

Yad Avraham Institute
WEEKLY TORAH COMMENTARIES SERIES
Parshas Shelach
June 23, 2006

Presented By: Rabbi Yosef Kalatsky, *Shlita*

<i>Inside This Week's Edition</i>	<u>Page</u>
<i>1. Protecting Oneself from the Pitfalls of Life</i>	<i>2</i>
<i>2. Recognizing the True Sense of Self</i>	<i>3</i>
<i>3. G'd's Wrath Reflects One's Behavior</i>	<i>4</i>
<i>4. Sacrifices- The Mechanism For Spiritual Rehabilitation</i>	<i>4</i>
<i>5. The Far Reaching Consequence of Moshe's Question</i>	<i>5</i>

About the Yad Avraham Institute

The Yad Avraham is a Torah learning institute located in midtown Manhattan. Classes are offered every day during the week starting at 5:50am and throughout the day. Classes in Chumash, Halacha, Hashkofa, Gemara, and general topics are well attended by businessmen, professionals, and students. The Yad Avraham invites you to participate in our extensive offerings of classes and events.

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Yad Avraham Institute
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B"H

Parshas Shelach

Presented by

Rabbi Yosef Kalatsky, *Shlita*
Dean

1. Protecting Oneself from the Pitfalls of Life

The Torah states regarding the spies (*meraglim*), **“Hashem spoke to Moshe saying, ‘Send forth men (for yourself), and let them spy out the Land of Canaan...’”** Rashi cites Chazal who explain, “The men that were chosen by G’d to spy out the Land initially were tzaddikim (righteous). They were G’d’s agents.”

The Midrash states, “One who is an agent to perform a mitzvah (*shaliach mitzvah*) is considered to be beloved to G’d because he is willing to sacrifice in order to execute his agency...As we see Yehoshua Ben Nun (after the passing of Moshe when he assumed the mantle of leadership) had sent two spies, Pinchas and Calev, who sacrificed in order to perform their agency.” A true *shaliach mitzvah* is one whose objective is solely for the sake of the performance of a mitzvah. Because of this level of dedication, the agent is beloved to G’d. The Midrash continues that although the spies were initially tzaddikim, because of their failing they were ultimately considered “fools.” It was because of their own conflicts of interest that they were not able to perceive correctly what they had witnessed in the Land. The events that were actually Divinely orchestrated were perceived as tragic rather than as blessing. The basis for the failing of the spies was that they were lacking in trust in G’d. Despite the fact that they were told that they would enter into the Land where they would only experience blessing, they did not see it as such- but rather it would be their ultimate destruction.

In contrast, Calev and Yehoshua had processed the same events that the others had witnessed as blessing. Calev had gone to the graves of the Patriarchs to pray to G’d that he should see the events with clarity and not be influenced by the lack of faith of the others. One’s faith had to be secure and unwavering in order to be able to see blessing in disguise. The Midrash tells us that wherever the spies had gone, they had witnessed people burying their dead. The spies, whose failing was in the area of trust,

perceived this to be an indication that the Land devours its inhabitants. However, because of their level of trust, Calev and Yehoshua saw these events as a blessing that G’d had brought a plague upon the Canaanites to distract them from the spies who were scouting out the Land.

The Gemara tells us that one who is engaged in doing the Will of G’d (*shaliach mitzvah*) merits Divine Protection from harm. Since his only objective is to perform the Will of G’d, he merits protection. If one is at a level where he dedicates his life to bring honor to G’d, he merits an even greater level of protection. As it states, “G’d protects the feet of his devoutly righteous.” Although one inevitably will stumble because it is a reality of life that one is not continuously aware of every pitfall, if one is engaged in doing G’d’s Will, he will be protected. Despite the overwhelming draw and influence of the other spies, Calev and Yehoshua did not succumb. They merited special clarity (Divine Protection) because of their level of devoutness and dedication.

Rav Alexander Ziskind z’tl writes in his work *Yesod V’ Shores ha’Avodah* that before he would begin the recitation of grace after meals (*Birchas Hamazon*), he would recite a special tefillah (prayer) beseeching G’d that he should not be interrupted. Because of dedication and love for G’d, he wanted to perform the mitzvah in the most perfect context. He was aware that whenever one is about to perform a mitzvah one is very often interrupted with situations beyond his control. Beseeching G’d in this manner is an expression of one’s dedication to fulfill the mitzvah- thus meriting Divine Protection.

It states in the Shema, **“You shall serve G’d with all of your heart, with all of your soul and with all of your assets...”** The Gemara in Tractate Berachos asks, “If G’d expects one to give his life, which is most precious, as an expression of his love for G’d, why must the Torah state that he must forfeit his assets as an expression of love?” The Gemara explains that there are certain individuals who value their financial assets even more than their own lives. This individual must

demonstrate his love for G'd by forfeiting his possessions for His Glory. One's dedication and sacrifice for the sake of the performance of a mitzvah is an expression of one's love for G'd. There is a principle that is demonstrated and repeated continuously throughout the Torah that G'd responds measure for measure. Therefore, if one lives his life with dedication to G'd, he will be considered "His beloved."

2. *Recognizing the True Sense of Self*

The Torah states, "**Hashem spoke to Moshe saying, 'Send forth men (for yourself), and let them spy out the Land of Canaan...'**" The Midrash explains, "Although the spies were initially devoutly righteous (tzaddikim) and special people, they behaved like fools. Moshe referred to them before his passing as 'a convoluted generation.' Although they were chosen by G'd and Moshe, they were lacking in faith. From where do we know that the spies were initially devoutly righteous? Moshe did not wish to choose the spies himself without consulting with G'd. Moshe consulted with G'd regarding each and every individual and He attested that each of them was sufficiently qualified. However, because of their lack of trust in G'd, they acted foolishly by slandering the Land."

Despite G'd's promise that Canaan was a land that flows with milk and honey and all blessing exists there, the Jewish people had requested that spies should be sent to scout out the Land. G'd had promised them that they would conquer the Land without difficulty- meaning that the conquest would come about through supernatural means. The request of the Jewish people to send spies was considered a serious failing. It was an indication that they did not trust G'd. Nevertheless, because the spies that were chosen by Moshe and G'd were devoutly righteous, he was confident that their analysis of the Land would be accurate and proper. Ultimately, this did not unfold as Moshe had believed, because the spies themselves failed because of their lack of faith.

Hillel states in Pirkei Avos (Ethics of our Fathers), "One should not believe in himself until the moment of his death." Rashi cites this principle, regarding the holy Patriarchs. We find that G'd did not associate His Name with the Patriarchs – Avraham and Yaakov before they passed away. Regardless of their piety and special relationship with G'd, they were not guaranteed to retain their state of spirituality until their passing. Even people of their dimension are subject to choices of heresy to deny G'd's existence until the moment of their death. Yitzchak,

our Patriarch, because he was blind and confined to his home he was not subject to a choice that would cause him to forfeit his status as a tzaddik. Therefore, G'd associated His Name with him during his lifetime.

Hillel continues in the Mishna, "Do not remove yourself from the community (tzibur). Do not pass judgment on your fellow until you have come to his location/situation. Do not say something that should not be heard because it may be heard. Do not say that you will study (Torah) when you are not occupied because that time may never come." Hillel presented all of these principles in conjunction with one another. Seemingly, there is a common thread that runs through all of them. The Gemara in Tractate Sanhedrin tells us that if the Torah had not been given through Moshe at Sinai, it could have been given through Hillel because of his exceptional level of humility. All of the principles presented by Hillel in the Mishna emanate from his humility. For example, because of one's ability and means, one may believe that he is no longer in need of the community. To this, Hillel responds that this is a grave mistake. It is only because of one's ego that one is not able to appreciate the value of being part of a community. If one had the proper level of humility, he would be keenly aware of his own vulnerability to spiritual failing (sin) and thus understand that he is not secure as a tzaddik until the moment of his death. In contrast, the one who is lacking in humility will believe, because of his sense of self/ego that he is secure in his status, as he believes it to be. Therefore, he is not worried about failing. It is only the humble person who recognizes one's susceptibility to failing. Thus, he will not pass judgment on another.

When the spies witnessed the giants and other events, they believed that the Land was uninhabitable and not possible to conquer. They came to this conclusion because they truly believed that their success and accomplishment in life was partially due to their own abilities and efforts- thus causing them to believe that conquering the Land was beyond their ability. This perception of reality was based on their own lack of humility. If they were truly humble they would have appreciated and known that it is G'd who gives the individual the ability to confront and surmount all challenges of life. Since their understanding of life was partially due to their own initiative, despite the promise of G'd that they would conquer the Land, they had difficulty accepting this as true. This was the basis of the failing of the spies. In contrast, because of their humility, Yehoshua and Calev, although the conquest was humanly impossible,

they were not discouraged. They understood that the word of G'd would cause them to succeed.

3. G'd's Wrath Reflects One's Behavior

The Torah tells us that the spies had returned with slanderous reports about the Land. They had caused the entire Jewish people to complain against Moshe. As the Torah states, **"They (the spies) returned and brought forth to the Children of Israel an evil report on the Land..."** Later the Torah seemingly repeats the same information at the time when the spies were punished by G'd. As it states, **"But as for the men (*anashim- men of special status*) whom Moshe sent to spy out the Land, and who returned and provoked the entire assembly..."** Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh asks, "It seems that this verse is superfluous."

He explains, "The reason the Torah needed to repeat **'...as for the men whom Moshe sent to spy out the Land...'** it is to teach that there are five reasons that provoke the Wrath of G'd upon man. Firstly, if one of great spiritual status (tzaddik) defies his Maker, G'd is exacting with that individual and He is not willing to forgive him. Thus, when this special person sins, the Attribute of Justice (Midas HaDin) comes upon him without delay." This touches upon the principle, "G'd judges the devoutly righteous as precise as a hair breadth." Ohr HaChaim continues, "Secondly, One who is within a proper setting and despite his (spiritually supportive) environment chooses to sin, the claim against him is greater than the one who sins in a less spiritually conducive environment." The spies, who were chosen by G'd, were some of the most special amongst the Jewish people. Initially, they were devoutly righteous and complemented one another in a special spiritual context. Despite this, they chose to sin. This is another reason for the Attribute of Justice to be activated. "Thirdly, if one has an experience that clearly indicates that G'd is with him and he chooses to ignore this fact, then he is immediately subject to the Attribute of Justice. As the Gemara in Tractate Menochos tells us, someone had traveled a long distance to engage with an infamously renowned prostitute. When he was about to engage with her, he was struck in the face by his *tzitzis* (the fringes themselves allude to the 613 Commandments of the Torah). He understood that he should not sin and immediately fled. If he were to ignore this clear sign from G'd and choose to sin, the claim against him would be very severe." Despite all of the miraculous events that allowed the spies to return safely after being exposed to giants and other dangers, they

chose to ignore the Hand of G'd and slandered the Land. "Fourthly, if one sins and causes others to sin, he will evoke the most extreme level of Justice. The spies not only sinned by slandering the Land, they caused the Jewish people to complain against G'd and Moshe. Lastly, if one sins when one's natural inclination does not draw him in that negative direction, he is more culpable because this emanates from his insolence and defiance of G'd. As the Gemara tells us in Tractate Sanhedrin that Amon (who was an evil Jewish King) had cohabited with his own mother, although he had no desire to do so, only to enrage G'd." Although the spies were lacking in faith and thus believed that the Land was not conquerable, they had no reason to impose their doubt upon the Jewish people. This emanated from their evil. Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh explains that the repetition of the verse is only to communicate to us that every one of these five reasons were applicable to the spies and therefore they evoked the most extreme level of justice upon themselves.

One may experience events in his life which clearly indicate that G'd is communicating to him that he must change his behavior. In addition, suddenly if one were to experience good fortune, which is clearly unrelated to his own initiative, and subsequently behaves as if that event never took place, this will evoke the Attribute of Justice upon him. Despite the revealed miracles that were continuously witnessed in the First Temple, the Jewish people sinned, which ultimately caused the Wrath of G'd to come upon them. It caused the destruction of the Temple. During the Second Temple period, G'd's Presence went into concealment. This was an act of Divine Mercy. If G'd's Presence had been obvious as it was during the First Temple period, the Wrath of G'd would come upon them at the most extreme level. However, in a state of concealment if the Jewish people should sin, there is a basis to mitigate the Attribute of Justice. G'd did not want to subject His children to tragedy.

4. Sacrifices- The Mechanism For Spiritual Rehabilitation

After the incident of the spies, with all of its consequences, the Torah tells us that if one were to bring a burnt offering (olah) it must be accompanied with a meal offering and wine libations.

Sforno explains, "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 meat offering by itself. It

alone was considered a fully appropriate sacrifice. As we find regarding the sacrifices of Abel, Noach, and Avraham. They had brought burnt offerings without any accompaniment. 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. 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 to be brought by itself. It needed to be accompanied with a meal offering and libations. After the sin of the spies, which caused even further spiritual diminishment to the Jewish people, when one brought a personal burnt offering, it needed to be accompanied with a meal offering and libations. It was no longer sufficient to bring the meat offering by itself.”

Reb Chaim Vital z'tl explains that just as there are 248 (RAMACH) parts to the human body, there are 248 parts to the soul (nishama) of the Jew. There are 248 (RAMACH) Positive Commandments that correspond and correlate to every part of the soul. When one performs a Positive Commandment, it nurtures a particular aspect of the soul. Just as the body is nurtured in the physical sense through the ingestion of food, so too is the nishama nurtured through the performance of mitzvos.

As a result of the spiritual failings of the Jewish people, they were severely diminished. Although initially after one had sinned, bringing the meat offering by itself was sufficient to rehabilitate the spirituality of the Jew, after the sin of the spies the offering by itself needed to be accompanied with the meal offering and libations to bring about that same spiritual rehabilitation. This was done by bringing additional offerings along with the burnt offering in order to bring about the same level of spiritual accomplishment that was achieved by the burnt offering alone prior to the sin.

What must be understood is why did the sin of the Golden Calf impact upon the Jewish people on a communal level and not on a personal level. The personal diminishment only manifested itself after the sin of the spies- consequently affecting the personal burnt offering.

Sforno explains that although the Jewish people themselves did not participate in the sin of the Golden Calf (regarding its worship), their failing was that they allowed the rabble (eirev rav) to worship it in their midst. The fact that they tolerated this level of Desecration of G'd's Name (chilul Hashem) was a failing on a communal level. Thus, the communal offering needed to be accompanied with the

meal offering and libations to bring about full atonement. However, the sin of the spies was a failing on an individual level. Each Jew had the choice to either reject the evil report of the spies (because of his personal faith) or accept it. Because of their lack of trust in G'd, every Jew accepted the slander of the spies. By failing on a personal level, the personal burnt offering needed to be accompanied by a meal offering and libations to bring about its desired effect. Just as when one is ill, he needs specific medications and therapies to address his illness, so too the offerings that one brings must address the spiritual effects of sin upon the soul. Therefore, when the Jewish people were spiritually diminished because of their sins, they required a different profile of offerings to rehabilitate their spirituality.

5. *The Far Reaching Consequence of Moshe's Question*

The Midrash cites the words of King Solomon in Mishlei (Proverbs), “‘Like vinegar to the teeth and smoke to the eyes, is the lazy one to the one who sent him.’ What is this analogous to? It is similar to a king who had a vineyard – when he sees that that the vintage of the harvest is of good quality he says to his sharecroppers, ‘Bring in the wine into my palace/house.’ However when he sees that the wine has soured into vinegar he says to them, ‘You take the vinegar to your houses – do not bring it to me.’ Similarly, when G'd had seen the elders of the Jewish people acting in a proper manner, He said, ‘**Gather to Me seventy men (elders)...**’ However, when He saw that ultimately the spies (meraglim) were going to fail/sin, G'd said to Moshe, ‘**Send for yourself men...**’” Regarding the elders, who were tzaddikim (righteous/devout) who acted in accordance with G'd's Will, G'd wanted that they should be associated with Him. However regarding the spies who were going to sin, He did not want any association with them, rather He said to Moshe “Send for yourself.”

The Midrash seemingly implies that Moshe had some degree of culpability regarding the spies. This is the reason G'd said to him to take the spies for himself. If he had no culpability the Torah would have said, “Send these spies...” The Torah tells us that at the time of the sin of the golden calf (when Moshe was in heaven), G'd said to Moshe, “**Go down, your people have become corrupted...**” The Midrash points out that G'd identified the people as “Moshe's people” indicating that he had some degree of culpability for their actions. Moshe responded saying, “Why are they my people and not

Yours?” G’d explained to Moshe that the people that He was referring to were the rabble (eirev rav) who Moshe had taken out of Egypt without consulting with Him. The rabble instigated and initiated the golden calf. Thus, there is a degree of culpability attributable to Moshe for not consulting with G’d. However, regarding the sin of the spies, what relevance does Moshe have to their decision to sin, that G’d should say, “Send for yourself” ?

The Torah tells us that after Moshe had presented himself as the Redeemer of Israel, the Jews staged a work stoppage. Pharaoh reacted to this by withdrawing the straw subsidy that was given to the Jewish people while maintaining the same quotas of bricks. The Jewish people came to Moshe and complained that their lives had become more difficult since he had come. Moshe went to G’d and said, “**My Lord, why have You done evil to this people, why have You sent me?**” G’d responded, “**Now you will see (the redemption).**” Chazal explain that “Now” implies that Moshe will merit seeing the present redemption from Egypt but will not merit bringing the Jewish people into the Land of Israel. Because he questioned G’d, he did not merit entering the Land. He was to pass away prior to the Jewish people entering Israel.

Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh explains the verse, “Send for yourself men...” to mean that it was in Moshe’s best interest to send the spies into the Land of Israel. By doing so, the Jewish people would be delayed in the desert an additional 39 years before entering the Land, thus extending Moshe’s life for 39 years. It was also in the interest of the Jewish people to be exposed to Moshe for an additional 39 years. The issue of Moshe passing away prior to the Jewish people’s entering the Land would not have come about had he not questioned G’d in Egypt. He would have entered together with them.

Indirectly, the sin of the spies was in essence a consequence of Moshe’s questioning G’d. Because G’d wanted Moshe to live an additional 39 years, He created a setting of choice so that the Jews should be delayed in the desert for 39 years (i.e. the spies). With this understanding, we can appreciate the Midrash, which states that the elders of Israel, who were tzaddikim and devout, identify with G’d – “Gather to Me...” However, the spies, who were only given the setting to choose because of the failing of Moshe in Egypt, they identify with him - “Send for yourself...”

YAD AVRAHAM DAILY CLASS SCHEDULE

Monday Through Friday

5:50- 6:00 am	Chumash with Rashi
6:00- 6:15 am	Pirkei Avos (Maharal)
6:15- 6:30 am	Mishna Berurah
6:30- 7:25 am	Halacha
6:30 -6:45 am	Mussar
6:45 -7:25 am	Talmud—Tractate Avodah Zorah
7:25 - 8:20 am	Davening Followed by Breakfast
8:20 - 8:45 am	Mishna
9:00 -10:00 am	Daf Yomi
2:00pm	Mincha

Special Weekday Classes

Monday

11:15 – 12:15pm **Talmud: Taanis**
Location: Sunrise Capital 641 Lexington (25th FL.)
Enter on 54th Street

12:30 – 1:30pm **Talmud: Pesachim**
Location: Shandholt 488 Madison Avenue
Between E.51st and E.52st

Tuesday

12:15 - 1:15pm **Torah Insight Based on the Parsha**
Location: Yad Avraham

Wednesday

11:30 – 12:30 pm **Talmud: Taanis**
Location: Sunrise Capital 641 Lexington (25th FL.)
Enter on 54th Street

1:00—2:00 pm **Derech Hashem**
Location: Yad Avraham

Thursday

10:30 –11:30am **Tehilim with Malbim**
Location: Yad Avraham

12:00 – 1:00 pm **Talmud: Taanis** Sunrise Capital 641 Lexington