

# GIVING LIFE

*by Rabbi Pinchas Avruch*

## **Rabbi Pinchas Avruch**

This week, we again witness the Jewish Nation at one of its moments of great spiritual challenge. The episode of the spies, ten of whom failed to appreciate the true essence of the Holy Land and dispirited the Children of Israel with their disparaging report, is one that significantly altered the course of Jewish history. In the short term, as punishment for being swayed by a report based on forty days of touring and finding fault with the land, the Jews were doomed to spend forty years wandering in the wilderness while that entire generation perished, never to enter the Promised Land. But for millennia to come, that night that the nation cried needlessly was to become a night of legitimate tears. That night, Tisha b'Av (the ninth of the Jewish month of Av), became the night that the greatest tragedies befell the Jewish people. The destruction of the First Bais HaMikdash (Holy Temple), the destruction of the Second Bais HaMikdash and the Spanish Inquisition all occurred on Tisha b'Av.

But two of the twelve spies, Yehoshua (Joshua) and Calev, stood firm in their commitment to G-d and His promise that the Land would become the homeland of the Children of Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaakov. Calev attempted to placate the nation, "We shall surely ascend and conquer it, for we can surely do it!" (Bamidbar/Numbers 13:30) For his efforts, Calev is singled out by G-d for reward. "But my servant Calev, because a different spirit was with him and he followed Me wholeheartedly, I shall bring him to the land to which he came and his offspring shall possess it." (14:24) Why did Calev merit this special compensation if, in the end, he did not accomplish his goal? The Jewish people did not heed his exhortation and paid the ultimate price for it. What is the significance of this effort?

Rabbi Moshe Feinstein (1895-1986; Rosh Yeshiva/Dean of Mesivtha Tifereth Jerusalem in New York City; the leading decisor of Jewish law of his time) maintains that there is more here than simple goodwill for expending effort; that sentiment is not commensurate with such remuneration. Rather, an introspective review of the chapter reveals that Calev's words DID make a difference. The fact that the ten had to retort that the conquest was impossible, that they had to restate their argument and fortify it, indicates that Calev's statement impacted the Jewish nation, negating the skepticism of the ten spies' initial declaration and causing the masses to sway, reembracing G-d's promise, albeit for only fleeting moments.

Herein lies the great worth of Calev's deed. Jewish law dictates that a moment of physical life is so precious that even a brief extension of life justifies desecration of the Sabbath. Similarly, notes Rabbi

Feinstein, affording one's fellow Jew an additional moment of spiritual life - as a mentor, as a teacher, as a parent or as a friend - is a tremendous act, one worthy of such fantastic reward.

Have a good Shabbos!

---

Copyright © 2002 by [Rabbi Pinchas Avruch](#) and Project Genesis, Inc.

Kol HaKollel is a publication of the Milwaukee Kollel Center for Jewish Studies 5007 West Keefe Avenue; Milwaukee, Wisconsin; 414-447-7999