



Parshas Shlach

For the week ending 28 Sivan 5759 / 11 & 12 June 1999 (Outside Israel)
21 Sivan 5759 / 4 & 5 June 1999 (Inside Israel)

Overview

At the insistence of Bnei Yisrael, and with Hashem's permission, Moshe sends 12 scouts, one from each tribe, to investigate Canaan. Anticipating trouble, Moshe changes Hoshea's name to Yehoshua, expressing a prayer that Hashem not let him fail in his mission. They return 40 days later, carrying unusually large fruit. When 10 of the 12 state that the people in Canaan are as formidable as the fruit, the men are discouraged. Calev and Yehoshua, the only two scouts still in favor of the invasion, try to bolster the people's spirit. The nation, however, decides that the Land is not worth the potentially fatal risks, and instead demands a return to Egypt! Moshe's fervent prayers save the nation from Heavenly annihilation, however, Hashem declares that they must remain in the desert for 40 years until the men who wept at the scouts' false report pass away. A remorseful group rashly begins an invasion of the Land based on Hashem's original command. Moshe warns them not to proceed, but they ignore this and are massacred by the Amalekites and Canaanites. Hashem instructs Moshe concerning the offerings to be made when Bnei Yisrael will finally enter the Land. The people are commanded to remove challah, a donation for the kohanim, from their dough. The laws for an offering after an inadvertent sin, for an individual or a group, are explained. However, should someone blaspheme against Hashem and be unrepentant, he will be cut off spiritually from his people. One man is found gathering wood on public property in violation of the laws of Shabbos, and is executed. The laws of tzitzit are taught. We recite the section about the tzitzit twice a day because it reminds us of the Exodus.

Insights

TOURIST TRAP

“And they cut from there a vine with one cluster of grapes, and bore it on a double pole, and of the pomegranates and of the figs...” (13:23)

It always struck me as somewhat bizarre that the Israeli Tourist Board should have chosen as its symbol the spies carrying a massive cluster of grapes. The spies' entire agenda was to denigrate the land of Israel. One would think that a Tourist Board whose raison d'être is to do totally the opposite, would find the image rather disturbing.

Thankfully, we have more ways of repairing the damage of the spies' evil words than mere marketing. The mitzvah of *bikkurim* — the bringing of the first fruits to Jerusalem — was given to us as an atonement for the spies. The spies showed revulsion for the Land, and in the era of the Holy Temple, the mitzvah of *bikkurim* gave us the opportunity to show our love of the Land. Thus, the mitzvah of the *bikkurim* was applicable only to the seven species for which the Land is praised: Wheat, barley, grapes, dates, figs, olives and pomegranates.

The Mishna explains the mitzvah of *bikkurim*: “A person going down to his field and seeing the first fig, the first grapes or the first pomegranate, ties a reed around the fruit and says ‘These are *bikkurim*.’”

It's interesting that out of the seven species for which the Land is praised, only three are mentioned in the Mishna. It's not by coincidence. For it was just those three species that the spies brought back with them from the Land: Grapes, pomegranates and figs.

Those very fruits that the spies used for their smear campaign against the Land became the subject of a mitzvah whose whole purpose was to show the dearness of the Land.

Prepared by Ohr Somayach in Jerusalem, Israel

©1999 Ohr Somayach International - All rights reserved.

22 Shimon Hatzadik Street, POB 18103, Jerusalem Israel

38 East 29th Street 8th floor, New York, NY 10016, USA

613 Clark Avenue West, Thornhill, Ontario L4J 5V3, Canada

972-2-581-0315

1-212-213-3100

1-905-886-5730

fax: 972-2-581-2890

fax: 1-212-213-8717

fax: 1-905-886-6065

info@ohr.org.il

RZCorlin@aol.com or estern@Aol.com

Somayach@MSN.com

Written and Compiled by Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair

General Editor: Rabbi Moshe Newman

Parshas **Shlach** - 28 Sivan 5759 / 11 & 12 June 1999 (Outside Israel),
21 Sivan 5759 / 4 & 5 June 1999 (Inside Israel)

Production Design: Eli Ballon

THE WORD

“Because he has disgraced the Word of G-d” (15:31)

I'm not much of a gardener. My thumbs always seem greener than my lawn. However, an expert gardener can take any part of a tree, even the smallest leaf, and from that leaf re-grow the entire tree. Not only from little acorns do mighty oaks grow. You can grow an oak from any of its parts.

The Book of Proverbs calls the Torah a tree: “It is a tree of life to those who hold onto it.” The Book of Proverbs isn't mere poetry. If the Torah is called a tree, it means something about a tree expresses the essence of the Torah.

The Torah's subject matter is vast, but contained in every word of the Torah is the whole Torah. If a person plants a word of Torah in his heart, be it from any of its myriad subjects, he can grow the tree of the entire Torah.

Separate entities grafted together result not in a true whole, but rather a collection of parts. True unity exists when every part can independently express the whole, when every part contains the potential to be the whole.

Drawing its source from this week's parsha, the Talmud (*Sanhedrin 99a*) lists several definitions of what can be termed “because he has disgraced the Word of G-d.” One of these is someone who says that the whole of the Torah is of Divine origin except for one sentence. Denying one word of Torah is equivalent to boring a small hole in an ocean liner. Eventually the whole ship will sink.

Maybe, however, we can understand his failing on a much more fundamental level.

The verse doesn't say that he has disgraced the “words” of G-d. It says “the word” in the singular. Why?

When a person denies a single word of Torah, he attacks its indivisible unity. Thus, it is the “Word” he has disgraced, and not just the words.

ONE WORD THAT CONTAINS ALL

The world was created with ten statements. “Let there be light...Let the earth sprout vegetation...Let us make man...”

Count them, however, and you'll only find nine. Where is the tenth statement? The answer is that the first word of the Torah, “*Bereishet* — In the beginning,” was also a statement.

This first utterance, however, was unique. It doesn't say “And G-d said ‘In the beginning...’” It just says “In the beginning...” Because in *Bereishet*, in that first word, everything was created together at once. Everything that would eventually be the words of G-d was brought into existence with just one word.

TEN COMMANDMENTS THAT ARE ONE WORD

Similarly, the Ten Commandments were first spoken “as one word.” One Word that no mouth could speak, that no ear could hear. Only after that first utterance did G-d explain the ten separately.

What is this Word that no mouth can speak nor no ear hear? It is that Word which is beyond human comprehension, forever beyond our grasp.

When G-d first spoke the Ten Commandments, the Jewish People perceived them as one sound. One sound that was impossible to grasp. They heard but did not understand. They couldn't distinguish one word from another.

Our understanding operates only through the perception of each part, each voice by itself. The human ear cannot hear an individual sound as a separate entity when it is mixed with another sound. We perceive by identifying separate entities, distinguishing one thing from another.

However, there is another kind of perception, one that doesn't deal with what things are, rather that they *are*. This is the perception of existence itself. That there is an existence. This perception, the mouth cannot speak nor the ear hear. The perception of existence defies categorization. It is the perception of *is*.

THE KNOWLEDGE OF IS

This perception is called the One Word that contains all words. All other perception is in the realm of explanation and distinction. But the perception of existence itself cannot be understood by means of explanation.

The Hebrew word for explanation is *perush*, from the root “to separate.” From where is it separated? From the First Word. An explanation separates a thing from the original Word which contained everything — *Bereishet*. The grasp of existence itself, however, transcends explanation. It is the perception of *is*.

Existence is synonymous with the Word of G-d, the Word with which the Heavens and the Earth were created. That Word, the mouth cannot speak nor the ear hear.

All the Torah is one. When a person seeks to make its ineffable unity into mere words, he disgraces and cheapens it. He has brought down the Word to the merely human level of explanation: he imposes “*perush*” separation upon the transcendent Unity of our Holy Torah.

Sources:

Tourist Trap - Rabbi Menachem Ziemba in Iturei Torah

Haftarah: Joshua 2:1 - 2:24

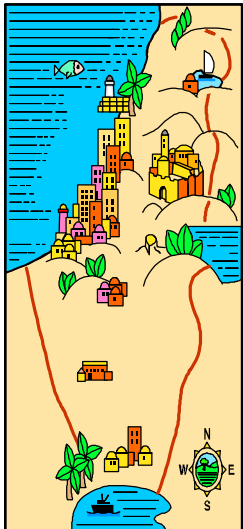
This Haftara narrates the story of the two spies sent by Joshua to explore the city of Jericho in preparation for the first conquest of the Promised Land. Our Sages teach that the two spies were Calev and Pinchas, two very righteous people, for Joshua wanted to be sure to avoid an outcome similar to that of the twelve spies sent by Moses, recorded in this week's Parsha. The spies entered the city as earthenware dealers and sought lodgings by Rachav. After they were detected by the locals, their hostess proved a great ally by hiding them. She then told them that the psychological warfare had been won already, as the inhabitants were petrified from the mere idea of waging war with the Israelites, after hearing about the miracles performed for them. After sending them off safely they in turn promised her to save her and her family.

EARTHENWARE

The passage begins with the fact that they were sent in secrecy; the term used is "cheresh." Since this term reminds us of the word "cheres" — Hebrew for earthenware — our Sages deduce that they took along pottery to disguise themselves as traveling earthenware merchants. The Chidushei HaRim explains that Joshua had reason to choose clay vessels as the ware for the disguise, in order to remind them not to stumble as had the previous spies. Earthenware vessels differ from other vessels in that they do not accept spiritual defilement unless their *interior* comes into contact with the spiritually defiled. This is because, unlike metal, wood or glass, the clay from which they are formed has no importance; its sole significance is due to its form as a vessel. Spiritual impurity passes only when it contacts the important aspect of an entity, so regarding clay vessels, unless it touches the interior, which symbolizes the usefulness, the impurity will not pass on. Joshua wished the spies to understand that a man is like an earthenware vessel: His significance lies in his duty, he has no self importance. This thought would prevent them from diverting from their assignment.

LOVE OF THE LAND

Selections from classical Torah sources which express the special relationship between the People of Israel and Eretz Yisrael



JERICHO

The first city to be conquered by Joshua and the Israelites, Jericho relied on its impenetrable fortifications to withstand any attack. After receiving his spies' report that the fear of Israel gripped the city's inhabitants, Joshua led his army in a march around Jericho's massive walls for seven days. On the seventh day the walls miraculously gave way, allowing the Israelites to conquer the city.

The walls did not actually "come tumbling down" as the old spiritual has it. Since they were as thick as they were high, such a tumble would have been meaningless. They sank into the ground, with only a small portion remaining above the ground to mark the miracle.

Modern Jericho is populated by Arabs, but there is an ancient synagogue which Jews have made repeated efforts to preserve as a Jewish holy place.

Parshas *Shlach*

*For the week ending 28 Sivan 5759 / 11 & 12 June 1999 (Outside Israel),
21 Sivan 5759 / 4 & 5 June 1999 (Inside Israel)*

Torah Weekly is available from several sources:

- World Wide Web: Our address is <http://www.ohr.org.il>
- Fax and Mail in Israel and US-MAIL in America. Send us a note requesting a subscription in Israel, or call 800-431-2272 in the US for details.
- E-Mail via InterNet. To subscribe, send the message "sub weekly {your full name}" to listproc@virtual.co.il

This publication contains words of Torah. Please treat it with due respect. Do not let this land on a garbage heap.