

INTEGRATING HOLINESS

by Shlomo Katz

Parshas Shlach

Integrating Holiness

Shelach

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Today's Learning:

Bava Kamma 5:4-6:1

Daf Yomi (Bavli): Yevamot 37

Daf Yomi (Yerushalmi): Pesachim 62

The major part of our parashah is devoted to the incident of the meraglim, who spied out Eretz Canaan and brought back a report that dissuaded Bnei Yisrael from attempting to conquer the Land. What motivated the meraglim, whom our Sages say were men of great spiritual stature?

Some commentaries explain that the meraglim were worried that Bnei Yisrael could not exist in the mundane environment that would prevail after they conquered and settled the Land. Such an environment would distract them from the lofty spiritual pursuits that are expected of a Jew, the meraglim believed. Therefore, they wanted to cause Hashem to decree that Bnei Yisrael would never enter Eretz Yisrael, but rather would stay in the desert forever.

However, observes R' Moshe Zvi Neriah z"l (1913-1995; founder of the Bnei Akiva yeshiva network and youth movement), the idea that the Shechinah needs to be restricted to a particular rarified environment is a gentile idea. As for us, our very reason for existence is to demonstrate that Hashem is present in every place and situation. When Hashem gave us the Torah, He called upon us to be "a kingdom of priests and a holy nation." "Kingdom" implies material pursuits, while "priests" implies spirituality, and the Torah combines these two pursuits into one - "a kingdom of priests," i.e., a nation that brings holiness into its mundane activities.

Following the incident of the meraglim, the Torah teaches the mitzvah of pouring wine on the altar

of the Bet Hamikdash. This juxtaposition is meant to demonstrate to the Spies that they erred. Bnei Yisrael were destined to live on and work the land, yet they would have a Temple where even wine would be an object of holiness. (Ner La'maor)

From the Parashah . . .

"Moshe called Hoshea son of Nun 'Yehoshua'." (Bemidbar 3:16)

The Aramaic translation Targum Yonatan states: "When Moshe saw the humility of Hoshea bin Nun, he called him 'Yehoshua'." Rashi explains that this was Moshe's prayer that Hoshea / Yehoshua not get caught up in the evil plans of the other Spies.

R' Shmuel of Kamenka z"l (19th century) explains that Targum Yonatan is answering the famous question: Why did Moshe pray for Yehoshua and not for the other righteous spy, Calev? Targum Yonatan is explaining that Moshe knew that Calev would go to the graves of the Patriarchs to pray for assistance (see below). However, Yehoshua, in his humility, would consider himself unworthy of such assistance, and would not pray. Therefore Moshe prayed for him.

(Quoted in Otzrot Tzaddikei U'geonei Ha'dorot)

"They ascended in the south and he arrived at Chevron . . ." (Bemidbar 13:22)

Rashi explains the change from plural to singular as follows: "Calev alone went there and prostrated himself on the graves of the Patriarchs, offering prayer that he might be helped not to give way to the enticement of his colleagues and join them in their counsel."

While the custom of praying at the graves of ancestors and tzaddikim has classical sources, including the Gemara on which Rashi's comment is based, there are many halachic opponents of the practice. R' Shmuel Rabinovich shlita (rabbi of the Kotel Ha'ma'aravi / Western Wall) explains that the reasoning of the opponents is that the unlearned might pray to the deceased, which would violate one or more prohibitions of the Torah.

What is the basis for praying at the graves of ancestors and tzaddikim? R' Rabinovich explains (based on earlier sources) that the souls of prior generations know what is happening in this world and feel pain when their descendants suffer. By bringing our suffering to their attention, we in effect ask G-d to take into account the merits of the deceased and relieve their suffering by relieving the suffering of their descendants.

R' Rabinovich writes further (in the name of the medieval work Akeidat Yitzchak) that this is what distinguishes Hashem's justice from the justice dispensed by mortals. A human judge cannot take into account all of the potential outcomes of a sentence that he imposes. Only Hashem can work out all of the possible consequences of His actions and ensure that suffering is experienced only by

those who deserve it [or upon whom it is decreed for another reason].

Accordingly, R' Rabinovich concludes, G-d forbid that one attribute any power to save to any creation -- even to an angel, and certainly not to the soul of an ancestor. One also should not ask that an ancestor's soul intercede in Heaven, as this also attributes power to the soul. Rather, one should simply inform the deceased of one's suffering so that, in the merit of the deceased and in order that the soul not suffer, salvation will come. [Ed. note: Readers are encouraged to seek halachic guidance regarding this sensitive subject.]

(She'eilot U'teshuvot Sha'arei Zion ch.17)

From the Haftarah . . .

"It was told to the king of Yericho saying, 'Behold! -- men have come here tonight from Bnei Yisrael to search out [literally, 'to dig out'] the Land'." (Yehoshua 2:2)

Why did he use the unusual phrase "to search out" (literally, "to dig out") instead of saying, "to see" or "to spy upon"?

R' Zvi Elimelech of Dinov z"l (chassidic rebbe, best known by the title of his work Bnei Yissaschar; died 1841) explains: The Gemara equates Eretz Yisrael with the hide of gazelle. When a gazelle is skinned, its hide shrinks so it appears as if it could never have accommodated the body that previously was inside it. Eretz Yisrael, too, appears unable to support all of the Jewish People, but it "grows" to meet the need. Recognizing this requires looking beneath the surface; hence the expression "to search out" rather than merely "to see" the Land.

(R' Zvi Elimelech adds: Although the verse attributes this idea to the servant of the non-Jewish king, apparently Hashem put those words in his mouth.)

(Derech Edotecha)

Diaries

This week, we present another excerpt from Eleh Masei, entitled "A Journal of the Journey of the Rabbis, Members of the Committee to Raise the Crown of Judaism in Our Holy Land, Who Toured All the Settlements of Shomron [Samaria] and Galil [Galilee] in the Winter of 5674 [1914]."

On the evening of the 24th of [Mar]cheshvan we came to Atlit. The settlement was founded in 5668 [1908]. We prayed Ma'ariv in the shul, which also serves as a school and pharmacy.

Twelve families live there, all farmers. They are simple, straightforward people. They are eager to hear what the rabbis have to say. The rabbi of Yaffo [R' Kook] and R' Horowitz [the author of the diary] converse with an eight year old boy. They ask him what he has learned in the last few days. He does

not know about the prayers, except for an occasional glance at his father's siddur in shul on Shabbat. He does not know who the Patriarchs were. The teacher, who was there at the moment, is angry at the rabbis because they ask the student questions without first asking the teacher what kind of student the boy is. R' Horowitz silences the teacher [and explains] that it is not their intention to draw any conclusions from talking to the boy; they are just making conversation with him. A little girl who was there does answer all of the questions properly.

The houses in the settlement are five years old. There is also a mikvah there, but Dr. Jaffe from Zichron Yaakov does not permit it to be used (according to the villagers) because water that has stood for a day or two is dangerous. Subsequently, he defended himself in a letter to the rabbi of Yaffo saying that he does not object to the use of the mikvah but simply demands that the mikvah be kept clean to reduce the serious risk of malaria.

The members of the settlement seek a sefer Torah, for which they are willing to pay 20 Francs. Their current sefer Torah is borrowed from Zichron Yaakov.

After Ma'ariv, we met with the council of the settlement. At the rabbis' request, the council immediately agreed to accept the separation of terumot and ma'asrot. It was decided that the regular shochet will be the supervisor for this matter.

The rabbi of Yaffo and R' Horowitz speak about improving the religious situation through Shabbat observance, educating children regarding Torah and yirah / fear of Heaven, prayer, tefilin, tzitzit and other mitzvot "which man shall carry out and by which he shall live" [paraphrasing Vayikra 18:5].

Upon hearing the rabbis' words, the teacher becomes excited. In particular, he is deeply disturbed by the idea of introducing Torah and religion into the curriculum. He says that the rabbis have come from some out- of-the-way corner of the world and don't understand life in the settlement. If the fathers do not observe Torah and mitzvot, for what do their children need it? In his opinion, Torah can only be transmitted by parents.

The council asks the rabbis to select a Hebrew name for the settlement. The teacher says that [the traveler] Klausner has already identified the settlement as Magdiel. However, the rabbi of Yaffo objects and proves that according to the tradition of our Sages, this name ["Magdiel"] has Roman connections [see Rashi to Bereishit 36:43] . . .

The council pleads with the rabbis to name the settlement as they see fit, and their word shall be law.

[R' Horowitz continues, describing how the teacher attempted by every means to disrupt the meeting and terrorize the settlers, until at last they turned on him. R' Kook suggested naming the settlement "Terumiah." The council signed a document agreeing to observe the laws of terumah and ma'aser, and asked the rabbis to send them a teacher for religious studies. In the morning, R' Yadler separated terumah and ma'aser from the existing produce, and R' Horowitz promised to try to obtain

a sefer Torah for the settlement.]

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The editors hope these brief 'snippets' will engender further study and discussion of Torah topics ('lehagdil Torah u'leha'adirah'), and your letters are appreciated. Web archives at **Torah.org** start with 5758 (1997) and may be retrieved from the [Hamaayan](#) page.

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