

Maamarei Mordechai

הסבר לפי ממש פשוט

Parshas Shlach 5785

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Hashem tells Moshe to send scouts to Eretz Canaan.

שְׁלַח-לְךָ אַנְשִׁים וַיִּתְּרוּ אֶת-אֶרֶץ כְּנָעַן אֲשֶׁר-אָנִי נֹתֵן לְבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אִישׁ אֶחָד אִישׁ אֶחָד
לְמִטָּה אֲבַתְּיוּ תִשְׁלְּחוּ כָל נָשִׂיא בְּהֵם:

“Send for you men of stature, and they shall scout the Land that I am going to give to Bnei Yisroel, send one man from each of the ancestral tribes, each should be a leader of them.” (Bamidbar 13:2).

Why did Hashem give this command to send scouts? What other important lesson is learned from the specific wording (plurality of the verbs) in the pasuk?

Bnei Yisroel were on the march toward the Land. Now Hashem commanded them to send out scouts. There were not spies. Spies were sent later. (Ibid 21:32). The purpose of these scouts was to appraise the country, not to find its weaknesses. At this point, it was certain that Hashem would do battle for them. (Shmos 14:14). They heard Hashem at Har Sinai, they build the Mishkan, and enjoyed Hashem’s Holy Presence among them. They were meant to find out if the inhabitants were strong and many. (Ibid 13:18). This would indicate if the Land could support a mass and strong nation. They were to see if the towns were fortified and if the land was good. (Bamidbar 13:19). This would indicate if the land suffered many wars or if the people were in relative security to farm and grow. They were to see if the soil was rich, if there were trees, and if crops grew plentiful. (Ibid 13:20). This would indicate how much they would enjoy the land in security and prosperity.

There was another important reason Hashem told Moshe to send scouts. The Torah says, “Send for you.” (Ibid 13:2). It was for “you” for Moshe. The scouts were to tell Moshe all about the Land. Moshe, already at this point, was decreed not to see the Land. While the final blow to the decree, and Hashem telling Moshe explicitly that he and Aharon would not enter the Land, did not take place until later (ibid 20:12) the decree was already in place.

Hashem told Moshe and Aharon, by the incident of the waters of strife, where they hit the rock instead of talking to it, that the reason they cannot enter the Land is “because you did not create faith in Me.” (Ibid). The Torah, interestingly, does not state that Hashem’s anger flared up. How can Hashem mete out such a devastating punishment without Hashem’s anger being flared up? As there was no anger, there was no harm done; and as there was no harm there should have been no restriction. Without getting too far off topic, the anger did flare up, but earlier.

Hashem met Moshe on Har Sinai at the burning thornbush. (Shmos 3:2). Moshe was then sent to Pharaoh to commence taking Bnei Yisroel out of Egypt. (Ibid 3:10). Moshe failed. When he returns, he tells Hashem that Bnei Yisroel did not believe in him

as a leader. (Ibid 4:1). Hashem then gives Moshe the signs to convince Moshe to have faith. (Ibid 4:9). If Moshe would show faith, then Bnei Yisroel would believe in him and Hashem. Moshe points out his own physical short-comings. (Ibid 4:10). Hashem says, He will be in Moshe's mouth. (Ibid 4:11). Moshe responds, וַיֹּאמֶר בִּי אֱלֹהֵי שְׁלַח־נָא בְיַד־תְּשַׁלְּחֵהּ: "And he said, in me is My Master; send please in the hand of whom You will send." (Ibid 4:13). Moshe was stating that Hashem controls everything and everyone, and will teach him how to speak, so Moshe had no purpose. He was a puppet and Hashem could then send anyone. Moshe did not understand that his goal was to be an advocate of the people. He was also to work in ways to bring the people to have faith in Hashem. Hashem could use just anyone. However, that messenger needed to inspire the people to believe in Hashem because that person will not be there always. And with his own words, Moshe sealed his own destiny. The pasuk can mean "send them with whom you will ultimately send them." The one that will finish the job—Yehoshua. Moshe, unwittingly, predicted his own destiny.

That is when Hashem's anger flared up. (Ibid 4:14). Moshe repeated that same failure to understand about bringing the people closer to Hashem. He was too much his own person, decided on his own to hit the rock and not bring the greater wonder and exalting of Hashem's Name, by having the water appear through speech alone. Thus, the anger did flare. The two incidents are connected.

Even if the decree for Moshe not to see the Land was not made earlier, Hashem knew the destiny. By the time Moshe wrote the Torah—just before his death, just before handing it over—he also knew the facts. Therefore, the Torah in many places hints that Moshe would not see the Land.

The Torah is purely truthful. Even before Moshe erred, Hashem told him, "I have descended to save Bnei Yisroel from the hand of Egypt and to bring it up from this land to the good and spacious Land." (Ibid 3:8). There is no indication that Moshe would go, too. Hashem then instructed Moshe to say, "I (Hashem) have surely considered you...and I will uplift you from the burden of Egypt to the Land of the Canaanite..." (Ibid 3:17). Again, Hashem will take them to the Land. Moshe was not instructed to say "take us to the Land." Hashem repeated the instruction that Moshe is to say, "I will bring you to the Land." (Ibid 6:8). "I" meaning Hashem will bring "you" not us.

Moshe told Bnei Yisroel, just as they were about to leave Egypt, "When Hashem has brought you into the Land..." (Ibid 13:5). He repeated it again. (Ibid 13:11). Bring you, not us. Further, after the incident with the scouts returning and complaining, Hashem said, "none of those involved...who have disobeyed me...shall see the Promised Land." (Bamidbar 14:22-23). Calev is the exception. (Ibid 14:24). Hashem spoke further to Moshe and Aharon (the pausk indicates both) after the Korach rebellion. (Ibid 14:26). The people complained that they were brought to the desert to die. (Ibid 16:13). Hashem used their own words, and decreed all will die in the desert, save Caleb and Yehoshua. (Ibid 14:3). All, included Moshe and Aharon. Moshe told Bnei Yisroel, "when you enter the land." (Ibid 15:2). Them and not him. Thus, the Torah shows itself to be ultimately true. We should learn from this example to speak factually, without exaggeration or sarcasm, and say what we mean and mean what we say.