

באהבה ובאמונה

מכון מאיר



ע"ש אילנות מאיר לפסיכותרפיה

Parashat Shelach 5774



Rabbi Dov Begon

Message for Today

“We must go forth and occupy the land. We can do it!”

At first, the spies were important people, as it says, “All the men were leaders of the Israelites” (Numbers 13:3). Yet when Moses sent them to spy out the Land, they were transformed, as it says, “They departed and they came back” (13:26) – just as their arrival had been with bad intentions, so too, their departure (Rashi). From men who were supposed to exude a lofty spirit and strong faith in our right to Eretz Yisrael and our ability to conquer it, they became another type of people, people who only see the negative, libelers of Eretz Yisrael:

““We cannot go forward against those people!” replied the men who had gone with him. ‘They are too strong for us!’ They began to speak badly about the land that they had explored. They told the Israelites, ‘The land that we crossed to explore is a land that consumes its inhabitants. All the men we saw there were [huge!](#) While we were there, we saw the titans. They were sons of the giant, who descended from the original [titans](#). We felt like [tiny grasshoppers!](#) That's all that we were in their eyes.” (13:31-33).

Only Joshua bin Nun and Calev ben Yefune were steeped in faith and trust in G-d, and although they were in the minority, they ultimately succeeded in leading the Jewish People to the conquest of the Land and its settlement.

The spies “changed their skins,” altering their views as far as Eretz Yisrael. Rather than strengthening and encouraging the people, they frightened and demoralized them. Just so, in our own day, some of our prime ministers who have taken up the reins of leadership, have changed, altering their political world view despite their having been elected on the basis of their promise to the voters that they would be faithful to Eretz Yisrael and to settling every part of it.

When they were asked for an explanation of their extreme turnaround, they would answer, “What you see from you don’t see from there.” Yet actually that is just an excuse. They followed the path of the spies, whose faith in our right to Eretz Yisrael and in our ability to rule over it and to settle all of it dwindled to nothing.

This weakness stems from a lack of faith, a lack of spirit, and from moral deterioration. These in turn derive from their having distanced themselves from Jewish tradition, and their having never imbibed from our Jewish sources. It is from those sources that from time immemorial we have drawn our faith and trust in the Eternal One of Israel, and in our right to

all of Eretz Yisrael. We believe in G-d's having a goal of fulfilling the destiny of the Jewish People in Eretz Yisrael, towards the enlightenment and betterment of all mankind.

Our leaders suffer a lack of self-confidence, and an inability to provide security to the citizens of our country. They hesitate, agonize and zigzag, and the price is paid by our country's citizens. We saw this both with the recent Lebanese war, and daily in Sderot and the adjoining settlements.

The call of the hour is to change the leadership of our beloved country, to elect leaders full of faith and trust in G-d, people with a vision and great, benevolent spirit. We need people of integrity who set an example by their own lives. We need brave people, who are truly faithful to the people, Torah and land of Israel, such as Joshua bin Nun and Calev ben Yefune.

By such means, we will see the speedy fulfillment of Calev's words: "We must go forth and occupy the land. We can do it!" (Numbers 13:30). Amen.

Looking forward to complete salvation,

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ערוך אלקנה לייפשיץ הי"ד



Rabbi Shlomo Aviner

“No” to Charity from Non-Jews

The Talmud relates (Bava Batra 10b-11a)

“Queen Ipra Hurmiz, mother of the Persian king Shevor, sent 400 dinars to Rav Ami, and he did not accept them. She sent them to Rava, and he accepted them, so as not to anger the authorities. Rav Ami heard about this and he got angry. He said, ‘Doesn’t Rava subscribe to the verse: When its crown is withered, they break. Women come and make fires with them (Isaiah 27:11)?’”

Rashi explains: “When the nations run out of merit and the last vestige from their charitable act dries up, then they break.” Rav Ami meant: “The Persians are wicked, and we look forward to their disappearing from the earth. That fact that they had held out until now is due to their giving charity to Jews. The husk, so to speak, endures because of the sparks of holiness contained within it. Thus, one mustn’t accept charity from non-Jews, for it lengthens their existence. How then could Rava have accepted it?” The Talmud continues:

“Rava didn’t wish to anger the authorities”: Since Ipra Hurmiz was queen, refusal to accept charity from her could have unleashed a calamity on the Jews.

“And didn’t Rav Ami, as well, wish not to anger the authorities? Rather, he wished to distribute the money to poor non-Jews”: According to Rav Ami, if Rava had no choice but to accept the money, he should have distributed it to poor non-Jews and not to poor Jews. For then, there would be no problem of Jews accepting charity from non-Jews, which lengthens their rule.

“Yet Rava *did* distribute it to poor non-Jews. Why then was Rav Ami angry? It was because no one told him the end of the story” [i.e., that Rav had given the money to non-Jews].

Halachic Conclusions:

1. It is forbidden to accept money from non-Jews.
2. If there is no choice, because the money is coming from a king or government minister, and refusal is liable to cause the Jews suffering, then the money should be accepted and distributed to the non-Jewish poor, in order not to benefit from it (Rambam, Hilchot Matanot La’evyonim 8:9; Yoreh Deah 254:1-2).

The Talmud likewise teaches:

“Queen Ipra Hurmiz, mother of King Shevor, sent a purse of dinars to Rav Yosef. She said, ‘Use it for the greatest mitzvah.’ Rav Yosef pondered what great mitzvah she was referring to.”

The queen wanted to contribute to the greatest mitzvah. This case was different from the last one, where she did not specify what the money was for. Here, she specified “the greatest mitzvah”. Therefore, it was forbidden to trick her. What is more, she would have found him out.

“Abaye answered, ‘The greatest mitzvah is redeeming captives.’” (Bava Batra 8a-b).

Halachic Conclusions:

1. It is forbidden to accept money from non-Jews.
2. If there is fear of angering the authorities, the money should be distributed to poor non-Jews.
3. If the king specified the money’s purpose, it should be used for his wishes to avoid angering the throne. Some say, however, that here, as well, the money was used specifically to redeem non-Jewish captives, while others say that there was no choice, for the queen specified “the greatest mitzvah”. Thus, the money had to be directed to redeeming Jewish captives (Tosafot, *ibid.*, s.v., *Yativ*, as follows below).

“There was the case in which he received money from an Arab who had donated a lamp to the synagogue. There, there was no problem of angering the throne” [because it wasn’t the king who had donated it, and it was possible to refuse].

“There, the reason had been that the lamp was comparable to a Temple offering, and we say (Nazir 62a) that the double use of the word “*ish*” in Leviticus 22:18 teaches that non-Jews may contribute offerings to the Temple.” [or, in our case, a lamp to a synagogue].

Halachic Conclusions:

1. One may accept Temple offerings from a non-Jews.
2. One may accept donations from non-Jews to a synagogue – and this differs from charity to the needy! Yet the donations must be respectable enough to glorify our place of prayer (see Responsa *Da’at Kohen* 132, by Rav Avraham Yitzchak HaKohen Kook).

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ע"ש אליעזר מאיר לפשיטת ה"ד



Rabbi Ya'akov HaLevi Filber

The Spies' Sin

The People of Israel in the Land of Israel following the Torah of Israel -- these are the three components of Jewish perfection. Since Abraham's being thrown into the fiery furnace, the nations of the world have been trying to harm us through one of these three components. There are numerous historical examples of attempts to annihilate us physically, starting with Laban, who sought to destroy everything, continuing with Haman, who plotted to kill all the Jews in one day, and leading up to the European Holocaust. There are also examples of attempts to make Israel assimilate through spiritual annihilation, like the Greeks who decreed that the Jews must write on ox horns that they have no part in the G-d of Israel (Bereshit Rabbah 2), the Romans who forbade circumcision (Shabbat 130a), and Christianity, which forced the Jews to convert. Yet since the collapse of the Soviet regime, we find no further attempts among the nations to attack the Jewish religion or to destroy any Jewish community physically. In our times, the nations' efforts against Israel are chiefly concentrated on the third component -- harming Eretz Yisrael and wrenching parts of it away from us. Unfortunately, some Jews, as well, take part in the original attempt by the spies to sever the Jewish People from their land. In his book "Igeret HaRe'iyah" (Igeret 96), Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook writes:

"The foundation of Israel's exile and low stature that continue on this earth are due only to our not publicizing Eretz Yisrael, its worth and wisdom. Moreover, we do not rectify the sin of the spies, who slandered the Land, with a response of equal measure: to make known to the whole world the glory and majesty of the Land, its holiness and splendor. Following all of our trespasses in the other direction, we should only merit to express even one ten thousandth of the Land's delight, the luminance of its Torah, the glory of its wisdom, and the holy spirit that reigns in its midst."

Numerous interpretations have been given for the sin of the spies. One of them is that of Rabbi Joseph Soloveitchik, as in brought in the sefer "Perakim BeMachshevet HaRav," in the chapter dealing with "The Uniqueness of Eretz Yisrael." There he explains that Jewish fate is tightly bound to Eretz Yisrael, because only there is the Divine Presence revealed and only there does prophecy flourish. Therefore, a special people must settle the special land. Rabbi Soloveitchik compares the covenant between the Jewish People and the Land of Israel to a bond of marriage. The entry into the Land is more than just movement from one place to another. It

constitutes a symbol of the marriage bond between the people and their land. Everything that happens in this land influences the spirit and position of Jews, wherever they may be. Yet in contrast to marriage, regarding which divorce is an option, the connection between the Jewish People and their land is one that endures forever.

Jewish law states that it is forbidden for a person to marry a woman or even to become engaged to her until he has seen her. It matters not how many good recommendations he has received about her. This connection must be from the depths of one's heart, and without reservations. Therefore, it must be based only on his directly knowing her. It is forbidden to enter the marriage covenant without personally knowing and appreciating the prospective mate first. Moses was therefore commanded to send men to spy out the Land, not to gather information, but to give the tribal heads the opportunity to know Eretz Yisrael first hand. As representatives of the public, it was a chance to bring the whole public a report on the special nature of the Holy Land. Despite G-d's promise regarding the excellent characteristics of Eretz Yisrael, the Israelites needed to apprise themselves of these traits directly, by means of their princes.

The Israelites were a unique people, consecrated to G-d, and they were about to enter into marriage with the unique land, one which has maintained its loyalty to the Jewish People. Even when its Jews were exiled from it and it was conquered by foreigners, the land remained desolate and ceased its blessings, like a faithful wife who longingly hopes and waits for her husband's return. Moses therefore hoped that the spies would sense and recognize the special characteristics of the Land, and would appreciate its preciousness in terms of the covenant of G-d with Abraham. The only ones who understood the special value of the land were Joshua and Calev. Calev therefore went to prostrate himself on our patriarchs' graves at the Cave of Machpelah, while the rest of the princes went to examine the territory from the Tzin Desert all the way to Rechov on the road to Chamat. The spies investigated the Land externally, like real estate dealers. They examined its value in terms of the benefits of this world. For that reason, they failed in their relationship to it.