

מעשה אבות ... סימן לבנים

ומה הארץ אשר הוא יושב בה הטובה הוא אם רעה ומה הקרים אשר הוא יושב בהנה הבמחנים אם כמבצרים ... (יג-יב)

In 1946, American scientist Adelbert Ames Jr. invented something called the “Ames room.” An Ames room is a distorted room that creates an optical illusion. When viewed through a peephole, the room appears to have distorted perspective. One of the most interesting effects of an Ames room is that the distorted perspective can make people and objects look much bigger or smaller than they really are. For this reason, Ames rooms are widely used for practical special effects. The Land of Israel is often referred to as the “Ames Room” of the world. It appears to be bigger than it really is.

In the late 1980’s a Chinese teenager made his way to the shores of America. He wanted to raise his education level and decided that the United States of America, the world financial capital, would be the place for him. He was exceptionally bright and he managed to procure a visa for “reasons of higher education” - which was the purpose of his trip.

But he came from a “closed” country, a sheltered environment, and when he arrived in America, he was mesmerized at how advanced this country was compared to the village where he came from. He tried to soak up as much as he could. To overcome the culture and language barrier he was suffering from, someone suggested he read the “highly acclaimed and prestigious New York Times,” as the man put it. It was hard at the beginning, but the more he read the better he got at it.

Almost his entire education came from reading the Times and after a few months, he realized something interesting. The newspaper primarily covers three countries vastly more than any other: the U.S., Russia and Israel. Clearly, he surmised, these must be the dominant countries of the world. Now, America and Russia he had heard of, as they were the two recognized superpowers, and he could understand why there was so much coverage on them. But what was Israel? He had never even heard of it back in China! He took out a map and began scanning for this presumably large and important country. After a few failed attempts to locate it on the map, he made an “educated” guess that Israel was probably Canada, the large country on the northern border of the United States. Probably some people call it by its old name and some people call it by its new name. He never bothered to ask anyone or determine the real answer, so he simply accepted this as fact.

Time went on and after a while, he landed a job at the esteemed firm Lehman Brothers, then considered one of the largest investment banks in the United States. For the first time since his arrival in this country, he began to meet and mingle with all different types of people. One day he met another worker, a religious Jew, and the two struck up a conversation. During the course of the conversation, the Jewish man mentioned that he had just come from Canada.

“Really? So tell me,” asked the young Chinese, “when is this country called Canada and when is it called Israel?”

He was met with a strange look. He tried to reword the question but was met with an even stranger look. Realizing he was mistaken but not knowing exactly what his mistake was, he told the friendly Jewish man of his ordeal and why he concluded that Canada and Israel were the same. If it was always in the news, it must be a large and populous country, no?

“Well,” came the amused reply, “I can understand your thought process, but come let me show you where this ‘world dominant country’ actually lies on the map.”

Ever the one to learn something new, the Chinese fellow followed the Jewish man to the nearest library where they obtained a large detailed map of the world. It had every country in a variety of colors.

The Jewish fellow pointed towards the middle east and said, “Look really close. There it is.”

Assuming he was pointing to Egypt, he was about to ask why was does it say Egypt on the map, instead of Israel, but he bit his tongue; this was becoming quite embarrassing. He was really not comprehending this whole matter.

The Jewish man seemed to pick up on that and pointed directly at a tiny smudge on the map, right off the Mediterranean Sea. “This is Israel,” he smiled. “Go learn some Jewish history and then you’ll understand why the world is busy with it.”

תורת הצבי על הפטרות **A PENETRATING ANALYSIS OF THE WEEKLY HAFTORAH BY AN UNEQUALLED HISTORIAN** **ישלח יהושע בן נון ... הרש לאמר לבו ראו את הארץ ואת יריחו... (יהושע ב-א)**

The *Haftorah* tells us that *Yehoshua Bin Nun* sent two spies to scout out *Eretz Yisroel* prior to the invasion, but they were discovered and only through the help of a woman by the name of Rachav did they manage to escape. The *Navi* tells us that the pair went to spy on “*The land and Yericho*” - implying that the spies were required to scout not only Yericho, but the rest of the country, as well. However, we only find that the spies went to Yericho and then returned to *Yehoshua* with their report.

R’ Dovid Feinstein ז”ל (Kol Dodi) explains the disparity by saying that the attitude of Yericho’s residents was enough to demonstrate the general feeling of the entire Canaanite population. Ordinarily, border cities like Yericho would be

fortified because they would be responsible for protecting the country, so that the inner cities would not have to defend themselves. Accordingly, the spies knew that if the residents of fortified Yericho were confident that they could resist the invaders, the spies would have to proceed to the unfortified towns in the interior to gauge their feelings. However, if even the people of Yericho were afraid of *Klal Yisroel*, then it would be indicative of the terrified feelings of the people in the unfortified cities.

As a result, since even the people of Yericho, despite its walls, were afraid of the invading Jews, it was obvious that the people in the interior were surely afraid, and there was no need for the spies to go any farther.

והתחוקתם ולקחתם מפרי הארץ והימים ימי בכורי ענבים ... (ג-ב)

CONCEPTS IN AVODAS HALEV FROM THE FAMILY OF R' CHAIM YOSEF KOPFMAN ז”ל

מחשבת הלב

Moshe Rabbeinu had instructed the *Meraglim* to take samples of the luscious fruits of *Eretz Yisroel* to show the *Yidden* how beautiful the land is. Instead, they used that very same fruit to do just the opposite and in the end, they spoke derogatorily about the land. It’s brought down from the *Kadmonim* that the *mitzvah* of *bikkurim* serves as a *tikkun*, by showing our eternal love of the land, and therefore, the *bikkurim* are *davka* from the *Shivas Haminim*, משבח הארץ. (See **Rashi** - *Ki Savo*)

My grandfather, **Reb Uri Wiederman**, would always repeat the following *vort* said over in the name of the great **R’ Menachem Ziemba ז”ל Hy”d**. The *Mishnah* in *Bikkurim* (3-1) states: רמון, שביכר, קישור, גפני ואומר הרי אלו בכורים” Why does the *Mishnah* choose figs, grapes, and pomegranates as examples? He answers because these were the three fruits the *Meraglim* took whe they scouted the land. Why though, did they only take three? **R’ Shamshon M’Ostropoli ז”ל** explains based on the **Targum Yonason** who translates the word “והתחוקתם” as, “והעבדון חזקתא,” - you should make a *chazaka*. **R’ Shamshon** quotes the *Gemara* in *Bava Basra* that says regarding a fruit field, if a buyer picks and eats the fruits of three different trees, that effects a *chazaka*, and doesn’t require a *חזקה* of three years to preclude an ownership challenge. Thus, *Moshe Rabbeinu* instructed them to take three types of fruit to show, upon their return, that the land is now ours, and the ownership cannot be contested. Yet, they failed in *Moshe’s* intended mission for them.

Perhaps we can add the following *machshava*: A person who takes his first fruits and presents them to *Hashem*, is essentially showing that *Hakadosh Boruch Hu* is in charge. The *Meraglim*, however, failed to realize this concept and wanted to remain in their exalted positions when entering the Land of Israel. While today we don’t have *bikkurim*, let us hope that our actions reflect our belief of Who is truly in charge and may the **קב”ה** send His *yeshua* as then, to our beloved land and its people.

משל למה הדבר דומה

ותשא כל העדה ויתנו את קולם ויבכו העם בלילה ההוא ... (ד-א) **משל**: **R’ Shraga Feivel Mendlowitz ז”ל**, is credited for reviving *Torah* Jewry in America. He helped build *Yeshiva Torah Vodaath*, founded *Torah Umesorah*, and many more incredible achievements that still live on till today. However, among the many endeavors he envisioned, he believed the transformation of American Jewry depended on the creation of a cadre of teachers who burned with a sense of mission.

He once sent his protege, **Rabbi Alexander Gross ז”ל**, later another of the founders of *Torah Umesorah*, to a distant community for the *Yamim Noraim*. When he returned, **R’ Shraga Feivel** asked him how many *Shabbos* observers he found there. **Rabbi Gross** expressed doubt that there was even one fully *Shomer Shabbos* Jew.

“And when you realized that,” **R’ Shraga Feivel** asked him

in amazement, “didn’t you cry bitterly?”

And then, **R’ Shraga Feivel** let out a cry that only he was capable of emitting, which conveyed his lifelong legacy. Only those capable of crying over the state of American Jewry would be able to change it!

נמשל: The *Torah* tells us that *Klal Yisroel* cried bitterly about their fate of going into the Land of *Eretz Yisroel* - which was completely unjustified and unwarranted. *Hashem* then told them: “Because you cried a baseless cry, I will give you something to cry about.” This is the day of *Tisha B’av*, a day on which we mourn and cry year after year. This is a powerful lesson for us too. How many times do we cry and bemoan senseless things when we ought to see the good and positive path *Hashem* is leading us in? If we would cry over the important things, we would be able to accomplish what *Hashem* really wants from us in this world!

הארץ אשר עברנו בה לתור אתה מוכה הארץ מאד מאד ... (ד-ז)

EDITORIAL AND INSIGHTS ON MIDDOS TOVOS FROM THE WELLSPRINGS OF R’ GUTTMAN - RAMAT SHLOMO

דרגה יתירה

How could the *Meraglim* have come back from *Eretz Yisroel* with an evil report? It is almost impossible to fathom. The answer is that they went in with an evil report in their minds and therefore, they came out with an evil report on their lips!

The spies who were the twelve *Nesi'im* (princes) of *Klal Yisroel*, were afraid that they would lose their position as princes once they entered the Land. They knew that life as they knew it in the *Midbar* would be completely changed. They would lose their exalted status and spiritual standing, as the Jewish Nation would have to live a physical existence, in a land of plowing and harvesting. The *mann* would no longer fall down from the sky and they would not be protected or led by the clouds of glory and pillars of fire. They brought back an evil report because they thought they could change *Hashem’s* plan. They thought they could live a holier and more spiritual life in the *Midbar*. They thought they were smarter than *Hashem*!

A man once said some negative and critical things about *Eretz Yisroel* to **R’ Moshe Lelover ז”ל**. **R’ Moshe** rebuked him and said, “The *Torah* says that the Land of Israel is VERY VERY good! Why are you not seeing it? Because in order to see that *Eretz Yisroel* is very, very good, one must fulfill the words of the *Mishna* (*Avos* 4,4) “Be VERY VERY humble!” When someone is arrogant, he will not be satisfied and will complain about *Eretz Yisroel*. Only someone who is humble will be positive and accepting of the more spiritual dimensions of the Land and less comfortable or convenient situations he is in.”

The *Meraglim* came back with an evil report that *Eretz Yisroel* “devours its inhabitants.” Unfortunately, today, millions of “spies” publicize “evil reports” about our Holy Land. There is non-stop world criticism and as Jews, we must never get caught up in the slander and negativity over Israel. Why should we ever have a bad word to say about *Eretz Yisroel*? We must be VERY VERY careful to be VERY VERY humble and make sure to only say that the Land of Israel is VERY VERY good!