



A Fascinating Insight from the Chasam Sofer

The Meraglim Did Not Sense Kedushah in the Fruits of the Land because Their Spiritual Essence Had Been Transferred to the Mahn

In this week's parsha, parshat Shelach, we will focus on the episode of the meraglim. The commentaries are bewildered by their behavior especially; after all, they were the princes of Yisrael. The text attests to this as follows (Bamidbar 13, 3): "כולם אנשים ראשי בני ישראל המה"—**they were all distinguished men; they were leaders of Bnei Yisrael.** We will endeavor to explain how these distinguished men fell from such a pinnacle to such depths. What prompted them to speak ill of the promised land that HKB"H praises constantly with numerous superlatives? For example, it is written (Devarim 8, 7):

"כי ה' אלקיך מביאך אל ארץ טובה ארץ נחלי מים עיינות ותהומות יוצאים בבקעה ובהר, ארץ חטה ושערה וגפן ותאנה ורמון ארץ זית שמן ודבש, ארץ אשר לא במסכנת תאכל בה לחם לא תחסר, כל בה ארץ אשר אבניה ברזל ומהרריה תחצוב נחושת".

For Hashem, your G-d, is bringing you to a good land—a land with streams of water, springs, and underground water that emerge in valley and mountain; a land of wheat, barley, grape, fig, and pomegranate; a land of oil-olives and honey. A land where you will eat bread without poverty, you will lack nothing there; a land whose stones are iron and from whose mountains you will mine copper. Furthermore, what greater praise than (ibid. 11, 12): "ארץ אשר ה' אלקיך דורש אותה תמיד, עיני ה' אלקיך בה מראשית השנה ועד אחרית שנה—a land that Hashem, your G-d, seeks out; the eyes of Hashem, your G-d, are always upon it, from the beginning of the year to year's end.

It also behooves us to examine the profound intent of the instructions Moshe Rabeinu gave the meraglim. He instructed them to evaluate explicit characteristics of Eretz Canaan in preparation for entering it and capturing it. Here are the instructions he gave them (Bamidbar 13, 18):

"וראיתם את הארץ מה היא ואת העם היושב עליה, החזק הוא הרפה, המעט הוא אם רב, ומה הארץ אשר הוא יושב בה, הטובה הוא אם רעה, ומה הערים אשר הוא יושב בהנה, הבמחנים אם במבצרים, ומה הארץ, השמנה הוא אם רזה, היש בה עץ אם אין, והתחזקתם ולקחתם מפרי הארץ והימים ימי בכורי ענבים".

See what the land is; and the people who live on it—are they strong or weak, are they few or many? And how is the land in which they live, is it good or bad? And how are the cities in which they reside; are they open or are they fortified? How is the land (soil), is it fat (fertile) or lean; does it have trees or not? You shall strengthen yourselves, and you shall take some fruit of the land." Those were the days of the first ripening of the grapes.

After giving them this list of things to evaluate—the strength and numbers of the inhabitants, the fortifications of the cities, and the quality of the land—why did he add the admonition: "You shall strengthen yourselves, and you shall take some fruit of the land"? Why was it necessary for them to bring back fruit from the land? Lastly, what is conveyed by the concluding remark of the narrative: "Those were the days of the first ripening of the grapes"? This suggests that Moshe Rabeinu had a specific interest concerning the grapes. And as we see, the meraglim complied with these instructions, as it

states ibid. 23): "ויבואו עד נחל אשכול ויכרתו משם זמורה ואשכול ענבים" —they came until the Valley of Eshkol and cut from there a vine with one cluster of grapes, and they carried it on a pole by two.

The Spiritual Quality of the Fruit of Eretz Yisrael Pervaded the Mahn

We will begin to shed some light on the subject by introducing a precious insight from the impeccable teachings of the great luminary, the Chasam Sofer, zy" a. He explains the episode of the meraglim thoroughly in the Responsa of the Chasam Sofer (O.C. 197) in a letter addressed to the brilliant author of the Yismach Moshe, zy" a.

The Chasam Sofer provides us with a novel understanding of the grave error of the meraglim—returning a negative report regarding the fruit of the land. As prominent leaders of Yisrael, they were also great Torah scholars. Hence, when HKB" H promised to bring the people (Shemot 3, 8): "אל ארץ" —to a land flowing with milk and honey—they understood that He was not referring only to their unique taste as perceived by the senses but also to the divine spiritual qualities they were imbued with. Therefore, when they ate the fruit of the land and did not sense any special taste or element of kedushah, they were disappointed and questioned Hashem's promise.

The Chasam Sofer asserts that, indeed, the fruit they tasted lacked any special taste or hint of kedushah. This was not due to any deficiency in the kedushah of Eretz Yisrael. It was because HKB' H had taken the inner, spiritual, holy taste designated to pervade the fruit from above, and saturated the mahn that fell for Yisrael in the midbar with it. As a result, the fruit of the promised land resembled a shell devoid of any taste of kedushah.

This is reflected in the report given by Yehoshua bin Nun and Caleiv ben Yefuneh to all of Bnei Yisrael (Bamidbar 14, 7):

"הארץ אשר עברנו בה לתור אותה טובה הארץ מאד מאד, אם חפץ בנו ה' והביא אותנו אל הארץ הזאת ונתנה לנו ארץ אשר היא זבת חלב ודבש, אך בה' אל תמרודו ואתם אל תיראו את עם הארץ כי לחמנו הם סר צלם מעליהם וה' אתנו."

The land that we passed through to scout, it is a very, very good land. If Hashem desires us, he will bring us into this land and give it to us, a land that flows with milk and honey. But do not rebel against Hashem! And do not fear the people of the land, for they are our bread; their protection has left them, and Hashem is with us.

They were telling the people that, without a doubt, the land is as good as HKB" H promised it would be—flowing with milk and honey. However, the reason you do not taste spiritual kedushah in the fruit is because **"they are our bread."** In other words, the inhabitants of the land are only eating the external, physical bread lacking the spiritual qualities of our mahn. That is because **"their protection has left them"**—the spiritual essence of kedushah has left their fruit; **"and Hashem is with us"**—the spiritual essence from HKB" H is with us in the mahn. This is the reason you do not taste spirituality in the fruit of the land; but when we enter the land, and the mahn will cease, the divine, spiritual plenty will once again pervade the fruit of the land.

We find that the Chasam Sofer applies this concept in Torat Moshe on our parsha in relation to the passuk (ibid. 4): "ניתנה" —ראש ונשובה מצרימה" —let us appoint a leader and return to Mitzrayim. In this vein, he goes on to interpret the passuk (ibid. 13, 32): "ויציאו דיבת הארץ אשר תרו אותה אל בני ישראל לאמר: " —they brought forth an evil report regarding the land they had spied on to Bnei Yisrael, saying, "The land through which we have passed to spy on is a land that devours its inhabitants." Rashi comments: **Wherever we went, we found them burying the dead.** According to the Chasam Sofer, this was because the spiritual component of their fruit had been removed and they were only consuming the outer shell. This did not supply the inhabitants of Canaan enough sustenance to keep their bodies healthy and alive; so they were constantly burying their dead.

To fully comprehend this concept, let us refer to what our master, the Arizal, explains at length in Likutei Torah regarding the passuk (Devarim 8, 3): "ויענג וירעיבך ויאכילך את: " —המן אשר לא ידעת ולא ידעון אבותיך, למען הודיעך כי לא על הלחם לבדו יחיה

.האדם, כי על כל מוצא פי ה' יחיה האדם. He afflicted you and made you hungry, then He fed you the mahn that you were not familiar with, nor were your forefathers familiar with, in order to inform you that man does not live by bread alone, rather by everything that emanates from the mouth of Hashem does man live. In other words, let us not think erroneously that man is sustained primarily by the external, physical bread. Rather, man's primary sustenance comes from the inner, spiritual component within the food, which comes from the word of Hashem spoken during the creation of the world (Bereishit 1, 11): "תדשא הארץ דשא"—let the earth sprout vegetation.

The Taste of a Food Is the Holy Spark that Sustains It

Let us expand on the sacred words of the Chasam Sofer based on a teaching from the holy Ba'al Shem Tov and his disciples. The taste we sense in any food is the holy "nitzotz" that sustains it. This concept is presented in the sefer Ba'al Shem Tov on the Torah (Lech Lecha) in the gloss Makor Mayim Chaim (19) in the name of the sefer Ahavat Dodim on Shir HaShirim. He says that when we taste something good in our food or drink, we should realize that it is from the Almighty—the source of all pleasures. Therefore, we should not settle for the physical pleasure alone but should cling to Him through this physical act.

The Ma'or Einayim writes something similar (Matot). Here is a translation:

There is nothing in the world that does not contain a holy spark emanating from the speech of HKB"H that sustains it. That is the taste of the thing that is sweet to the palate. As it is written (Tehillim 34, 9): "Taste and see that Hashem is good." In other words, what you taste and perceive as good is Hashem; He is the holy "nitzotz" embodied in the thing. The essence of the food remains within a person, while the waste is expelled devoid of any sustenance; it is worthless. The essence of the food that nourishes a person and gives him strength is the holy "nitzotz" in that food; it is what tastes good in the food and drink a person ingests. Thus, when a person eats a

food, that "nitzotz" becomes a sustaining part of his being and provides him with strength.

This explains the insight of the Chasam Sofer nicely. The spiritual taste and divine abundance embodied by holy sparks should have imbued the fruit of Eretz Yisrael. The people of Yisrael, however, were in the midbar at the time and not in the land. Therefore, that divine abundance and influence was temporarily transferred from the fruit of the land to the mahn that came down to them from the heavens in the midbar.

By Consuming the Fruit of the Land We Are Being Nourished from the Purity and Kedushah of the Shechinah

It gives me immense pleasure to explain the reason HKB"H transferred the spiritual taste that should have permeated the fruit of the land into the mahn that Yisrael ate during their forty-year sojourn in the midbar. As we know, the midbar is the domain of the klipot and forces of tumah. This is explained by the Arizal in Sha'ar HaKavanot (Techum Shabbat): **The habitat of the klipah itself is referred to as a desolate wilderness ("midbar"), since it is not suitable at all for inhabitation nor for planting.**

This is conveyed by the passuk (Devarim 32, 10): "ימצאהו" **בארץ מדבר ובתוהו ילל ישימון**—He found him in a desert land, and in the wastes of a howling wilderness. Rashi comments on the words "ארץ ציה ושממה": **"A land of parchedness and desolation," a place of the howling of "taninim" and the screaming of "bnot yaanah."** There, too, they were drawn by faith. In other words, even in the domain of the klipot, they believed wholeheartedly in Hashem. Clearly, Bnei Yisrael required special protection from the prevailing influence of the klipot in the midbar.

It also behooves us to present the explanation of the Bach (O.C. 208) concerning the formula of the three-faceted berachah: "וּנְאֻכַּל מִפְרִיָּהּ וּנְשַׁבַּע מִטּוֹבָהּ"—and let us eat from its fruit and be satisfied with its goodness. He asserts that the kedushah of the land which it receives from the supreme (heavenly) kedushah is also present in its fruit; they are nurtured from the kedushah of the Shechinah that dwells in the midst of the land . . . Hence, it is fitting

that we insert in the berachah the phrase “and let us eat from its fruit and be satisfied with its goodness,” because by eating her fruits, we are being nourished from the kedushah of the Shechinah and her purity and being satiated from her goodness.

Since HKB”H imbued the mahn with divine abundance and influence designated for the fruit of Eretz Yisrael, the kedushah of the mahn affected Yisrael in the midbar just like the fruit of Eretz Yisrael affects those who consume them. This is why our sacred sefarim teach that the consumption of the mahn purified and refined Yisrael. Here is what the Agra D’Kallah (Beshalach) writes about this in the name of the great Rabbi of Riminov, zy”a, in connection with the passuk (Shemot 16, 15): “ויראו בני ישראל ויאמרו איש אל אחיו מן הוא” —**Bnei Yisrael saw and said to one another, “mahn hu”** (literally: “It is mahn”):

By eating the mahn, their physical bodies were purified. It enabled each person to recognize his fellow’s inner self and thoughts. They were changed by the mahn from day to day. Hence, the fellow they recognized yesterday seemed to be someone else the next day. This is the implication of: “ויראו בני ישראל ויאמרו איש אל אחיו מן הוא.” They saw the friend they saw the day before and said: “**Who is this?**”—“**mahn hu**”—because he had been transformed by the mahn into someone else.

The Torah Yisrael Received in the Midbar Functioned as a Magnet Drawing the Sparks of Kedushah from the Fruits of the Land to the Mahn

This, however, raises an obvious and perplexing question. Moshe Rabeinu certainly knew ahead of time that the meraglim would not taste any spirituality in the fruit of the land, since it had been transferred to the mahn. So, why did he still insist that the meraglim: “וזהתחזקתם ולקחתם מפרי הארץ”? What benefit was served by having them bring back fruit from Eretz Canaan?

As a loyal servant in the presence of his master, I would like to justify the remarks of the Chasam Sofer. Let us begin by introducing what the Ohr HaChaim hakadosh writes (Yitro) in relation to the passuk (Shemot 19, 5): “ועתה אם שמוע תשמעו”

—בקולי ושמרתם את בריתי והייתם לי סגולה מכל העמים כי לי כל הארץ” —and now, if you hearken well to Me and you will keep My covenant, you will be a treasure (“segulah”) to Me from among all the peoples, for all the earth is Mine. He refers to a statement of Chazal (Pesachim 87b): “לא הגלה הקב”ה את ישראל לבין האומות אלא כדי שיתוספו עליהם גרים” —**HKB”H only exiled Yisrael among the nations in order to add converts (“geirim”) to their numbers.**

In Sha’ar HaPesukim (Shemot), the Arizal explains the deeper meaning of this statement. As a consequence, of the “cheit Eitz HaDa’at,” sparks of kedushah fell and were scattered throughout the world. This compelled Yisrael to go into galut from one place to another. By observing the precepts of the Torah and performing mitzvot, they would elevate the sparks of kedushah that had fallen in that location. These sparks of kedushah are referred to as “geirim.” This then is the deeper meaning of Chazal’s statement: “**HKB”H only exiled Yisrael among the nations in order to add ‘geirim’ to their numbers**”—it is their mission in galut to gather up all the scattered sparks of kedushah. When this task is accomplished, we will no longer need to go into exile, and we will merit the final, total geulah.

With this in mind, the Ohr HaChaim hakadosh asks the following question: The words of the neviim are full of rebukes related to the churban and resultant galut. We express this fact in our Musaf tefilot on the Yamim Tovim: “ומפני חטאינו גלינו ומפני חטאינו גלינו—**but due to our sins, we were exiled from our country and distanced from our land.** This declaration implies that were it not for our sins, we would never have been compelled to leave Eretz Yisrael. If so, how would we elevate all of the sparks of kedushah scattered around the world?

The Ohr HaChaim answers that we would accomplish this feat by means of Torah-study. The Torah would function as a powerful **magnet** attracting the sparks of kedushah scattered throughout the world. Unfortunately, this did not happen; the Jews in Eretz Yisrael did not study Torah or serve Hashem properly. Therefore, they had to actually wander from place to place in exile to clarify and gather up the lost sparks.

This then is the message conveyed by the passuk cited above: “**And now, if you hearken well to Me and you will**

keep My covenant—i.e., if you occupy yourselves with the study of Torah and serve Hashem—**“you will be a treasure to Me from among all the peoples”**—you will be able to draw in all the sparks of kedushah located among the peoples of the world by means of Torah-study, which will function like a magnet—**“for all the earth is Mine”**—all those sparks of kedushah must be elevated and returned to Me.

Accordingly, we can explain the power of the mahn, the heavenly bread, which HKB”H provided for Yisrael in the midbar. It possessed the spiritual qualities and taste destined for the fruit of the land. They received this gift in the merit of receiving the Torah in the midbar. In the midbar, the Torah functioned like a magnet drawing the kedushah from the fruits of the land and depositing it in the mahn. Now, even though the mahn began to fall prior to Matan Torah; nevertheless, Bnei Yisrael yearned for the Torah immediately upon departing Mitzrayim. In fact, the Midrash teaches that as soon as HKB”H informed them that they were going to receive the Torah, they began counting the days from Pesach to Shavuot with great anticipation. In that merit, the Torah began to function as a magnet even prior to Matan Torah.

Based on this, we can suggest a wonderful interpretation of a statement in the Midrash Tanchuma (Beshalach 20): **“לא ניתנה ל”** **התורה לדרוש אלא לאוכלי המן”**—**the Torah was given for study (elucidation) exclusively to those who ate the mahn.** With this statement, our sages hinted to the amazing relationship between eating the mahn and studying Torah. As explained, by studying Torah, they drew the taste and kedushah from the fruits of the land into the mahn. Therefore, the Torah was given to them specifically to study and expound in order to attract the sparks of kedushah scattered around the world.

The Meraglim Refused to Enter the Land because They Knew that the Sparks of Kedushah Scattered around the World Must Be Collected and Clarified

Following this line of reasoning, we can now explain the misguided intent of the meraglim. As mentioned above, they were not ordinary people; they were distinguished, intelligent leaders. They perceived through their “ruach hakodesh” that Yisrael would have to wander from exile to exile to complete

the task of clarifying the sparks of kedushah. Hence, they argued that it was preferable to remain in the midbar and complete the clarification process there. Why should Yisrael enter Eretz Yisrael, build a Beit HaMikdash, and then be compelled to go into galut to clarify the sparks of kedushah? Let them enter the land after the process is completed, and the geulah sheleimah is imminent.

Therefore, Moshe Rabeinu devised a clever plan; he instructed them to bring back and taste the fruit of the land. He needed to actually demonstrate to them that the spiritual taste had vanished from the fruit and entered the mahn. Furthermore, this transpired due to the Torah Yisrael studied in the midbar, which acted like a magnet drawing the spiritual taste and the sparks of kedushah out of the fruit and into the mahn. Realizing this, they would understand that if they entered Eretz Yisrael and continued to study Torah there, the Torah would continue to function as a magnet and attract the sparks of kedushah from all around the world to Eretz Yisrael. Hence, they would not need to go into exile.

This is the message Moshe Rabeinu conveyed to the meraglim with the statement: **“והתחזקתם ולקחתם מפרי הארץ”**. In other words, **find mental fortitude** and reassurance **from** the deficient quality of **the fruit of the land.** **“והימים ימי בכורי ענבים”**—during this season of the year, the fruit should be sweet and plump. Instead, they are dry and lifeless; their sweetness has vanished. How did this happen? The Torah has acted as a magnet and has temporarily borrowed the fruit’s vitality and sweetness. With this awareness, you will understand that there is no reason for Yisrael not to enter Eretz Yisrael. If they continue studying Torah in the land, they will attract all the sparks of kedushah from all around the world and will not need to go into galut.

In this vein, let us suggest a wonderful interpretation of the passuk (Shemot 16, 4): **“ויאמר ה' אל משה, הנני ממטיר לכם לחם מן השמים, ויצא העם ולקטו דבר יום ביומו, למען אנסנו הילך בתורתי אם לא.”** **Hashem said to Moshe, “Behold! I will rain down for you bread from heaven; and the people shall go out and gather enough for each day, so that I may test him, whether he will follow My Torah or not.”** The commentaries endeavor

to explain this: How did HKB”H employ the mahn to discern the degree of Yisrael’s observance? Based on the incredible insights of the Chasam Sofer and the Ohr HaChaim hakadosh, we can suggest that HKB”H provides us with the answer in the passuk itself.

“I will rain down for you bread from heaven”—do not think that the mahn is totally spiritual and does not possess any of the sustenance of the fruits of the land; **“the people shall go out and gather enough for each day”**—through their thoughts, they will be able to draw sparks of kedushah daily from the taste and vitality destined for the fruit of the land; **“so that I may test him, whether he will follow My Torah or not”**—for, if they abide by the Torah of Hashem, the Torah will function as a magnet drawing in the taste and qualities of the fruits of the land into the mahn; otherwise, the mahn will remain completely tasteless.

Now, let us also explain why the Torah informs us: **“והימים ימי ביכורי ענבים—those were the days of the first ripening of the grapes.** As we know, the juice or drink obtained from any fruit is deemed to be of a lower status than the fruit itself; as such, the berachah recited over it is generic: **“שהכל נהיה בדברו”**. There is one exception, however; wine extracted from grapes is elevated to a higher status and is honored with a unique berachah: **“בורא פרי הגפן”**. This is the implication of the phrase: **“יין המשומר בענביו”**—**wine that has been preserved in its grapes.** This is why Moshe Rabeinu instructed the meraglim to bring back grapes that have wine preserved within; it is because the sparks of kedushah of the wine, which can be used for the special kiddush on the wine, is concealed inside the grapes. He wanted them to realize that sparks of kedushah are concealed within the fruits of the land; HKB”H had only transferred their kedushah into the mahn temporarily for the sake of Yisrael in the midbar.



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