



PhiloTorah D'var Torah

Takes a Licking and Keeps on Ticking

78 p'sukim of Parshat Sh'lach's 119 p'sukim (around 2/3 of the sedra) deal with CHEIT HAMERAGLIM - the Sin of the Spies - from G-d's 'suggestion' that Moshe send the Meraglim, if he (Moshe) so chooses, to their names and status in the nation, to their 'assignment', to their 40-day 'tour' of the Land, to their report to Moshe and Aharon and all the People, to their attempt (successful, sadly) to discourage the people from journeying to the Promised Land, to Kalev's brave and inspiring words (which were not heeded, sadly), to the bitter crying of the adult male population, to their demanding new leaders who would take them back to Egypt, to G-d's 'anger' and intention to destroy the nation, to Moshe's 'convincing' G-d to relent on that plan, to the decree to wander in the Midbar for a total of 40 years, during which the adult male population would die out, to the Divine 'execution' of the Ten Meraglim, to the failed attempt to 'repent' and go to the land, against G-d's and Moshe's objection.

(That was a run-on sentence by which my eighth grade English teacher, Mrs. Ruth Silver, would have been appalled - but, that's how the 78 p'sukim read.)

The title of this PTDT is from the old Timex watch commercials, extolling the durability of their watches.

It came to mind as I reviewed Parshat Sh'lach, because the Sin of the Spies certainly resulted in a licking, by the immediate deaths of the 10 Meraglim, by the decree against the generation of the Wilderness - DOR HAMIDBAR, and by G-d's praise of Yehoshua and Kalev for their faithfulness to His Promises.

It is not for us to judge that generation - the Mishna in Sanhedrin (10:3) gives us a machloket (disagreement) between Rabi Akiva, who says that Dor HaMidbar has no share in the World to Come, and Rabi Eliezer who says they were righteous people who entered into the Covenant with G-d at Sinai. Not our place to judge them and pick sides in this machloket.

But we can look around in our own time and see that - very sadly - the Sin of the Spies - KEEPS ON TICKING.

Commentaries suggest that the ten meraglim, men of high standing in Israel, preferred to remain in the Midbar where their physical needs - water, food, clothing, protection from the elements - were met by G-d's miracles, freeing the people to live Torah lives in a pristine environment without the toil that would ensue upon entering the Land.

The multitude wanted to return to the 'good life' in Egypt.

We see both these attitudes alive and

well in our own time.

Ever hear a fellow Jew say: We have everything we need for a full Jewish life here in (fill in your choice of a wonderful Jewish community in Chutz LaAretz)?

That is CHEIT HAMERAGLIM alive and well over three thousand years since the first Meraglim and the people who were panicked by them.

Ever hear a prominent rabbi boast of his contribution to Torah and its adherence as a justification of his remaining in the Midbar (GALUT)?

A Jew who knows in his heart - and actually says so out loud - that he belongs in Eretz Yisrael, as all Jews do - BUT -

That BUT can be the serious issues of parnassa (livelihood), of the perceived abandonment of elderly parents, or children and grandchildren they do not want to leave behind... I hear that. I would not categorize such fellow Jews as modern-day meraglim.

Nor would I criticize others for whatever reason - good or not so good - for not coming on Aliya or at least planning it for their future.

My criticism is directed at those who told me that I was crazy to come on Aliya. To the ones who say - Israel isn't for every Jew. Israel isn't for me.

Cheit HaMeraglim - alive and well.

If that is so, then it is also so that the call

of Kalev and the words of Kalev and Yehoshua are alive and well today.

"Kalev silenced the people to [hear about] Moshe, and he said, 'We can surely go up and take possession of it, for we can indeed overcome it.' ... They (Yehoshua and Kalv) spoke to the entire congregation of the children of Israel, saying, 'The land we passed through to scout is an exceedingly good land. If HaShem desires us, He will bring us to this land and give it to us, a land flowing with milk and honey.'" (Bamidbar 13:30, 14:7-8)

That's what they said so long ago. Do you side with them? Do you echo their words? Do you, who live here already, share their sentiments with your family and friends who are not yet here?

If so, there can finally be kapara, atonement for Cheit HaMeraglim; it isn't too late. **PTDT**

P.S. I want to be clear that even those with various reasons that they don't live in Israel, should at least feel that they are missing something vital in their Torah life. I don't criticize those who are not here (yet), only those who don't consider living in Eretz Yisrael as a significant aspect of Torah Life.

P.P.S. Here's a quote attributed to Margaret Mead: "It may be necessary temporarily to accept a lesser evil (or a less ideal situation - ed.), but one must never label a necessary evil as good (as ideal - ed.)."