

Good Shabbos Everyone. In this week's Torah portion Parshas Devorim, Moshe Rabeinu (our teacher) reprimands the Jews for their misbehavior during their travels in the wilderness. One of the sins that Moshe Rabeinu mentions, is the sin of the Spies. The Spies went to Eretz Yisroel on a reconnaissance mission to see the condition of the inhabitants, in order to plan an invasion. In essence however, the incident of the spies was really a test for the Jews, to see if they would have faith in Hashem.

Hashem had already promised the Eretz Yisroel to the Jewish people in many places in the Torah. As Moshe Rabeinu says in this week's parsha: "See... Hashem your G-d has placed the Land before you; go up and possess, as Hashem, G-d of your forefathers, has spoken to you. Do not fear and do not lose resolve." (Devorim 1:21) However, as the Torah tells us, 10 of the 12 spies came back with a pessimistic report about Eretz Yisroel, saying about the land that it contains "[a] people greater and taller than we, cities great and fortified to the heavens, and even children of giants have we seen there." (Devorim 1:28)

The Jewish people believed this pessimistic report and became fearful. This behavior on the part of the Spies and the Jewish nation in general demonstrated a lack of trust in Hashem. The Bnai Yisroel failed Hashem's test. Hashem had promised the Bnai Yisroel that they would take the land easily and they failed to believe in Hashem. For this lack of trust, the generation was condemned to die in the wilderness and not enter Eretz Yisroel. We learn from here how important it is to pass the tests in life which Hashem sends us.

The Rabbis teach us that life is full of tests. In fact, life itself is a series of tests. In order to understand this, we must delve deeper into the spiritual realm. A soul is sent down to this earth in order to fix spiritual shortcomings; shortcomings that the soul failed to fix in a previous incarnation. The Sages tell us that if we see that a certain thing in life is more of a temptation for us, then we should know that that is the shortcoming that our soul has come down to this earth in order to fix. For example, if a person has a great desire to steal, he should know that one of his primary purposes on this earth is to come to respect others' property.

Hashem routinely sends tests to people, in order to see if they are really working on themselves in this life. Following the previous example, Hashem will give the thief opportunities to steal, in order to test him.

Let us now tell an inspirational story, which shows how one Jew withstood a test that Hashem sent his way.

Almost 30 years ago, Mr. Albert Azar was a salesman for a clothing-wear company. Mr. Azar often had to travel around the country for several weeks at a time. Since he was an observant Jew, Mr. Azar usually had a great deal of trouble finding kosher food on his extended business trips. Of course, there were kosher restaurants in New York, New Jersey and in Detroit. However, Mr. Azar had the biggest difficulty when he traveled in the South. After several inquiries, Mr. Azar managed to find a reliable kosher restaurant in Memphis, Tennessee. He was able to stock up on food from the restaurant in Memphis, which would feed him for the next two weeks during his travels down South.

In 1972, Mr. Azar began a business trip in Birmingham, Alabama, planning as usual to wrap up the week in Memphis for Shabbos. In Birmingham, Mr. Azar attempted to sell to a client who had refused to buy from him several times before. Mr. Azar was amazed this time to hear from the president of the corporation who was interested in purchasing clothing from Mr. Azar.

On Thursday afternoon, Mr. Azar rushed to the office of the corporation to discuss the sale with the president of the corporation. The appointment was set for 1 p.m. Mr. Azar arrived on time but he was forced to wait for several hours. Mr. Azar began to become concerned that he would not be able to make it to Memphis by Thursday night. Shabbos was quickly approaching and he

did not want to get stuck in Birmingham. As the hours dragged on, Mr. Azar reasoned that he could leave Birmingham early on Friday morning and still arrive in Memphis before Shabbos.

Finally, at closing time, the president of the corporation came out and apologized to Mr. Azar, telling him: that his meeting had lasted longer than he had expected. They set another appointment for Friday morning at 9 a.m.

Mr. Azar arrived the next morning on time to the appointment. Again, the president made Mr. Azar wait. The hours dragged on and Shabbos was nearing. Finally, Mr. Azar called the restaurant in Memphis to order food for Shabbos. The restaurant was closing, they could not make food for him. Mr. Azar was crushed. What would he eat on Shabbos and in the coming two weeks? However, he believed that Hashem would help.

It was really getting late and Mr. Azar could no longer wait for the president. Before the receptionist could stop him, Mr. Azar barged into the office of the president. "I am leaving on the next flight out." Mr. Azar told the surprised president. "If you want to place an order, do it now." He said to the president. The president gave Mr. Azar a small order!?!

Miraculously, Mr. Azar managed to catch a flight and arrive in Memphis mere minutes before Shabbos. Still, he would have no food for Shabbos. However, he believed that Hashem would help. As soon as he landed, he made his way to the cheap hotel where his company had made reservations. Mr. Azar made an instant decision. It was bad enough that he had no food for Shabbos but was not going to stay in the dumpy hotel. However, he believed that Hashem would help. He headed across the street to a brand new hotel. By then, it was mere minutes to Shabbos.

The clerk at the hotel desk told Mr. Azar that the hotel was practically empty. He could choose any room that he wanted. Mr. Azar told the clerk that he was running late, so he told the clerk that any room would be fine. The clerk assigned him room 358.

With minutes to sundown, Mr. Azar rushed upstairs to room 358. It was nearly Shabbos and he quickly began to unpack before Shabbos. He had a sinking feeling in his heart. There was nothing to eat for Shabbos. However, he believed that Hashem would help.

He flung open the closet door and began to hang up his clothing. He was shocked but what he saw in the closet. He closed the closet door and opened again, wondering if his eyes had been playing tricks on him. Everything was still there!

Mr. Azar stretched out a trembling finger and touched a bottle of strictly kosher wine. With the wine were two challahs, six different kinds of packaged meats, pickles, olives, potato salad, coleslaw, cookies, soda, and whiskey. It was enough to feed ten people.

As Mr. Azar prayed the Shabbos prayers, he thanked Hashem for the miracle of the Shabbos food. He was able to enjoy Shabbos even under the most difficult conditions.

About three months later, Mr. Azar was at a gathering at the home of a friend Abe Kassen back home in Deal, New Jersey. It was then that Mr. Azar heard the story behind the mysterious Shabbos food. Three months earlier, Abe Kassen and fellow businessman Ike Hillery had been in Memphis on a business trip. They had bought enough food for the coming week. On Shabbos afternoon, Abe began experiencing stomach pains. Not wanting to strange hospital in Tennessee, Abe asked his friend Ike to rush him home. In their haste to leave the hotel, the two left the food in their hotel room, the same hotel room that Mr. Azar happened to receive when he checked into the hotel. (Visions of Greatness p.36 R.Y.Weiss)

Hashem tested Mr. Azar to see if he would lose faith. However, Mr. Azar continued to believe that Hashem would help him, even up to the last minute. Let us be inspired by this story to withstand the many tests that come our way in life. Let us remember that these are all tests from Hashem. **Good Shabbos Everyone.**