding our Internal Battle

The Torah tells us that the Jewish people wanted to spy out the Land of Canaan before they entered into it; despite the fact that Hashem promised them that it would be a bountiful land of milk and honey. The question is - how could the meraglim (the spies) have even approached Moshe to ask if they could spy out the land in the face of Hashem's promise that all will be good? The Yalkut explains that the meraglim asked Moshe if they could spy out the land under the pretext that there may be a Kilul Hashem (Desecration of Hashem's Name).

They claimed that Hashem promised that the Jewish people would find great treasures upon entering the Land of Canaan; however, they believed that the Canaanites would hide their wealth so that the Jews would not be able to find it. Therefore in order to prevent the Kilul Hashem of the Jewish people entering the Land and not finding the treasures, they needed to go ahead and find where the Canaanites have hidden the treasure so that the promise of Hashem should be fulfilled. If it were not for this possibility of a Kilul Hashem (even though it was a ploy by the meraglim) Moshe would have vetoed the suggestion immediately. However since Kilul Hashem was a concern Moshe asked Hashem if the meraglim could go and spy out the Land. Hashem responded to Moshe, "Send for yourself men..."

Meaning, if you need for your own reasons to send spies then send them; however from Hashem's perspective He had already assured the Jewish people that the Land would be full of blessing. Hashem also warned Moshe that there was a risk that the spies would misinterpret what they saw in the Land.

As a result of the warning Moshe received from Hashem, he knew that there were risks involved in sending the meraglim. Moshe therefore prayed for Yehoshua (one of the meraglim) and added the letter "yud" to his name so that Hashem should protect him from being negatively affected by the others. The question is - if Moshe understood the risks of the mission of the spies then why did he only pray for Yehoshua? Moshe could have prayed for all of the meraglim. How can we understand this?

The Gemara tells us in Tractate Bava Basra that the spiritual dimension of Moshe Rabbeinu was comparable to the sun because just as the sun he generated his own energy. Yehoshua was comparable to the moon because just as the moon reflects the light of the sun, Yehoshua reflected the spiritual energy from Moshe his Rebbe. None of the other meraglim were at the same level of Yehoshua. He continuously was learning with Moshe Rabbeinu and never left Moshe's tent. This is the reason Rashi gives in his commentary on Pirkei Avos why Moshe transmitted the Torah to

Yehoshua rather than Aaron or any one else. Yehoshua literally lived in the shadow of Moshe Rabbeinu.

The talmidim (students) of the Vilna Gaaon zt'l once told him, "Rebbe, we wish we had your yetzer ha'rah (evil inclination)." To this the Vilna Gaaon answered, " You would not want my yetzer ha'rah because as the Gemara states, "The greater one is the greater his yetzer ha'rah"" Why is this the case? If a person's evil inclination does not match his spiritual dimension then that person's existence would not be a challenge or a test. That person would not be able to grow spiritually. Therefore as a person grows spiritually his yetzer ha'rah also grows. Since the Vilna Gaaon was the equivalent to the Rambam in terms of spirituality, then it is understood why he told his talmidim that they would not want his yetzer ha'rah.

The Gemara in Tractate Sukkah tells us that Reb Abbayia had heard that a man and women had made plans to meet one another one night to commit adultery. On the appointed night, Abbayai followed them secretly and overheard the man backing out of the plan because he believed that it was not the right thing to do. When Abbayai witnessed that the man was able to refrain himself from committing adultery, he returned to his colleagues worrying that had the situation happened to him, he would have succumbed. His colleagues told him not to worry that it is only because of his spiritual greatness that his yetzer ha'rah was more intense and therefore he would not have succumbed.

With this we can understand why Moshe prayed for Yehoshua not to be affected and not the other meraglim. Yehoshua was the spiritual reflection of Moshe Rabbeinu and because of his dimension he was more susceptible to negative influences than the other meraglim. Moshe added the letter "yud" to Yehoshua's name and prayed for him so that despite his greatness the spying should not negatively impact him.

The Gemara in Tractate Shabbos says that if a person truly wishes to advance spiritually, Hashem will help him to grow; on the other hand, if a person has no interest in spiritual advancement, then Hashem lets him fall to as low as he wants to fall.

4. Things are not as they seem to be - Trusting Hashem

The Torah says, "Hashem spoke to Moshe saying, 'Send for yourself men and let them spy out the Land of Canaan that I give to the Children of Israel...'" The Torah could have simply stated, "Send for yourself men and let them spy out the Land of Canaan." Seemingly the part of the verse, "that I give to the Children of Israel..." is superfluous. What is this part of the verse coming to add? Evidently, it was important for the Jewish people to know that they are sending spies to scout out the land that was being given to them by Hashem and not just any land.

The Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh says that the Land of Israel was in fact impossible to conquer through human efforts. The spies witnessed giants and an extraordinary situation in the land, all of which was incomprehensible and unconquerable from a mundane and human point of view. Because of they

believed they were locked in human context, the Jewish people believed that they could not possibly affect the extraordinary state of affairs in the land. Therefore they believed that the gift, which was being given to them by Hashem in actuality, was not a gift but a death trap.

The Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh explains that the situation depicted in the Torah is similar to a landlord who gives a building to someone and guarantees that there will be no tenants upon receiving the building. Because the landlord is the owner of the building and has complete control of its occupancy, his guarantee should be believed.

The opinion or perception of the recipient is irrelevant in this situation. The Torah states, "...let them spy out the Land of Canaan that I give..." to indicate that while it is true that the land is "The Land of Canaan" (with all of its extraordinary circumstances); however, it is only the land of the Jewish people because Hashem gave it to them. If Hashem told the Jewish people that He was giving them the land and that it would be clear of any difficulties - how could they even question this? Because the Jews did not perceive the land as property that was being given to them by a landlord who's guarantee is to be accepted, they saw the Land of Canaan as the dwelling place for giants and place of their demise. If the Jews understood and internalized that fact that Hashem said to them the He was giving them the land they would not have had such a misperception. The question is why did the Jewish people not have the level of trust in Hashem that made them perceive the land in accordance with His promise?

The answer is -trust is not merely a concept. Trust is a reality. How could the Jews not have absolute trust in Hashem after witnessing the revealed miracles in Egypt, the splitting of the Sea, the receiving of the Torah at Sinai, and the daily miracles in the dessert? In fact the Jews did realize that Hashem performed for them great miracles which seemed to come to them even though they themselves did not believe they were worth of such miracles. The problem they had was how long would Hashem continue to perform such miracles for them? They believed they were completely undeserving of any miracles. The Jews perceived themselves as a people who engaged in idol worship at the time of the Sinai experience (the Golden Calf). They questioned, "Why is Hashem treating us like royalty when we are not royalty." The fact is the Jewish people did not have absolute trust in Hashem. They believed that ultimately Hashem was leading them to their demise. As a result of their lack of trust and the slandering of the land by the spies and the Jewish people, Hashem did in fact decree that the generation should be destroyed. Moshe however pointed out to Hashem that the Egyptians would perceive this as Hashem taking the Jewish people out of Egypt to kill them in the desert. Therefore Hashem decreed that the generation should die over a forty-year period.

The surviving Jews could have also perceived the death of the generation as proof that Hashem intended to ultimately lead them all to their demise. All of these misconceptions are based on a lack of trust and faith. When circumstances around us do not make sense to our thinking do we negate our questions and trust Hashem or do we fall prey to the circumstances?

Throughout history the Jewish people have only survived based on trust and faith because the circumstances of our survival have always been difficult to comprehend. If we would focus on statistics and our actual circumstances we would not have been able to survive. If a Jew has trust in Hashem then he will be able to overcome any circumstance.

The reason why the spies failed and the Jews believed their slandering of the land was because they did not have trust in Hashem. If Calev did not prostrate himself on the tomb of the Patriarchs and ask for Hashem's help to perceive the situation correctly or if Moshe did not add the letter "yud" to Yehoshua's name they too would have failed despite their spiritual level.

If a person believes that he cannot make a living or run a business unless he works on Shabbos then he is demonstrating a lack of faith and trust in Hashem. Chazal tell us that Hashem decides one's livelihood from Rosh Hashanah to Rosh Hashanah. With this issue as well as all other aspects of our life we must trust Hashem because it is the only way to perceive reality correctly and to assure our survival.

5. The Limitation of the Human Mind to Perceive Reality

At the beginning of Parsha Shelach, Rashi asks the question, "Why is the portion of the meraglim (spies) juxtaposed with the portion of Miriam?" The Midrash tells us, "The evil people (the rashaim) had witnessed what had happened to Miriam and they did not learn a lesson from it." Miriam had spoken out of turn about Moshe and as a result of this she developed leprosy (Tzaras), which caused her to be sent out of the camps for seven days. The "evil people" had witnessed the effect of speaking negatively yet they did not change their behavior and subsequently they slandered the land. The reason the Midrash gives why these people did not take heed from the incident of Miriam is that they were "Rashayim (Evil People)". Meaning, the evil person is so desensitized and out of touch with reality that even though something is blatantly clear, the evil person does not have the clarity to comprehend it.

The Gemara tells us that the hearts of the Rashayim (the evil people) are sealed over in a way that desensitizes them. Evil people live by a motto, "Eat, Drink, and be merry for tomorrow we may die!" If one may die tomorrow and every moment has infinite value should one waste that moment eating and drinking? The evil person does not understand the foolishness of his thinking. The evil people which the Midrash refers to did not learn from witnessing the incident of Miriam because their hearts were sealed and they were not able to see things clearly. What should these evil people have learned from Miriam?

When Miriam spoke out of turn about Moshe Rabbeinu she was not undermining Moshe but rather it was an affront against G-d Himself. Miriam saw that Moshe had separated from his wife after Sinai because of his spiritual level as a prophet. She and Aaron were also prophets in their own right but they did not separate from their spouses. Even though she knew that Moshe was a greater prophet than she was, she believed that he should not have separated from his wife. Miriam is punished

immediately after making such remarks. Hashem responds," How could you (Miriam) speak this way about Moshe My servant?" The fact is the root of her mistake was that Miriam did not perceive Moshe in the way that she should have viewed him. Since she did not understand who Moshe was, she commented on his decision to separate from his wife.

Was Moshe simply a very special person? Or was he more than that? The Gemara tells us that Moshe, as an individual, was equivalent to the Sanhedrin (the High Court), which was comprised of seventy judges who were at the most advanced spiritual level. The word of Moshe was equivalent to the Word of Hashem. The Rambam says that the basis of Torah is the word of Moshe. If Moshe's decision was to separate from his wife that meant that it was Hashem's decision that he should do so. When Miriam questioned Moshe's behavior, she was in essence questioning G-d and the authenticity and validity of the Torah itself. Since Moshe was the receiver and the transmitted of the Torah and Miriam questioned his behavior, she was undermining his role as the transmitted of G-d's word. She, nevertheless, did not perceive Moshe as synonymous with Hashem and therefore with this lack of clarity she spoke out of turn.

The lesson, which should have been learned from the incident of Miriam is that, we should not rely on our own perception and understanding of reality. Miriam's mistake stemmed from her lack of comprehension of Moshe because she was limited by her own human mind set. The Divine Mind does not operate within this limited context. The Divine Mind is impossible to comprehend.

Hashem told the Klal Yisroel that He is giving them the Land of Canaan and that it would be full of bounty and blessing. The spies saw that the land was filled with giants and unexplainable phenomena. This was a seeming contradiction. On hand Hashem promised them the land and that it would be filled with blessing; however, on the other hand, they witnessed extraordinarily frightening circumstances when they spied out the land. How could this be? Since they assessed the land with their own limited and deficient human powers of comprehension they could not resolve the contradiction. They tried to measure Hashem with their own measuring rod (the human mind).

Avraham was told that his decedents would be as numerous as the stars in the sky, yet Hashem told him to slaughter his only son as an offering. How could this seeming contradiction be resolved? Avraham understood that he could not comprehend the Divine Mind- for Hashem there was no contradiction. Avraham did not question Hashem because he knew that within his limited human capacity he could not understand the Divine Mind. Situations may seem completely irrational and unexplainable, but they are this way only in our context.

The lesson that the evil people should have learned from the incident of Miriam was that she was punished because she processed reality with her own limited human perception and spoke out of turn against Moshe. The evil people should have understood that despite what they witnessed in the land, if Hashem says that the land would be filled with blessing then that must be the true reality. They should have understood that their own perception was meaningless and that they would never

be able to reconcile any contradictions between their perception and the Divine Mind.

People sometimes have questions that they cannot go beyond. They are trapped within their own limited perspective. This prevents them from negating their human assumptions and relinquishing their view point in favor of the Divine Perspective. In certain cases we do receive clarity on situations; however, this clarity is not due to our level of genius but rather it is a gift from Hashem. For example, if one trips on a rock and discover a great treasure under it- did he find the treasure because of his abilities as a treasure-hunter? Even when we believe we understand that understanding comes from Hashem. This is the lesson of the meraglim.

Now that we understand the mistake of the spies we should take heed and also learn that the world does not need to make sense to us in order for us to follow and trust Hashem. We should understand what does not make sense to us makes perfect sense to Hashem.

6. Wandering the Desert - Curse or Blessing?

The Torah tells us that as a result of the incident of the meraglim (the spies), the Jewish people were condemned to wander in the desert for an additional thirty-nine years until the entire generation of people who were between the ages of twenty and sixty passed away. Only the new generation was to enter the Land of Israel. Chazal tell us, "The Torah was given only to those who ate the Mann (the Manna)." The question is- what is the relationship between the giving of the Torah and the Mann?

The Mann was the sustenance that Hashem gave the Jewish people in the desert and it not only provided for their physical needs but also it impacted their spirituality. The Mann gave the Jews the spiritual capacity to fully understand and internalize the Torah properly. If this were not the case then why did Chazal relate the giving of the Torah with the eating of the Mann?

The Gemara in Tractate Yomah tells us that the Mann was the physical manifestation of the food that sustained the angels. Ramban explains that the Radiance of Hashem sustains angels and thus the Mann was the materialized version of that Radiance. This is the reason why the Mann was absorbed directly and completely into the internal organs and did not generate waste because of its spiritual purity. Evidently the Jews needed to be spiritualized in order to comprehend and absorb the Torah and therefore Hashem provided them with the Mann as the means for them to gain that requisite spiritual capacity.

Initially the Jews were supposed to receive the Mann for only several months and then enter into the Land of Israel where they would not need the Mann any longer. However, because of the incident of the spies, Hashem decreed that the Jewish people needed to wander the desert for an additional thirty-nine years and thus receive the Mann for that extended period of time. Clearly Hashem's Decree was a punishment; however, it was also an indication that the Jewish people were not ready to enter the Land of Israel.

The Gemara tells us, "If a person lives outside of the Land of Israel it is as if he has no G-d." Meaning,

if one lives outside of Israel (the Holy Land) one is not fully connected to Hashem. The spiritual dimension of the Mitzvos performed in Israel is at a higher level than that outside of Israel. The proper location for Torah is the Land of Israel. One has more clarity in Israel to understand Torah.

We see that since the Jews did not trust Hashem, they accepted the reports of the spies. If they had trust in Hashem, the Jews would have rejected the reports of the spies. The lack of trust demonstrated by the Jews was an indication that their level of spirituality was deficient. In order to overcome any difficulty one must have trust in Hashem and if one does not have this trust then he will not be able to go beyond the difficulty. Therefore the shortcoming of the Jews was that they were not spiritualized enough to be at a level to enter the Land of Israel. They were not at a level to be able to function on their own without the Mann and to rely on natural means of sustenance. While in the desert the Jews lived a supernatural existence, which was devoid of any illness or physical deficiency. By entering into the Land of Israel the Jewish people would have been removed from the supernatural existence of the desert and forced to function within a natural context.

The tests in life exist in the natural system and within this context one needs to have trust and faith in Hashem. If one does not have trust in Hashem then one cannot survive the trials and tribulations of life. Therefore the Jewish people needed to spend an additional thirty-nine years in the desert being sustained by the Mann in order to become spiritualized to the point when they could survive the natural system in Israel.

The Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh says that when the Torah states, " Send for yourself spies..." it is specifically addressing Moshe Rabbeinu. If the Jewish people entered into the Land without question, Moshe would have passed away. Therefore it was in his best interest that he send the spies so that if they failed then Moshe would live another thirty-nine years. Since the Jews failed, they needed Moshe Rabbeinu for another thirty-nine years in order to develop the necessary spiritual capacity to survive a natural existence. It is only because Moshe was with the Jewish people for this extended period of time and we continued to receive the Mann that we have been able to survive throughout the generations. In actuality, Hashem's Decree for the Jews to continue to wander the desert was a blessing even though the generation passed away.

Copyright © 2002 by Rabbi Yosef Kalatsky and Project Genesis, Inc.

Rabbi Kalatsky is the founder of the [Yad Avraham Institute](#), a New York-based learning center whose mission is to disseminate Torah to Jews of all backgrounds and walks of life.