LEGAL THEFT

The Gemara (Sota 34a) informs us that ten out of the twelve spies were involved in bringing fruit specimens back in order to display them before the people. Eight of the spies were occupied with carrying a giant cluster of grapes, one transported a big pomegranate, and one carried a large fig. In this way, ten of the spies were occupied with transporting the grotesque fruits, while Yehoshua and Calev did not carry anything. According to one opinion, they were able to excuse themselves, says the Gemara, because they were more prominent than the others, and they were understandably not expected to carry large objects. Another opinion explains that they refused to participate due to their not agreeing with the plan to confront the nation with a message of despair.

Several issues must be addressed regarding the command of Moshe about bringing back fruit. Moshe had specifically instructed the spies to bring back fruit of the Land. How could Yehoshua and Calev disobey this order, even with whatever calculations might have been considered? When Moshe originally made his request to bring back fruit of the Land, he told the group to “strengthen themselves - ויהיו חזקים” in order to do so. What did Moshe mean and what was his intention by telling the group of spies that they would have to be strengthened? Finally, Moshe’s instructions seem to be strange, for we know that the halachah does not allow stealing, even from a gentle. How could these men be told to take fruit and to bring it back? From where were they supposed to obtain these specimens, if not by stealing them, which is illegal?

The Gemara (Avoda Zara 53b) teaches that the Land of Israel was given to our patriarchs, and their children who entered the land later did so as inheritors of a land they already owned. However, Tosafos in Rosh Hashana (13a, אולא שלמה) explains that the non-Jewish residents do own any produce they plant while they live in the Land.

Chasam Sofer suggests that Moshe felt that the entry of his men who served to collect reconnaissance represented the forward onset of conquest, and any fruits they could collect were legally acquired as spoils of war, as this was the initial volley of conflict. This is why he told them that their movements needed to be done “with strength”. The war had now begun.

Yehoshua and Calev were aware, however, that the spies did not set out having accepted Moshe’s mission. The evil plot of the ten spies disqualified their legitimacy, and their taking the fruits was no longer justified. Knowing that the mission was fraudulent, Calev set out to daven at Me’aras Hamachpeila that he should be protected from their conspiracy. This is why Yehoshua and Calev could not honor Moshe’s command to bring back fruit. The legal justification which Moshe had relied upon was not in effect, and taking fruit would have been illegal at that point.

CREDIBLE LIES

Any false matter in which they do not say a bit of truth at its beginning does not hold up at its end. -- Rashi

A brief analysis of the spies and their report will show that their motive was purely to lie, and to make that lie more plausible. Moshe had given these men specific instructions. They were first to notice and report about the nations that
resided in the land, whether they were strong or weak (Verse 18). They were then to note whether the cities were fortified or open cities (Verse 19). Only then were the spies to determine whether the land itself was fertile or lean, to see if there were trees, and to bring back some samples of the fruit (Verse 20). There was a reason for the sequence of their mission and the report to be brought back.

Sefer Torah Or emphasizes that the spies, however, intentionally reversed the order of the information as they returned. They first gave the answer to the third question, as they proclaimed that “the land was indeed flowing with milk and honey—and this is its fruit”. The reason the spies presented the information in this altered manner was in order to distort its impact by setting a foundation of a bit of truth in order to build upon it a tower of lies.

It could also be that a liar begins his words with truthful facts not merely to form a strategic platform from which to build some degree of credibility, but for another reason as well. Deep within the soul of the liar is the knowledge that lies are evil. The liar himself, at some level, is not comfortable with his falsehood. As much as he possibly can, he would actually like to avoid living and portraying a life of lies. This leads him to begin by stating the truth, and to maintain it as long as he can, although he knows that he will ultimately mislead and alter facts in order to accomplish his personal agenda.

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IT WAS SIMPLY BEAUTIFUL

In our verse we find that the spies report about Eretz Yisrael “גנה - and also it is a land which flows with milk and honey”. When Yehoshua and Calev present their findings, they simply state that the land “is flowing with milk and honey”, without the introductory word “גנה - and also”. What is the significance of this discrepancy?

Sefer Bais Yaakov explains that during the uprising of Korach and his gang, Dasan and Aviram had circulated a complaint that it was unfortunate that the nation had left Egypt. They incited the people by confronting Moshe (16:13): “Is it not enough that you have brought us up from a land flowing with milk and honey to cause us to die in the desert?...” The spies were also alluding to the fact that Egypt was a wonderful land and that it was wrong for Moshe to have taken the people from such a haven. Egypt was the most wonderful and fertile land, they claimed, but Eretz Yisrael was also fertile, albeit in a secondary manner. Nevertheless, they added that conquest of the land was ultimately impossible, for the occupants were too mighty and residing in the land was fraught with significant flaws.

The truth was, however, that the Torah itself testifies that even Tzoan, the most desirable haven in Egypt, was inferior to the most barren tract in Eretz Yisrael (see Rashi 13:22). Contrastingly, Yehoshua and Calev stated unequivocally that Eretz Yisrael was “a land which flowed with milk and honey”. Its being desirable was not in any way secondary to any other place. It was not “also” like Egypt.

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WITH NO DELAY

Why is only Calev mentioned here and not Yehoshua? Not until six verses later is it mentioned that Yehoshua, too, would merit entering the Land of Israel. And even there, Calev is mentioned first.

In Ozna’im LaTorah, Rabbi Zalman Sorotzkin points out an important lesson. Not only is a person judged for his failure to do a mitzvah, but also for not doing it at the best time. A story is told of a man who had a dream. In the dream, a well-known rabbi who had recently passed away appeared before him. The rabbi told him that he saw a certain tzaddik standing on Erev Shabbos at the gates of Gan Eden. He asked the tzaddik why he didn’t enter. The tzaddik answered him that since he had often delayed changing into his Shabbos clothing until Shabbos had already started, he was punished for measure by not being allowed into Gan Eden on Leil Shabbos.

Based on this story, we may be able to answer our original questions. The Torah tells us that after the spies returned with their negative report, “There was a reason for the sequence of their mission and the report to be brought back.” Thereafter, the Torah speaks of the reward of entering Eretz Yisrael the second time. This is done so
that no one would think that Yehoshua was punished by not being allowed to enter the Land, but even there, he is mentioned after Calev.

THE PRINCES’ QUEST

The series of events as they unfolded seem astonishing. When Moshe encouraged the people to enter the Land, they insisted upon sending scouts before proceeding. After the scouts returned, however, the people refused to believe in how the conquest of the Land could be successful. Now, finally, as Moshe delivers a verdict that they will not be permitted into the Land, the people organized a group to try to fight their way into Eretz Yisrael, against the instructions and without the support of the Shechina and Moshe. Why did they refuse to consider entering the Land when it was encouraged and supported, but now they suddenly wake up and develop a determination that is unstoppable? What could have been their reasoning?

Sefer Yishm’ru Da’as notes that our sages tell us that the spies possessed a bias against having the nation enter the Land. In the desert, these men were considered important leaders. They were the princes of the tribes. Yet, they feared that once in the Land they would lose their prominence and stature. This is why they saw everything from a standpoint of how to maintain power. Every person is made up of a soul and a body. There is a constant struggle between the two, and every decision a person makes involves a question as to which of these components will persevere. Many issues involve whether a person will favor an intellectual and spiritual consideration, or whether the physical and mundane tendencies will be victorious.

The spies and their followers were driven by the thirst for power and personal prestige. When Moshe finally informed them that they had earned a destiny of doom, they were shocked as they faced the reality of their decisions. They quickly felt remorse, and they made a furious attempt to connect with the Land which was now eluding them. Nevertheless, their teshuva was not acceptable, and they met their demise as they once again disregarded Moshe’s command that they desist in their fruitless attempt to enter the Land.

We must ask, however, why it was that their teshuva was not accepted. The Gemara in Menachos (29b) presents a rather mystical remark. “This world was created with the letter ס which is similar to a vestibule. It is partially enclosed, but it is open at one end (the bottom). Anyone who wants to drop out of the world by pursuing evil may do so. The smaller leg of the ס is to indicate that if a person does teshuva, he may enter the world once again. However, he cannot expect to enter the same way in which he left (the bottom). He must enter from a different direction (the side), otherwise he will not succeed.”

This was the error of the ones who sought to fight their way into the Land. Teshuva must include a new approach and a varied perspective upon the world in order to be successful. The sin was the result of improper behavior, but that behavior was the result of a flawed outlook upon one’s role and mission in the world. One must develop a refreshed view of what is correct, and therefore come back to this world from a new direction and with a corrected understanding of how to fulfill God’s will. Otherwise, the teshuva is incomplete and might not be effective.

SHABBOS VIOLATION: A NATIONAL TRAGEDY

The story of the נקשת עץ, the man who was gathering wood on Shabbos, is the subject of much discussion. He violated one of the prohibitions of Shabbos, and there is some argument as to whether it was carrying, cutting, or bundling together the wood.

Rashi, citing the Sifrei, explains that this event was a degradation to Bnei Yisrael, for it occurred on the second Shabbos after the commandment of Shabbos was received. Bnei Yisrael, therefore, had only kept one Shabbos. He also says in the name of the Sifrei that the seeming redundancy of “the people who found him gathering wood brought him to Moshe...” means that even though the people who saw him warned him to stop, he still continued gathering. Two questions can be asked. First, why does Rashi say that this event was a degradation to Bnei Yisrael when only one individual violated the Shabbos? Also, Bnei Yisrael warned him to stop. What more could they have done? It certainly should not be a shame for all of Bnei Yisrael.
Regarding the first question, Rav Shimon Schwab, מטב ביר משהubesch, says that at the time, Bnei Yisrael were on a very high level. Therefore, even the sin of one person harmed the whole nation, much as one little drop of mustard ruins a white shirt. Bnei Yisrael are responsible for one another, and all must bear the sin of a single person.

As to the second question, the fact that the man kept on gathering the wood, even after the warning, was the problem itself. Instead of penetrating his heart, the warning made no impression, and the man continued about his ways. Bnei Yisrael should have made an extra effort to influence the man, but instead, as the Ibn Ezra explains, they only brought him to court on Motzaei Shabbos.

Even the sin of one person harmed the whole nation, much as one little drop of mustard ruins a white shirt.

Halachic Corner

Vessels (used for food) purchased from a non-Jew require tevilah, immersion in a kosher mivkah or spring/stream, before being used. This is true in the case of both used utensils (in which case they also need kashering) and new ones. The law is derived from "Klei Midian", when Bnei Yisrael took booty after the war with Midian. The idea behind this ritual is not merely an issue of purity and impurity in the formal sense of the laws of tum'ah. It represents a spiritual elevation of a utensil before it becomes fit for the "altar", the Jewish royal table, where eating is viewed as an elevated activity, not just an animalistic pursuit. This law is limited to metal and glass utensils. Some poskim have a doubt concerning the glazed coating on china and porcelain. No brachah is recited on anything except metal or glass. Any doubtful materials are immersed without a brachah or immediately following the immersion of a k'li which definitely needs a brachah. When one vessel is immersed, the brachah is "יוצל כלים חלים". When several are immersed, the brachah is "ליעל כלים חלים".

Questions for Thought and Study

1. In what order were the spies listed? See Ramban and Sforno to 13:4
2. Why does the Torah say that Bnei Yisrael were in Kadesh (הֶרְשָׁדָן) when the spies returned but does not mention Kadesh as part of the desert of Paran when they left for Canaan? See Ohr HaChaim 13:26
3. Why does the Torah need to tell us that the אֶלֶף מָצַמְעֵן (Divine Presence) was in the אֶלֶף מָצַמְעֵן (Tent of Meeting - the holiest part of the Mishkan) in the middle of the incident with the spies? See Rav Shammai Raphael Hirsch to 14:10
4. How was Calev’s challenge of defying the other spies greater than Yehoshua’s? How was he rewarded for overcoming this challenge? See Ohr HaChaim 14:4
5. Why does the Torah say that the Canaanites and the Amalakites were in the valley (הַוֹרַשָׁת) in Pasuk 14:25, yet, in Pasuk 14:45 they were described as being on the mountain (הַר הוֹרַשָׁת)? See Rabbeinu Bachya and Chizkuni to 14:25
6. Who were the people who found the person gathering wood in the wilderness? See Malbim 15:32

This Week Likutei Peshatim is Sponsored

- By Hebrew Theological College wishing mazal tov to HTC Board of Regents member Dr. Oscar Novick and his wife Bernie on the birth of a great-grandson, born to Ora & Elimelech Billet; and extending heartfelt condolences to Rabbi Gavriel & Mrs. Gavriella Bachrach on the loss of her mother, Mrs. Toby Zippin, ר��, and their brother-in-law, Shmuel Linsky, רא"י.
- By Fasman Yeshiva High School and Hebrew Theological College thanking all of our alumni, friends and Yeshiva parents for making Ignite the Night 2019 truly spectacular! Thank you to the 275 attendees who came out for an epic fabrengen with Rabbi YY Jacobson and ZUSH at Ignite Glass Studios. Thank you so much for your support!
- By Blitstein Institute invites women of the community to the Edith Tessler Rosh Chodesh Project for Women. Rabbi Gershon Schaffel will give the lecture, "Chinuch for Adults", Rosh Chodesh Tammuz, Wednesday, July 3rd, 2019, at 1:30 PM, at Shallots Bistro. Come early and receive 10% off your lunch order.
Arie Crown Hebrew Day School Early Childhood is seeking creative, dedicated teachers and assistants to work with children Pre-Nursery-Kindergarten. Enthusiastic educators who will inspire our young children to learn through exploration and investigation. Lead teachers must have early childhood education experience. Limudei Kodesh and General Studies positions available. Shoshana Safirstein ssafirstein@ariecrown.org or 847-908-7797.

Shabbat of Achdut in Skokie with acclaimed Chassidic musicians of Zusha! This Shabbat, June 28-29, Parashat Shelach. Friday Night Kabbalat Shabbat at KCT, 9220 Crawford, at 7:00 PM; Friday Night Oneg at the home of Daniel and Rifka Weiss, 9100 Kedvale Avenue, at 8:45 PM; Shabbat morning davening at Lubavitich Chabad of Skokie, 4059 Dempster Street, at 9:00 AM; Seudah Shlishit at KCT, following 8:05 Mincha.

JCC Chicago seeks outstanding Early Childhood Assistant Teachers for Fall 2019. Be part of a team of educators, social workers and specialists who support the whole child through a developmentally appropriate curriculum embracing Jewish life and complementing the home. We’re looking for those who are enthusiastic about guiding each child to their potential towards future success. Visit www.jccchicago.org/careers for more information and to apply online.

JCC is now hiring a Manager of Community Programs, who will spearhead engagement through the creation and oversight of community programs (i.e. Chicago Loves Israel, Sukkot Fest, etc.) and will oversee Teen & Family, Sports and Recreation, Aquatics and Fitness offerings in the Rogers Park, Evanston, and Skokie communities. To learn more and to apply, visit https://www.jccchicago.org/about/careers/.

Save the date! Madraigos Midwest is hosting our first High School Girls Retreat Weekend supported by the Waldner Foundation. Friday, August 30th - Sunday, September 1st, at the Northbrook Hilton. More information will be coming soon, with registration opening after July 4th on our website. For more information, call our office at 773-478-6000 or email us at info@madraigosmidwest.org.

Madraigos Midwest High School Girls Summer Program returns! The program takes place every Wednesday night from June 26th to July 31st. Activities like miniature golf, fireworks at Navy Pier, BBQ at the beach, chessed project, and much more! For more information, please contact Rivkah Efron at 847-347-5255 for location and times.

The new Chicago Orthodox Student Union concludes its Summer Learning Program directed by the YU Torah Mitzion Kollel this Tuesday, July 2, at KINS: 7:15 PM Dinner, 7:30 PM Shiur. CLICK - “College Learning Initiative at KINS” Shiur - “Out of This World Torah: Extraterrestrial Life in Jewish Thought”, led by Rabbi Michael Friedman. Meat/veggie food included! Questions? Please email chicagoorthodoxstudentunion@gmail.com. See you at the Finish Line! Join us at the Midwest Charity Ride Finish Line on Sunday, June 30, 2:00-4:00 PM. Champion-worthy BBQ - face painting - balloon twister - bounce house - and more! At the Evanston Golf Club (Yahav home, 8630 North Keeler Avenue, Skokie). To sponsor a rider, visit MCRide.org. The Midwest Charity Ride benefits The Chicago Center, Hatzalah of Chicago, Maot Chitim of Chicago, and Sharlene Levinson Bikur Cholim of Chicago.

Save the date! Rabbi Paysach Krohn is coming to Congregation Yehuda Moshe, 4721 Touhy in Lincolnwood on July 5th, at 8:45 PM. Rabbi Krohn will be speaking Friday evening, Shabbos lunch and Shabbos afternoon. For further information, email ymshul@aol.com or call 847-673-5870.

Ida Crown Jewish Academy is seeking a full-time teacher of Hebrew Language. The desired candidate will have strong language skills and relevant teaching experience. Please direct inquiries to hebrew.teacher.icja@gmail.com.
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Answers:
1. Rabban says that they were listed in order of their greatness. Sforno says that they were listed in the order of their age, from oldest to youngest.
2. As a punishment for the incident with the spies, Bnei Yisrael spent the next 39 years around the area of Kadesh. (They spent the first 19 years in Kadesh and returned there at the end as well. See Devarim 2:14)
3. At that point, Bnei Yisrael deserved to be destroyed, so the רפוך但他们 didn’t rest on Bnei Yisrael.
4. It only remained in the Mishkan to communicate with Moshe.
5. Rabbi and great-grandchildren, in memory of Rose Schneiderman, May their memory be for a blessing.
6. Prepared by Rabbi Ben-Zion Rand, Editor, and Mrs. Naomi Samber, Managing Editor.

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