

# ONCE A SPY ALWAYS A SPY?

*by Rabbi Pinchas Winston*

## Friday Night:

G-d spoke to Moshe, saying, "Send men and spy the Land of Canaan which I am giving to the Children of Israel ..." (Bamidbar 13:1-2)

While on speaking tours, I often make a comment that I have made for years: Whether people can make 'aliyah' is dependent upon many factors, and should first be discussed with their rav. Nevertheless, one's yearning to live in Eretz Yisroel should be ongoing, as should one's desire for the Final Redemption to come.

This idea is a fundamental of Torah philosophy, something that should be as natural to the Jew as preparing for Shabbos. Yet, still, there is much resistance to it, and, as usual, someone in the crowd - of the religious type -- usually asks, somewhat skeptically I might add:

"What is your source to say that?"

After recovering my senses from hearing such a question uttered, I provide the relevant sources and point out that the Talmud teaches:

Three wonderful gifts were given to Israel by The Holy One, Blessed is He, and all are acquired through suffering. They are: Torah, Eretz Yisroel, and, the World-to-Come. (Brochos 5a)

"The implication here," I explain, "is that, just as with Torah and the World-to-Come you must continually long for them and work towards them REGARDLESS of your daily predicament, so, too, with respect to Eretz Yisroel, it must be forefront in your mind."

"But rabbis much greater than you or I never talk about it or encourage it?!"

The truth is, it depends on the rabbi, and, besides, many assume that, just as they love Eretz Yisroel, so do their constituents. As well, the day-to-day problems and concerns of life outside of Israel are more than enough of a distraction to keep the focus away from issues of loving this godly gift. And some, quite frankly, are afraid to broach this subject, which they know is unpopular amongst many Jews.

"But, it is so much easier to learn Torah in America/England/South Africa!" they argue.

"I know," I answer. "The spies -- the Torah leaders of their generation -- claimed the same thing."

Let's make no mistake about it: we are in exile today because the spies rejected Eretz Yisroel over three thousand years ago. It is therefore logical, though uncomfortable, to say that, as long as we continue to 'reject' Eretz Yisroel, for whatever reason, exile will continue. This is why the period of 'Kibbutz Golios' -- 'Ingathering of the Exiles' -- will last exactly forty years, says the Zohar, corresponding to the forty years we wandered in the desert because of the spies.

In fact, Kibbutz Golios has two parts to it. 'Phase One' is the determination of who desires to live in Eretz Yisroel, and who would be there if conditions permitted them to make the move, and, who does not care to live there. It is a 'winnowing out' process based upon one's intellectual, spiritual, and emotional connection to Eretz Yisroel and redemption. 'Phase Two' will come later, b"H, when the time comes to bring them there.

What makes this idea even more chilling is the fact that the Arizal, in Sha'ar HaGilgulim, states that the generation of Moshiach and the Final Redemption will be a reincarnated 'Generation of the Desert,' that is, the generation of the spies. If so, then, loving and yearning for Eretz Yisroel at that time may not simply be A test for that generation, but THE test of that generation!

If so, then that could help to explain why there is so little said about loving Eretz Yisroel at the top, for, that is how G-d makes sure that our decisions are our own. 'Teshuvah shlainmah' would be for the Torah leaders to encourage us, and, for us to develop our own love of this gift from G-d, while accepting the conditions of acceptance.

Furthermore, it helps to explain all the present day crises facing the Jewish people of Eretz Yisroel, which serve to arouse love of the land in some, and, in others, anti-Eretz Yisroel feelings. Just remember the words of the spies upon their return when trying to intimidate the people from going up:

"The land which we spied is a land that consumes its inhabitants ..." (Bamidbar 13:32)

She is certainly doing THAT today.

"If in our eyes we were like grasshoppers, then certainly we were the same in their eyes!" (Ibid. 33)

That is the way we seem to view ourselves today, like grasshoppers, and, we assume the enemy views us the same way.

Will we EVER learn from the spies? They made their love of Eretz Yisroel and acceptance of its demands dependent upon a pre-existing ideal state of Torah life. However, it is clear from history, hashkofah, and, from living in Eretz Yisroel, that an ideal state of Torah-living is dependent FIRST upon our loving and acceptance of Eretz Yisroel.

In areas of bitachon and emunah -- trust and faith -- into which life in Eretz Yisroel falls, it ALWAYS works that way.

There is one very important difference, though, between the generation of the spies and ours. In one respect, the spies could afford to err, since thousands of years of history had yet to be played out. However, there isn't much time left to history today, making the need for Heaven's response to our spiritual malaise to be far more dramatic and immediate.

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## Shabbos Day:

*They returned from spying the land at the end of forty days. (Bamidbar 13:25)*

Now, why does that number sound familiar? Oh yes, that is the number of days Moshe Rabbeinu spent on top of Har Sinai receiving Torah. In fact, Moshe Rabbeinu spent three sets of forty days on top of Har Sinai. What a coincidence, right?

Of course not, as the following seems to indicate:

Moshe spent forty years in the house of Paroah, forty years in Midian, and forty years leading the Jewish people. Rebi Yochanan ben Zakkai spent forty years in business, forty years learning, and, forty years teaching. Rebi Akiva, for forty years, was a simpleton, then, for forty years he learned, and then taught for forty years. (Sha'ar HaGilgulim, Hakdamah 36)

Thus, the number 'forty' represents the completion of a cycle, either for good or for bad.

In hashkofah, there is the concept of 'zu l'umas zu' -- 'this against this' -- which means that, for everything positive in the spiritual world, there is something that corresponds to it in a negative way in the spiritual world, exactly. In fact, it is like standing on top of a mirror, where everything that exists on top of the mirror exists in reverse 'below' the mirror.

In other words, the forty days the spies spent on their mission were the exact opposite of the forty days that Moshe spent on Har Sinai. This is why G-d would not command them to spy the land, but rather, He only allowed them to go of their own volition. Unready spiritually for such a mission, they had entered into a spiritually dangerous reality, and G-d rarely commands us to do dangerous acts.

This is hinted at, perhaps, in the second verse of the parshah, where G-d refers to the gift of Eretz Yisroel as 'Eretz Canaan,' a place, at that time, which was steeped in extreme immorality. Canaan was the land of the Canaanites; Eretz Yisroel was destined to be the land of the Jewish people.

This, in turn, alludes to another deep concept that Eretz Yisroel is more than a land, it is a concept -- a description of a certain, specific spiritual reality and level of holiness. Only once the entire nation of the Jewish people entered Eretz Canaan did the concept of 'Eretz Yisroel' overtake the land and transform it into the physical reality of Eretz Yisroel. Only through the Jewish people are the Heavenly concept of Eretz Yisroel and the Earthly concept of Eretz Yisroel unified and made one.

This is why it can be said that:

... In the future, Jerusalem will be like Eretz Yisroel, and Eretz Yisroel, like the rest of the world. Thus, in the Time-to-Come, the whole world will have the holiness of Eretz Yisroel ... (Pesikta Rabbosai, Piska 1)

THEN, and not NOW. In fact, this was the mistake of the two-and-one-half tribes that opted to stay on the east side of the Jordan River in Moshe's time. They knew that in the future that even those lands would have the holiness of Eretz Yisroel, and therefore felt it okay THEN to remain there.

Well, at least they thought that they had found a philosophical rationalization for their materialistic 'needs.' In the end, Moshe Rabbeinu gave them what for:

Moshe answered the descendants of Gad and Reuven, "Should your brothers go to war while you live in peace here? Why would you discourage the Jewish people from crossing into the land which G-d has given to them? That's exactly what your ancestors did when I sent them from Kadesh-Barnea to scout the land. They traveled to the brook of Eshkol and scouted the land, [only to re-turn] and discourage the Children of Israel from going into the land which G-d had given to them. [This earned them] the wrath of G-d on that day Who swore, 'Any man who left Egypt, twenty years or older, will not see the land of which I swore to Avraham, Yitzchak, and Ya'akov, because they did not follow Me -- with the exception of Caleiv, son of Yefuneh the Kenizite, and Yehoshua, son of Nun who followed G-d.' G-d was angry with Israel, and He made them wander in the desert for forty years until the entire generation who acted wrongly, according to G-d, had died out. "You follow in your ancestors' footsteps, erring, wishing to add to G-d's anger at the Israelites. If you go against Him, He will again leave them in the desert. This will destroy all this people." (Bamidbar 32:6-15)

In any case, those who LOVE America & Co. should not get so excited. In Yemos HaMoshiach, after the yetzer hara is 'slaughtered,' ALL Jews will finally yearn for the greatest closeness to G-d possible, and pursue it, and pursue it we will. However, there will be a difference between those who pursue it then, and those who did so in advance of Moshiach's arrival.

... When the dead are resurrected they will revert to totally new entities, of the loftiest spiritual nature. The same transformation will happen to those six (seven) thousand Jews who remained alive (in Eretz Yisroel after Moshiach's arrival). Their bodies will resemble that of Adam HaRishon before the sin, similar, as well, to the body of Moshe Rabbeinu. This change will enable them all to float in mid-air, and fly as eagles. This will be extremely astounding to the redeemed exiles. Upon witnessing this the Diaspora Jews will be worried, and they will complain to Moshiach saying, "Are we not Jews like them? Why do they merit to fly and exist in an elevated spiritual state, while we don't?"

Moshiach will respond,

"It is quite well known that G-d works measure-for-measure. There were those who lived in the

Diaspora, but later made efforts and sacrifices to elevate themselves to dwell in the Holy Land in order to merit a purity of soul. They were not so concerned about finances and health. They traveled over vast lands and crossed seas, not paying attention to the possibilities of drowning, being robbed along the way, nor of being taken captive by some strange foreign ruler. Since they placed priority of their spirit over their materialism and physicality, they merit, measure-for-measure, to be elevated to this lofty spiritual stature. Yet, there were also those who had the opportunities to go up to Israel as well, but remained hesitant and reluctant, being of great materialistic stature. They prioritized the material and left the spiritual pursuits as secondary. Therefore, they shall remain physical, measure-for-measure. Yet as far as your desire for wealth, G-d has taken care of that as well. He will grant you wealth beyond your wildest dreams, for soon all the treasures that were ever sunken will arrive; all seas have been sworn to produce these items at the shores of Yafo." (Tuv Ha'Aretz, "In Praise Of Those Who Dwelled In Israel At The Time of Moshiach)

Too bad the wealth won't matter as much then, without the yetzer hara to make it so important. You should see what else the author, Rav Noson Shapiro, has written in the name of his rebi, the Arizal.

Thus, if a Jew has difficulty coming to love Eretz Yisroel the land, he or she should work HARD on loving Eretz Yisroel the concept. It will only be a matter of time until one can do both with a full heart, and regardless of whether or not a person can make aliyah, it still looks 'good' in G-d's eyes, from Whom the gift came in the first place.

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## **SEUDAH SHLISHI:**

*Do not go after your heart and your eyes, after which you go wantonly. (Bamidbar 15:39)*

This little piece of moral advice happens to also be a Torah-mitzvah, number 387 in Sefer HaChinuch. Simply explained, one is not to devote thoughts to entertain views and ways of thinking that are opposite to the ways of Torah, since it can lead to heresy.

After all, it happened to the spies, and, many great people since them. More importantly, it happened to someone even greater than them, Adam HaRishon himself.

Everyone always asks, if Adam HaRishon was on such a high spiritual level, and thus, without an internalized yetzer hara, how could he ever have come to break the commandment not to eat from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil?

In the realm of pshat, it is a great question without a great answer. However, Sod explains that the actual mitzvah not to eat from the forbidden fruit had two parts to it: not to LOOK at the tree, and, not to EAT from the tree. As long as Adam HaRishon fulfilled the first part of the mitzvah, the second part of the mitzvah was simple to fulfill as well, for, as long as Adam HaRishon maintained his original, VERY HIGH level of spiritual greatness, actual eating from the tree was virtually impossible.

However, for the right reasons, Adam HaRishon did the wrong thing, or rather, the right thing at the wrong time.

He understood that, at the time he was placed in the Garden, creation was perfectly good except for the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. He also understood that, through the tree, he would participate in the perfection of creation and become a partner with G-d. What he did not take into account at the time was that he lacked the spiritual fortitude to accomplish such a task, at that moment -- like the spies who prematurely entered Eretz Yisroel.

Anyway, according to Kabbalah, once Adam 'spied' the tree to try and understand the nature of its evil, he, unwittingly became drawn to it, and, unwittingly reduced his own spiritual greatness and that of the world around him. No longer was he the same Adam HaRishon anymore, for, his perspective on life had changed, as did his relationship to creation. Eating from the tree THEN was just a matter of time.

If he could have seen his new position in life through the eyes of his old one, he might have been able to recognize the change, and, have avoided the sin. But, few of us can, and, judging the world through our new perspective based upon the evil to which we have become exposed, we slide even further in the wrong direction.

Thus, Shlomo HaMelech warned, "G-d made man upright, but they have sought out many devices" (Koheles 7:29). Until man's eyes behold sin or anything remotely connected to it, he is considered quite 'straight.' However, once the eyes have spied something desirable, it is just a matter of time until the desire becomes all-consuming, and, the mind becomes its servant to produce the 'appropriate' rationalizations.

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## **MELAVE MALKAH:**

### Part Three: Kibbutz Golios

The Zohar says that, in advance of the 210 years of Techiyas HaMeisim, there is a forty year period of 'Kibbutz Golios,' literally, the 'Ingathering of the Exiles' (Toldos 139a). As the name implies, it is the period of time during which all REMAINING Jews at that time will be brought back to Eretz Yisroel. And, as the number implies, it corresponds to the forty years the Jewish people wandered in the desert.

In other words, the end of Jewish history perfectly mirrors the beginning of Jewish history. We began with 210 years of life in Egypt, meant to bring us back to the level of Adam HaRishon before the sin (though just the opposite resulted), and then, we 'wandered' outside the land of Israel for forty years. At the end of history, we will, b"H, be in a process of returning to the land of our fathers over the course of forty years, which will be followed by a 210-year period necessary for us to return to the level of Adam HaRishon before his sin.

The period of Kibbutz Golios will have two phases: Pre-Moshiach and Post-Moshiach. During the Pre-Moshiach period of Kibbutz Golios, while history will still be subject to 'hester panim' (hidden Divine Providence), there will be minimal 'aliyah' to Eretz Yisroel, but, many situations that will force Jews around the world to reconcile their feelings regarding Eretz Yisroel and redemption.

During that phase, it will look as if not much is happening to help the process of exile-ingathering, when, in fact, a hidden winnowing process will be in full swing. Some Jews will feel a yearning to live there, whether they will get there or not, while others will feel disenchanted and neutral to the idea of living on the land.

The importance of one's feelings and attachment to Eretz Yisroel, at that time, will be virtually unnoticeable to most people. However, where a person stood with respect to the concept of living in Eretz Yisroel and their drive for closeness to G-d will either support them during Phase Two, or, tragically, come back to haunt them. There are many midrashim to this effect.

Phase One, within this forty-year period of Kibbutz Golios, will come to a conclusion just before and during the arrival of Moshiach ben Dovid. Having come to save the Jewish people from Gog and Magog (if that is the path history takes), and to rid the world of evil, the reality of G-d, the priority of Torah, and, the centrality of Eretz Yisroel to the Jew will become eminently clear.

With the yetzer hara on the way out of history for good, Jews will see life the way G-d meant it to be seen, and thus, the era of free-will choice will come to an end forever (Succah 52a). With the end of free-will choice, the chance to 'earn' reward to enhance one's portion in the World-to-Come will also come to a conclusion -- forever.

According to the Zohar, the official beginning of Kibbutz Golios was the year 5750 from creation, or, 1990 BCE. That would correspond to the 'last quarter' of the 'Erev Shabbos' of history, and, the demise of Russia and its stranglehold on millions of Russian Jews. History itself certainly seems to have 'quickened' at that point, and major shifts in world thinking have since occurred.

It is also the year that corresponds to the 'tenth hour' of Day Six, when Adam ate from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. Each millennium corresponds to one day of creation, and each millennium, when divided by a factor of 'twelve,' yields 83.33 years per one hour of creation (Pirkei d'Rebi Eliezer). Thus, if ever there was an hour/century ripe for 'tikun,' it is this period of 83.33 years.

Certainly the events in Eretz Yisroel since 5761 have dominated world attention, and, have forced Jews to take sides and make decisions about their vision of the future of Eretz Yisroel. Very little middle ground seems exist today, with Jews being 'forced' either to the right or to the left. This is not incidental or just plain politics; this is a function of Kibbutz Golios.

The transference from Phase One of Kibbutz Golios to Phase Two is, of course, the Final Redemption under the leadership of Moshiach ben Dovid, at last. When exactly this will happen is one of the biggest question marks in Jewish history, and the subject of many trial calculations and much

controversy.

In the world of Kabbalah, it is not really as much of a variable as it seems to be. The calculation is rather mathematical and quite fixed: the precise moment when Yesod transitions to Ateres HaYesod (Hakdamos v'Sha'arim, 86d). Now, knowing how to work that proportion out is, as the Ba'al HaLeshem states, a matter only for those who have "tasted from the Tree of Life," that is, those (very) few who have become VERY WELL versed in the works of the Zohar and Arizal.

Thus, for the vast majority of us, the calculation is very much a variable, and we can only wait each day for Moshiach as the Rambam has told us to in his famous 'Thirteen Principals of Faith.' However, the Zohar does say that, just as the actual birth of child become increasingly obvious with time, so, too, will the calculation of Moshiach's arrival become so obvious that even a school child will be able to make it (Bereishis 118a).

However, as the moment of transition from Phase One to Phase Two approaches, one can expect the miracles to become increasingly more obvious, free-will to become increasingly more reduced, and, world history to become increasingly more precarious. This will begin the final approach to that long-awaited period called 'Yemos HaMoshiach,' the topic for next week, b"H.

Have a great Shabbos. It wouldn't hurt to work on appreciation of Eretz Yisroel this week, either.  
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