

FISHING IN THE DESERT

by Torah.org

The land of Israel was just over the horizon, the Promised Land of their forefathers. As they were about to enter the land, the Jewish People approached Moshe (Moses) and asked to first scout out the land to see if it was safe and viable, so that they could be properly prepared to enter. The nation chose to take this precaution, not trusting that G-d — who had performed miracle after miracle for them in the Exodus from Egypt, in the desert, and at Mount Sinai — would settle them safely in the Promised Land. This lack of trust ultimately led their chosen scouts to view the land in a negative light, and return with an alarming report.

As a consequence of their distrust, the generation of the Exodus would remain in the desert for forty years, and only their children would merit to settle in the land.

The language used to describe the mission of these scouts is "*Vayasuru Es Eretz Canaan*" — and they will explore the land of Canaan (Numbers 13:2).

This same expression is found at the end of the Torah portion, with the description of G-d's Commandment to wear *Tzitzis*, strings attached to all four cornered garments. The reason for this Commandment, the Torah explains, is to wear a reminder of G-d's Commandments, and thereby *not* seek to explore, "*Lo Sasuru*," following the desires of our hearts and eyes (Numbers 15:39).

The desire to explore the new land, or to follow desires that reach beyond the guidance of the Torah, share the same theme. The scouts were sent due to a lack of trust in G-d's assurance of a safe and bountiful land, while our heart and eyes send us out to search beyond the confines of G-d commandments and guidance for life. G-d asks us to trust that He has provided for us all that we need to lead a productive and meaningful life, to experience the serenity of His care. We should already know that there's no need to pine for something better, because there *is* nothing better.

While this directive concerns the principles of the Torah, it also offers us guidance for life. Hours of window shopping, website browsing, and channel surfing are spent in the search for something better than what we have now. If we have a particular need, that is one thing... but sometimes we are looking for something we want, creating a need we did not have at the outset. In those cases, the exploring usually ends with little gain to justify the lost time and money. The lesson is to seek satisfaction in our present. Trust that everything we need is already available to us; it's just waiting for us to appreciate it.