

# SICHA SUMMARY

## Likkutei Sichos, Vol. 33

*Shelach, Sicha 2*

### The Context:

When ten of the spies Moshe sent to scout the Land of Israel returned with an evil report, G-d bemoaned their sinful behavior: "How much longer will this evil congregation who are causing complaints against Me exist? (Bamidbar 14:27)

Yet, in calling these ten spies an "evil congregation," the Torah incidentally reveals that it is ten men who comprise a quorum for all matters of congregational prayer. This paradox in the revealed law of Torah parallels the mystical reading of the spies. Chassidus explains that the spies' motives were to remain in the desert focused on their spiritual pursuits, divorced from the demands of state-building in the land of Israel. Their mistake was in trivializing the importance of making a home for G-d within the physical world, but their intentions were noble. Thus, they are indeed a "congregation" worthy of the name.

### The Explanation:

In his laws of Repentance, Rambam outlines the ascending stages of proper Divine service, from the merely acceptable to the ideal. In chapter 9 he writes:

"For these reasons, all Israel, in particular, **their prophets and their Sages**, have yearned for the Messianic age so they can rest from the oppression of the gentile kingdoms who do not allow them to occupy themselves with Torah and mitzvot properly. They will find rest and **increase their knowledge in order to merit the World to Come.**" (Hilchos Teshuva 9:2)

This implies that the sages' motivations were to attain the world to come. In the first halacha of chapter 10, he writes:

"A person should not say: "I will fulfill the mitzvot of the Torah and occupy myself in its wisdom in order to receive all the blessings which are contained within it or in order to merit the life of the World to Come... It is not fitting to serve God in this manner. A person whose service is motivated by these factors is considered one who serves out of fear. **He is not on the level of the prophets or of the wise.**" (Ibid, 10:1)

This implies that ideally one should not serve G-d in order to attain the world to come, and that the sages indeed did not serve G-d in this manner. This seems to contradict what Rambam wrote in 9:2. Then in the second halacha of chapter 10, Rambam describes the ideal Divine service:

“One who serves God out of love occupies himself in the Torah and the mitzvot and walks in the paths of wisdom for no ulterior motive: not because of fear that evil will occur, nor in order to acquire benefit. Rather, he does what is true because it is true, and ultimately, good will come because of it.” (Ibid 10:2)

The explanation is as follows: In chapter 9, the sages the Rambam is describing desire the world to come not for its reward, but because it provides them with an ideal setting where they can flourish in their spiritual progress. They desire spiritual attainment and Divine knowledge, and the World to Come is where a soul can accomplish that with ease. This is the category that most “wise men” fall into.

The lofty servant of chapter 10, however, is one “who does what is true because it is true,” there is no desire for spiritual attainment, for drawing closer to G-d. This is a person who has no other desire other

than doing what G-d desires. This is not easily attained, as the Rambam continues: “This is a very high level which is not merited by every wise man. It is the level of our Patriarch, Abraham, whom God described as, “he who loved Me,” for his service was only motivated by love.”

Based on the above, we can categorize the spies as the wise men who desire the ideal setting of the World to Come so that they can progress in their divine service. This is an acceptable aspiration, but it is not the pinnacle of Divine service. Therefore the Jewish people had to remain in the desert for forty years, cultivating their spiritual strengths so that they can eventually attain the ideal level of unconditional service. Once they achieved this level of doing good because it is true, they were able to enter the Land of Israel to build a home for G-d.

Now, even though this level of love is rare, it is possible to achieve the tangible outcome of this love — the fulfillment of physical mitzvos. When we perform mitzvos simply because G-d commanded them, we are mirroring the one who loves good because it is true, we are not seeking spiritual enlightenment, but simply attempting to live with G-d’s commands.

\*\*\*