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“Unfortunately, for some people, a good scapegoat is nearly as welcome as a solution to their problem!”

(1) מגילה כ: (2) ברכות ב: (3) הכל נמצא בבית יוסף
או"ח י"ח (4) מטה אפרים תריט: (5) כף החיים
רסב:כד (6) קלא"ז (7) או"ח יח:ט

מעשה אבות סימן לבנים

ולמה ה' מביא אתנו אל הארץ הזאת לנפל בחרב נשינו וטפנו יהיו לבו הלוא טוב לנו שוב מצרימה וגו' (יד-ג)

When the Jews announced that it would be better to die in the desert or go back to Egypt, than enter the Promised Land, they were in fact rebelling against the very word of *Hashem*. This wasn't anymore about the state of the Land but rather these former righteous men were denying their faith in the Almighty who promised a “*Land flowing with milk and honey*.” When a person decides that he “knows better” then *Hashem* and makes alternative plans, he renounces his faith and belief in *Hakadosh Boruch Hu*. If *Hashem* says that *Eretz Yisroel* is the land for the Jewish People, than who are these spies to decide otherwise?

Grand Island is a 27-square-mile parcel of land located midway between Buffalo and Niagara Falls in Western New York State. Grand Island is also the site of the first modern-day attempt to establish a national Jewish homeland, outside of the Land of Israel. At the root of this unlikely scheme is a man by the name of Mordechai Manuel Noah. Born in Philadelphia in 1785, Noah gained notoriety as U.S. Consul in Tunis, Sheriff of New York and editor of a half-dozen newspapers. A skilled orator, he became chief spokesman of the 30,000-member American Jewish community, where he pushed strongly for a Hebrew education.

In his extensive travels throughout Europe and North Africa, Noah observed the persecution of the Jews and called for “a new fatherland where Jews will be free to preserve their nationality.” The Land of Israel, inhabited by hostile Arabs, seemed like an unrealistic site to settle Jews, and Noah saw a temporary alternative in Grand Island. It was an ideal site for industry, surrounded by hydroelectric power and situated close to the Erie Canal trade routes. Besides, the island was largely uninhabited except for some American Indians - whom Noah disingenuously considered to be “descendants of the Ten Lost Tribes.”

With full alacrity, Noah proceeded boldly with his plans. In 1820, he petitioned the New York State legislature for rights to Grand Island, and later levied a “redemption tax” upon each Jew in the world.

Reports of Noah's scheme appeared in newspapers from London to Moscow. Jewish leaders, most notably the chief rabbis of Paris and London, responded by demanding proof of Noah's authority, and sarcastically asked to see the prophetic text which named a swampy island in the Niagara River as the spot for Israel's redemption. Noah responded simply that America, “under the influence of freedom,” provided the best conditions for a modern Jewish state.

Undaunted by mounting criticism, Noah proceeded to purchase land on Grand Island and sponsored a celebration to dedicate the new Jewish state. A ceremony was held consecrating the Jewish Homeland, on September 12, 1825. Noah delivered a long-winded speech, in which he made it clear that Grand Island was to be only a temporary gathering place, until the Jews could return to Zion. The event was marked by a program of Psalms and Noah, dressed in a crimson judicial robe, named his new colony “Ararat,” in recognition of an earlier Noah who had landed his ark on Mount Ararat. Ever the theatrical showman, Noah also sponsored the sailing of a sizeable real ark filled with wild western animals, all the way from Buffalo to New York City. To climax the affair, a sandstone monument was inscribed, and a parade was held through the streets of Buffalo, complete with a 24-gun salute.

After this auspicious beginning, however, the dream of Ararat was soon but a memory. With little support for his grand plan, Noah left town in disgrace, eventually accepted a judgeship in New York City, married a wealthy Jewish woman and forgot about Grand Island. Yet, he continued to fight for the revival of a Jewish homeland, this time in the Land of Israel, and remained dedicated to this goal until his death in 1851.

משל למח הדבר רומח

ועבדי כלב עקב היתה רוח אחרת עמו וימלא אחרי וכו' (יד-כד)

משל: A simple villager once purchased a watch in the big city and brought it home as a gift to his family. All the neighbors came over to marvel at the new innovation and one lady became very jealous. She ran to her husband and complained, “How come you don't get me a watch also?”

He laughed. “Silly woman. Why would I want a watch like that that tells me what to do? When I want to eat, I eat. When I want to sleep, I sleep. I'm not dependant on a silly clock to decide for me when I have to do things!”

The lady thought this was brilliant and ran back to her neighbor who just got the watch. “See, now you are a slave to this silly little device. How foolish of you to constrain yourself all day!” She laughed and taunted her neighbor.

But the neighbor shot right back. “Hah, I'm much smarter than that! The watch-maker taught me how to turn the dials to set the watch. So you see, I'm no slave. If I want to eat lunch, all I do is turn the dial to the afternoon hours and I sit down to eat. In fact, I control the watch, not vice versa!”

הארץ אשר עברנו בה לתור אתה ארץ אוכלת יושביה היא וגו' (יג-לב)

When the *Meraglim* - Spies, came back and reported on their findings, they described the Land of Israel as: ארץ “*A land that devours its inhabitants*.” Rashi explains that wherever they went, they found people burying their dead. In actuality, *Hashem* had made this happen for the spies' benefit, so that the inhabitants would be otherwise occupied and not notice the spies. This being the case, ask many of the *Meforshim*, what was the sin of the spies? Surely what they were saying was in fact the truth; they did indeed see many funerals going on.

The famed **Kotzker Rebbe, R' Menachem Mendel Morgenstern ZT”L**, explains that not everything that is merely “not a lie” - is the truth. A person can describe a specific item or incident the way he or she sees it, and it would not necessarily be called a truth. Yet, at the same time, it is not a lie either. A real man of truth looks at not only what his eyes behold; he looks at what is beyond the surface, searching for the depth of the matter.

The spies allowed themselves to be misled by the external appearance of the natural world, despite all the promises given by *Hashem* that He would bring them to the Land. But the faith of *Klal Yisroel* does not depend upon what their eyes see. This was the essence of the sin of the spies. What they spoke could not be called lies, but it also wasn't the absolute truth. They failed to attain a deeper understanding of what was going on. When they saw people burying their dead, they thought it was characteristic of the Land, but they didn't see that *Hashem* orchestrated these events for their benefit, in order that they should not be discovered. On the other hand, only Yehoshua and Kalev were able to perceive what was really going on.

EDITORIAL AND INSIGHTS
ON THE WEEKLY MIDDAH OF...

שמה בתלך

TORAH GEMS

ועתה יגדל נא כח אדני כאשר דברת לאמר. ה' ארץ אפים ורב חסד (ד-ה)

The *gemara* (סנהדרין קיא) relates how Moshe begged for mercy on behalf of the Jewish People. Earlier, when Moshe had gone up to the Heavens to receive the *Torah*, he found the Almighty writing the words, “ה' ארץ אפים, *Hashem, slow to anger*.” This, he was told, applies to the righteous and to the wicked and it will come in handy at a later time. That later time was when Moshe prayed for mercy after the sin of the Golden Calf and the Spies. Now, he realized that only through the mercy and slowness to anger of *Hashem*, could the Nation survive the decrees issued against them.

What is interesting to note, is that unlike by the sin of the Calf, when Moshe added the word “אמת” to his *Tefillah* (“ארץ אפים ורב חסד ואמת”), by the sin of the spies, he consciously deleted this word entirely. **R' Yosef Sholom Elyashiv Shlit’a** quotes the **Zohar** to explain that *Hashem* looks to forgive *Bnei Yisroel* only with those *middos* that the people themselves maintain. However, when the spies spoke lies and words of deceit against the Holy Land, and by extension, *Hashem* Himself, there was no way that *Hashem* could employ the attribute of *Emes* - truth, to find forgiveness for the people, and thus, the word “אמת” was deliberately left out of Moshe's prayers.

On a lighter note, it is told that in Vienna, there was once a rabbi who was far from G-d-fearing and honest, and even his congregants knew it. One time on *Shabbos*, the *chazan* neglected to follow the normal custom to wait until the rabbi finished *Krias Shema* before continuing the prayers.

The rabbi was incensed and demanded to know why the *chazan* didn't wait for him to finish with the word “אמת”.

The *Chazan* shrugged. “If we had to wait until you reached אמת' (truth), it could take a very long time.....!”

דרגה יתירה

FROM THE WELLSPRINGS OF
R' GUTTMAN - RAMAT SHLOMO

ועשיתם אשה לה' עולה או זבח ... לעשות ריח ניחוח לה' וכו' (טז-ג)

Once upon a time there was a leaf on an old maple tree that was extremely unhappy. “If only I could fly and be free, rather than be stuck forever to this tree,” it thought. “I would explore new places, see interesting sights, experience life. *Hashem*, if only I could fly.” So *Hashem* brought a strong gust of wind, which detached the leaf from the maple tree. Up, up it flew, higher and higher, faster and faster. The little leaf was overcome with joy at its good fortune. At last it could fly. Then, as the wind died down, the little leaf dropped to the ground, and without its source of sustenance, it shriveled up and died.

The quest for total pleasure is a never-ending battle, and the results, are short lived. The only truly wealthy person is one who is satisfied. One who has inner peace and enjoys what he has. One who is so involved in material pursuits that it overtakes his life, is nothing but a pitiful pauper. The **Chofetz Chaim ZT”L** says that there is no greater poverty than this.

One's lot in life constitutes the tools *Hashem* has given him for the role he is expected to play. Some need financial wealth, possibly to function as distributors of *Hashem's* funds; others need poverty to achieve the personal growth that is born out of adversity. Only *Hashem* knows who needs which tools. Although one may view another's possessions or talents as better or more valuable than his own, he must remember that he personally would likely have no use for them. Wanting to obtain what belongs to another, or desiring to be what another person is, can be compared to the leaf on the maple tree who thought he could fly. All you're doing is setting yourself up for a fall! Don't worry just be happy!