

WHEN SEEING IS NOT
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Engendering A Metamorphosis Through One's Alignment

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

When A Test Is Not A Test

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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; 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. 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 their lack of faith.
8. It was only for them to understand they were unworthy.

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. Sforno: "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. 12 spies: 10 were evil & 2 were devoutly righteous.
4. Why did Moshe not pray for Caleb?
5. Ethics Of Our Fathers: 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.

Weekly Torah Commentary Series: Shelach



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Are We G-d's Agents or Do We Act Out of Self-Interest?

Torah: "Hashem spoke to Moshe saying, 'Send for yourself men and let them spy out the Land of Canaan that I give to the Children of Israel...'" The "men" that were being sent were people of stature who represented each of the tribes.

Rashi: At the time that Moshe sent these individuals they were righteous. Only later when they were engaged in spying out the land did they become corrupt. Two of the twelve spies that were sent did not become corrupt. *Hoshea Bin Nun*, who did not become corrupt, had the letter "yud" added to his name by Moshe Rabbeinu to become *Yehoshua*. Moshe added the letter "yud" to his name (which represents one of the names of G-d) to indicate that Hashem should come to his aid. *Calev*, representing the time of *Yehudah*, also did not become corrupt because he went to Hebron to the tomb of the

Patriarchs and prayed to Hashem that he should not be ensnared in the plot of the other spies.

Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh: If these individuals were all initially righteous and went to scout out the land with Hashem's approval, what caused them to become corrupt? Secondly if Hashem knew this then why did He approve this mission in the first place? There is a fundamental principle. When a person represents another individual as his agent he is affected to some degree by the mindset and thoughts of that person. He is acting totally in the capacity of the people who appointed him.

Since the motive and intent of *Klal Yisroel* was to be suspicious and distrustful of Hashem regarding the Promised Land, the spies were impacted by this negative intent. These qualities of the Jewish people, who they were representing, diminished these special people. Although the spies did have

free choice (until the very end), their mission became more difficult because of the influence of those who they represented. We see from this that an agent's function is directly linked to the intent of the one who he represents.

Sfas Emes zt'l: If the spies were doomed to fail, then why did *Hashem* authorize and approve the spying of the land? *Hashem* approved their mission because if they had acted as His agent, then the spiritual quality of their agency would protect them and cause them to see things clearly. However, if their own agenda was primary and *Hashem* was a mere irrelevancy, then their chance to succeed would be in question.

When *Hashem* authorized their mission He was giving the spies the opportunity to turn their agency into a *mitzvah*. If the spies carried out their mission believing that they were agents of *Hashem* they would not have become corrupted. If, on the other hand, the spies went into the land representing themselves then they would not merit that special Divine Assistance.

In order for one to be the agent of *Hashem* one must negate himself and his will to do the Will of *Hashem*. Since the spies did not do this, they became corrupt. The same is true for every Jew. The reason why we exist in this world is to carry out the Will of *Hashem*. When we put on *tefillin*, observe *Shabbos*, observe dietary laws etc, we perform in these capacities for the sake of *Hashem* and not for our own advancement.

Sefer Yehoshua: *Yehoshua* Ben Nun (the one who had taken the Jewish people into *Canaan*) had sent *Pinchas* and *Calev* to scout out *Yericho*. *Pinchas* and *Calev* presented themselves as "*Kadorim*" (peddlers who sell earthenware vessels). Why did *Pinchas* and *Calev* choose to represent themselves as earthenware salesmen?

Sfas Emes: The value of a vessel is usually defined by its function as well as the material from which it is made. If a vessel is made of metal and it breaks or can no longer be used, the vessel still retains a degree of value because its metal can be smelted. However, an earthenware vessel, which is made of clay, has value only in its function. Thus if it should break it has no value whatsoever.

Pinchas and *Calev* were identified as *Kadorim* because they had totally negated themselves to carry out the Will of *Hashem*. They had no personal motive and

were like the earthenware vessel because their total value rested on their function as agents of *Hashem*. They negated themselves to such a degree that they were able to enter into the inn of *Rachov* (which was a brothel) without succumbing to temptation.

We must ask ourselves the question: what is our purpose in existence? If the answer is, the purpose of our existence is to do the Will of *Hashem*, then we are acting as *Hashem's* agents, thus meriting Divine Assistance. However if we perform *mitzvos* with an ulterior motive (such as self-interest), we will not merit that same Assistance and thus the effect and value of our actions are diminished.

Understanding the Adversity of Our Inclination to Spirituality

Torah: The Jewish people wanted to spy out the Land of *Canaan*, despite the fact that *Hashem* had promised them that it is a bountiful land flowing with milk and honey. The question is – how could the *meraglim* (the spies) even consider approaching *Moshe* to ask if they could spy out the land. They knew that he would reject their request because *Hashem* had already said that it was a bountiful land that flows with milk and honey.

Midrash: The *meraglim* could not reveal their true motive to *Moshe* which was to determine if the land was conquerable or not. Knowing that they would be rebuffed, they made their request under the pretext that they were concerned about a *Chilul Hashem* (desecration of *Hashem's* Name). Their concern was that *Hashem* promised that the Jewish people would find houses filled with great wealth upon entering the Land of *Canaan*. Their concern was that the *Canaanites* would bury their wealth so that the Jews would not be able to find it, thus causing a *Chilul Hashem*. Therefore it was an imperative to take the initiative to send spies to locate the hidden wealth, thus causing the Word of *Hashem* to be fulfilled.

When *Moshe* understood their concern, he immediately became blinded, not understanding their true intent. *Moshe* posed the question to *Hashem*. *Hashem* responded by saying, "Send for yourself men..." Meaning, if you feel the need to send spies then I authorize the mission; however from My perspective I have already assured you that the land is filled with blessing.

The inference of *Hashem's* words was that there was a risk factor if *Moshe* sent spies because the facts could be misconstrued. *Moshe*, understanding the possibility of misinterpretation, prayed for his disciple *Hoshea Ben Nun* and added the letter "yud" to his name to be called *Yehoshua*. The added letter was to signify that *Hashem* should protect him from negative influences and all evil. If *Moshe* understood the risk of the mission then why did he only pray for *Yehoshua*? He should have prayed for all of the *meraglim*. How do we understand this?

Gemara in Tractate *Bava Basra*: "The face of *Moshe* was like the sun and the face of *Yehoshua* was like the moon." *Moshe Rabbeinu's* spiritual dimension was comparable to the sun because just as the sun generates its own energy and light, so too *Moshe* was a dimension of spirituality on his own. *Yehoshua* being the primary disciple of *Moshe*, was comparable to the moon because his dimension of spirituality was only a reflection of his teacher *Moshe*. Just as the moon reflects the light of the sun, so too, *Yehoshua* was a reflection of *Moshe's* spirituality. None of the other spies were at the same level as *Yehoshua*. He was continuously learning with *Moshe Rabbeinu* and never left *Moshe's* tent.

Rashi commenting on *Pirkei Avos (Ethics of our Fathers)*: The reason why the transmission of the *Torah* was through *Yehoshua* rather than *Aaron* or the other disciples of *Moshe* was because he never left the presence of his *rebbe, Moshe*. *Yehoshua* literally lived in the shadow of his *rebbe*.

The *Vilna Gaon zt'l* lived in the eighteenth century and was considered equivalent in greatness to the *Rambam* (Maimonides). Regarding his spirituality, he was depicted by all of the *Torah* sages of his time as a living angel. The students of the *Vilna Gaon zt'l* once commented to him, "Rebbe, we wish we would have your *yetzer ha'ra* (evil inclination)." To this the *Vilna Gaon* answered, "You would not want my *yetzer ha'ra* because as the *Gemara* in Tractate *Succah* states, "The greater one is, the greater is his *yetzer ha'ra*." Why is this the case?

If a person's evil inclination does not continue to match his dimension of spiritual growth, then the person would no longer be in a context of making choices. Thus, the person's spiritual accomplishment would no longer have that special value. Since the *Vilna Gaon* was the equivalent of the *Rambam* in

terms of *Torah* scholarship and spiritual dimension, then it is understood why his response to his students was that they would not want his *yetzer ha'ra*.

Gemara: *Abayei* had overheard a conversation between a man and women who had made plans to commit adultery deep in the marshes. *Abayei* followed them secretly and overheard how the perspective adulterer had a change of heart because he believed that it would be too difficult to maintain the relationship on an ongoing basis. When *Abayei* saw this man's self control to suppress his desire and not commit adultery he was astounded because he felt that if he were in the same situation he would have succumbed to temptation.

Abayei realized that an ordinary person could restrain himself and yet he could not. This caused him to become depressed because he realized that he was not at the level he should be. He shared this disappointment with his colleagues. They responded by telling him, "There is nothing to be concerned about; it is only because of your spiritual dimension that your *yetzer ha'ra* is so overbearing. Therefore you would have succumbed."

With this principle we can understand why *Moshe* only prayed for *Yehoshua* not to be affected. Since *Yehoshua* reflected a semblance of *Moshe's* spirituality he was the most susceptible to the evil inclination. *Moshe* added the letter "yud" to *Yehoshua's* name and prayed for him so that he should be able to overcome his evil inclination.

Gemara in Tractate *Shabbos*: If a person truly wishes to advance himself spiritually, *Hashem* will help him along this journey; on the other hand, if a person wishes to contaminate himself (spiritually) then *Hashem* will allow him to fall as he chooses to do so.

The Value of Trust

Torah: "*Hashem* spoke to *Moshe* saying, 'Send for yourself men and let them spy out the Land of *Canaan* that I give to the Children of Israel...'" The *Torah* could have simply stated, "Send for yourself men and let them spy out the Land of *Canaan*." Seemingly the part of the verse, "that I give to the Children of Israel..." is superfluous because it is known that the land of *Canaan* is the Promised Land. What is this part of the verse coming to add?

Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh: The Land of Israel (as it was at the time) was in fact impossible to conquer through human efforts because of what the spies had actually witnessed. The spies witnessed giants of extraordinary dimension, cities that were fortified in a way that made them impregnable, and the nations in the land were unconquerable through natural human ability. Because they believed that the conquest of the land was going to be determined only through their own effort, the conquest was impossibility. Therefore they believed that the gift, which was being given to them by *Hashem* in actuality, was not a gift but a death trap.

Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh: When the *Torah* states, "... let them spy out the Land of *Canaan* that I give..." *Hashem* is telling them initially that when the spies embark on their mission to spy out the land that the conquest of *Canaan* is impossibility through human efforts and they will only succeed because "I *Hashem* am giving the land to the children of Israel." To indicate that is important for them to know that only in this manner (through G-d's intervention) will they be able to conquer the land and not think for one moment that it is through their own efforts. Because if they should consider this even for a moment they will despair and question Gd's true intent.

If *Hashem* told the Jewish people that He is giving them the land then it is obvious that it would be without any difficulties. The Jews did not perceive it as a gift being given to them "free and clear." They saw the Land of *Canaan* only as a dwelling place for giants and a location where they would meet their fate. If the Jews had understood and internalized what *Hashem* had said to them (that He was giving them the Land) they would not have had such a misperception. The question is why did the Jewish people not have the level of trust in *Hashem* that would have had them perceive the land in accordance with His promise?

Trust is not merely a concept but rather it is a reality that is sensed. The difficulty is, how could the Jews not have absolute trust in *Hashem* after being beneficiaries of the revealed miracles in Egypt, the splitting of the Sea, the receiving of the *Torah* at Sinai, and the daily miracles in the desert? All the good that they had experienced through *Hashem's* beneficence was problematic to them. How is it possible that after being idolaters in Egypt could they be worthy of such kindness? Especially after *Hashem* had taken them as His Chosen People, they failed though idol worship with

the Golden Calf. The question they asked themselves was, "Why is *Hashem* treating us like royalty when we are not deserving of such treatment?"

Because of their sense of unworthiness the Jewish people could not have absolute trust in *Hashem*. They believed that ultimately *Hashem* would destroy them. Because of their lack of trust in *Hashem*, they saw their entry into the Land of *Canaan* as a ploy to bring the Jews to their death. The new generation that survived the forty-year trek (anyone less than the age of twenty at the time of the sin of the spies) could have also perceived the demise of the previous generation as a proof *Hashem* to ultimately lead them all to their destruction. All of these misperceptions are based on a lack of trust. When circumstances become incomprehensible do we suppress our own difficulties and trust *Hashem* or do we fall prey to our difficulties which have no resolution?

Throughout history the Jewish people have only survived because of their trust and faith in *Hashem*. The fate of the Jew and his survival has always been difficult to comprehend. If we would focus on the statistics and circumstances that the Jews have been subjected to, there should not be a Jewish people. It is only because of the Jew's trust in *Hashem* that circumstance and statistics have no relevance whatsoever.

The reason why the spies reported that the Land was unconquerable and the Jews believed this information as fact was because they did trust *Hashem*. If *Calev* had not prostrated himself on the tomb of the Patriarchs and ask for Divine Assistance to help him perceive the situation correctly or if *Moshe* did not add the letter "yud" to *Yehoshua's* name they too would have failed despite their spiritual level.

If a person feels that he could not earn a living unless he works on *Shabbos*, then he is demonstrating a lack of faith and trust in *Hashem* because the *Talmud* tells us that one's livelihood is determined by *Hashem* on *Rosh Hashanah* for the entire year until the following *Rosh Hashanah*. With this issue as well as all other aspects of our life we must trust *Hashem* to perceive reality correctly, thus assuring our survival.

The Limitation of the Human Mind

Rashi citing *Chazal*: "Why is the portion of the *meraglim* (spies) juxtaposed to the portion of *Miriam*?"

Midrash: The juxtaposition teaches us, "although these evil people (the *rashaim*) witnessed what had happened to *Miriam* they did not learn a lesson from it." *Miriam* had spoken out of turn about *Moshe* (her brother) and was punished by G-d with the affliction of leprosy (*Tzaras*), which caused her to be sent out of all of the camps for seven days. The "evil people" had witnessed the consequences of speaking negatively (*lashon hara*) yet they did not learn from this and subsequently slandered the land.

Midrash: The reason why these people did not take heed and were oblivious to *Miriam's* situation was because they were "*rashaim* (Evil People)". Because the evil person is so desensitized he does not have the ability to comprehend the wrong in doing evil.

Gemara: The hearts of the *rashaim* (the evil people) are sealed over; therefore causing them to be desensitized.

Talmud quoting *Neviim*: The motto of Evil people is, "Eat, drink, and be merry for tomorrow we shall die!" If one may die tomorrow and thus every moment has infinite value should one waste that moment with eating and drinking? The evil person, because of his level of insensitivity, does not understand the foolishness of his thinking. The evil people that the *Midrash* refers to did not learn from the incident of *Miriam* because their hearts were sealed and could not see things clearly. What should have these evil people learned from *Miriam*?

When *Miriam* spoke out of turn about *Moshe Rabbeinu* she was not questioning *Moshe's* behavior but rather she was questioning *Moshe's* decision regarding his behavior. *Miriam* heard from *Tziporah* that *Moshe* had separated from her after Sinai because of his special level as a prophet. *Miriam* and *Aaron* were also prophets in their own right and they did not separate from their spouses. Although *Miriam* understood that *Moshe* (her brother) was greater than she was, she nevertheless believed that was not sufficient reason to separate from his wife.

After making these remarks to her brother *Aaron*, *Hashem* summons *Miriam*, *Aaron* and *Moshe* to the Meeting Tent and chastises *Miriam* by saying, "How could you (*Miriam*) speak this way about *Moshe* My servant? Do you not realize that his level of prophecy is on another plane and therefore he is not permitted to be with his wife." The basis for *Miriam's* mistake was that she did not perceive *Moshe* properly and

therefore she criticized his decision regarding his wife.

Gemara: *Moshe*, as an individual, was equivalent to the *Sanhedrin HaGadolah* (the Great High Court) which was comprised of seventy judges at the most advanced level. The word of *Moshe* was equivalent to the Word of *Hashem*.

Rambam in the *Laws of Yessodei HaTorah* that the basis of *Torah* is the word of *Moshe*. If *Moshe* separated from his wife that meant that it was *Hashem's* decision that he should do so. When *Miriam* questioned *Moshe's* behavior, she was in essence questioning the authenticity and validity of the *Torah* itself, because *Moshe* is the transmitter of the *Torah*. If *Miriam* questioned the accuracy of that transmission she is in actuality questioning the validity of *Torah*, which is synonymous with *Moshe*. So in fact her criticism of *Moshe* was not an affront to *Moshe* but was an attack against the authenticity and validity of *Torah*. *Miriam's* mistake was that she did not perceive *Moshe* as synonymous with *Hashem*. As a result of this misunderstanding she spoke out of turn.

The lesson that the spies should have been learned from *Miriam* was that they should not rely on their own limited understanding. The basis for *Miriam's* mistake emanated from her limited understanding of *Moshe*. *Hashem* told *Klal Yisroel* that He is giving them the Land of *Canaan* that flows with milk and honey. The spies saw that the land was inhabited by giants and other unexplainable phenomena. What they saw with their own eyes and perceived to be reality was in contradiction with the Word of *Hashem*. How could they reconcile the two? According to their limited human capacity the two could not be reconciled. They tried to measure *Hashem* with their own measuring rod (the human mind).

Avraham was told that his decedents would be as numerous as the stars in the heaven, yet *Hashem* told him to bring his only son as an offering. How could this seeming contradiction be reconciled? *Avraham* understood that within the context of human intelligence it is not reconcilable. However he did understand that within the context of the Divine realm (The Mind of *Hashem*) there was no contradiction. *Avraham* did not question *Hashem* because he knew that within his limited human capacity he could not understand the Divine Mind. Situations may seem

completely irrational and unexplainable, but this is only the case in our own limited context.

The lesson that these evil people should have learned from *Miriam* was that she was punished because she processed what she had witnessed with her own limited human perception and spoke out of turn against *Moshe* rather than understanding that one could only understand *Moshe* if one is privy to the Divine Mind. The spies should have understood that despite what they had seen in the land, if *Hashem* had said that the land is filled with goodness then this is the true reality regardless of their own perception.

The human mind, because of its limitation, is not able to perceive many truths that do exist. Many times people have questions that they cannot go beyond. They are trapped within their own limited perspective. This causes them to accept their own assumptions as reality and negate the Divine Perspective. Now that we understand the mistake of the spies we must take heed and also learn that the world around us does not necessarily have to make sense according to our limited understanding, but rather we must understand that what does not make sense to us makes perfect sense to *Hashem*.



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