



DIVREI MENACHEM

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A Message That Matters!

Hashem tells us we are stiff-necked people. Indeed, we can be stubborn, rebellious, ungrateful, and short-sighted, such that so soon after “Har Sinai,” we worship a “golden calf.”

When we behave in ways inconsistent with Hashem’s will, we tend to rationalize our actions, for it is hard to recognize and accept our omissions. Moreover, in the face of castigation for our misdemeanors, we will likely retreat into any number of justifications.

In this week’s Parsha, Moshe dwells on several issues, including preparing the people for entry into Eretz Canaan and life in the “New World.”

In part, Moshe focuses on the spies whose report invoked fear and terror among the people. On the surface, the people had good reason to cry after hearing that “*there, we saw a people stronger and taller than we, great cities fortified to the heavens...and giants!*” (Devarim 1:28).

Logic and reason would posit that there was no way an inferior Israelite army could defeat those well-fortified Canaanite giants. However, for their misgivings, rationalizations, and lack of faith in Hashem, the people paid a forty-year extremely high price!

Now, asks Jon Levine – in a short but incisive comment on Moshe’s description of the spies in this Parsha – would the people still fail to believe in God and cower in fear as the conquest of Canaan drew near? And how would Moshe broach the subject to his nervous flock?

Levine points out that when Moshe prepared the people to attack Canaan, he used the precise terminology the scouts had previously used (see above). Thus, in his words, Moshe had told the people, “*Go and dispossess nations, greater...than you, cities fortified to the heavens, a people great and tall, the giants*” (ibid 9:1-2).

So, rather than ranking out the people and arguing that the spies’ report was exaggerated and their claims irrational, Moshe recreates the spies’ language to the letter – *seemingly validating their plaint!* But no! By using the spies’ vernacular and familiar prose, Moshe assuages his doubting listeners. Now they were on the same wavelength.

And now, Moshe could more easily tell his wayward flock not to worry – because not they, but Hashem was fighting their wars (cf. ibid 9:3-4).

If only our leaders and foes alike would imbibe that message. And, for our part, may we be deserving today that Hashem will so deliver our enemies into our hands.

Shabbat Shalom. ■

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