

א ב י ס כ ל ת ו ר א ה !

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Not If, But How

By Lavi Simhi '26

This week's פרשה focuses primarily on the sin of the מרגלים, the spies. משה sent them to go see the land of Israel, and they came back and reported exactly what they saw. So what exactly was their huge sin that led to such a severe punishment, death?! In modern times, the Mossad, for example, sends agents to gather information in places like Iran. Their job is to come back with as many details as possible, just like the מרגלים did. So what exactly did the מרגלים do wrong?

To answer the question, I would like to bring up a story told about Alexander the Great in the גמרא. In the story, Alexander the Great turns to his advisors and tells them that he wants to go to Africa. His advisors respond that he cannot go since the path is blocked by הרי חושך, the mountains of darkness. But Alexander the Great answers: "I did not ask you whether or not I can go, all I asked was how to get there, because I have already decided I am going." In the end, they tell him how to overcome the difficult journey and Alexander makes it to Africa. This story helps us understand the sin of the מרגלים. Like Alexander the Great's advisors, the מרגלים were not sent to decide whether בני ישראל could enter the land of Israel, their job was to only figure out how to conquer the land of Israel. From the moment Hashem said וַיִּתְּרֵם

"אֶת-אֶרֶץ כְּנָעַן אֲשֶׁר-אֲנִי נֹתֵן לְבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל" "and they should scout the Land of כְּנָעַן, which I am giving to בני ישראל, it was decided that בני ישראל would get the land - the only question left was how to enter and take it. Additionally, in the פסוקים it says that they were sent "לְתֹרֵם אֶת-הָאָרֶץ" "to scout the land" (במדבר י"ג:ט"ז), not to give opinions about whether it is possible to take and conquer it. The מרגלים went beyond their mission and ended up in rebellion against Hashem and His promise to the Jewish people. The מרגלים put doubts in the promise of Hashem and that is why they were so severely punished.

The story of the מרגלים teaches us that in life we face many hard challenges that may seem impossible, but the way we approach them makes a huge difference. If we approach them with doubt we will fail, but if we are determined and have a mindset of "this will happen", we will make it and overcome them. Like Alexander the Great said "I did not ask if I could, I only asked how I could get there". If you have already decided you are going to do something and you are fully committed, you will succeed.

Restarting Relationships

By Eyal Levin '26

After the episode of the spies returning from ארץ כנען, the next section begins with Hashem telling משה to give a series of laws to בני ישראל when they enter the land of ארץ כנען, including the חטאת, עולה, זבח, and הפרשת חלה. Why did Hashem say that בני ישראל will go to ארץ כנען right after they were told that only their descendants would make it to the land? It seems Hashem is rubbing it in בני ישראל's faces that they will not make it to the land of כנען themselves. Additionally, why is Hashem telling בני ישראל these specific laws?

The אבן עזרא says that Hashem was trying to console בני ישראל, as they still would enter the land even after rebelling against Hashem. Therefore, Hashem said "כִּי תָבֹאוּ" "when you enter" (במדבר), making sure there was no a question of whether they would enter. The reason Hashem needs to calm them down, is that they had been mourning over their mistake and Hashem needs to present some type of assurance for the future. The אבן עזרא adds that the inclusion of the קרבן חטאת was to show בני ישראל a way that they could make up for their sins. The עולה, and זבח were there because the תורה was already talking about the חטאת.

While בני רמב"ן agrees that Hashem is consoling בני ישראל, he disagrees about the exact nature of the consolation: while the אבן עזרא implies it was just to cheer בני ישראל up, the בני רמב"ן says בני ישראל were genuinely worried that even their descendants will not make it into ארץ ישראל, as they will not be

good. Therefore, Hashem gave specific laws only applicable in the land of ישראל. That is why Hashem commanded them to bring the נסכים, libations, specifically, because while they could bring an עולה or זבח in the desert, they did not bring it with the נסכים until they entered ישראל. Additionally, הפרשת חלה was not practiced in the desert.

We learn from this עזרא אבן the attribute of immediate forgiveness, not through mere words, but action. In order to atone for the sin of the spies, בני ישראל had to give an offering symbolizing dedication and submission to Hashem.

However, the שו"ר בבור gives an entirely different take. He says that Hashem wanted to put the sin of the spies and the subsequent punishment behind Him, as בני ישראל had already mourned, and משה had davened for תשובה. Therefore, to restart their renewed relationship, Hashem commanded בני ישראל to bring sacrifices, as they are considered a pleasant smell and bring joy to Hashem. Hashem is communicating to בני ישראל that they should restart with a loving relationship.

We learn from the שו"ר בבור that we should forgive past wrongs others have committed against us. Additionally, in order to restart a relationship after forgiveness, we must provide a way in which we can learn and grow from the experience.



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EDITORS-IN-CHIEF

Eitan Orkaby '27
Theo Fraenkel '28

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