

R' Yekusiel Yehudah Halberstam, the Klausenberger rebbe, was unique among the giants of his day. He emerged from the smoking embers of the Holocaust, the only survivor of his immediate family, having lost his wife and eleven children ר"ל. The Rebbe's pure deep rooted faith enabled him to overcome his personal losses and be a pillar of strength to his suffering brethren. After the war he remarried, raised a new family, and among many accomplishments, renewed the chassidus of Klausenberg into a thriving, G-D fearing community both in America and in Israel.

As soon as the war ended, the Rebbe made his way to various displaced persons camps, where he infused the remnants of the Jewish people, in the camps, with hope and helped them renew their commitment to Torah and mitzvos. In one episode, he was responsible for ensuring that a large group of teenage girls, who were in danger of being lost as observant Jews, be bought back into the fold before it was too late. The Rebbe worked hard to provide the survivors with religious articles sure as tefillin, tzitzis, siddurim and chumashim. In one camp, he would stand for hours each morning supervising as men and boys lined up to don a single pair of tefillin.

Once the Rebbe walked into a camp and announced that he had four sets of tzitzis threads which could be attached to a four cornered garment, as the Halachah requires. One hundred and fifty men came forward for a chance to receive the tzitzis. The Rebbe announced

that he would draw lots to determine which four of the one hundred and fifty would receive the tzitzis.

However, before the lots could be drawn, a teenage boy named Mendel, a Gerrer chassid stepped forward. "Rebbe," he cried "I should be entitled to receive one of the pairs without a lot being drawn!" "And why is that?" the Rebbe asked. "because the strict scriptural law states that one is required to wear tzitzis if he wears a four- cornered garments, but he is not guilty of transgression for not wearing a four cornered garment at all", replied Mendel. "I am the only one here who wears a four- cornered garment!" and with those words, Mendel grabbed hold of the hem of his shirt – possibly the only one he owned at the time- and ripped it in such a way that the shirt became a four cornered garment which requires tzitzis.

The Rebbe looked kindly at this young survivor, whose suffering had not weakened his love for Hashem's mitzvos. "Nevertheless," the Rebbe said gently, "it would not be fair to the others to give you the tzitzis without drawing lots. If your intentions in doing what you have just done were purely l'sheim Shamayim (for the sake of heaven) – as it appears to be – then Heaven will see to it that your lot should be drawn." The lots were drawn- and Mendel was the winner.

By Shlomo Katz

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Shelach 5769 - שלח תשס"ט

מס' ש"ח

Chazal tell us that before *Moshe* sent spies to scout the Land of Israel, he added a 'jud' to *Hoshea bin Nun's* name as a form of spiritual protection to shield him from the spies' conspiracy. *Targum Yonasan* adds that it was when *Moshe* saw *Hoshea's* humility that he changed *Hoshea's* name to *Yehoshua*. Surely humility is a positive attribute – why then would he need spiritual protection because of his humility?

Through a *Tosefta* in *Maseches Shabbos*, the *Avnei Shoham* answers this question. There is an argument between *Beis Shammai* and *Beis Hillel* as to whether one may touch bones left over after a meal on *Shabbos*. *Beis Shammai* say that the bones are *muktseh* and therefore one must remove the entire table top and shake the bones off it. *Beis Hillel* say that one may pick up the bones and remove them normally. We are told that *R' Zecharia ben Avkilos* would do a compromise between the two opinions – he would pick up the bones and throw them behind the couch. The *Tosefta* says that this attitude of *R' Zecharia ben Avkilos* destroyed the *Beis HaMikdosh*. This requires some clarification.

The *Tosefta* is making reference to the *Gemara* in *Gittin* 56a, in which *Bar Kamtza*, furious with the way in which he had been treated by his fellow Jews, denounces them to the Romans as rebels. To prove it, he suggests to the Romans to send an animal for sacrifice in the *Beis HaMikdosh*. If the Jews would refuse to offer it, then they are rebels.

Bar Kamtza secretly caused a blemish in the animal which would disqualify it in *Halachah*, but not according to Roman law. The *Gemara* tells us that *Chazal* were not sure what to do when the animal was brought. One suggestion was to offer up it up, despite the blemish, to avoid inciting the Romans. *R' Zecharia* objected, saying that people would conclude that animals with a blemish may be offered on the *Mizbeach*. An alternative suggestion was to assassinate *Bar Kamtza*, but *R' Zecharia* objected to that, on the grounds that people would conclude that if one brought a *korban* with a blemish, it was punishable by death. Consequently, *Chazal* did nothing and the Romans ultimately destroyed the *Beis HaMikdosh*. *Rabbi Yochanan* comments on this saying that 'on account of the humility of *R' Zecharia ben Avkilos*, Hashem destroyed the *Beis HaMikdosh* and exiled us from our land'.

Humility and the pursuit of compromise are praiseworthy attributes; however, under demanding circumstances a strong decision is needed. This was the problem with *R' Zecharia ben Avkilos'* attitude. According to the *Targum Yonasan* this is what *Moshe* feared in *Yehoshua*; he was worried that *Yehoshua* would be unable to make a resolute decision as his humility could have got in the way. Therefore he blessed him to strengthen his resolve.

By Gavriel Rosen

Fast Spies

(י"ד:ל"ד) ...יום לשנה יום לשנה...

...A day for a year, a day for a year... (14:34)

In this week's action packed parsha we read about the episode of the spies speaking loshon hora about Eretz Yisrael and the resultant decree for the B'nei Yisrael to wander in the desert for another forty years before entering the promised land. Forty years for the forty days the spies spied out the land of Israel, as the Torah writes (14:34) "yom-leshana, yom leshana" - a day for a year, a day for a year.

However, Rashi controversially gives a different reason why the Jewish people were sentenced to another forty years in the desert. Rashi points out (14:33) that the decree was issued only on the people from the ages of 20-60. Now, Masechet Moed Katan informs us that dying before the age of 60 is one of the forms of Karet. Rashi explains the reason the Jews were sentenced to only forty years in the desert was to insure every single person sentenced to death, died post- age 60 as every 20 year old sentenced to forty years in the desert required exactly a further forty years to push him over the the 60 year mark allowing him to die a nice, peaceful, karet-free death.

What is the basis for Rashi's opinion?

Now let us look ahead at the time the spies are returning from their adventure. Here, Rashi (13:25) asks the obvious question. Israel is pretty big. Bearing in mind that these spies were all Jewish, and everyone knows Jews have not fulfilled the mitzva of going to Israel unless they stop off for at least four falafels, how on earth did the spies only take forty days to check out the land? Rashi answers the question beautifully. It was revealed before Hashem that the spies would cause Israel to sin. Therefore, Hashem shortened the journey to only forty days to minimise the amount of time the B'nei Yisrael

would have to spend in the desert.

Here lies the key. If Hashem shortened the journey, why did Hashem not make it even shorter? Say ten days spying, equating to ten years in the desert. For this we need Rashi's second reason. Hashem did minimise the amount of time needed to spy out Israel. However, if this time is minimised too much, it in fact gets maximised - by a potential death of Karet.

Now for the punch line. The possuk quoted above says "yom leshana, yom leshana". That does not mean A YEAR for EACH DAY the Jewish people spied out the land, it actually means, A DAY for EACH YEAR the Jewish people were sentence to roam around the desert. The years causing the days rather than the days causing the years!

We see from this, that even at times when Hashem is annoyed at us, He always gives us the balanced minimum amount of punishment possible. There is a halachah that one is not allowed to hit their child when they are in a state of anger. We are not allowed to lash out in an uncontrolled manner. Even when our children need disciplining, we must be calm, composed and collected. The message of this D'var Torah is clear. Sure, there are going to be times when we get annoyed, even angry but it is our role as Jews to try and measure out the ideal way of dealing with every situation. With that viewpoint and motivation, we will please G-d merit the coming of Mashiach, in our days. Amen.

By Aaron Rosenberg,

Heard from Rabbi Y.D.Hartman

Trust

When it was finally time for Hashem to bring the children of Israel into the Land of Canaan, they asked Moshe to send spies first. After all of the miracles they had experienced in Egypt and in the wilderness, could they really not rely on Hashem's past record and trust Him upon entering the Land of Canaan without sending scouts?

In the traditional Jewish approach there exists a balance between "bitachon" (trust in G-d), and "hishtadlus" (human effort). Each individual must strike the proper balance between the two. A proper balance takes into account that G-d provides our livelihood regardless of how many hours we put in. It is written that it is decreed on Rosh Hashanah what a person's income will be for the year. In that case why do we work? Since mankind was cursed with "you shall eat with the sweat of your brow," which means that G-d's providence doesn't come to us openly, we work.

How much "hishtadlus", was required by the Jewish Nation in the period after it left Egypt? At that time G-d's providence was openly manifest, and all of their needs were given to them miraculously. There was no need to engage in activities related to earning a livelihood. They were free to be entirely spiritual beings with no other earthly pursuits.

However, being entirely spiritual is a tall order, and a very demanding one at that. The Jewish nation had not reached that level, and they therefore expressed their desire to send scouts into the Land of Canaan before going in to conquer it.

The scouts returned after 40 days and the Jews

panicked upon hearing their report. The scouts claimed that they could not enter the land. It was well protected by great and powerful nations. The Torah tells us that the Jews felt that G-d hated them and was planning on causing them to be killed at the hands of these nations. They even went as far as to say that even G-d could not stand up against the nations of Canaan. Our sages explain that what they meant is that as a result of their having worshipped the Golden Calf, and other sins they had committed, they would no longer merit G-d's help and they thus had to resort to natural strategies.

Rav Dessler explains that this was a very subtle, but grave sin. The Jews were really struggling with the aforementioned balance between trust and human effort. They leaned toward more human effort when less was indeed required. All that they complained about was really a subtle lie which they convinced themselves of, out of fear.

The lesson we learn from this event is that our attitudes are easily swayed by subtle concerns which we harbour in our hearts. We must always question our motivations and approaches - where are they coming from? Rav Dessler says that the human being can discern what is not the objectively correct approach - if he wants to. Sometimes fears or other considerations can cause one not to want to discern. The Torah is teaching us the repercussions of that kind of attitude.

By Steven Kaye

Double Riddle for the Week

Which 60 'great ones' learnt whilst shlomo slept in his room?

When baking bread, a certain size must be removed (challa). When baking for oneself, this is a 24th, however when made by a baker, only one 48th is taken. Why the difference in size?

(Answer in next week's Living Torah)

If you have a riddle or Jewish joke you would like to share with the living torah readers, please email us at:
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