

THE MERAGLIM (SPIES) - AND NISHMAS

Parshas Shelach

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A popular notion is often heard that life begins at forty. A more correct account may claim in all of life a total of forty meaningful years, the forty years from adulthood to the age of sixty, which are most exuberant, ambitious and intense.

In Parshas Bechukosai the Torah enumerates various monetary contributions to the Beth Hamikdosh based on the age of the contributor. Twenty to sixty of age is considered the physical prime. [This does not contradict the Talmudic statement: "Torah scholars the older they become the more they grow in wisdom" (Shabos 152a). The optimum of the earlier forty years relates to the physical realm].

Such a viewpoint, forty years representing a complete life cycle, may serve as a clue to a significant numerical calculation.

Moshe studied Torah on Sinai from the Al-mighty for forty days. This number may represent forty years in miniature. Indeed the awesome depth and breadth of Torah which Moshe acquired in forty days took him forty years to bequeath to the Israelites.

The Talmud relates (Chagigah 5b) there was a student who would walk to the academy a distance which took him three months. He started the journey after Pesach, stayed at the academy for one day, and returned home to spend Succoth with his family. They called him a "student for a day". Though this designation was meant as a humorous description of the man, it was not meant to slight him. It was to demonstrate the power of Torah study for even one day of the year, giving sufficient inspiration and intellectual stimulation to last for a year. This insight is used in the Talmud to explain the fairness of the

judgment decreed upon the Israelites for the iniquities of the Meraglim (spies). The Meraglim Moshe sent to the Land of Israel spent there forty days before they came back with their discouraging report. The retribution for their lack of faith was to remain in the desert for forty years. For every day in the land of Israel a year in exile in the desert (Bamidbar 14:34). The Talmud derives from this extraordinary "measure for measure" that living in sin for one day, too, is regarded as committing sin the whole year.

The actual phrase in the Chumash is "Yom Lashono", which literally means "a day for a year." According to the harsh punishment of a year for a day the phrase should have been "Shono Layom". However, the emphasis here is on the great importance of each day spent in the Holy Land and the unusual opportunities of Kedusha and encounters of religious ecstasy in Eretz Yisroel where "Yom Lashono" one day is worth a whole year. "The air of the Land of Israel scintillates wisdom" (Bovo Basra 158b).

The calendar of Torah life is more than a calculation of the total number of observances or of Talmud pages studied. It is a computation of the sum total of days which Torah is observed and studied. Every day thirsts for its sustenance. Every day craves for its spiritual nourishment. The total of three hundred sixty five restrictive Mitzvoths thus correspond to three hundred days of the year according to the Rabbis. (Tanchuma Parshas Saisai) to emphasize the co-relation between the Torah and the yearly cycle. A day elapsing without Torah study causes a missing link that perturbs the entire cosmic mechanism.

Still, one ventures to "dig" further to understand this phenomenal retribution (a year for a day): This number, 365, (the number of days in the year's cycle) is fundamental in corresponding to the human body. So is taught in the Talmud (Makos 23b): "613 mitzvos (Taryag) were given to Moshe, 365 negative laws ("do not") corresponding to 365 days of the

year's cycle. The Zohar (Vayishlach 170b) states it also corresponds to the 365 "gidim", sinews, in the human body, and 248 positive laws ("to do") corresponding to the "Remach Eivrim", 248 organs in the human body.

Thus, a Jew may express his fidelity and allegiance to Hashem with his hand, just one organ of his body, through which he manifests the feeling of all other organs. ["It happened that when Moshe raised his hand, Israel overpowered the enemy" (Shemos 17:11). "The prayer of my hands at the afternoon MINCHA" (Tehilim 141:2). "Your words radiate light to my leg" (Tehilim 119:105).]

This level of devotion to Hashem, when one is inspired to focus on each organ of his body, to anatomize his own physique and thank Hashem Taryag (613) fold is the fulfillment of the passage "Umibsofi" from my own flesh, I see my Creator (Iyov 19:26). The eyes that can see, the ears that can hear, the feet that can walk, the brain that can think, etc.

It takes a visit to a Rehabilitation Center and witnessing the hours spent with trained physical therapists to bring back to health that organ, that particular muscle. Dozens of expensive machinery help to exercise a particular sinew or fiber one is seldom aware of in healthy conditions.

Eretz Yisroel is blessed with special vision to see not only the whole, the totality of combined particulars, but also the detail, and comprehend its depth. "A land that Hashem Your G-d seeks out, the eyes of Hashem are always upon it, from the beginning of the year to year's end" (Devorim 11:12). Now if the Torah testifies that Hashem is ALWAYS "TOMID" watchful of Eretz Yisroel, what is the meaning of the added words "from the beginning of the year to the year's end"?

The answer, however, should now be obvious. For as the Zohar, above, taught us, the 365 days of the year correspond to the 365 sinews of the human body which in turn corresponds to the 365 negative laws (and 248 organs corresponding to the 248 positive laws). The divine

watchfulness for the welfare of Eretz Yisroel, then, is conditioned on our heeding the 365 negatives and 248 positives, with every fiber in our bodies.

It is logical, thus, that in Eretz Yisroel in particular one attains the capacity of anatomy. Each day in Eretz Yisroel provides the opportunity of 365 particulars, the equivalent of 365 days of the entire year. The failure of the Meraglim each day (of the forty days) was really the failure of 365 days of lost opportunity. "Yom Lashono", a day for a year, a day was meant opportunities of 365 days. The harsh result: forty years in the Midbar.

On Shabos and Yom Tov we recite NISHMAS following the Shira. What is the connection? The Shira concludes with the hope and promise of Eretz Yisroel. "You will bring them and implant them on the mount of Your heritage, the foundation of Your dwelling place, that You, Hashem, have made, the Sanctuary that Your hands established".

There, in the Mikdosh, as well as in all Eretz Yisroel, it was asserted, a Jew can focus upon every organ, every fiber of his being and relate it to Hashem. This is NISHMAS: "Therefore, the organs that You set within us, and the spirit and soul that You breathed into our nostrils, and the tongue that You placed in our mouth - all of them shall thank and bless, praise and glorify... Your name. Every knee shall bend to You, every spine shall prostrate itself before You, all hearts fear You, all innermost feelings and thoughts shall sing praises to Your name. Each organ, each sinew, a vital instrument in the orchestra singing Shira to Hashem.

