

# Maamarei Mordechai

הסבר לפי ממש פשוט

Parshas Shelach 5784

D. Mordechai Schlachter

The scouts return from their forty-day mission and say the following.

**וַשָּׁם רָאִינוּ אֶת־הַנְּפִלִים בְּנֵי עֲנָק מִן־הַנְּפִלִים וַנְּהִי בְּעֵינֵינוּ כְּחַגְגָּבִים וְכֵן הָיִינוּ בְּעֵינֵיהֶם:**

“And there we saw Nephilim the sons of Anak of the Nephilim, and it was that we were in our own eyes like grasshoppers. And so, too, we were in their eyes.” (Bamidbar 13:33).

This report gives insight into what the scouts actually did incorrectly. The punishment of forty-years for forty-days seems harsh. However, it was exactly midah-keneged-midah, it was the punishment that fit the crime. They call the people of the land Nephilim. However, there is no account of Nephilim being part of Canaan when Bnei Yisroel conquer it. Further, if they were like grasshoppers in the inhabitant’s eyes what is the significance that they were grasshoppers in their own eyes? Also, who or what is Anak?

When Moshe recounted the history of the wandering in the wilderness he says, “The scouts said, ‘What king of place is this? Where are we going to? We have seen people that are taller than us, with large cities and sky-high walls, and Anakites.’” (Devarim 1:28). He leaves out “Nephilim” and it seems that the Anakites were a people. Moshe further describes the Anakite people as being giants. (Ibid 2:10). Yehoshua also wiped out the Anakite people when he invaded. (Yehoshua 11:21). And yet, the scouts call them “the children of the Anak.” (Bamidbar 13:22). “Moreover, we saw the children of the Anak.” (Ibid 13:28). These reports make it seem like Anak was one person who had these three powerful children.

Nephilim are only mentioned one other time in the Torah, during the era of the great deluge. (Bereishis 6:4). The Torah, there, describes them as men of renown. (Ibid). The scouts here, said that the Nephilim were the sons of Anak. (Bamidbar 13:33). They also said that Anak is one among the Nephilim, a Niphel himself. Therefore, it seems that the scouts were saying that three sons of the Anak, who himself is a Nephil, were present; three giant Nephilim were controlling Canaan. If this is to be taken literally, that means that the Nephilim survived the deluge. Moshe does not call them Nephilim. He again just calls them Anakites when Bnei Yisroel are spurred on to conquer the Land. (Devarim 9:2). Also, it is odd phrasing to say ‘Nephilim sons of Anak, one of the Nephilim.’ Just say Nephilim. Why mention Anak?

The hint is in Hashem’s response. When Hashem hears the nation embittered by the scouts’ reports, the Torah gives Hashem’s reaction. וַיֹּאמֶר ה' אֶל־מֹשֶׁה עַד־אֵנָה יִנְאַצְנִי הָעָם הַזֶּה וְעַד־אֵנָה לֹא־יִאֱמְנוּ בִּי בְּכָל־הָאֵתוֹת אֲשֶׁר עָשִׂיתִי בְּקִרְבּוֹ: “And Hashem said to Moshe, ‘Until when will this nation spurn me? And until when will they refuse to believe in Me? With all the signs that I have done in their midst!’” (Bamidbar 14:11). This same sentiment echoes from earlier. וַיַּעַן מֹשֶׁה וַיֹּאמֶר וְהֵן לֹא־יִאֱמְנוּ לִי וְלֹא יִשְׁמְעוּ בְּקִלְי כִּי יֹאמְרוּ לֹא־נִרְאָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ: “And Moshe answered Hashem, and he said, “Lo! They will not believe in me. And they will not listen to my

voice. Because they will say, 'No, Hashem appeared to you.'" (Shmos 4:1). When Hashem approached Moshe and told him to be His servant to Bnei Yisroel, this is how Moshe objected. Moshe had a legitimate concern. Since Hashem appeared to Moshe personally, through the Malakh (in the form of the fire on the thornbush) and through hearing Hashem's voice, Moshe was not able to be a full baal betachon. A person of faith is one who takes information and belief on faith. Moshe did not need to take Hashem's existence on faith because Moshe talked to Hashem. Moshe did not *believe* that Hashem existed, he *knew* Hashem existed. Bnei Yisroel, who merited the geula from Mitzrayim because of their faith, would not be able to believe in a servant of Hashem who did not share their level of Emunah. It's surprising to think about but that is what Moshe perceived the situation to be.

Hashem's response to Moshe was to show him signs. Hashem showed him the sign of the staff turning into a serpent (ibid 4:3), Moshe's hand turning into tzaraas (ibid 4:6), and turning water to blood (ibid 4:9). The Torah calls these signs. (Ibid 4:8). Hashem felt that when Bnei Yisroel would see signs, particularly the ten makos, then that would seal their belief in Moshe as Hashem's servant. The signs were for Mitzrayim. They were also to show Bnei Yisroel that Moshe – who performed the signs – was Hashem's servant.

This is how the Torah describes what Hashem's gripe was here. To answer the question of how Bnei Yisroel can believe in Moshe, Hashem made Moshe perform signs. Logically, all the signs that Hashem performed – e.g., the makos, splitting of the Yam Suf, defeating Amalek, manna, the quail, pillars of fire and clouds, Revelation on Har Sinai – should have been enough to seal their belief in Hashem. Yet, they still spurned Hashem. How is it possible that they still spurned Hashem after all of the signs and wonders?

The answer is in this pasuk. One, there were no Nephilim in Canaan. They were merely Anakites, giants. Yet, the scouts said not only were there giants, but they were Nephilim. Nephilim were a special breed of people who had renown. (Bereishis 6:4). They were equal to when the great lords of mankind took common daughters at will so they could create their own clans and tribes. (Ibid). The scouts called them Nephilim, and not just giants, to demonstrate that while Nephilim no longer existed, their concept as super powerful beings still existed in Canaan.

Two, the scouts saw themselves as mere grasshoppers. Locusts are powerful in swarms (as was seen in Eretz Mitzrayim). They are quite helpless by themselves. *We are mere grasshoppers*. This is in contract so what Yishayahu prophesized. הַיֵּשֶׁב עַל-הָאָרֶץ הַיֵּשֶׁב עַל-הָאָרֶץ : "It is He who sits enthroned on the world, and the dwellers on the planet are mere grasshoppers." (Yeshia 40:22). The scouts were saying they were as insignificant to the dweller of Canaan as humans are to Hashem. They were completely unworthy, powerless, and subject to the Canaanite whims.

Three, and that is how they see us. The Canaanites see us as we see ourselves. It is no longer Hashem versus them. It is us versus them. They are great and powerful giants. We are insignificant grasshoppers. They do not fear Hashem. Thus, Hashem's reaction. How quickly they forget all the signs and wonders proving Hashem is with them. And that is why their children needed forty years for the forty days to wander, grow, lose their lack of faith, gain their new faith, and then be ready to conquer the Land.