

Parenting in the Parsha

פרשת שלח In-Dependence

וַיִּצְיֵאוּ דַבַּת הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר תָּרוּ אֹתָהּ אֶל-בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לֵאמֹר הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר עָבְרָנוּ בָּהּ לְתוֹר אֹתָהּ אָרֶץ אֲכָלֶת יוֹשְׁבֵיהָ הִוא וְכָל-הָעָם אֲשֶׁר-
רָאִינוּ בְּתוֹכָהּ אַנְשֵׁי מַדּוֹת

Thus they spread calumnies among the Israelites about the land they had scouted, saying, "The country that we traversed and scouted is one that devours its settlers. All the people that we saw in it are men of great size;

וזה ענין ארץ י' שהי' תחת יד כנען. ובנ"י יבררו וילבנו גם שיתנהגו עפ"י טבע כי תבואו ונטעתם כו' כמ"ש במדרש שם שלא כמו שהי' במדבר רק ליטע ולזרוע והוא כנ"ל שיעשו פעולות שע"פ טבע ואעפ"כ תהי' האמונה חזקה ומאירה בלב כי הש"י ברא הטבע באופן זה והוא פלא עוד יותר מהניסים איך כל דבר גדול וקטון צבא השמים וצבא הארץ כל מין ומין בע"ח ודצח"מ יש לו אופן והנהגה מיוחדת וסדר שסידר לו הש"י וכשמתנהגים כן מתקן גם עולם העשי' כראוי. אולם מסוכן הדרך שלא יפלו מהאמונה וצריך התחזקות גדול

This is the idea of The Land of Israel that was in the hands of the Canaanites. The *inei Yisroel* would sift and clarify (the presence of G-d) as is written in the *midrash* there. Not as it had been in the desert, rather, they would plant trees and engage in actions in the manner of nature and nevertheless their faith would be strong and burn in their hearts that Hashem created nature in this fashion. This is an even greater wonder than all the miracles, how everything big and small, the hosts of heaven and earth, every species of living thing and every inanimate and animate object has its own course and order that G-d set for it. When they follow that course, they perfect the realm of action as is fit. But, that path carries the risk that one might fall from faith and it requires great fortification

- Chiddushei Ha'Rim

If you love somebody, set them free

- Gordon M Sumner

The low point of the book of *Bamidbar*, and possibly of the entire Torah, is the report that the *meraglim* deliver on their return from the land of Canaan. On the precipice of entering the land, twelve leaders of the people, all great men according to the *possuk*, are sent on what seems like a last minute formality to scout the approach to the invasion of the land. That formality turns to disaster as they return the conclusion that invading the land is a fruitless, suicide mission. Their report along with the hopelessness and fear it instills in the people condemns them to wander the desert for forty years and to die there, leaving their children to enter the Promised Land in their stead. What could have prompted these once great men to stray so far from the purpose of their mission?

The *Chiddushei Ha'Rim* takes note of a comment of Rashi based on the *gemara*. The *gemara* in Sotah states that the *meraglim* returned as they had left. Just as their return was a conspiracy of evil, they embarked on their mission in a conspiracy of evil as well. That comment, the *Chiddushei Ha'Rim* points out, stands in stark contrast to the *possuk* itself and Rashi's comment that *kulam anashim*, all of them were righteous when they left. Which was it?

The *Chiddushei Ha'Rim* explains the mindset of the *meraglim* and, by extension, the mindset of the remainder of the people. They were living a life in the desert completely removed from the mundane worries and concerns of day-to-day life. They could devote their full energy solely to Torah study and religious growth without having to be bothered with things like earning a living, supporting their families, preparing meals, and doing laundry. Now they stood ready to enter not just a different land, but an entirely different way of life. In The Land of Israel, *mon* would not rain down from the

heavens. By the sweat of their brow they would eat bread. There would be no clouds protecting them from the elements and from their enemies. Shelter and security would come with hard and consistent work. Their clothing would not miraculously remain fresh and new, but they would need to launder the old and weave and sew the new. The realization that life in this new land would so severely curtail their opportunities for unimpeded study and growth colored the thinking and view of the *meraglim* until they rejected the land outright.

In the view of the *Chiddushei HaRim*, these great men rejected the land for noble reasons and motives. They wanted to retain the holy existence of life in the *midbar*. If so, what was the severity of the *chet*?

Clearly, the *meraglim* were trying to hold on to a way of life that was not the ideal. Of course, it is easier and more comfortable to have all of your needs met and addressed, leaving you free to pursue the Divine, unimpeded by the burdens of day-to-day life. But, that is not what G-d wants from us. He wants us to seek the Divine in the natural world, to build time for the spirit while also nourishing and caring for the body. The *meraglim* saw the *midbar* life as the ideal and life in the land as *b'dieved*. They had it backwards.

What is the lesson for parents? Parents provide their young children with all of their needs. We rain down on them our own form of *mon* and provide them with shelter, security, and safety along with wardrobe and laundry service. But, we need to train them to be able to let go. Sometimes parents, in service of their own need to be needed, raise their children to dependence rather than independence. Other times, parents simply fail to see the great value in proactively raising their children to be comfortable being self-sufficient.

In this age of helicopter or snowplow parenting and extreme worries over safety, we sometimes raise children who are too afraid to leave the nest and be on their own. The best thing we can do for our children is to raise them to the point that they no longer need us. If we don't, we as a society will pay a very steep price. If you truly love your children, set them free.

Good Shabbos,
Rabbi Yisroel Gottlieb