

Parshas Shelach

This week's parsha is Shelach, the incident of the Meraglim, and the punishment of the generation to sojourn for another 38 years in the desert. We learn in Gittin 6b the importance of speaking precisely and pleasantly to be convincing and not have adverse outcomes (Gittin is talking about a husband not speaking harshly to his children or wife). Since the ten spies spoke harshly, it had negative consequences. Furthermore, precise and planned speech can get people's attention; that is how Kalev and Yehoshua got the attention of the contagion nation that was in arms about going to the land of Israel (did you hear what the son of Amram said?). Still, it also shows that Lashon Hora is very compelling and something to ward oneself from. The Gemara in Sotah 34b discusses the Meraglim at length. The Gemara recounts that Kalev went to Chevron to pray at the Ohel of the forefathers that their logic should not sway him. This is important that Kalev does not go the way of the spies because he was the fulfillment of the promise to Avraham in the Bris Bein Habesarim that someone from the 4th generation after Avraham would enter the land. (Parshas Lech Lecha Chapter 15 posuk 16, Rashi quoting Sotah 11b, that the "4th generation" would mean that Kalev would enter the land because all the rest of the generation passed away due to the Meraglim). The Gemara explains further in Sotah 34b that the words send for yourself spies are essential because, usually, a person doesn't choose something terrible for themselves.

Still, since the outcome of the spies (Hashem knew) would be wrong, they had to be sent on their own volition not, as a

commandment of Hashem, otherwise the outcome would be chosen for them (i.e., if Hashem sent them, as He did by the spies and Yericho, the result wouldn't have been to slander the land). The "for yourself" is similar to what we learned about the trumpets (in last week's Parsha B'Haloscha). That is, when you go out (for yourself), you have the choice ultimately to serve Hashem and represent the King of conversely – Chas Vishalom. But going out for yourself requires work to stay on the path. But more important than the lesson, we have evidence of why the Lubavitcher Rebbe's explanation in the Mamer Shelach Lecha Anashim makes sense. How could the Jews have been swayed not to go into the land when this was the 'dream'? The succinct answer is that in the desert, they were living in the best times; they could serve Hashem and learn Torah with minimal to no distraction from the physical or mundane world (their clothes grew on them, and the Manna was served to them). Yet, going into the land would require involvement in the physical, which is daunting and may (as we saw in history) result in destruction, decimation, and other problems. But this was not the purpose; we must draw spirituality from the mundane. Hence we see, based on the Gemara in Sotah, Yehoshua (as the future leader of the Jews) was saved by Moshe to ensure that he entered the land; Kalev had other reasons to enter into the land (due to the Dor Rivii promise to Avraham in Lech Lecha), his prayer, therefore, was to ensure that he wasn't ensnared by the logic of the Meraglim, which seemed sweet, and correct. He needed to pray not to Hashem alone but separated from the spies, at the Kever of the forefathers who represented the generations of the promise. (it stands to reason that the detail of alone from the

spies as written in the Gemara is essential because you could posit that the other spies would also take the chance to pray at the forefather's gravesite).

In Bamidbar 14:24, even though it says that Kalev has a different spirit about him (which Rashi there explains), the word Eikev is used in the posuk. To me, this represents and hints at Kalev's actions being like Yaakov, who previously altered the course of history due to destiny. So even though Kalev has reason to follow the other spies, he doesn't because of a historical basis. He kept true to his purpose even if all logic dictated the opposite. He was also convincing to ensure the spies didn't suspect his behaviour, so he seemed to be on their team, but the truth of the matter was the contrary.