

A LESSON FROM THE PARASHA

Teamwork

In this week's *parasha* we have the tragic and unfortunate story of the *meraglim*, the ten spies who went to scout out the land of Israel and returned with a bad report. The Jews then cried the entire night and did not want to enter the land of Israel. Hashem came to Moshe and said "let Me wipe out the Jewish nation as they are undeserving of their great destiny and I will build a great nation from you Moshe."

Moshe then responds by beseeching G-d on behalf of the Jewish people. He says "do not destroy them because if you do the nations who are living in Canaan (Israel) will say that You killed them because You are not strong enough to fight the 31 kings of Canaan and therefore You killed out the Jewish people to avoid the embarrassment of defeat." Hashem responds, "you are right," and they are forgiven.

This conversation between Moshe and Hashem seems to raise the following question. Why did Moshe respond to Hashem with what seems like a concern for G-d's image in the eyes of mere human beings? G-d is all powerful and clearly does not need to worry about the opinion of a bunch of Canaanite kings. How was this answer able to save the Jewish people from destruction?

I heard the following clarifying answer from Mr. Charlie Harary. Moshe was telling Hashem, "Forget about the Jewish people for a minute. Yes, they deserve punishment, but what about Your honor? How will the world perceive such an action?" To that Hashem responds, "If it's Me and My honor that you care about, then the Jewish nation deserves forgiveness." This shows us that the most important thing in the world is G-d's

honor, and even if the Jewish nation did a terrible sin, they can be forgiven in order to protect the honor of Hashem. This is our purpose as the Jewish People; we are here in this world to "Sanctify the Name of G-d."

Many times, we get busy with the "rat race" of life and we fail to see the bigger purpose of our actions. We may even mistakenly push aside and step on other people in order to "reach our goal" of learning Torah and doing *mitzvos*. In essence, we may be caring more about ourselves than the Honor of Hashem. This unfortunately common way of life will steer one away from fulfilling his ultimate purpose in this world, to "Sanctify the Name of G-d." Let us learn from this week's *parasha* to live life by playing our roles as individuals while keeping a main focus on Sanctifying the Name of Hashem altogether as one nation. 🕊

RABBI
EPHRAIM
SKOLNIK



THE RABBI WAS ASKED ON THE PARASHA

THIS WEEK WITH
RABBI DOVID SPETNER

This Week's *Parasha*:

Q) Why were the spies allowed to take from the fruit of the land? Did it not belong to someone?

A) Even though we find that Lot was criticized for allowing his animals to eat from people's land because the land of Israel was not yet given to Avraham, immediately following the departure of Lot we find that Avraham was instructed to walk through the length and width of the land. There is an opinion brought in the Talmud that this was actually when the land was given by G-d to Avraham, and this walking through it was a show of ownership, which would therefore make everything grown in Eretz Yisrael owned by the Jewish people.

Last Week's *Parasha*:

Q) Why was Aharon not given *tzara'as* for listening to Miriam? Isn't that forbidden as well?

A) It most certainly is forbidden to listen to *lashon hara*. It is not clear, though, that one would receive the punishment for the sin of listening to or even accepting *lashon hara*. However, the question still stands since, according to the *Sifri*, both Miriam and Aharon spoke about Moshe; Miriam perhaps was punished for having opened the conversation. Chofetz Chaim (Be'er Mayim Chaim Hilchos Lashon Hara 3:6) quotes the Gemara *Erchin* 16a that one receives *tzara'as* only if his or her words made an impact. Miriam's initiating the *lashon hara* caused Aharon to speak *lashon hara*, thus qualifying Miriam's *lashon hara* for *tzara'as*. Aharon's words however made no impact; hence he was not afflicted.

There do seem to be different views in different *midrashim* as to whether Aharon

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THE RABBI WAS ASKED ON THE PARASHA

CONTINUED

briefly experienced *tzara'as*. There is such an opinion brought in *Shabbos* on 97a. According to Pirkei d'Rabbi Eliezer, he did not get *tzara'as* since this would have been a blemish and render him unfit to serve in the *mishkan*. Instead, he suffered by seeing his sister Miriam afflicted with *tzara'as*.

Q) Aharon told Moshe to *daven* for Miriam to be cured from the *tzara'as* because he could not pronounce her *tahor* (pure), as he was a close relative. If so, then no one could pronounce her *tamei* (impure) either, so what was he worried about?

A) This question is actually posed by *Tosfos* to *Zevachim* 102a, where this question goes unanswered. It is possible that even if Miriam would not have the *halachic* status of a *metzora*, as we mentioned earlier from Pirkei d'Rabbi Eliezer, having the affliction itself renders one a *baal mum*, as having a significant blemish. 🙄

Something always bugged you about the upcoming parasha (or last week's)? Ask! If you would like to submit a question on the parasha, please email it to parasha@cincynkollel.org. Questions will be selected to address at the discretion of the Rabbi who is answering that week. Questions may be edited for brevity/clarity.

A SHINING EXAMPLE

There were two families in Israel who lived next door to each other with each having a similar number of children. As time passed the Sharon family increased in size as their children began to get married, while the Yitzchaki family seemed to be locked in time as child after child reached marriageable age, yet none of them had gotten married. Eventually, the Sharon family needed to expand their living quarters in order accommodate their expanding family. There was a problem though. In order to expand their apartment, the construction crew would need use of the Yitzchakis' balcony. Turning to his neighbor, Mr. Sharon asked Mr. Yitzchaki for his permission. A lump developed in Mr. Yitzchaki's throat. All these years he had watched the Sharons grow with a bit of jealousy, and now it would be pushed in his face that much more. But he swallowed that lump and said with a small attempt at a smile, "Yes, I am so happy for you. The project should go with success." At 7 o'clock the next morning there was a knock on the door. Opening the door, Mr. Yitzchaki found the contractor and several men waiting to use his balcony, and what he agreed to began to sink in. Weeks of people tramping through his apartment all day with all the noise that construction brought with it, without

A BA'AL HATURIM FOR YOU

The numerical value of the phrase from our *parasha*, "v'asu lahem tzitzis," "and they shall make for themselves *tzitzis*," (600) is the same as the words *tz'dakos* and *n'sharim*, righteous acts and eagles. The significance of this, explains Ba'al Haturim, is that one who performs the mitzvah of *tzitzis* properly will merit beholding the Divine Presence, as it says in *Tehillim*, "I with righteousness will see your face," and will merit what is said in the *passuk* "And I have taken you on the wings of eagles." 🙄

any enhancement of his own apartment to show for it. After the project was finished, after all the noise had finally quieted down, the Yitzchakis received a phone call with a suggestion of a date for their oldest daughter. The Yitzchakis were pleasantly surprised, as they had not received a phone call like this in a while. Their daughter went out and things progressed until their daughter was engaged. Now meeting the parents of the boy, Mr. Yitzchaki found that the father was familiar. He was the contractor, who had something to tell him, "When I saw how you selflessly opened your home for your neighbor in such a way, I told my wife that this is a family that I would love for our son to marry into, so we inquired, and we are so happy it worked!" 🙄

THE FALSE MESSIAHS OF JEWISH HISTORY

RABBI NOSSON WIGGINS

FALSE ACCUSATIONS AGAINST RAMCHAL (PART II)

The year 1727 was the turning point in Ramchal's life. As a student of Rabbi Bassan of Padua, Ramchal had access to his teacher's library, which contained many *kabbalistic* works. From this collection, Ramchal took a particular interest in Rabbi Chayim Vital's *Eitz Chayim*, a *kabbalistic* treatise based on the teachings of his master, Rabbi Yitzchak Luria (otherwise known as *Arizal*). *Arizal's* *kabbalistic* doctrine was widely studied in Italy and Ramchal was deeply impacted by his writings. As mentioned, by the age of fourteen Ramchal had learned all that his teacher had to offer, and in the same year his teacher, Rabbi Bassan, left Padua and moved to Reggio. For the next six years, Ramchal delved even deeper into the mysteries of the Torah and became acquainted with other *kabbalists* in Padua who shared a similar drive. These friendships developed and deepened and eventually, in 1727, Ramchal decided to create a *kabbalistic* circle or study group which was housed in a private study hall. The circle would accept members who wished to dedicate their days to the continuous study of the *Zohar* exclusively for the sake of repairing and restoring the Divine Presence (a process called *tikkun ha-Shechina*) which would bring the ultimate redemption. Ramchal composed rules and regulations for the group's members which, aside from the principal purpose of intensive study of the *Zohar* from morning until evening, required that the members occasionally fast, carefully fulfill every law and custom for the sake of being completely clean before G-d, and respect and love each other wholeheartedly. Ramchal was the spiritual leader of the group, which originally consisted of seven students and afterward accepted another nine, including Ramchal's brother Shimon. This *kabbalistic* institution was founded in 1727 in Padua.

In the same year, on Rosh Chodesh Sivan, Ramchal began experiencing divine revelations during which the *sodos* (secrets) of *kabbalah* were taught to him by a *maggid* (a celestial teacher). The *maggid* also instructed Ramchal to compose a commentary on *Koheles* (*Ecclesiastes*) based on the *kabbalistic* interpretations that he was taught. Eventually, after following the instructions of the *maggid*, Ramchal merited a visitation from the prophet Eliyahu (Elijah), who divulged other secrets of the Torah. These Divine experiences, which Ramchal merited because of his lofty spiritual achievements, continued for three years (1727-1730), during which Ramchal was instructed to write a second edition to the *Zohar* and other *tikkunim* as well. Due to Ramchal's great modesty, nobody outside the members of the group was aware of these celestial revelations, and it would have remained that way if not for a student of Ramchal – Rabbi Yekutiel Gordon of Vilna – who exposed the secret in a mysterious letter. 🙄