

"The Spies--a Lesson in Values Clarification"

Source #1: A Synopsis of the Story of the Spies - Parshas Beshalach

1 And the LORD spoke unto Moses, saying: 2 **'Send thou men**, that they may spy out the land of Canaan, which I give unto the children of Israel; of every tribe of their fathers shall ye send a man, every one a prince among them.'27 And they told him, and said: 'We came unto the land whither thou sentest us, and surely it floweth with milk and honey; and this is the fruit of it. 28 **Howbeit the people that dwell in the land are fierce, and the cities are fortified, and very great; and moreover we saw the children of Anak there.** 29 **Amalek dwelleth in the land of the South; and the Hittite, and the Jebusite, and the Amorite, dwell in the mountains; and the Canaanite dwelleth by the sea, and along by the side of the Jordan.'** 30 And Caleb stilled the people toward Moses, and said: 'We should go up at once, and possess it; for we are well able to overcome it.' 31 **But the men that went up with him said: 'We are not able to go up against the people; for they are stronger than we.'** 32 And they spread an evil report of the land which they had spied out unto the children of Israel, saying: 'The land, through which we have passed to spy it out, is a land that eateth up the inhabitants thereof; and all the people that we saw in it are men of great stature.

And all the congregation lifted up their voice, and cried; and the people wept that night. 2 And all the children of Israel murmured against Moses and against Aaron; and the whole congregation said unto them: 'Would that we had died in the land of Egypt! or would we had died in this wilderness ! ... 11 **And the LORD said unto Moses: 'How long will this people despise Me? and how long will they not believe in Me, for all the signs which I have wrought among them? 12 I will smite them with the pestilence, and destroy them, and will make of thee a nation greater and mightier than they.'**15 now if Thou shalt kill this people as one man, then the nations which have heard the fame of Thee will speak, saying: 16 **Because the LORD was not able to bring this people into the land which He swore unto them, therefore He hath slain them in the wilderness.....**

20 **And the LORD said: 'I have pardoned according to thy word.** 21 But in very deed, as I live--and all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the LORD-- 22 surely all those men that have seen My glory, and My signs, which I wrought in Egypt and in the wilderness, yet have put Me to proof these ten times, and have not hearkened to My voice; 23 surely they shall not see the land which I swore unto their fathers, neither shall any of them that despised Me see it. ...36 **And the men, whom Moses sent to spy out the land, and who, when they returned, made all the congregation to murmur against him, by bringing up an evil report against the land, 37 even those men that did bring up an evil report of the land, died by the plague before the LORD.**

Source #2 The follow-up of the מעפילים:

לֹט וַיְדַבֵּר מֹשֶׁה אֶת-הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה, אֶל-כָּל-בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל; וַיִּתְאַבְּלוּ הָעָם, מְאֹד.

מ וַיִּשְׁפְּמוּ בְּבֹקֶר, וַיַּעֲלוּ אֶל-רֹאשׁ-הָהָר לֵאמֹר: הֲנִנּוּ, וְעָלִינוּ אֶל-הַמָּקוֹם אֲשֶׁר-אָמַר יְהוָה--כִּי חָטָאנוּ. מֵא וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה, לָמָּה זֶה אַתֶּם עֹבְרִים אֶת-פִּי יְהוָה; וְהוּא, לֹא תִצְלַח. מֵב אֶל-תַּעֲלוּ, כִּי אֵין יְהוָה בְּקִרְבְּכֶם; וְלֹא, תִנְגַּפוּ, לַפָּנִי, אִיבֵיכֶם. מֵג כִּי הָעַמְלֵקִי וְהַכְּנַעֲנִי שָׁם לַפָּנִיכֶם, וַיִּפְּלְתֶם בַּחֲרֹב: כִּי-עַל-כֵּן שָׁבַתֶם מֵאַחֲרֵי יְהוָה, וְלֹא-יְהִיָּה יְהוָה עִמָּכֶם.

מֵד וַיַּעֲפְלוּ, לַעֲלוֹת אֶל-רֹאשׁ הָהָר; וְאֶרֶון בְּרִית-יְהוָה וּמֹשֶׁה, לֹא-מָשׁוּ מִקְרֹב הַמַּחֲנֶה. מֵה וַיֵּרֵד הָעַמְלֵקִי וְהַכְּנַעֲנִי, הַיּוֹשֵׁב בְּהַר הַהוּא; וַיִּכּוּם וַיִּפְּתוּם, עַד-הַחֲרָמָה. {פ}

39 And Moses told these words unto all the children of Israel; and the people mourned greatly. 40 And they rose up early in the morning, and got them up to the top of the mountain, saying: 'Lo, we are here, and will go up unto the place which the LORD hath promised; for we have sinned.' 41 And Moses said: 'Wherefore now do ye transgress the commandment of the LORD, seeing it shall not prosper? 42 Go not up, for the LORD is not among you; that ye be not smitten down before your enemies. 43 For there the Amalekite and the Canaanite are before you, and ye shall fall by the sword; forasmuch as ye are turned back from following the LORD, and the LORD will not be with you.'

44 But they presumed to go up to the top of the mountain; nevertheless the ark of the covenant of the LORD, and Moses, departed not out of the camp. 45 Then the Amalekite and the Canaanite, who dwelt in that hill-country, came down, and smote them and beat them down, even unto Hormah.

Source #3: Rav Avigdor Nebenzhal, Sichot L'Sefer Bamidbar

מחזה נדיר ביותר: העם רוצה לעלות מיד לארץ בה בחר ה' – ומשה רבנו אוסר זאת בשם ה'! היתכן!! ומתי מתרחש דו-שיח זה? – ממש באותו ליל תשעה באב, בו הוסת העם שלא לעלות! (לדעה שהמרגלים מתו מאוחר יותר – הרי שפסוק ל"ז המוסר על מותם, הקדים את המאוחר). ולכאורה, היש לך תשובה גדולה מזו?! מיד לאחר שמשה מוסר להם בשם ה', שחטאים גרם שרק בניהם יכנסו לארץ, מתרחשת התעוררות תשובה עזה בעם! אם נשיב לב,

An unusual sight: The nation wants to immediately go up to the Land that Hashem chose – and Moshe Rabeinu forbids this – in G-d's name?!? Could it be so? And when does this exchange take place? On that night of Tisha B'av, the very night that the people were incited (by the meraglim) not to go up. On the surface of things, was there any greater teshuva than this? Immediately after Moshe informs them that their sin determined that only their children would enter the Land, a tremendous burst of teshuva/repentance takes place!!

Source #4: Rambam, Mishnah Torah, Hilchos Teshvah 2:2

ב ומה היא התשובה, הוא שיעזוב החוטא חטאו ויסירו ממחשבתו ויגמור בלבו שלא יעשהו עוד, שנאמר יעזוב רשע דרכו וגו' (ישעיה נה, ז). וכן יתנחם על שעבר, שנאמר כי אחרי שובי נחמתי (ירמיה לא, יח). ויעיד עליו יודע תעלומות שלא ישוב לזה החטא לעולם (ב), שנאמר ולא נאמר עוד אלהינו למעשה ידינו וגו' (הושע יד, ד). וצריך להתודות בשפתיו ולומר עניינות אלו שגמר בלבו:

2) What exactly is repentance? Repentance involves forsaking sins and removing such thoughts from one's way of thinking and resolving firmly never to do it again, as it is written, "Let the wicked man forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return to the Lord". One should also be remorseful over what one has done, as it is written, "For after I had returned away I repented". One also has to testify to God that one will never return to that sin, as it is written, "...nor shall we say any more to the work of our hands". All of these three declarations have to be made out loud.

- ויתאבלו העם, מאד (חרטה)
- הננו, ועלינו אל-המקום אשר-אמר יהוה (עזיבת החטא)
- כי חטאנו. (וידוי)

Source #5a: The Targum's view of the מעפילים

יְהִיָּה יְהוָה עִמָּכֶם: מִדַּ וַיַּעֲפְלוּ
לְעֹלֹת אֶל-רֹאשׁ הַהָר וְאָרוֹן

בְּסַעֲדָכוֹן: מִדַּ וְאֲרָשְׁעוּ
לְמַסַּק לְרִישׁ טוֹרָא וְאָרוֹן

....and 5b) Moshe's recounting of the incident in chapter one of Devarim:

מִגַּ וְאָדַבַּר אֲלֵיכֶם, וְלֹא שָׁמַעְתֶּם; וַתִּמְרֹוּ אֶת-פִּי יְהוָה, וַתִּזְדוּ וַתַּעֲלוּ הָהָרָה. 43. So I spoke to you, but you did not listen, and you rebelled against the command of the Lord, and you acted wickedly and went up to the mountain.

מִדַּ וַיֵּצֵא הָאֱמֹרִי הַיֹּשֵׁב בְּהָר הַהוּא, לְקִרְאָתְכֶם, וַיִּרְדְּפוּ אֶתְכֶם, כַּאֲשֶׁר תַּעֲשִׂינָה הַדְּבָרִים; וַיִּכְתּוּ אֶתְכֶם בְּשַׁעִיר, עַד-חֶרְמָה. 44. And the Amorites, dwelling in that mountain, came out towards you and pursued you as bees do, and beat you down in Seir, as far as Hormah.

Source #6: Rav Nebenzhal:

וקשה: איך אפשר להתעלם מן הצד החיובי שביסוד מעשיהם? מן הרצון האמיתי, לתקן את חטאם במסירות-נפש של ממש? – והתשובה:

This remains difficult: How is it possible to ignore the positive aspect of their actions – their true desire to rectify their transgression by giving of themselves (to conquer the land)?

Source #7: Back in Parshas Shlach

ל. וַיְהִי כִּלְבָב אֶת הָעָם אֶל מֹשֶׁה וַיֹּאמֶר עֲלֵה וְנַעֲלֶה וַיִּרְשָׁנוּ אֶתְּהָ כִּי יָכוֹל נוֹכַל לָהּ:
לא. וְהָאֲנָשִׁים אֲשֶׁר עָלוּ עִמּוֹ אָמְרוּ לֹא נוֹכַל לַעֲלוֹת אֶל הָעָם כִּי חֲזָק הוּא מִמֶּנּוּ:

30. Caleb silenced the people to [hear about] Moses, and he said, "We can surely go up and take possession of it, for we can indeed overcome it."

31. But the men who went up with him said, "We are unable to go up against the people, **for they are stronger than we**."

Rashi:

חזק הוא ממנו: כביכול כלפי מעלה אמרו

For they are stronger than we: Heb. מִמֶּנּוּ, [which may also be interpreted as, they are stronger than he.] They said this in reference to the most High, as it were, [as if to say that the people are stronger than He. – [Sotah 35a]

Source #8: What was the root of their sin, then?

Rav Nebenzhal:

ארץ ישראל. והלא כולם ידעו שה' אמר שאפשר? – אלא שנקודת החטא הייתה בכך, שהחשיבו את הענקים כגורם עצמאי; כגורם, שהנו מחוץ ליכולת השליטה של ה', ח"ו. לדידם, רצון ה' הוא גורם חשוב מאוד בעולם, אפילו מרכזי, אך יש גורמים נוספים מלבדו, וצריך להתחשב גם בהם כשמביטים על מכלול המציאות.

The point of transgression was that they considered the "giants" an independent force, as a factor outside of Hashem's dominion, G-d forbid. For the spies, Hashem's will is a very important consideration in the world, even central, but there are other considerations outside of Hashem's will, and they have to be taken into consideration when looking at the "big picture".

Source #9: Sefer Shmuel Ch. 15

יח וַיִּשְׁלַח יְהוָה, בְּדָרֶךְ; וַיֹּאמֶר, לֵךְ וְהַחֲרַמְתָּה אֶת-הַחֲטָאִים אֶת-עַמְלֵק, וְנִלְחַמְתָּ בּוֹ, עַד כְּלוֹתָם אֹתָם. יט וְלָמָּה לֹא-שָׁמַעְתָּ, בְּקוֹל יְהוָה; וַתַּעַט, אֶל-הַשָּׁלַל, וַתַּעַשׂ הַרְעָה, בְּעֵינֵי יְהוָה. {ס}

כ וַיֹּאמֶר שְׂאוּל אֶל-שְׂמוּאֵל, אֲשֶׁר שָׁמַעְתִּי בְּקוֹל יְהוָה, וְאַלְכֶּךָ, בְּדָרֶךְ אֲשֶׁר-שָׁלַחְנִי יְהוָה; וְאַבְיָא, אֶת-אַגַּג מֶלֶךְ עַמְלֵק, וְאֶת-עַמְלֵק, הַחֲרַמְתִּי. כא וַיִּקַּח הָעָם מִהַשָּׁלַל צֹאן וּבָקָר, רַאשֵׁי הַחֲרָם, לְזִבְחַ לַיהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם, בְּגִלְגָל. {ס}

כב וַיֹּאמֶר שְׂמוּאֵל, הַחֲפֹץ לַיהוָה בְּעֵלוֹת וּזְבָחִים, כְּשֹׁמֵעַ, בְּקוֹל יְהוָה: הִנֵּה שָׁמַעַ מְזִבַּח טוֹב, לְהַקְשִׁיב מִחֶלֶב אֵילִים. כג כִּי חֲטָאתָ-קִסֵּם מְרִי, וְאַנּוּ וַתִּרְפִּים הַפֶּצֵר: יַעַן, מָאַסְתָּ אֶת-דְּבַר יְהוָה, וַיִּמְאַסְךָ, מִמְּלֶכֶךְ. {ס}

18. And the Lord sent you on a mission, and said, 'Go, and you shall utterly destroy the sinners, the Amalekites, and you shall wage war against them until they destroy them.'

19. Now, why did you not hearken to the voice of the Lord, but you flew upon the spoil, and you did what was evil in the eyes of the Lord?"

20. **And Saul said to Samuel, "Yes, I did hearken to the voice of the Lord. I did go on the mission on which the Lord sent me, and I brought Agag, the king of Amalek alive, and have utterly destroyed the Amalekites.**

21. And the people took from the spoil, sheep and oxen, the best of the ban, to sacrifice to your God in Gilgal."

22. And Samuel said, "Has the Lord (as much) desire in burnt offerings and peace-offerings, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than a peace-offering; to hearken (is better) than the fat of rams.

23. **For rebellion is as the sin of divination, and stubbornness is as idolatry and teraphim.** Since you rejected the word of the Lord, He has rejected you from being a king."