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Rabbi Yosef Kalatsky

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### Enabling A Subversive Force Of Action

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1. The Jews asked to send spies to scout out the land.
2. G-d said: I've told them that it is a good land, if they wish to send spies they can; Moshe acceded.
3. Midrash: The Jews understood they could not reveal their true intent to Moshe that they lacked in faith.
4. They said they were concerned G-d's name should not be desecrated.
5. G-d said we will find houses filled with wealth; the Canaanites will surely bury their wealth.
6. Why wouldn't Moshe have been concerned had they presented their real intent?
7. Torah: You will eat to be sated in the Sabbatical year.
8. Midrash: You will eat a minuscule amount & be sated.
9. Torah: "If you will ask what will we eat if we don't plant etc, I will command my blessing: the 6th year will have a 3 year yield."
10. Seforno: "If you have faith, the less will be equivalent of the more. If you don't, you will have a 3 year yield."
11. If Jews have faith, the word of G-d will come to fruition; if not, you must locate the wealth to avert a desecration of G-d's name.

### Securing Leadership Through Augmentation

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1. Moshe adds the letter Yud to Yehoshua's name.
2. Yud connotes a supplication that Yehoshua be saved from the machinations of the spies.
3. There were 12 spies; 10 were evil and 2 were devoutly righteous.
4. Why did Moshe not pray for Caleb?
5. Ethics Of Our Father's: Moshe transmitted the Torah to Yehoshua.
6. Yehoshua was responsible to transmit the Torah in its perfect form as it was given at Sinai to Moshe.
7. Rashi: Yehoshua was the dedicated student of Moshe who never departed from the Tent.
8. Eldad and Meidad prophesized Yehoshua would be his successor: Moshe therefore prayed that he should not be influenced.



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### Engendering A Metamorphosis Through One's Alignment

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1. The spies chosen were initially devoutly righteous.
2. They only became evil when returning with ominous reports.
3. Ten of the twelve spies said they could not go because it is a land that devours its inhabitants.
4. The spy mission lasted 40 days from the time they embarked until they returned.
5. When they returned, the Torah states they went and they returned.
6. Midrash: they returned as they went.
7. As when they returned it was with an evil intent they went with an evil intent.
8. The two verses are contradictory.
9. Ohr Hachaim Hakadosh: When one assumes the position as agent one is linked to the one he represents.
10. If the one represented has a lack of faith it will impact on the agent negatively.
11. Since the Jewish People had a lack of faith they impacted negatively on their representatives, the spies.
12. When they initially were chosen, they represented nobody.
13. Upon departure, were they linked to the Jewish People.

### When A Test Is Not A Test

CLICK TO VIEW!



1. The Jews asked to send spies to scout out the land.
2. G-d said: I've told them that it is a good land; there is no need to send spies...
3. When they send spies, I will give them a setting for them to err and they will not inherit the land.
4. They were only authorized to send spies to fail to understand why they are not worthy to enter into the land.
5. Conventionally, a test is to determine one's ability..
6. If it is beyond one's ability, it is not a test but a definite failure.
7. Regarding the spies: There never was a consideration they would succeed due to their lack of faith.
8. It was only for them to understand they were unworthy.

## Weekly Torah Commentary Series: Shelach



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### Potential, Determined by One's Linkage

*Torah:* The Jewish people requested that *Moshe* send spies to scout out the Land of *Canaan*. The *Torah* states regarding the spies, "...they were all distinguished men (*anashim*) ...they were all princes." The *Torah* identifies the scouts that were chosen by G-d to be men of acclaim.

*Rashi* citing *Chazal*: "All the men that were chosen were proper Jews."

*Midrash*: "All the men that were chosen to scout out the Land were devoutly righteous before they set out on their mission." Initially when the spies had been chosen, although they were righteous they later became corrupted and evil. If they were of such exceptional spiritual standing, how could they return with slanderous reports of the Land that were against G-d to the degree of bordering on blasphemy?

*Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh*: The incident of the spies can be explained with the principle of agency. The *Gemara* draws from many sources in the *Torah* that if one appoints an agent to perform a *mitzvah* or carry out any other act on his behalf, the result of the agent's actions is attributed to the one who had commissioned him. The agent is only effective and can function in his capacity because of his linkage to the one who he represents.

*Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh*: Based on this principle, if the agent should represent individuals who lack faith or who are corrupted in their spirituality, the linkage between the two will affect the agent negatively. Although the spies were initially devoutly righteous and men of special spiritual status, because they were the agents of the Jewish people to scout out the Land who lacked faith, they were affected negatively. The clarity that they initially had before becoming the agents of the Jewish people was lost. This caused

them to see what they had witnessed in a negative context rather than in a positive context. Although they still had the ability to choose correctly (otherwise they would not have been faulted for their behavior); however, they did not choose to make the proper choice because they had lost their clarity.

The Jewish people had demonstrated many times from the time that they had left Egypt a lack of faith in G-d. When the Jewish people were caught between the Sea and the approaching Egyptian army the *Torah* states, "They said to *Moshe*, 'Were there no graves in Egypt that you took us to die in the desert? What is this that you have done to us to take us out of Egypt?'"

After the Splitting of the Sea, the Jewish people traveled and arrived at a location called *Marah*. It was an oasis where the waters were bitter. They complained to *Moshe*, "What shall we drink?" Despite the fact that G-d had promised to take them to a Land that was flowing with milk and honey, they lacked faith and requested spies to scout out the Land to see if the Land of *Canaan* would be beneficial to them. The spies that were chosen to scout out the Land, were thus negatively impacted and impaired through the agency of the Jewish people.

Although *Yehoshua* and *Calev* were also agents of the Jewish people, because of their unique dimension of spirituality were able to perceive what they had seen properly. In addition, *Moshe* added the letter "yud" to *Yehoshua's* name (which represents one of the names of G-d) to indicate that G-d should come to his aid. *Moshe* prayed that he should not fall prey to the machinations of the spies. *Calev*, the prince of the tribe of *Yehudah*, when he felt that he was being affected by the other spies, went to *Chevron* to prostrate himself on the graves of the Patriarchs to pray so that he should not succumb to their influence.

Just as the linkage between the agent and the one who appointed him can have a negative affect on the agent, identically if one is linked to a positive source, then that agent will draw ability that is beyond his own capacity as a result of the linkage. If one represents an individual who is worthy of great Divine Assistance, the agent will be worthy of that assistance. He will be able to overcome and surpass situations that would not have been possible on his own.

*Torah*: Regarding the building of the *Mishkan*, G-d commanded *Moshe* to build the *Mishkan* and

subsequently delegated all the tasks of its building to the Jewish people. If in fact the building of the *Mishkan* was done by the Jewish people, why did G-d command *Moshe* himself to build it?

*Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh*: G-d wanted *Moshe* to be the beneficiary of every aspect of the *Mishkan*. By delegating the building of the *Mishkan* to the Jewish people, they were his agents representing him. Thus, everything that they had done, accrued to *Moshe* based on the laws of agency. However based on the words of the *Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh* regarding the spies, we can understand the building of the *Mishkan* differently.

G-d wanted the Jewish people to be the agents of *Moshe* so that they should merit the Divine Assistance that they personally were not worthy of. As *Moshe's* agents their level of accomplishment in the physical and spiritual realm would be the equivalent of *Moshe's* dimension of person. The spiritual capacity to contain G-d's Presence would be enhanced to a greater degree. The Jewish people merited special Divine Assistance to be able to build the *Mishkan* and infuse it with all its needed intent. This was only possible because they were the agents of *Moshe*.

*Chazal* refer to the *Mishkan* as "the *Mishkan* of *Moshe*" because the dimension of holiness of the *Mishkan* was a reflection of *Moshe's* own holiness. Had they not been linked to *Moshe* as his agents, the *Mishkan* would have had a limited capacity.

*Gemara*: The *Kohen* officiates as G-d's agent. Based on the affect of the linkage, which comes about as a result of agency, one's intent, will determine the dimension of the *mitzvah*. If one truly performs a *mitzvah* for the sake of G-d and is acting as His agent, the ability to produce something in the spiritual realm will surpass anything that he could have accomplished in his own right.

## **Self-Interest, The Motivating Factor**

*Midrash*: "...There is no one who is more beloved to G-d than the one who is an agent to perform a *mitzvah* (*shaliach mitzvah*). This is because he is willing to sacrifice himself in order to execute His agency to succeed..." It is interesting to note that it seems from the *Midrash* that the one who performs the *mitzvah* itself is not as beloved as the one who is an agent to perform a *mitzvah* on behalf of another. When one

performs a *mitzvah* such as wearing *tefillin*, eating *matzah*, etc, he is not considered as beloved as the one who has been appointed as an agent to perform a *mitzvah*.

*Gemara* in Tractate *Bava Metzia*: There is a principle, "A person prefers one 'kav'(dry measure) of his own produce over nine 'kavim' of his fellow's produce..."

*Rashi*: Since one toiled for his own produce, although it is a smaller amount, it is more beloved to him than that of his fellow because it is a product of his own effort. Similarly, when one performs a *mitzvah*, he does so for his own benefit; however, if one is an agent to perform a *mitzvah* on behalf of another, it is more difficult to be as dedicated to sacrifice for its performance because the agent is not the ultimate beneficiary. However, if the agent does perform the *mitzvah* as an agent with great sacrifice and dedication, it is considered a great accomplishment and is thus beloved by G-d.

The *Vilna Gaon* would send out an agent every year well in advance of the Festival of *Succos* to seek out a proper *esrog* on his behalf. One year the *esrog* yield was not of quality status and it was difficult to locate an *esrog* that met the standard of the *Vilna Gaon*. The *Vilna Gaon's* agent, after a lengthy search, came upon a wealthy individual who had purchased an exceptional *esrog* that would meet the approval of the *Vilna Gaon*. The agent informed him that he was seeking to purchase an *Esrog* on behalf of the *Vilna Gaon*. He was willing to pay any price for it.

The wealthy man responded that because he was already a person of great wealth he was not interested in selling the *esrog*. The agent asked him, "Is there anything that you would want for your *esrog*?" The man pondered and said, "I will sell you my *esrog* in exchange for the *Vilna Gaon's* share in the world to come." After being taken aback by this cost, the agent reluctantly agreed and returned to *Vilna* with the *esrog*. When the *Vilna Gaon* asked him, "What was the cost of the *esrog*?" He hesitantly responded with great trepidation, "Your share in the world to come." The *Vilna Gaon* joyfully replied, "*Baruch Hashem* (Thank G-d) I can now for the first time in my life perform a *mitzvah* completely selflessly for its own sake, without any consideration of reward (*I'shmah*)."  
When one performs a *mitzvah* on behalf of another, because he is not the beneficiary of his agency, he has greater relevance to perform the *mitzvah* for the sake of G-d.

*Midrash*: "There was never an individual who was able to succeed as agents to perform a *mitzvah* as much as the two that were sent by *Yehoshua Bin Nun*. As it states, 'Yehoshua Bin Nun sent two individuals...' *Yehoshua Bin Nun* (after the passing of *Moshe* he assumed the mantle of leadership) had sent two spies, *Pinchas* and *Calev*, who had sacrificed and were successful in their agency."

*Torah*: *Pinchas* was a zealot because he risked his life to bring about a sanctification of G-d's Name. As the verse states, "He (*Pinchas*) avenged My Vengeance." When he internalized the wrath of G-d he killed *Zimri*, the Prince of the Tribe of *Shimon* and *Cozbi* the Midianite Princess when they were cohabitating in a public setting. *Pinchas* acted solely for the sake of G-d's glory. *Calev* was the Prince of the Tribe of *Yehudah*, which was endowed with kingship. One is only able to be a true king if he possesses the characteristic of negation, which will allow him to act selflessly. *Calev* was therefore able to fulfill his agency on behalf of G-d on an exceptional level.

## Atonement, Spiritual Rehabilitation

*Torah*: The spies who were sent to scout out the Land had returned with slanderous reports about the Land. They said, "It is a Land that devours its inhabitants." Rather than trusting the Word of G-d, and perceiving it as something that is good, they said to *Moshe*, "We will not go in." They believed that G-d was misleading them and causing them to believe that all He had done for them was in their best interest. However, because of their own sense of spiritual inadequacy because of their involvement from the sin of the Golden Calf, they processed everything in a negative manner. As a result of this sin, G-d decreed that the generation that was between the ages of 20 and 60 should perish in the desert over a 40- year period.

*Torah*: After the incident of the spies, "*Hashem* spoke to *Moshe* saying, '...When you will bring a fire-offering to *Hashem* – an elevation offering or a feast offering... or a free-will offering, or on your festivals, to produce a satisfying aroma to *Hashem*... the one who brings the offering must bring a meal offering...and wine for a libation...' After the sin of the spies, if one were to bring a peace offering, burnt offering, etc, it must be accompanied with a meal offering and a wine libation. Why does the *Torah* choose to mention these elements of the sacrifice at this point in time?

*Sforno*: “Until the sin of the Golden Calf, if one wanted to bring a burnt offering to G-d it was sufficient for him to bring the animal for the offering by itself. It was considered to be fully effective although it was not with the meal offering and the wine libation. The offering produced a satisfying aroma to G-d, as we find regarding the sacrifices of *Abel*, *Noach*, and *Avraham*. They had brought burnt offerings without being supplemented with anything else.

“At the time of the giving of the *Torah* at Sinai, the youths also brought burnt offerings that were not accompanied with a meal offering and libations. However, as a result of the spiritual diminishment of the Jewish people that was caused by the sin of the Golden Calf, when a communal offering was brought it was no longer sufficient for it to be brought by itself. It needed to be supplemented with the meal offering and libations. As the Jewish people regressed in their spiritual state, as after the sin of the spies, even when one brought a personal offering, it needed to be supplemented with a meal offering and libations. It was no longer sufficient to bring the meat offering by itself.”

*Gemara* in Tractate *Sanhedrin*: If a non-Jew violates any of the seven Noahide laws he is liable for the death penalty even if he is not forewarned. If the non-Jew steals he is liable for the death penalty; however, if the Jew steals although it is considered to be a grave sin, he does not need to die to be atoned. If the sin of stealing is so grave that one must die, why is the Jew not subject to the death penalty as the non-Jew? Whenever anyone sins it causes a diminishment in one’s spirituality. Punishment is the mechanism for atonement. The seriousness of the sin and its damaging effect on one’s spirituality will determine the degree of punishment needed to rehabilitate one’s spirituality.

The spiritual make up of a Jew and non-Jew are different. The spirituality of the non-Jew is less viable than that of the Jew who has a more advanced spirituality, which causes it to be more resilient to the affect of sin. If a non-Jew violates any of the seven Noahide laws, the damage to his spirituality is so severe that only death could atone for his sin. This is not so regarding the Jew because his dimension of spirituality is more advanced. Before the sin of the Golden Calf the spirituality of the Jew was at its most wholesome and viable level. Thus, if a Jew sinned, it was sufficient to only bring the animal for the burnt offering in order to be atoned.

However, after the sin of the Golden Calf, the spirituality of the Jew was diminished and became less resilient. In order to bring about atonement, the communal offering needed to be supplemented with the meal offering and libations. After the sin of the spies, their spirituality was further diminished and thus needed even greater degree of initiative to be rehabilitated. The individual offering needed also be supplemented with a meal offering and libations.

*Torah*: “*Hashem* spoke to *Moshe* saying, ‘...When you will eat of the bread of the Land, you shall set a side a portion for *Hashem* (*challah*)...’”

*Sforno*: “After the sin of the spies, the Jewish people also needed the *mitzvah* of *challah*. One needed to perform a positive commandment regarding the preparation of the bread so that he should be worthy of blessing to come upon him. As it states, ‘When you give the first of your dough to the *Kohen* (Priest), it will bring blessing into your house.’” In order to be worthy of the blessing of G-d, the Jewish people needed to tithe their dough before partaking of it. Prior to the sin of the spies, they were not obligated in the *mitzvah* of *challah* because they were innately worthy of blessing.

## Understanding One’s Limitation

*Torah* in *Beha’aloscha*: *Moshe* was overwhelmed by the demands that were put upon him by the Jewish people as their leader. He said to G-d saying, “Why have You done evil to Your servant...that You place the burden of this entire people upon me? Did I conceive this entire people or did I give birth to it...” In response, G-d said to *Moshe*, “Gather to me seventy men from the elders of Israel...I will increase some of the spirit that is upon you and place it upon them, and they will bear the burden of the people with you...”

After *Moshe* had gathered the seventy elders before G-d, the Divine Presence descended upon them. At that time the *Torah* states, “Two men remained behind in the camp, the name of one was *Eldad* and the name of the second was *Medad*...and they prophesied in the camp...” *Eldad* and *Medad* had prophesied, “*Moshe* will die and *Yehoshua* will bring them in.” Meaning, *Moshe* would pass away and his disciple, *Yehoshua Bin Nun* will assume his position.

*Chazal*: Upon hearing their prophecy, *Tziporah* the wife of *Moshe* exclaimed, “Woe to the wives of prophets!”

Meaning, that since the Sinai event, when *Moshe* assumed his special status as prophet, he had separated himself from her, so too will the wives of these prophets experience a similar fate. She believed that since *Eldad* and *Medad* had become prophets, that they too would separate themselves from their wives. When *Miriam*, *Moshe's* sister, overheard *Tziporah's* remark, she said to her brother *Aaron*, "Was it only to *Moshe* that *Hashem* spoke? Did He not speak to us as well?"

*Miriam* could not understand the legitimacy of *Moshe's* decision to separate from his wife. *Miriam* and *Aaron* were also prophets and this was not sufficient cause for them to separate from their spouses. When she had spoken critically of her brother *Moshe*, *Miriam* was afflicted with leprosy, thus causing her to be sent out of the camp of Israel. The Jewish people were not able to travel for a seven-day period until she recovered from her leprous state. Although, *Miriam* when she had spoken critically of her brother *Moshe* it was not with the intent of deprecation, she was nevertheless punished because it was considered to be *lashon hara* (negative speech).

*Midrash*: During the seven-day period, the Divine Presence, the Clouds of Glory, and the entire Jewish people waited for her recovery out of respect. Why did *Miriam* merit such honor? When *Moshe's* mother *Yocheved* could no longer conceal his birth in Egypt, she put him into a box and placed it into the Nile. The *Torah* states, "*Miriam* stood at a distance and waited to see what would happen to him." In the merit of waiting a moment to see what the fate of her brother would be, G-d rewarded her measure for measure. Just as she had waited for *Moshe*, so too did the Divine Presence, the Clouds of Glory, and the entire Jewish people wait for her to recover. This is to teach us the immeasurable value of a *mitzvah*.

Although *Miriam's* positive act was only momentary, she was rewarded with many multiples. Thus revealing that when G-d rewards one for a *mitzvah* measure for measure He does so 500 times greater than when He metes out punishment measure for measure. After the incident of *Miriam*, the *Torah* tells us about the spies who were sent to scout out the Land. They returned with slanderous and evil reports about the Land. As a result of this information the Jewish bemoaned their fate, believing that if they were to enter the Land they would die. Consequently, G-d punished them by having them perish in the desert over a forty-year period.

*Midrash*: The juxtaposition of the incident of the spies to the portion of *Miriam* is to teach us, "These evil

people witnessed what had happened to *Miriam* and they did not take heed." They should have learned from *Miriam*, that just as she as a result of her limitation was not able to evaluate the true essence of *Moshe's* dimension, so too they, because of their limitation, are not able to fully grasp what they had witnessed in the Land of *Canaan*. Since G-d had already promised them that the Land would be a Land that flows with milk and honey, and they would only thrive there, the spies should have had sufficient reason to understand that their perception of reality was not accurate.

It is interesting to note that because *Moshe* had said to G-d that being the sole bearer of the responsibility for the Jewish people was too overwhelming for him, a chain of events was set in motion. As a result of what he had said, the *Torah* tells us the *Eldad* and *Medad* prophesied in the camp. Their prophecy led *Yocheved* to make the remark, "Woe to the wives of prophets," which was overheard by *Miriam*, her sister-in-law. Consequently, *Miriam* spoke critically of *Moshe*, resulting in her becoming a leper.

*Miriam's* predicament was public knowledge because for a seven day period, the Divine Presence, the Jewish people, and the Clouds of Glory did not travel until she recovered from her leprous state. There was sufficient time for the Jewish people and especially the spies, who were people of greater caliber than the average person, to reflect on what had transpired with *Miriam*. Because of their slander of the Land, they were classified as truly evil for not drawing the lesson that should have been learned.

## Tracing Something to Its Source

*Torah*: When the spies had returned to deliver their slanderous reports about the Land, "They went and came to *Moshe* and *Aaron*..." It would have been sufficient for the *Torah* to state that they "came," which was what they were actually doing when they returned. Why does the verse need to mention their departure in relationship to their return?

*Rashi* citing *Chazal*: "It is to associate their going with their coming. Just as when they had gone to scout out the Land it was with an evil intent, so too was their return (with the reports) with a similar evil intent."

*Torah* at the beginning of *Shelach*: Regarding the spies, "Send forth for yourself men..."



*Rashi* citing *Chazal*: “The men that were chosen by G-d to spy out the Land initially were devoutly righteous (*tzaddikim*) and men of special status.” If the spies were initially classified as men of status, how do we understand the words of *Chazal* that tell us that they had gone to scout out the Land it was with an evil intent?

*Torah*: Regarding the sending out of the spies, “*Hashem* spoke to *Moshe* saying, ‘Send forth for yourself men...’” G-d had already promised the Jewish people that He was taking them to a Land that was filled with blessing. Despite the fact that requesting to scout out the Land before entering it was a breach of faith, G-d nevertheless allowed them to do so.

*Midrash*: “G-d said to *Moshe*, ‘Because they wanted to see the Land before entering, I will put them in a precarious situation where they can easily fail through misinterpretation.’” If G-d had already proven His dedication and love to the Jewish people through the many instances of revealed miracles, why would that not be sufficient for them to believe that G-d would not carry forth what He had promised them? Their request was an indication that they had a lack of trust (faith) in G-d.

Because of their breach of faith, G-d presented them with a setting in which one must have unswerving faith to be able to perceive truth. Their interpretation of the events that they had witnessed in *Canaan* was only due to their lack of trust in G-d. In contrast,

*Yehoshua* and *Calev*, who were giants in faith and scrupulously pious, had interpreted the events correctly. Everything was perceived by them in a positive vein, which was a confirmation of G-d’s dedication to His people. This is why the *Torah* associates their return with their departure.

Based on the principle of “*aveira goreres aveira*, one spiritual infraction (even of a minor nature) draws one to another (of an even more severe nature),” although the spies were initially classified as righteous because they did not intend to defy G-d; nevertheless, because their mission was an indication that they did not trust G-d, it led them to be put in a more precarious position that caused them to become evil. The end result, which was the slandering of the Land, reveals that their initial initiative was already spiritually tainted.

*Gemara* in Tractate *Shabbos*: “One’s speech (subject matter) on the *Shabbos* should be different from the weekday.” If one were to discuss matters that are not related to the *Shabbos* at their *Shabbos* meal in the presence of their family, although it may seem to be innocuous, the outcome of this could lead to something that would be regrettable. One who takes the words of *Chazal* lightly and thus easily dismisses them, will come to transgress in other areas that are more serious. This mindset will set a spiritual dynamic and momentum in the family, based on the principle of *aveira goreres aveira*, that will result in grave consequences.



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