



DID HASHEM FORCE THE YIDDEN TO ACCEPT THE TORAH?

Shabbos Parshas Nasso, 12 Sivan 5725*

Before Hashem gave the Torah to the Yidden, “He hovered the mountain over them like a barrel.” This created a disclaimer for the Torah—the Yidden could say that they were coerced into accepting it.

But if the Yidden had already joyfully and willingly stated “*Naaseh venishma*” before this occurred, why was this show of force necessary at all?

The answer given is that the Yidden accepted the Written Torah willingly, but they were forced to accept the Oral Torah. Only years later, they accepted the Oral Torah willingly, during the time of the story of Purim.

But the Oral Torah is the explanation of the Written Torah, and it is impossible to properly understand the Written Torah without the Oral Torah. So the Yidden must certainly have accepted the Oral

Torah as well when they said “*Naaseh venishma?*”

The answer lies in a *halacha* in the laws of acquisition: “A person cannot buy something that does not exist.” The Yidden would only receive the Oral Torah along with the second *luchos*, months later, so they could not accept it now, as willing as they may have been. The Written Torah, on the other hand, would be given less than a day later, and the Yidden had already been elevated to the spiritual level required to receive it. So when the Yidden declared “*Naaseh venishma,*” they *could not* have included the Oral Torah in their commitment.

That is why Hashem had to hold the mountain over their heads—in order for them to accept the Oral Torah, which they had not yet committed to.

WHAT SPOOKED THE SPIES?

Sunday, Parshas Shelach, 5725*

By the time they were readying to enter Eretz Canaan, Moshe Rabbeinu knew the Yidden well; very well. He was their leader and was familiar with their every character trait. When it came time to select the *meraglim*, he certainly chose the 12 most suited men

for the task, men who would be sure to bring back a positive, optimistic view of the land and the Yidden’s ability to conquer it. Indeed, Rashi confirms that “at that time, they were good”—the *meraglim* were indeed the best candidates for the job.



PHOTO: JEM/THE LIVING ARCHIVE / 04489

לע"נ
הרה"ח ר' יצחק נח ע"ה בן האדמו"ר
משה מנחם מענדל מסלאנים ע"ה
סילווער
גלב"ע ח"י סיון ה'תשמ"ב
הרה"ת ר' בנימין זאב ע"ה בן יבלחט"א
הרה"ת ר' אברהם יוסף שיחי סילווער
גלב"ע כ"ב סיון ה'תשע"ג
תנ"צ'בה'
נדפס ע"י הרה"ת ר' אברהם יוסף
וזוגתו מרת צב' הינדא שיחיו
סילווער

So why were 10 of them scared off as soon as they got there, returning with a thoroughly negative report, and convincing the Yidden not to enter the land?

What's more, the Yidden knew about the land and its inhabitants well in advance. In the *shira* at the sea, they sang, "The inhabitants of Canaan trembled." The existence of 31 kings could not have come as a surprise then—they knew about *all* the inhabitants of the land.

What spooked the *meraglim*?

The Alter Rebbe explains in *Likkutei Torah* that the *meraglim*—precisely *because* they were "good people"—were of the opinion that the Yidden should stay in the desert, where they did not need to occupy themselves with their material needs and could focus on learning Torah and doing mitzvos. Why give this all up and go to a land where they would have to spend so much time plowing and planting, buying and selling.

That explains why Moshe could pick people who were *tzaddikim*, but would nevertheless advocate against conquering the land.

But still, at the time that they were selected, they already knew what entering the land entailed. They were already aware that they would have to occupy

themselves with *gashmiyus*, and clearly, they were ready for that—they were "good people." What changed their minds once they got there?

Seeing it.

The *Chachamim* tell us that "hearing isn't the same as seeing." They had heard about the challenges of living in the land and thought they could face them, but once they *saw* the land—they saw the physical and spiritual challenges settling in the land would entail—their confidence disappeared, and they were cast into doubt.

The lesson we can learn from this is:

Often, while we're still in yeshiva or in school, we make a firm resolution to never be intimidated by the challenges presented in *olam hazeh*. But then when we reach the world outside, the challenges seem overbearing and we may feel the urge to just run away instead of facing our real mission. This story teaches us that we need only to trust in Hashem and remember that as long as we follow His will, He will fight for us. Ultimately, we will be victorious!

(*Sunday Parshas Shelach 5725—to the graduates of Beis Rivka and counselors of Camp Emuna; Likkutei Sichos vol. 8, p. 289*)