

PLACING THE PARTITIONS

by Rabbi Yochanan Zweig

"These are the words that Moshe spoke to all Yisroel..."(1:1)

Parshas Devarim enumerates a list of places where Moshe spoke to Bnei Yisroel.¹ The Midrash notes that many of these places are not recorded in Parshas Massei, the parsha which offers an exhaustive list of Bnei Yisroel's travel itinerary, and there is no historical basis upon which to substantiate the existence of these places; rather, the names of the places are veiled allusions to all of the transgressions perpetrated by Bnei Yisroel while they were in the desert.²

According to Rashi, the place listed as Chatzeiros refers to the insurrection of Korach and his followers.³ The Maharal asks why the Torah refers to the story of Korach as "Chatzeiros" when the events actually occurred in Paran, which Moshe also mentions in the verse. The Maharal suggests that since Paran is already used to allude to the sin of the spies, the Torah refers to Korach's insurrection as Chatzeiros, which is the closest place to Paran.⁴ If the Torah's primary intention is not the geographical placement of the transgression, rather a name which best alludes to the sin, a reason must still be found for why Chatzeiros is specifically chosen to represent Korach's insurrection.

Korach is described by Chazal as a "Ba'al Machlokes" - a person who is divisive by nature. Such an individual thrives upon focusing on those aspects within people which create conflict. He sees himself separate from others and seeks only a path of dissention rather than unity. It is therefore appropriate that his actions are alluded to with the name "Chatzeiros" which is the plural form of "chatzeir" - "courtyard". The Halachic definition of a "chatzeir" is an area which is surrounded by partitions, conferring upon it the status of a separate legal entity. The seeds of "machlokes" - "dissention" are sown when we focus solely upon our differences, failing to see those areas that we either share in common or with which we compliment each other.

Among the intricate laws involved in "Eiruv", plural for the word "eiruv" - "merging", is the law of Eiruvei Chatzeiros.⁵ This law allows for the merging of all separate private domains into one large entity, thereby permitting a person to carry from one domain to another on the Shabbos. It is most appropriate for this ordinance to have been enacted by Shlomo Hamelech, for Chazal refer to him as "Melech shehashalom shelo" - "the King to whom harmony belongs".⁶ Shlomo was able to unite the entire world under his reign, for he was able to focus upon those areas that allow for a harmonious

coexistence.⁷ Therefore, he was the one who enacted the ordinance which merges separate entities into one large entity.⁸

1:1,2 2.Sifri 1 3:1,2 4.Ibid 5.Yad. Hilchos Eiruvim 1:1 6.Shir Hashirim Rabbah 3:14 Although Chazal refer to Hashem in this manner, the simple text refers to Shlomo Hamelech. 7.Megilla 11b 8.Eiruvim 21a

No Respect For Tradition

"All of you approached me..." (1:22) Moshe rebukes Bnei Yisroel for the sin of the spies which resulted in the death of an entire generation and Bnei Yisroel's condemnation to wander in the desert for an additional thirty-eight years.¹ Moshe introduces the recounting of the episode with what appears to be merely an historical depiction of the way in which the events unfolded: "All of you surrounded me saying 'Let us send men ahead to spy out the Land.'" ² Rashi however, teaches that this introductory statement identifies a flaw in Bnei Yisroel's behavior. Bnei Yisroel approach Moshe "be'irbuvia" - "in a disorderly and disrespectful manner", the young pushing ahead of their elders and the elders pushing ahead of the leaders.³ Why is this information introduced in Parshas Devarim which is only a recounting of the episode and not in Parshas Shelach which contains the primary account of the occurrence? Why is it necessary to divulge this indiscretion which appears to be only tangential to the actual sin of the spies?

The strong commitment to tradition adhered to by the Jewish people reflects not only their desire to ensure Jewish continuity but also their respect and reverence for earlier generations and their values. A breakdown in observance of these traditions makes a statement that the earlier generations and the values held dear to them are no longer worthy of respect.

For four hundred years, beginning with the Patriarchs and continuing on from parent to child, a tradition of returning to the Land of milk and honey as promised by Hashem was handed down.⁴ The very notion that spies were needed to determine the Land's viability as a place of residence for Bnei Yisroel reflects a lack in their respect for the traditions of their elders.

Devarim is the Sefer which records the last few weeks of Moshe's life. Moshe uses this time period to relate all the transgressions committed by Bnei Yisroel in the past and to exhort them not to succumb again. The manner in which they approach Moshe is not integral to the story line of the sin of the spies and therefore not recorded in Parshas Shelach. It is, however, essential to understanding the dynamics of the sin and how to avoid repetition of this occurrence. By identifying the flaw in their manner of approaching him, Moshe is explaining to Bnei Yisroel that this flaw is symptomatic of the greater problem, the lack of commitment to the traditions of their elders. Had they possessed the

required reverence for their elders they would not have questioned the viability of Eretz Yisroel.

1.Bamidbar 14:29,32 2.1:22 3.Ibid 4.Bereishis 12:7