

SICHA SUMMARY

PROJECT LIKKUTEI SICHOS | 5783 - YEAR OF HAKHEL



Likkutei Sichos, Vol. 23

Shelach, Sicha 1

The Context:

On the cusp of entering the Land of Israel, Moshe and the Jewish people send spies to scout out the land. Introducing this narrative, the Torah states: “G-d spoke to Moshe saying, ‘Send out for yourself men who will scout the Land of Canaan.’” (Bamidbar 13:1-2)

Commenting on the phrase, “send for yourself,” Rashi says, “According to your own understanding. I am not commanding you, but if you wish, you may send.” It was Moshe’s prerogative to send spies or not.

Yet, everything Moshe did, he did as a servant of G-d. His will was always aligned with the Divine will. Indeed, the next verse says, “and Moshe sent them... by the word of G-d.”

The Questions:

1. If G-d desired the mission, then why did He not command it outright, instead

leaving it for Moshe to decide on his own?

2. The men chosen by Moshe were distinguished leaders of the people, how could they have erred so dramatically?
3. The mission was twofold: to investigate the best way to infiltrate and subdue the Cannanites in the country, and to bring back fruit of the land so the Jewish people could see how plentiful and desirable the land was. Why was the second element so crucial, to the point of risking the spies’ lives?

The Explanation:

Although G-d demands unquestioning fealty to His will, He also desires that the human being develop an intellectual and emotional appreciation of His will. We are not only to fulfill G-d’s commands out of simple obedience, but also out of passion.

This was the purpose of the mission of the spies: to allow the people to develop their own feelings for the land, and to find a natural path to conquering it on their own, without openly miraculous intervention. Therefore, G-d did not want to command this mission, because that would defeat the

purpose of it being a human-directed undertaking. Moshe had to come to the conclusion to send spies on his own. This is why retrieving the fruit of the land was important — the entire purpose of the mission was to enable the people to create their own feelings of excitement about the land, to see and feel and understand the beauty of the land G-d had promised them.

This explains the spies' error: they assumed that they were supposed to exercise their intellect independently and arrive at any conclusion that seemed correct to them. Seeing the strength of the inhabitants, they came to the conclusion that there was no natural means of overcoming the enemy, and said, "we cannot ascend." But Moshe had charged them with finding the best possible natural means of conquest available, not with coming to their own conclusions regarding the viability of the mission. They were not wrong in reporting the facts, they were wrong in coming to

their own conclusion that "we cannot ascend."

Thus, they took the mission of using their own intelligence too far, and detached their intellect from a foundation of trust in Moshe. They should have used their trust as a guiding light for their intellect, so that they could assemble some natural tactics for entering the land.

The Lesson:

When using our own intellect in finding our way forward in our mission in this world, it is imperative that our efforts be grounded in absolute trust in "Moshe," the leader of the generation who assigns us our tasks. Relying on our unfettered intellect alone, we will be prone to finding rationalizations excusing us from our mission. We must be totally devoted to Moshe, and allow our inner heart and mind to follow that conviction.
