

Shelach & Korach 5773

BS"D Parshiot Shelach and Korach 5773

THE MAKING OF A MIRAGEL (SCOUT OR SPY)

Contemporary rabbis can be divided into three groups:

1) Those in the galut who, out of despair and hopelessness, willingly or indirectly lead their flocks ever deeper into the desert of assimilation and whatever else American culture can "contribute" to pollute the holy Jewish soul. Indeed there are pockets of Torah study and mitzvot in America, but even a barren desert has an oasis to two.

2) The Chareidi rabbis in Eretz Yisrael are loyal and God-fearing men, but they have shrunken the Universe of the Torah by relegating it to the Bet Midrash, the kitchen and the bedroom.

3) The Dati Leumi (religious Zionist) rabbis who teach that we are now in the midst of our nation's redemption as stated by the prophets. They send their students to defend the nation; to ascend the Temple Mount (in the halachically accepted manner) and study the laws of the Bet HaMikdash; to settle every part of Eretz Yisrael which has been returned to us, including Yehuda, Shomron, and the Golan. Their students create Torah centers across the land and influence the people who have been for so long neglected in the ways of the Torah. The rabbis who teach that if we wish to have a State based on the Torah, then we have to participate in all walks of life to make it so; because it will not happen through the super-colossal weddings of Belz and Sanz.

So the question arises: What determines the hashkafa (outlook) of these so very different rabbinic leaders?

I believe that the Torah alludes to the answer in parashat

Shelach.

The parasha begins with the miraglim (scouts, spies) episode and ends with the mitzva of tzitzit (fringes on a four-cornered garment). Parallel words appear in both these sections which draws one to conclude that the miraglim and tzitzit are associated.

The word "latur" (to look or view as would a tourist) in the miraglim section appears in the tzitzit section as "velo taturu" (do not follow the desires of your eyes and heart). The word "ura'ietem" (and you shall see) appears in both sections.

And indeed there is a connection between the sin of the miraglim and the mitzva of tzitzit.

The Talmud Yerushalmi (Brachot chap 1) states that the blue thread in the fringes of tzitzit is like the color of the ocean, and the ocean is like the color of grass, and grass is like the color of the sky and the sky has the color of the Holy Throne, etc.

The message is that the function of tzitzit (among others) is to raise one's eyes and perspective from the routine and mundane in order to perceive the exalted spiritual essence that Hashem has implanted in the world. The miraglim were guilty of what we call "rosh katan" (small headedness or limited scope) which caused them to see only the superficial side of Hashem's Holy Land – the fruit, the cities, the Canaanites, but not one word of the sanctity present there, because they felt no sanctity. Yehoshua and Calev saw the same material entities that the others saw, but they also saw the great spiritual potential that the Land holds for God's chosen people.

Herein lies the essential difference between contemporary spiritual leaders. If one is a talmid chacham, well versed in Talmud and the Shulchan Aruch, it does not necessarily mean

that his world outlook is penetrating or incisive.

One's world view is formulated through a myriad of psychological and educational elements, such as upbringing, personal inclination, penchants and weaknesses, where one lives, his friends and influences, ambition, and courage or lack of it.

Korach, I believe, did perceive the glory of HaShem. He was blessed with the ability to feel the spiritual essence in the world surrounding him, but his downfall was caused by his ego which turned his spirituality inward instead of seeing his role as part of the great tribe of Levi.

It is the personal responsibility of each man and woman to choose the spiritual leader who will guide them through the wilderness of their lives. "My rabbi told me so" is no excuse because, in most cases, it is the individual who chooses his rabbi.

The man or woman who is blessed with the world view that we are now living in the midst of the redemption of Am Yisrael will draw close to a rabbi who sees Medinat Yisrael as the harbinger or precursor to the final redemption. One who is stuck in the quicksand of the galut will hide behind the "aprons" of the many available rabbis who dot the land, from Squaretown in the east to L.A. in the west, who view contemporary Jewish history from a peephole perspective.

It is a matter of rosh katan (limited scope) vs. rosh gadol (wide scope), which leads each individual rabbi's hashkafa.

When was the last time your rabbi spoke of the rebuilding of the Bet Hamikdash, or the restoration of the Davidic monarchy? The closest a rabbi in the galut or the chareidi religious leadership in Eretz Yisrael will go is to sigh and say "We need the Mashiach".

Part B:

In parashat Shelach, the miraglim witnessed very dramatic scenes. Canaanite people were dying everywhere and the local population was constantly occupied with the never-ending line of funerals. The miraglim returned and stated their conclusion that Eretz Yisrael is "Eretz ochelet yoshve'ha" – a land which devours its people.

However, chazal (our rabbis of blessed memory) taught the truth that the widespread death of so many people was a sudden occurrence intended to draw the Canaanites' attention away from the 12 strangers who were touring the land. It was the hand of God intending to protect the miraglim from what otherwise would have brought about their discovery and their death at the hands of the locals.

How history repeats itself!

Many Jews in the galut turn to what is now occurring in Syria, Lebanon and Iraq, and soon to spread to Jordan Turkey and Egypt, and conclude that the region is "ochelet yoshveha," too dangerous to even contemplate aliya to the Holy land.

But what these modern-day miraglim do not want to see is that HaShem is doing battle for the Jewish people as He had done in the time of Yehoshua and Calev. In Syria, brutal acts of slaughter are perpetrated by Arabs against their own brothers and sisters. A day does not go by in Iraq that tens of people are butchered by Sunnis against Shiites and vice versa. The carnage is spreading to Lebanon and soon to other countries, and all the while Am Yisrael in our homeland continues to develop without interference.

The saying goes that "beauty is in the eyes of the beholder".

It would be no less true to state that belief in HaShem's sacred covenant with the Jewish people is also very subjective, and depends upon one's basic yirat shamayim (religious sensitivities). Events can be interpreted very differently depending on a person's religious feelings, and

that is where our freedom of choice enters the picture. The righteous, God-fearing man and woman will see the hand of HaShem in a falling leaf and certainly in current events. Those who are weak in their belief will always find excuses to escape the sacrifices that a loyal Jew must make in order to advance towards the goals set by HaShem for His chosen people.

Shabbat Shalom

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