



PhiloTorah D'var Torah

Juxtapositional Mitzvot & Topics

Parshat Sh'lach has 119 p'sukim in three p'rakim (Bamidbar 13,14,15) of 33, 45, and 41 p'sukim respectively.

The first two p'rakim - 78 p'sukim, just about 2/3 of the sedra, consists of the devastating episode of the Meraglim. Included are the details of their instruction, the tour of the Land, their report to the People and the panic it incited, the insufficient attempt by Kalev and Yehoshua to convince the People to have faith and confidence in G-d that what He is giving us is truly good AND doable. Then the deaths of the ten Meraglim and the decree that the adult male population was to die out during the 40 coming years (actually, it was less than 39 years from this point). And we also read about the failed attempt to go forward to the Land after having declared that they had sinned.

As often as one reads/hears/learns the two chapters of Sh'lach, one cannot help but be mortified each time by what happened and the long-term ramifications of the Meraglim fiasco.

And then comes perek 15. Forty-one

p'sukim. Including the three mitzvot counted from the sedra, a number of other mitzvot which are counted elsewhere, another "episode". The whole perek and its contents could possibly be studied on its own, but it seems pretty obvious that it is all to be understood in the shadow of the Cheit HaMeraglim.

Let's look at the topics of Bamidbar 15 one at a time.

First topic is the Menachot (flour and oil) and N'sachim (wine of libation) that were to accompany most Korbanot. Important to note that this topic is found elsewhere in the Torah and not counted among the Taryag mitzvot in Sh'lach. That entitles us to ask, why is it here.

The parsha begins with - When you will enter the Land of Israel... Take it as a message from G-d, that as angry as He was about Cheit HaMeraglim and as close as He got to destroying the people completely, and as serious as the consequences were for the sin of the spies - He still intends to bring us into Eretz Yisrael. The parsha continues - When you will offer korbanot in the Mikdash - Yes, says HaShem, you will come to the Land and I will still accept your offerings. Don't think that you will be entering the Land only because of promises I made to your Avot. It is you that will not only continue Temple service, but the M'nachot and N'sachim will be

REI'ACH NICH'O'ACH LASHEM, a pleasing fragrance to HaShem. What a comforting message to a people that were utterly depressed after the decree of their dying out in the course of 40 years.

This is followed in the Torah by the mitzva of Challah. (Possible) message - true, the manna will cease when you enter the Land, but there will be many mitzvot that will help you spiritualize the physical necessity of eating.

Next comes a review of the korban Chatat for inadvertent sinning. Sometimes, it will be the errors of your leaders for which they will offer a Chatat on behalf of the whole community and sometimes each person will be liable on his own and have to bring a Chatat Yachid.

Nothing counted here - so what's it doing here? Perhaps it give us food for thought. He was faulted for the Sin of the Spies. The ten spies were struck dead in a plague. Maybe it was the leaders who panicked the people that are the guilty ones. But the whole adult male population was also punished. Makes you think.

Next we find the strange case of the Wood Gatherer. An individual who publicly violated Shabbat. And he was executed for it. Another reminder that there are communal sins and individual sins.

Finally, the sedra ends with what

became the third passage of Sh'ma. The mitzva of Tzitzit is presented.

Without going into too much detail, with Challah representing mitzvot that have to do with food, Tzitzit represents mitzvot related to clothes. Another human necessity that is elevated by the Jew with the mitzvot of Tzitzit, head covering, modesty in dress.

In this Tzitzit passage we also find the untimed, 24/7 prohibition of not following the negative temptations of heart and mind. This is definitely a stand-alone mitzva but it also can cause us to reflect about the meraglim of way back then as well as the same mindset that is sadly alive and well in our time.

The final pasuk of Parshat Sh'lach, when said in the Sh'ma and with focused kavana, is a fulfillment of the mitzva to remember the Exodus all the days of our lives. And not just the Exodus itself, but that it was HaShem who took us out.

Sh'lach gives us a lot to ponder and a lot to act and improve upon. **PTDT**