



ALTHOUGH COMMANDED TO TAKE OF THE FRUITS, CALEB & JOSHUA DID NOT. THEY REALIZED WHAT MOSES DID NOT; THE CORRUPT SPIES WOULD USE THESE STRANGELY LARGE FRUITS TO MOBILIZE SUPPORT FOR THEIR REBELLION. THUS, CALEB & JOSHUA WERE CORRECT TO THINK RATIONALLY FOR THEMSELVES, EVEN OPPOSING MOSES. —Rabbi Reuven Mann

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**Weekly Parsha**

## Shelach

RABBI BERNARD FOX

**“They will not see the land that I promised to their forefathers. All that anger Me will not see it.” (BeMidbar 14:23)**

Where should we live? Are we obligated to live in Israel? True, there may be legitimate reasons for not picking up tomorrow and moving. But should we have as a personal objective relocating – at

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# THE SPIES

RABBI MENDY FEDER

In order to understand the story of the Meraglim we must first examine the nature and cause of their sin. A careful analysis of the story raises many perplexing questions that demand explanation. A proper appreciation of the story will teach us some very important lessons, which can help us in perfecting our own behavior and our relationship with our Creator.

We must first investigate the motivation behind the mission of the Meraglim. Rashi remarks that Bnei Yisrael initially proposed the mission. Moshe was ambivalent about this proposition. On the one hand he understood Bnei Yisrael's need to scout the land, but apparently recognized a latent danger in the operation. Moshe was perplexed, and accordingly sought counsel from God. What was Moshe's concern? A strong case could be made that the mission made absolute sense. Judaism demands that a person be proactive and behave in accordance with his intellect. To sit back and expect God to take care of one's needs is a distorted, infantile idea of bitachon – trust in God. True bitachon demands the individual utilize his tzelem Elokim, his mind, to act rationally and to take security only in his recognition of the ultimate reality. The people wanted to know about the land that they were going to conquer. The spies were the nobility of the Jewish people, men of distinction and leaders of the people. They felt that a scouting mission was essential to properly plan an attack. Did not Yehoshua ultimately send scouts prior to entering the

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## Weekly Parsha

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land 40 years later? How was the action of the Meraglim any different? What bothered Moshe about this mission and what was the nature of his concern?

In order to identify and properly understand the dangers of the mission we must scrutinize the entire sequence of events. A thorough analysis, based on the comments of Chazal, gives rise to many questions, the resolution of which may help us comprehend the underlying sin of the spies.

The spies, upon returning, reported their findings to the entire Jewish people. One of their conclusions was that Eretz Yisrael was "eret ochelet yosheveha," (Bamidbar 13:32) a land that consumes its inhabitants. Rashi explains that the scouts reported that wherever they went they encountered an inordinate number of funerals. This, they felt, reflected the fact that it was a difficult and treacherous land to settle. Rashi explains that the spies failed to perceive the good intent of God's actions. God chose to distract the inhabitants so that they would not pay any heed to the spies, thereby removing any element of danger from the mission. The Gemara in Sotah 35a adds that the residents of the land were at the funeral of Iyov, who protected that generation. Nevertheless the spies did not appreciate this Divine assistance. Calev and Yehoshua, on the other hand, recognized and appreciated this kindness of God. They reported to the people, "sar tzelem me'aleihem" (ibid. 14:9) God has removed his shade, his protection, from the peoples of the land. Rashi tells us that Calev and Yehoshua were referring to Iyov, their protector, whom God had killed. As such, the inhabitants of the land were now vulnerable to being destroyed.

We must pause and ask: what do the Gemara and Rashi mean? Are they positing that Iyov lived at this time? Furthermore, why were the other spies so blinded to God's helpful hand?

After reporting their findings the spies rallied the people and incited them to complain against Moshe and Aharon. The people said, "let us appoint a new leader to and return to Egypt" (ibid. 14:4). The Gemara in Sanhedrin 107b states that the language of, "nitnah rosh – appoint us a leader" is "lashon avodah zarah – an expression that connotes idolatry." This comment is difficult to understand. What is the connection between Bnei Yisrael's fear of entering the land and idolatry?

Calev and Yehoshua did not participate in the sin of the other spies. In order to help us understand the ramifications of the sin we must first analyze the behavior of Calev and Yehoshua to understand why they didn't participate. The Gemara in Sotah 34b tells us that Calev went to kivrei Avot – the graves of his forefathers – in order to plead for God to have mercy on him. The Baalei Tosafot cite the Gemara in Brachos 18a which states that the dead lack knowledge of worldly events. If that

is the case, the Baalei Tosafot ask, what was the intent of Calev in visiting their graves? How could such a visit possibly help Calev in asking for mercy from God? Furthermore, what was the intent of Calev in asking for mercy and what did this have to do with not succumbing to the advice of the spies? The Gemara also tells us that Yehoshua did not join Calev in his journey to kivrei Avot because Moshe had already sought God's compassion on his behalf when he changed his name from Hoshea to Yehoshua. This was done so that God would save him from the bad counsel of the spies. How does a name change or a visit to a cemetery protect one from becoming falling into a bad crowd?

The question that is most basic to the whole story is: why were the spies and the rest of the nation terrified about attacking the inhabitants of the land? Where was their trust in God? As God asked Moshe, "How long will [this nation continue] not to have faith in Me, despite all the signs I have performed in its midst?" (ibid. 14:11). This nation witnessed the most miraculous of plagues and watched as most powerful nation in the world was rendered powerless. This nation observed the total annihilation of the Egyptians at the splitting of the Red Sea as they marched through walls of flowing water. This was nation that God personally brought out of Egypt and sheltered and sustained in the wilderness. What could possibly cause them to suddenly question God's ability to lead them into the Promised Land? Could they have doubted His ability to protect them? Such a possibility seems absurd.

In order to answer these questions we must first understand the state of mind of the Jewish people at this fateful time in history. The Gemara in Sotah 34b states that we have a tradition that the names of the various spies allude to their actions. "Setur ben Michael" was so named because "setur ma'asav shel haKadosh Baruch Hu," he distorted the actions of God. His father's name connotes "mach E-l," he portrayed God as weak. Rashi explains that his hatred of God caused him to lie in his report. He portrayed God as weak by comparing Him to a homeowner who is unable to remove his furniture from his house, the underlying accusation being that God is unable to drive the inhabitants out of the land. "Nachvi ben Vofsi" was named because "hechvi d'varav shel Hashem," he concealed the words of God." His father's name alludes to "pise'ah al midotav," he ignored God's attributes. Rashi explains that he concealed things by not reporting things the way he actually observed them. He also ignored the good things that God did for Bnei Yisrael by not reporting them accurately, for example, by reporting that the land consumed its inhabitants and giving Bnei Yisrael impression that the land was undesirable and impossible to conquer. He

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distorted and concealed the fact that God caused these deaths in order to prevent their destruction.

An analysis of the Gemara poses several considerable difficulties. What does it mean that the spies' hatred of God made them liars? Why would these spies hate God? At the inception of the mission they were considered ha'sarim – the leaders. These were individuals that personally experienced the great beneficence of the Creator. How could such noble individuals stoop to the base level of lying about the God Who took them out of Egypt? What was the cause of this behavior?

The Gemara, by citing the tradition that the spies' names allude to their actions, provides great insight into the nature of the spies' sin. This Gemara sheds light on the psychological underpinnings of the actions of the spies. These men were faced with an internal conflict. On the one hand they were the nobility, the leaders and guides of the nation. But at the same time they, like all of Bnei Yisrael, had all of their needs provided for by God. He liberated them from slavery, defeated their masters, protected them in the wilderness, and presently led them into their new homeland. Consequently these leaders felt impotent. They felt as though they, the would-be leaders of the Jewish people, had no role in their salvation. With this underlying, unconscious motivation, the leaders roused the people to demand that Moshe send spies to scout out the land. They did in order to play an active role in the process of entering the land, thereby satisfying their need to feel proactive and important. Moshe was cognizant of this psychological need but was caught in a dilemma. On the one hand he recognized that this request was a deviation from the God's set course of action, for God had not commanded Moshe to send the spies. On the other hand he recognized that were he to deny Bnei Yisrael's request their feelings of inadequacy would only intensify, generating feelings of resentment and possibly rebelliousness. After consulting with God, who left the decision up to Moshe, he reluctantly agreed to send spies in an attempt to satisfy the psychological need of the people and the leaders in a healthy manner. The Gemara in Sotah is informing us of the psychological mindset of the spies. Obviously they didn't hate God. However, they resented the fact that God did everything for them, especially since they were supposed to be the leaders of the people. Their pride would not allow them to accept the fact the state of being completely passive and powerless. It is this unconscious resentment that the Gemara refers to as "hatred" of God. It was this resentment which caused the spies to be terrified upon seeing the mighty inhabitants of the land. Rather than attributing this reaction to their own failings, their inability to

confront their own inadequacy led them to project their weakness onto God, comparing Him to a homeowner who is unable to move his furniture. Unconsciously, they could not tolerate the notion that God would have to take care of them again because they were totally helpless.

But the question still remains: how did this resentment prevent them from recognizing and appreciating all of the good that God had and continued to do for them? Why did they unconsciously project their own weakness onto God and blind them to the display of providence they had been subject to thus far?

An understanding of the Klal Yisrael's response to the spies' report is quite revealing. They did not to cry out to God to assist them in conquering the inhabitants nor did they demand that Moshe explain God's actions. Rather their immediate reaction was, "appoint us a leader and we will return to Egypt" (ibid. 14:4). Our Sages teach us that this reaction stemmed from an idolatrous emotion. Bnei Yisrael viewed God as a Father in heaven Who took care of their every need because they were special. All of the miracles, care, and sustenance provided to them throughout the Exodus caused them to feel like spoiled children. They failed to recognize the mission with which they were charged at Sinai, that they were chosen to act as a moral light unto the world. They were destined to enter the land of Israel, not because God wanted to fulfill their desires, but in order to live at the highest spiritual and intellectual level and serve as a role model for the nations of the world, causing them to exclaim "surely a wise and discerning people is this great nation" (Devarim 4:6). It was only because of this mission that God watched over them and supervised them. God's providence functioned solely for the purpose of enabling them to achieve spiritual perfection. However, like rebellious children, they could not tolerate the fact that God had to take care of all their needs. They could not tolerate this because the idolatrous emotion pervaded their relationship with God. They acted as though God existed for the sole purpose of caring for their needs as helpless children. The hatred the Gemara describes is the unconscious resentment that a child encounters when he realizes his own inadequacies. The child cannot tolerate his total dependence on the parent. That is why there is no answer to God's rhetorical question to Moshe, "How long will [this nation continue] not to have faith in Me, despite all the signs I have performed in its midst?" (Bamidbar 14:11). It is interesting to note that the word "b'tocho," "in their midst," is used instead of a word indicating that the miracles were done for them. The reason why God wanted to destroy them at this point in time is that the people had totally corrupted themselves and their mission by adopting this selfish view of their

relationship with Him.

We can now also understand Chazal's interpretation of Calev and Yehoshua's response to the accusation of "it is a land that consumes its inhabitants." They responded by assuring the people that, "God removed the protection of the inhabitants." Chazal state that this refers to Ivov who had died and was the protector and strength for the inhabitants of the land. Chazal are again underscoring the basic sin of the Meraglim. Ivov typified a person whose experience taught him the proper perspective of one's relationship with the Creator. God does not exist merely to help a person fulfill his desires. His providence is based upon man's perfection as a spiritual being. The spies totally misconstrued the events they witnessed in the land of Israel in the same fashion, which distorted their entire relationship with God.

Yehoshua and Calev did not participate in the sin of the Meraglim but instead gave an accurate description of what they witnessed. They told the people not to worry about the inhabitants of the land, assuring them that God would destroy them and allow Bnei Yisrael to enter the land. They were aware of the true character of Bnei Yisrael's mission and their relationship with God. Yehoshua and Calev were capable of maintaining their security in this relationship and were not overwhelmed by the hysteria of the other spies. Moshe changed Yehoshua's name. By adding the name of God, "Yah" to "Hoshaya" creating "Yehoshua", Moses told Yehoshua that God would save him from the bad counsel of the Meraglim. Moshe was a rebbi to Yehoshua, a teacher and guide. He recognized the dangerous attitude of the other spies and warned his pupil. As Chazal tell us, the act of changing Yehoshua's name was a way of requesting compassion from God. Compassion from God is evoked when man realizes that his sins result from the frailties of the human condition. He seeks God's guidance to give him the opportunity and ability to act in accordance with his tzelem Elokim – his intellect, that which allows him to approach God. By changing his name Moshe secured this message, ensuring that Yehoshua would constantly remain aware of the dangers and maintained steadfast in his relationship with God. Our Sages tell us that Calev had to go out to kivrei avot – the graves of his forefathers – to seek compassion. He was not Moshe's main disciple and Moshe was not his personal rebbi, as he was to Yehoshua. Calev recognized the dangers of his mission and he went to kivrei avot. He sought inspiration from Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov, the great forefathers of our nation, men who had the proper perspective of man's relationship with God. The Avot symbolized the mission and destiny of Bnei Yisrael, for they were the origin and cause of our existence as the chosen people. Tosafos is accurate

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## Weekly Parsha

in pointing out that the dead are unaware of worldly events, however, Calev desired that the Avot be a source of compassion for him in a different sense. They were his teachers. They had the proper perspective of the Jewish people's relationship with God and their destiny. At this critical time, as the Jewish people were entering into the promised land, Calev sought inspiration from the fathers and mothers of our nation to save him from the negative influence of his peers. He sought God's compassion because he recognized the frailty of man and sought and resolved to resist those weaknesses. The Torah teaches us that Calev retained his strength of character because he had a "ruach acheret," a different spirit than the others. Calev possessed the true "ruach Elokim," the true spirit which is line with God's will.

Upon hearing the distorted report of the spies, the people did not discount the strength of the inhabitants. They failed to recognize that God would destroy their enemies and allow them to enter to the land to achieve their destiny. On the contrary, "vayivku – and they cried," Bnei Yisrael cried like helpless children. They were incapable of taking security in their relationship with their Creator. Chazal teach us that God responded by stating that they were crying for no reason and responded by promising, "I will give them reason to cry." That night was Tisha b'Av, a day indelibly etched into the calendar of our people as a day of tragedy. Tisha b'Av represents hester panim – the total concealment of God's special providence for the Jewish people. Throughout the generations Bnei Yisrael would mourn on Tisha b'Av, a day which reflects the distance between God and His chosen people. The Meraglim lacked the proper perspective of the relationship between God and Klal Yisrael. They failed to recognize their true mission. This resulted in distancing the Jewish people from God, establishing a chasm which will only be bridged in the Messianic Era. In the end of days, Bnei Yisrael will again cleave to God, with the proper perspective of their mission, and then will be worthy of being a moral light unto the world.

Another reflection of God's justice as being midda k'neged midda – measure for measure – was Klal Yisrael's punishment for sympathizing with the Meraglim. Those alive at the time were incapable of entering into Eretz Yisrael. Their relationship with God was marred by the idolatrous notion that they were special and that God would take care of them as helpless children. They did not appreciate the true character of their relationship with the Creator and were thus incapable of entering into the land. This generation had to do Teshuva and totally

reappraise their role as the Chosen Nation. What was their punishment? They had to dig their own graves and lie down in them, not knowing who would get up again. This was not a cruel or unusual punishment. It was midda k'neged midda. It allowed Klal Yisrael to reflect upon their relationship with God. God was not there simply to take care of their needs. God is the Borei Olam – the Creator of the world and source of all reality, as Iyov had recognized. Only by facing their own mortality as emanating from the Borei Olam could their idolatrous notions be shattered.

The entire story of the Meraglim is followed by a strange sequence of events. It tells us of a group of Jews, the mapilim, who immediately after God ravaged the spies with the plague attempted to enter into Israel. What were they thinking? Had they not personally witnessed God's punishment of the spies? Did they fail to recognize that they were not worthy of entering the land? The Torah teaches us that Moshe and the Ark of God did not budge as this group attempted to proceed into Eretz Yisrael. However, these people persisted, "v'yapilu la'alot el rosh ha'har – but they were stubborn [and proceeded] to ascend to the mountaintop" (ibid. 14:44). Rashi tells us that "v'yapilu – and they were stubborn" is "lashon choshech," an expression connoting darkness. Alternatively Rashi suggests it is a language of azut – audacity. These people were still in the dark. They failed to perceive the true sin of the Meraglim and the character of their relationship with God. They were audacious and arrogant. They felt they were punished because they simply doubted God. They were like children, incapable of recognizing reality and persistent in achieving a goal beyond their grasp. They felt that God would take care of them simply because they were special. This was azut, arrogance. They felt that the Meraglim were punished because they doubted God but felt that God was on their side. They felt that they were capable of entering the land. Moshe and the Ark of God did not budge. Moshe recognized that these people were doomed to failure. The Ark of God also did not budge. This represented that they were not worthy of God's intervention. The failure of the Meraglim was a failure of the greatest degree. It went to the core of their very existence as a nation and demanded a generation of time to cure. These people still suffered from the same malady. They were not worthy of God's providence and they were totally destroyed.

A careful analysis of the story of the Meraglim affords us an excellent opportunity to reflect upon our relationship with God as the Chosen Nation. It is only when we have a proper perspective of our relationship with the Borei Olam and rid ourselves of any idolatrous notions can we be worthy of redemption. ■



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some point – to Israel? There is significant popular confusion regarding this question. It is not my purpose to resolve this question conclusively. But hopefully, this discussion will clarify some of the key issues.

Nachmanides wrote a critique of Maimonides' *Sefer HaMitzvot*. *Sefer HaMitzvot* is an enumeration and description of the 613 mitzvot of the Torah. As part of his critique, Nachmanides provided a list of commandments that Maimonides neglected to count in his enumeration of the 613 mitzvot. In his list of positive commandments that Maimonides "missed", Nachmanides includes the mitzvah to possess the land of Israel. According to Nachmanides, we are commanded to possess the land. We are not permitted to leave the land in the control of any other nations. Neither are we permitted to leave the land in a state of desolation. In other words, according to Nachmanides, the conquering, defending, and developing of the land of Israel is a positive commandment.

Nachmanides quotes many passages from the Torah that seem to confirm his contention. One of his proofs is derived from this week's parsha. In this week's parsha, the spies discourage Bnai Yisrael from conquering the land of Israel. Bnai Yisrael heeds to the advice of the spies and refuses to enter the land. Both the spies and the nation are punished severely for this rebellion against Hashem. As a result of their refusal to conquer the land, the nation is condemned to wander in the wilderness for 40 years. The clear implication of the entire incident is that the Bnai Yisrael are commanded to possess the land of Israel and that they rebelled against Hashem and His commandments by refusing to proceed into the land.[1]

So, Nachmanides' position is clear. There is a mitzvah to possess and settle the land of Israel. The mitzvah – like all mitzvot included in the 613 commandments – applies for all generations. According to Nachmanides, it is time to pack our bags! Incidentally, this thesis provides some justification and halachic basis for creating a Jewish State. It is unlikely that Nachmanides expects us to possess and control the land and not establish some sort of governmental structure. But this issue requires more extensive discussion.

But Maimonides' position is less easily understood. As Nachmanides observes, Maimonides does not count possessing or living in the land of Israel as a mitzvah. Meggilat Esther offers a well-known explanation for Maimonides' position. He explains that according to Maimonides, a commandment can only be included among the



613 mitzvot if it applies for all generations. Any commandment that is given to be performed at a specific time in history cannot be included among the 613 mitzvot. For example, at the time of the giving of the Torah, Bnai Yisrael were instructed to not approach or ascend Sinai. This injunction was related to a specific time – the Revelation. After Revelation, the mitzvah no longer operates. There is no prohibition against climbing Sinai today. Therefore, this injunction cannot be counted among the 613 mitzvot.[2] Meggilat Esther contends that the command to possess the land of Israel was given to Moshe and Yehoshua to perform. The command continued to be binding and active until the exile from the land of Israel. But with exile, the command was suspended. It will reemerge with the Messianic era. But in the interim, there is no requirement to possess or conquer the land. Therefore, this is not a command that applies for all generations. Like the injunction to not ascend Sinai, the requirement to conquer the land of Israel emerges and reemerges at specific moments in history. As a result, it cannot be counted among the 613 mitzvot.[3]

This is an amazing assertion. It seems to be in direct opposition to numerous statements and rulings of Maimonides. One obvious contradiction is found in Maimonides' comments in his *Mishne Torah* regarding the significance of the land of Israel. Maimonides states that a person should live in the land of Israel – even in a city dominated by pagans. He explains that it is prohibited to leave the land of Israel even to live in a city that is predominately populated by Jews.[4] It seems very unlikely that Maimonides is referring to some past or

future point in history but would not apply his comments to his own times or to ours!

Another ruling of Maimonides seems to contradict Meggilat Esther's thesis. Maimonides explains that if a man wishes to resettle in the land of Israel and his wife refuses, the man may divorce his wife and he has no obligation to pay his wife the amount she is promised by her ketubah – her marriage contract. Similarly, if a woman wishes to settle in the land of Israel and her husband refuses, she may demand a divorce with full payment of her ketubah.[5]

This ruling clearly seems to contradict Meggilat Esther's thesis that there is no commandment in our times to live in the land of Israel. It would be remarkable and completely unlikely for Maimonides to rule that a woman is deprived of her ketubah for refusing to settle in Israel if living in Israel is of not a commandment and obligation. It is also unlikely that Maimonides – in his code of law – is stating a law that was irrelevant in his time and remains irrelevant.

However, the contradiction to Meggilat Esther's thesis is even clearer if the Talmudic source for Maimonides' ruling is explored. Maimonides bases his ruling on a discussion in Tractate Ketubot. Tosafot explain that there are some authorities that do indeed contend that there is no obligation to live in Israel in our times. Tosafot maintain that these authorities would contend that the Talmud's ruling – as quoted by Maimonides – does not apply in our times.[6] In other words, the Talmud's discussion and Maimonides' ruling are premised on the assumption that there is a mitzvah to live in Israel. If this mitzvah were

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suspended, the ruling would be void. It is clear from Tosefot's analysis that according to Maimonides, there is a mitzvah to live in Israel at all times.

Of course, this creates a problem. If Maimonides agrees that there is an obligation at all times to live in the land of Israel, then Nachmanides' criticism of Maimonides seems well-founded. Why does Maimonides not count this obligation among his 613 commandments?

There is an enigmatic comment of the Sages – quoted by Rashi – that may provide an insight into this issue. The Sages comment that even when we are in exile we should continue to practice the mitzvot. We must wear tefillin and observe the mitzvah of mezuzah. We should continue to practice the mitzvot so that they will not be new to us when we return to the land of Israel.[7]

This is an amazing comment! Some of the mitzvot are clearly tied to the land of Israel. For example, we are obligated to abstain from working the land during the Sabbatical year. We must give portion of the annual harvest to the kohanim and leveyim. These commandments only apply in the land of Israel. But other – indeed most – mitzvot are not tied to the land of Israel. Most mitzvot – for example, observing Shabbat, the laws of kashrut – are personal obligations. They must be observed regardless of our place of residence. The mitzvot of tefillin and mezuzah have no apparent connection to the land of Israel. Yet, according to the Sages, our observance of these mitzvot in exile is only practice for our return to the land of Israel!

Nachmanides, in his commentary on the Torah, deals with this question. But his treatment of the issue is almost as mysterious as the very statement of the Sages that he is attempting to explain. Nachmanides explains that the mitzvot were primarily commanded to those living in the land of Israel.[8] It seems that Nachmanides is merely confirming that the Sages are positing an intimate relationship between all commandments – even personal ones – and the land of Israel. But he does not seem to communicate any information regarding the nature of this relationship.

However, a more careful consideration of Nachmanides comments may provide an important insight. We tend to regard the 613 mitzvot as a number of independent commandments. We observe Shabbat, we pray, we place mezuzot on our doorposts. We recognize that various mitzvot reinforce one another. But nonetheless, we regard each as a separate and independent entity. Nachmanides seems to reject this popular interpretation of the 613 mitzvot. Apparently, he maintains that the

individual mitzvot are all part of a single complex and integrated system. It is true that a specific mitzvah can independently function and be significant. If a person prays but does not place a mezuzah on his doorpost, the mitzvah of prayer has been fulfilled. But any individual mitzvah only achieves its full significance in the context of the overall system of Taryag – the 613 mitzvot.

Consider an analogy. A human heart can be removed from the body. Using modern technology we can cause the heart to continue to beat outside of the body. Is the heart working? Is it beating? Of course, it is. But does the heart have its full significance outside of the body? No, we are keeping it alive until we can reintegrate it into the body. So too, it is important that we observe the mitzvot in exile. But we delude ourselves if we think that these performances have their full significance. Each mitzvah is part of a system of Taryag. This is a system that regulates the life of the individual Jew, within the nation of Bnai Yisrael, in the land of Israel. If the land of Israel is removed from the system, the individual mitzvah is isolated from the body in which it is designed to best function. Now, Nachmanides comment can be understood. The mitzvot were primarily commanded to those living in the land of Israel. In other words, the individual mitzvot were given to be fulfilled as part of a totality. A fundamental element of this totality is the land of Israel.

We can now return to Maimonides' position. Why does Maimonides not include the requirement to live in the land of Israel among the 613 mitzvot? Maimonides explains that he does not include within his list of mitzvot admonishments to observe the Torah. In other words, in order for a command to be counted among Taryag, it must enjoin us to perform a specific activity or prohibit a specific behavior. Admonishments to observe the Torah do not meet this criterion.[9] This same principle may explain Maimonides' reason for not including the obligation to live in the land of Israel among Taryag. As Nachmanides explains, the obligation to live in the land of Israel stems from the very nature of Taryag. Taryag is a system that only functions in its entirety in the land of Israel. Perhaps, Maimonides agrees with this interpretation of the mitzvot of the Torah. We are obligated to observe the Torah in its entirety. Therefore, we must live in the land of Israel so that we can perform the mitzvot of the Torah in the context of the entire system of Taryag. If this is correct, Maimonides may maintain that although this obligation engenders a specific requirement, it is essentially a general admonishment to observe the Torah in its entirety. In other

words, according to Maimonides, there is no specific obligation to live in the land of Israel. Instead, there is a general obligation to observe the Torah in its complete form. This general obligation generates a requirement to live in the land of Israel – only there can the Torah be observed in its complete form and context. But nonetheless, the requirement to live in the land of Israel stems from a general requirement to observe Taryag properly. And according to Maimonides, general admonishments are not counted among Taryag. ■

[1] Rabbaynu Moshe ben Nachman (Ramban / Nachmanides), Critique on Maimonides' Sefer HaMitzvot -- Positive Commands that Maimonides Neglected to Include.

[2] Rabbaynu Moshe ben Maimon (Rambam / Maimonides) Sefer HaMitzvot, Pinciple 3.

[3] Rabbaynu Yitzchak DeLeon, Meggilat Esther, Commentary on Maimonides' Sefer Hamitzvot, Comments on Nachmanides' Critique.

[4] Rabbaynu Moshe ben Maimon (Rambam / Maimonides) Mishne Torah, Hilchot Melachim 5:9-12.

[5] Rabbaynu Moshe ben Maimon (Rambam / Maimonides) Mishne Torah, Hilchot Eyshut 13:20.

[6] Tosefot, Mesechet Ketubot 110b.

[7] Rabbaynu Shlomo ben Yitzchak (Rashi), Commentary on Sefer Devarim 11:18.

[8] Rabbaynu Moshe ben Nachman (Ramban / Nachmanides), Commentary on Sefer Devarim 18:25.

[9] Rabbaynu Moshe ben Maimon (Rambam / Maimonides) Sefer HaMitzvot, Pinciple 4.

# Summer Rates

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# SHELACH

## *Warnings & Punishments*

**RABBI MOSHE BEN-CHAIM**



### God's Warning

In parshas Shilach, (Numbers, 15:31) we find a warning stating that whoever commits idolatry “despises God’s word”. Rashi states, “the warning for idolatry is from God, all other (warnings) are from Moses.” The question is what necessity is there for God to be the One admonishing us, in this single case? Directed more towards an answer, what would be lacking in the warning of idolatry, had Moses - or better yet a man - been the one warning us, and not God?

This second formulation of the question directs us to the concept of what exactly the purpose of a “warning” is, and how in the case of idolatry alone, is God’s warning essential for being most effective.

A warning, by definition, is part of the Torah system. The Gemara asks at times, “The punishment for such and such a crime we see, but from where is the warning derived?” Meaning, the Torah system does not only state punishments for violations, but it also includes passages that serve to warn man from acting in a certain way. The reason why we have warnings, and not punishments alone is to educate man on the destruction, which prohibited actions cause to his soul. By investigating the ruin that results from such actions, man may better understand why not to engage these acts. Man will come to conquer his drive for such actions by understanding the good derived from abstention. Thereby, man comes closer to the life of reality and goodness, which is only derived from complete adherence to the Torah’s principles.

A warning, then, must carry with it some principle whereby man is not forced to abstain through fear. Man is encouraged to abstain due to his appreciation of following what is real and good. As the argument offered to abstain becomes more conclusive, man will be more convinced and his chance for abstention will be greater.

Not only is the content of an argument essential, but the delivery can also play a role. What is the best argument from abstention from idolatry? It is a warning delivered by God Himself from amidst the flames of Sinai. Such a warning against idolatry - which all the Jews heard - is the most compelling argument. If God created an event where an entire mountain is ablaze, and intelligent principles were heard from those flames; then those who witnessed

this event were convinced that an intelligent Being controls the world, exclusive of impostors. Thereby, God eliminated the notion of idolatry.

Sinai was the best formulation of a warning against idolatry, and remains our Judaic proof of God’s existence.

### The Spies' Plague

In parshas Shelach (Num. 14:37) Rashi quotes down an odd Medrash, describing the punishment of the ten, evil spies who spoke against the land of Israel right before they were about to inherit it. Rashi states, “With that death suitable for them, measure for measure. They sinned with their tongue, (so) their tongues were extended to their navels and worms exited their tongues and entered their navels.”

How do we understand such a Medrash? From a standpoint of methodology, one must first define all elements: what do “tongue”, “navel” and “worms” represent? We see clearly that Rashi says they sinned with their tongues – their sin concerned evil speech. So tongue represents speech. But what do navel and worms represent? A person’s navel has a singular distinction over all other locations of the body: it is traced back to the umbilical cord, as the navel is the scar of that previous appendage. The navel recalls that which supplied the infant sustenance while in the womb. What do worms represent? They represent lowliness and that which one abhors. Something disgusting. We can now interpret the Medrash.

The tongue – over all else – is said to have been the culprit. Thus, speech was the sin. What type of speech? “Wormy” or disgusting talk. Thus, worms indicate this aspect. Finally, the tongues extended to the navel. Meaning, their speech (tongue) affected something to do with their navel, or rather, their sustenance. Israel was to be a land where God provided sustenance for the Jewish nation, besides being their homeland. The spies’ foolishly voiced their insecurities and removed their chance to gain this source of sustenance. In other words, “their tongues affected their navel with something wormy”. This punishment was meted out to the spies, as God always desires man to recognize his sin and improve. Such a bizarre punishment causes those affected to reflect. ■

*Taken from "Windows to the Soul"*

# Shelach

RABBI MICHAEL BERNSTEIN

## Messengers Gone Astray

Long before the spies set out on their ill-fated mission, Moses already suspected something would go wrong (13:16). "These are the names of the men Moses sent to reconnoiter the land. And Moses called Hosea, son of Nun, Joshua." Why did he change Hosea's name to Joshua? Our Sages tell us (Tanchuma 6, Sotah 34b) that the new name means "God save." Moses prayed that God would save Joshua from the conspiracy of the spies. Why was Moses suspicious? Why did he feel this particular intervention was necessary? And why did he single out Joshua from among the twelve spies for special consideration?

The Talmud notes (Berachos 34b), "A messenger's failure reflects badly on his sender." This aphorism displays a sensitivity to the subtleties of human nature. A messenger's dedication and enthusiasm usually reflect his perception of the sender's attitude. If he believes the sender cares deeply, he will extend himself to be successful; the messenger, having accepted the sender's mission, will do his best to satisfy him. But if the messenger deems the sender indifferent or negative to the mission, he himself will take a cavalier attitude toward its successful fulfillment. For instance, a pious rabbi and an indifferent Jew both send the same messenger to purchase a lulav, the palm branch used for the Sukkoth ritual, offering no additional instructions. The messenger will undoubtedly purchase a first-rate lulav for the rabbi and an acceptable one for the indifferent Jew. Although nothing is spoken out, the messenger's perception of the sender's preference will determine his actions.

Although God did not forbid the sending of the spies, Deuteronomy makes clear (1:22-23) that He did not approve of it either. Nonetheless, the weaker elements among the Jewish people, insecure in their relationship with God, persisted in their request for a reconnoitering mission before entry to the land; they did not have sufficient faith that God would deliver the land into their hands. Grounded in spiritual deficiency, the mission was doomed to failure from the beginning. Sensing the negativism of the senders, the messengers adjusted the thrust of their mission accordingly.

Moses perceived the reluctance of the senders to enter

the land and understood that the mission was destined for catastrophe. The people's desire to send spies gave credence to the prophecy of Eldad and Meidad that Moses would not lead the conquest of the land. In order to protect his beloved protégé from this impending disaster, Moses changed his name to Joshua. This act identified Joshua as specifically Moses' messenger and imbued his role in the overall mission with the passion and enthusiasm of his great sender.

## The Wood Gatherer

It was a tragic time. The Jewish people were on the verge of entering the Promised Land, but the disastrous chain of events beginning with the slanderous spies ruined everything. God decreed that the people would remain in the desert for a total of forty years, until the entire generation died and another took its place.

In the immediate aftermath, a strange incident takes place (15:32-35), "The people of Israel were in the desert, and they found a man gathering wood on the Sabbath. Those who found him gathering wood brought him to Moses, Aaron and the entire assembly. They placed him in detention, for it had not been clarified what should be done to him. And God said to Moses, 'The man shall be put to death; the entire assembly shall pelt him with stones outside the camp.'"

How does this episode connect to the preceding incident of the spies? Furthermore, what is the purpose of the seemingly superfluous information that the people of Israel were "in the desert (bamidbar)"?

The expression "they found a man gathering wood" is also puzzling. Ordinarily, the Torah would state that "there was a man gathering wood." The words "they found" implies that people were looking. What does this mean? The Sifrei explains that Moses posted sentries to watch for any violations of the Sabbath. If so, a new question arises. Why did Moses choose to investigate the nation's Sabbath observance at this point?

Moses understood that the Jewish people's eagerness to send spies and readiness to accept their slanderous report reflected a collective failure of trust in God's providence. Opposed to this, Sabbath

observance reinforces and gives testimony to God's general providence over mankind and His particular providence over the Jewish people; the Torah describes the Sabbath as a remembrance of the Creation and the Exodus. Presumably, Moses suspected that the collective deficiency in trust would manifest itself in a lax attitude toward Sabbath observance. Therefore, he posted sentries to warn against transgression and apprehend any violators. By raising the general level of Sabbath observance in the aftermath of the spies, Moses addressed their deficiencies and reinforced their collective trust in God.

Now let us consider for a moment. What did the wood gatherer intend to do with the wood? Rashi, in his commentary on the Talmud (Beitzah 33b), states that the primary use of wood is for construction. Let us then assume the wood gatherer intended to build a wooden house. Ever since entering the desert over a year earlier, the Jewish people had lived in tents. Faced with forty years in the desert, however, a wooden house beckoned as a more secure and comfortable abode than a tent. Thus, the wood gatherer sought security, because he lacked sufficient trust in God, the very flaw that had caused the disaster of the spies. The Torah emphasizes this last point with the gratuitous statement that they were "in the desert (bamidbar)."

After the return of spies, the word midbar occurs ten times in the parashah, corresponding to the number of spies who slandered the land. The mention of midbar again here in connection with the wood gatherer associates the two events. The desecration of the Sabbath echoes the underlying flaw that led to the debacle of the spies.

There is some disagreement among the commentators as to the chronology of events. Some follow the simple meaning of the verse and place the episode of the wood gatherer immediately after the incident of the spies. Rashi, quoting the Mechilta, states that it took place a year earlier, shortly after the Exodus. Even so, the same explanation holds true, for the Torah places these two events side by side. In both cases, insufficient trust was the root cause of the sin.

Right after the episode of the wood gatherer, the Torah commands the placement of tzitzis, fringes, at the corners of one's garment (15:40-41) "in order that you remember to perform all the commandments and be holy for the Lord. I am God, your Lord, who brought you forth from the land of Egypt to be a Lord to you, I am God, your Lord."

Clothing are a person's most immediate physical protection, and the tzitzis attached to them continually remind the wearer that God provides his true protection. The Jewish people had forgotten this important truth, and this led to the spies and the wood gatherer. The tzitzis would serve as a constant reminder and would hopefully prevent recurrences in the future. ■

*Copies may be purchased by contacting the author: bernsteinmichael@msn.com*



*Taken from "Getting It Straight—  
Practical Ideas for a Life of Clarity"*

# Books

**DOUG TAYLOR & RABBI MORTON MOSKOWITZ**

"What are you reading?" asked a familiar voice.

Startled, I looked up from my book. The willows beside my favorite park bench swayed gently in the breeze as the sun, so welcome after days of rain, radiated its heavenly heat into my face. Silhouetted against the radiant glare was my friend, the King of Rational Thought.

"Dialogues Of Plato," I announced proudly, holding up the book as he sat down next to me. "I just started it last night. It's fascinating."

I was surprised to see a frown flicker across his face.

"I see," he said quietly. "I presume you're reading it for entertainment?"

"Well, yeah, uh, I guess so," I said. "Why do you ask?"

"Because I notice that you're about a third finished with it already."

"Yes, I am. I've read about 100 pages."

He looked at me. "Since last night?"

"Uh, yeah. I started it around nine o'clock."

He sighed. That wouldn't be unusual, except that I had never heard him sigh.

"I presume you went to work this morning and are just taking a break," he said. "That means you've read 100 pages of the Dialogues Of Plato in less than two hours, which means you're averaging about one minute a page. Correct?"

"Well, uh, yeah, I guess that's right."

"And are you getting anything from it?"

"Of course," I defended. "It's very interesting."

"Really," he said. "And just what exactly have you learned from it?"

"Uh, well, uh, let's see," I began, as my mind desperately searched for an intelligent-sounding response. "He asks lots of questions. And, um, he stood up for what he believed. And, uh, well,

you know, there's lots of stuff here. I don't really know where to begin."

He smiled. "Nice try."

"Well, you don't expect me to remember it all, do you?" I was starting to feel a little defensive.

He lobbed the ball back to me. "Why are you reading it?"

That's the problem with not thinking clearly. You can delude yourself, or just skip the process altogether, but it's hard to hide when someone asks you a direct question.

Fortunately for me, he didn't wait for an answer. "No offense," he said, "but you're not reading that book. You're skating over it. Do you realize you've read 100 pages full of ideas from one of the greatest thinkers who ever lived, all in a little over an hour? That's like flying an F-14 at top speed from Las Vegas to Albuquerque and then thinking you've explored the Grand Canyon."

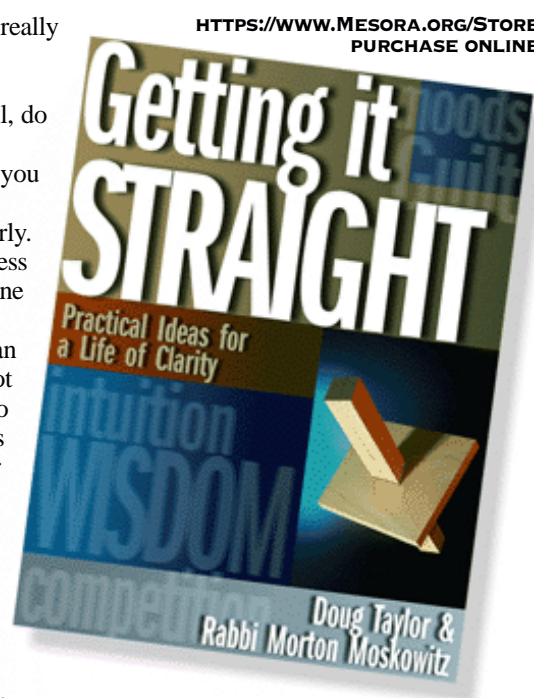
"There's an important principle here," he continued, "and it's one that's routinely ignored in our society. The principle is this: it's better to understand one idea clearly than a thousand ideas superficially. Do you know why?"

I was chagrined. "Uh, because I'll understand it better?"

"Yes," he replied, "but why is that important? What will it do for you?"

I chewed on it for a few seconds, then spoke. "Well, if I recall, you once said that the only way a person makes real behavior change is when an idea is clear to his or her mind. So, if I understand one idea clearly, then it can affect me. But if I know a thousand ideas only superficially then none of them will affect me."

He smiled. "Exactly. That's why I was so surprised that you were reading the Dialogues Of Plato so quickly. If you really want to gain



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anything useful from that book, you've got to approach it differently. Forget about getting through it. Take one page. Just one page. Read it. Think about it. Ask questions about it. Ask questions about Socrates' questions. Ask, 'why did he ask that particular question and not a different one?' Chew on it. Ponder it. That's where the real value is."

He rose to leave.

"Thanks for stopping," I said.

"You're welcome," he replied. "Enjoy the book." And with that, he headed out of the park.

I turned back to the Dialogues Of Plato and stared at it for a while.

Then I pulled out my marker and opened the book to page one. ■

# Torah

## & SECULAR LIFE



**Sara:** Dear R' Ben-Chaim,

I note an implication in your article "Trust in the Rabbis & Independent Thought" (JewishTimes VI:36) which is almost certainly unintentional but which may necessitate further attention.

You write,

*"There are but two categories in which a Jew makes decisions: 1) Jewish life, and 2) secular life. And within Jewish life, there are, A) Jewish law; B) Jewish beliefs: 'Hashkafa', and C) Jewish thinking; methods of analysis crucial for arriving at true Torah thought."*

I question the line you draw between "Jewish" and "secular" life -- for a Jew's purpose, and the end to which he should devote all his energy, is the service of Hashem; both "Jewish" and "secular" life are therefore facets of that single pursuit. **B o t h m u s t** be characterized by 'Jewish law, Jewish beliefs, and Jewish thinking'; indeed, if any of these conflicts with what might seem advisable from a secular perspective, it is the secular interest which is dispensed with.

If I wish to build a house, and I have a technical question about pozzolan cement, I will direct that question to an architect. If I

have a halachic question about pozzolan cement, I will direct that question to a posek -- and if his answer conflicts with that of the architect, I will heed the posek: for whether I am speaking to an architect or a posek, or even when I am deciding whether to build a house in the first place, I must bear in mind the Shulchan Aruch's dictate that "All a person's actions should be for the sake of heaven" -- ergo, even my "secular life" is a Jewish one; 'Jewish law, Jewish beliefs, and Jewish thinking' cannot be confined to one fraction of my pursuits, but should define all of them.

This point is concealed by your categorization -- so I hope you will bring it into the light.

Thank you for your attention.

Sincerely, Sara Jones

**Mesora:** You write, "If I wish to build a house, and I have a technical question about pozzolan cement, I will direct that question to an architect." We are in agreement. Secular activities do have experts, and they are not the Rabbis. Yes, all we do should be in service of God, and since life in service of God requires practical activities and considerations, it is wise to take advice from those who are experienced in those practical occupations.

Thank you for writing to make sure we brought out your valid point: secular life is not an end, but is followed only in as much as it contributes to a Torah life. It is both important and appreciated that this assumed implication has been discounted. ■





Groups



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**GroupName-subscribe@yahoogroups.com**  
 Once subscribed, you are enabled to email 100s-1000s others with a single email. Expect to receive many as well!

## Regional Lists

### Connecticut

• **Fairfield\_County\_Shuls (75)** An announcement list serving the Jewish community and all shuls in the greater Fairfield County Connecticut location.

### New York

• **Jewish\_Community (1576)** The Jewish Community is intended to combine the efforts of the local "shul" groups (NYC, Teaneck, Fair Lawn, Monsey, Essex County etc) and create a single resources for the New York and New Jersey metropolitan orthodox community for announcements of interest and common events. Certain announcements are very local in nature and belong in the local "shul" groups. Other announcements are regional in nature and should utilize this group to get the word out on a larger scale.

• **brooklynshuls(60)** A list for those affiliated with Brooklyn shuls.

• **bronxshuls(53)**

• **events\_for\_jewish\_women (182)**

• **FiveTownsJewishCommunity (1595)** The purpose of this email list is to enable local shuls, yeshivot and organizations to communicate with members of the Five Towns Jewish Community. The list should be used primarily for the dissemination of information regarding local shul, yeshiva and organizational or charity events and functions in accordance with the list policy posted on this site. It is the hope of the moderators of this group that this service will bring the community closer together by enabling the publicizing and enhancement of the

• **FiveTownsShuls (1345)**

• **HillcrestOnline (220)**

• **flatbushJewishAction (81)**

• **JFlatbushOnline (633)** Welcome! This is a group to allow members of the Brooklyn, New York Jewish community in Flatbush and other neighborhoods, to communicate. It is a place to let others know about events or programs at your shul or school, religious and cultural events, and singles events. We can also cover neighborhoods such as Boro Park or Crown Heights. It is also a place for various neighborhood topics, such as goods needed or available, different community efforts, concerns, etc.

• **lessshuls (112)** Discussion group for issues, topics and events of interest to the Jewish community of the Lower East Side of Manhattan.

• **MonseyShulsChat (72)**

• **manhattanshuls (95)**

• **NYCShuls (533) (NEW)**

NYCShuls@YahooGroups.com is an announcement list for the Jewish community in New York City. The primary goal of the group is to be an effective tool in the building and maintenance of our community.

• **PlainviewShuls (NEW)** Established to enable area residents a quick and effective means of information distribution. Please use this new forum to post shul/Torah class times, announcements, business, share ideas, and converse on matters relevant to the Plainview Jewish communities. As Torah

Jews we must follow what God demands of us. Let us all strive to learn more Torah, and practice the unmatched codes prepared by our Creator. Rising above our personal preferences, let us achieve something great...together.

• **queensshuls (102)** A general list for those affiliated with Queens shuls.

• **QueensCentralShuls (44)** An announcement list for the Jewish community and Shuls of Central Queens.

• **RiverdaleShuls (541)**

• **SiShulList (123)**

• **statenslandshuls (27)**

• **UWSyoungprofessionals (715)** The list is intended for announcements of interest Young Professionals living on the upper west side. HOW TO SUBSCRIBE: To subscribe go to <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/uwsyoungprofessionals/join> or send a blank email to [uwsyoungprofessionals-subscribe@yahoogroups.com](mailto:uwsyoungprofessionals-subscribe@yahoogroups.com). INFORMING OF EVENTS: To get an event added to our weekly e-mail send [grubey1@yahoo.com](mailto:grubey1@yahoo.com) information about the event and it will most likely be distributed to our list.

• **WestHempsteadShuls (270)**

• **WesleyHillsShuls (383)**

• **WhitePlainsShuls (26)**

### New Jersey

• **BergenfieldShuls (40)** Information for and about shuls in the Bergenfield / New Milford / Teaneck area.

• **EdisonHighlandParkBulletinBoard (563)**

• **EnglewoodShuls (635)**

• **LakewoodShuls (160)**

• **PassaicJews (651)**

• **TeaneckShuls (5958)** TeaneckShuls is an announcement list for the Jewish community and shuls in the Teaneck / Bergenfield / New Milford vicinity.

• **TeaneckShulsUnrestricted (60)**

• **TenaflyShuls (204)**

• **WestOrangeJewishCommunity (79) (NEW)** The Vibrant, Diverse, and Growing Jewish Community of West Orange, NJ USA This mailing list is intended for the sharing of information between, and communication among, all members of the West Orange Jewish Community and its many Jewish Institutions - regardless of religious affiliation.

• **WestOrangeShuls (638) (NEW)** The list is intended for announcements of interest to shul-goers in the West Orange vicinity

## Topical Lists

### Business

• **buscardexchange (22)**

• **jcbusinessforum (322)**

• **JewishBusiness (173)** Business ethics and practices according to Jewish law.

• **JewishBusinessnetworking (380)** A place for Jewish business people to network, develop leads and contacts, exchange ideas, find jobs, provide employment, and shmooze!

• **JewishBusinessAssoc\_Colorado (255)** We have monthly luncheons to discuss various business topics as well as Happy Hour get togethers to socialize with others in the Jewish Community.

• **JewishBusinessNetwork (490)** Hear Exciting Speakers, Exchange Business Leads, and Job Opportunities, Promote Your Business, and/or Come Socialize at Our 3rd Tuesday, Monthly Meetings, 6:00-8:15pm at the Jewish Community Association of Austin, 7300 Hart Lane

• **jewishwork (334)** The Jewish (and Bnai Noach) job market. For employers and for people seeking employment, anywhere in the world. On this email list you can announce positions available, and positions being sought. This list is not for ads to promote your business, product, or services.

• **UCLAAnderson-JBSA (99)**

**Dating**

• **Bay\_Area\_Jewish\_Singles (29)**

• **Frum-Jewish-Singles (101)** The purpose of this group is for Orthodox Jewish singles to be able to get together, exchange information about each other, post information about gatherings / singles weekends, to ask questions and possibly be able to set up a shidduch. You MUST be an Orthodox Jew to join this group and you will NOT be accepted until you answer the questionnaire that is emailed to you.

• **JDate\_Jewish\_Online\_Dating (50)** Are you Jewish? Are you Single? We have the solution for you! At JDate.com, you can meet like-minded Jews that are also single! This isn't an ONLINE dating site full of fake profiles! These are REAL PEOPLE just like you.

• **Jewish\_Matchmaker (108)**

• **jewish-singles (350)**

• **jewish-single-doctors (28)**

• **mercerc\_jewish\_singles (294)**

### Home Life

• **1davening (60)**

• **1-JewishComputing (64)**

• **1Jewish\_Homes (83)**

• **chiddush (232)** Chiddush is an advanced group that offers Yeshiva-level Jewish scholars (talmidei chachamim) the opportunity to share original insights into Jewish ritual and lore. Submissions may be up to one screen long, and must include traditional sources for reference. Include a statement that the submission was your own and that it has not been published elsewhere.

• **davening (337)**

• **Frum-Jewish-Parents (90)**

• **Gabbai (143)**

• **Jewish\_Cuisine (623)**

• **jewish-food (1749)** Jewish-Food is a moderated list for all interested in the discussion of GENERAL aspects of Jewish food which includes the exchanging of recipes, and cooking techniques of Jewish food using Kashruth (laws of keeping kosher).

• **JewishGeography (334)**

• **jewishhomes (719)**

• **JEWISH-RECIPE (492)**

• **jewish\_stitchery (112)**

• **Jewish\_Weight\_Watchers (169)**

• **Vegetarian\_Jewish\_Cuisine (392)**

### Religious

• **Jewish\_Converts (260)**

• **Teshuvah (123)** This is a group for those returning to Halachik Judaism, or already-frum Jews interested in assisting others.

• **Torah\_study (79)**

### Social

• **1-JewishPhilanthropy (113)** Jewish Philanthropy offers information about philanthropic activities and surveys of foundations that fund Jewish institutions. It networks Jewish fundraisers and donors.

• **Jewish\_Action\_Alerts (178)** This is an action alert listserv for Jews and friends of Jews from around the world to participate in local, national and international action alerts to governments, businesses, agencies as they effect the safety, security and welfare of Jewish people at home, abroad and in Israel. Groups from which action Alerts will be posted include, but are not limited to: AIPAC, UJC, JCPA, ADL, HonestReporting.com, CAMERA, and others.

• **Jewish\_Self-Defense (841)**

• **Jewish-Humor (318)**

• **jewish-jokes (455)**

• **jewish-american-veterans (83)**

• **Jewish-Outdoors-Club (1521)**

• **Jewish\_World (428)**