



THE HARRY H. BEREN TORAH WEEKLY

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Because Torah Is for Every Jew

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A Taste of Torah Overcoming Obstacles

By Rabbi Avraham Dovid Karnowsky

All of us encounter obstacles as we go through life. Most of them are relatively small hurdles, and with a little maneuvering, we can get past them. However, sometimes you come across the really big ones, the type where it feels like there is a roadblock in front of you, and you really don't see any way around it! We encounter this feeling many times in areas related to Jewish law. One might feel that in one's current situation, keeping a particular law is impossible; it feels like a mountain, with no solution in sight.

A couple of years ago I encountered one of these situations, and I went to ask advice from a respected person. He gave me a very cryptic and surprising piece of advice. "Just let go," he told me. "Take a step back, and everything will work out."

Allow me to explain what I believe he meant. In this week's Torah portion, we find a very perplexing encounter. The Jews were on their way to the Land of Israel, and they approached Moshe with a request. They wanted to scout out the land before going up to conquer it. Moshe asked Hashem, and they were given the go-ahead. Moshe then told them what they should look out for - if the people of the land are weak or strong, are the cities open or fortified, etc. The spies returned with a precise and accurate account: Indeed, the land is flowing with milk and honey. However, the people are giants and extremely strong, and the cities are all fortified. This report was considered a grave sin, and the spies died immediately, never again to see the Land of Israel.

What exactly was their sin? After all, they did deliver an honest report! The Ramban (Rabbi Moshe ben Nachman;

1194-c. 1270) provides the missing piece. He explains that the spies began their negative report with the word "Efes." (Shelach 13:28) The word *efes* means something that is completely impossible and unattainable. This was the big mistake, for they saw a situation which looked unreachable to them, and therefore, they wanted to give up. In reality, we know that Hashem is the one in control; He is the one Who wins the wars and conquers the Land. Our job is to do our bit, and Hashem takes care of everything. For Hashem, the Master of the world, the word impossible doesn't exist; anything is possible at any given time and moment.

This is the essence of Calev's retort to the spies, "We shall surely ascend and conquer it, for we can surely do it!" (Shelach 13:30) Rashi explains Calev's words: "Even if we have to climb to the Heavens, we can surely do it!" But how is it possible to ascend to the Heavens? Because we are aware that we are in the hands of the Master of the world, and for Him, anything is possible. We are a nation without any limitations, unfettered by any laws of nature.

This is the meaning of "letting go," to stop trying to come up with solutions using our own limited options. We have to take a step back and realize that we are in the hands of Hashem, Who can make any obstacle disappear - nothing is too big or hard. All we have to do is pray to Hashem and ask Him for His help and beseech Him to guide us through this roadblock. All that is left for us is to take a step back and be confident that we are in safe hands. Enjoy the ride!

Stories For The Soul

Heartbroken

Rabbi Shraga Feivel Mendlowitz (1886-1948), the head of Yeshiva Torah Voda'as in New York, was one of the major architects of Torah in America. Rabbi Mendlowitz was known for his great love of Eretz Yisrael.

Rabbi Mendlowitz suffered from a weak heart. In 1948, upon hearing that Jerusalem was captured by the Arabs during the Israeli War of Independence, Rabbi Mendlowitz was devastated. He was reciting *Birchas Hamazon*, the blessings recited after a meal. He arrived at the blessing that beseeches G-d to have mercy upon the Jewish People and upon Jerusalem. He began sobbing, and his frail heart gave out - his love for Eretz Yisrael and his grief over the tragedy took him from this world.

A student in Torah Voda'as once informed Rabbi Mendlowitz that he wanted to make the move to Eretz Yisrael.

"How do you plan on getting there?" asked Rabbi Mendlowitz.

"I will purchase a round-trip ticket," replied the student. "If it doesn't work out, I will return home."

"In that case, you may not go," said Rabbi Mendlowitz. "One does not go to Eretz Yisrael with a round-trip ticket."

In this week's parsha, the spies and the Jewish People failed to properly appreciate the gift of Eretz Yisrael. It is up to us to rectify their error and develop the proper love for our homeland.

Kollel Happenings

SUMMER NIGHT SEDER FOR BACHURIM

Attention boys entering 7th grade and older! The Kollel is once again holding its Summer Night Seder for Bachurim at the Kollel West Side Bais Medrash. Sunday-Thursday, mincha 7:45 pm, followed by learning. Ma'ariv at 9:10 pm. Stipends available for boys who maintain the schedule. For info or sponsorship opportunities, please contact rmf@denverkollel.org.

JULY 4TH LEGAL HOLIDAY LEARNING

Start your day off on the right foot with Torah study! The Kollel is offering learning at three locations: at the Kollel West Side Bais Medrash and at the Southeast Kollel Torah Center, shacharis at 8 am followed by breakfast and learning at approximately 9, and at EDOS, shacharis at 7:30 am followed by breakfast and learning at approximately 8:15. The topic will be *Fit For A King?: The Halachic Status of Modern Rulers*. For more information or sponsorship opportunities, please contact rmf@denverkollel.org or call 303-820-2855.

LEARN 2 LEARN

You have long dreamed of acquiring the tools to achieve proficiency in learning Gemara on your own. But how? The Denver Community Kollel offers a comprehensive, step-by-step, level-by-level program crafted for people just like you. All you need is the ability to read Hebrew; we will teach you the rest. For more information, contact rmh@denverkollel.org.

Increase Your Jewish IQ

By Rabbi Yaakov Zions

Last week we asked: What halachic details are based on the story of the *meraglim* (the spies) in Parshas Shelach?

A: 1) The Gemara (Brachos 21b) derives the need for a quorum of ten males based on the verses of the ten spies who belittled Eretz Yisroel. 2) The Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chaim 580:2) lists the anniversary of the spies' deaths as a *ta'anis* (an auspicious day for an individual to fast). The Mishna Berurah (quoting the Bais Yosef) explains that their repentance was not accepted, and

that is a cause for fasting.

This week's question: How can two friends eat the same food, prepared in the exact same manner, at the same time, and yet be required to recite different *brachos* (blessings) on them according to all contemporary opinions? (They did not eat or drink anything else in close proximity to the above-mentioned item.)

To submit an answer to Rabbi Zions, email ryz@denverkollel.org.

Lives of Our Torah Leaders

The Rambam Part VII

During his time in Egypt, the Rambam continued to write prodigiously. His greatest work, *Mishnah Torah*, was written between 1170 and 1180. The name *Mishnah Torah* is originally the appellation given to the Book of Devarim, and it means "the repetition of the Torah" (so titled because the Book of Devarim discusses many laws already mentioned in the previous books of the Torah). The work was *Yad Hachazaka*, "The Book of the Strong Hand," because *Mishnah Torah* consists of fourteen books, and the numerical value of the word "*yad*," "hand," is fourteen.

Mishnah Torah is an all-encompassing compendium of Jewish law. It covers all parts of halacha, including parts that are only applicable during Temple times, such as laws of sacrifices and many areas of the laws of *tumah* and *tahara* (ritual purity and impurity).

The Rambam intended *Mishnah Torah* to be a final source of halacha, saying that if one studied the work, there would be no need for any other.

Some interpreted this statement as meaning that there was no need for the Talmud, and this created opposition to *Mishnah Torah*. However, the Rambam never intended to supplant the Talmud. Rather, he wanted to make the practical

law available to those who would not necessarily have the opportunity to immerse themselves fully in the study of Talmud.

There was additional controversy over *Mishnah Torah* because the Rambam generally does not specify the sources for his rulings. Many subsequent commentaries on *Mishnah Torah* discuss the sources for the Rambam's rulings.

Mishnah Torah is viewed as the Rambam's magnum opus, and it is one of the most studied works in *batei medrash* through the ages and across the world. Countless works on *Mishnah Torah* have been written and continue to be written, as scholars debate the meaning and intent of the Rambam's precise use of words and grammar, his choice of location of a particular law, and the sources for his decisions.

Mishnah Torah is also a major source for practical halacha. Rabbi Yosef Karo (1488-1575), author of the *Shulchan Aruch* (Code of Jewish Law), generally used the Rambam, along with two other great medieval authorities, the Rif (1013-1103) and the Rosh (1250/1259-1327), as the main sources for his final halachic decisions.