

Yad Avraham Institute
Weekly Torah Commentaries Series
Portion of Shelach

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Presented By: Rabbi Yosef Kalatsky, *Shlita*

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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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Shelach

Presented by

Rabbi Yosef Kalatsky, Shlita

Dean

1. Being Sufficiently Worthy

The Torah tells us that G'd had promised the Jewish people that He was taking them into a Land that flows with milk and honey. Meaning, the Promised Land would contain unlimited blessing. Despite G'd's description of the Land, they requested that Moshe should allow them to send spies to scout out the Land before entering into it. Moshe presented their request to G'd, Who responded, "**Send forth for yourself men...**" We are able to understand that the Jewish people, who lacked in faith in G'd, would want to send spies to scout-out the Land, despite G'd's Promise. However, regardless of their lack of faith, how could they consider presenting their request to Moshe, understanding that he would reject it? Moshe's response should have been rebuke and castigation for making such a disgraceful request. It was a blatant affront to G'd. If this is so, why did he present their request to G'd?

Moshe dedicated his life to bring glory to G'd's Name. He would not tolerate any situation that could engender a desecration of His Name. The motivating factor behind all of his decisions was the sanctification of G'd's Name. The Midrash tells us that because the Jewish people understood the essence of Moshe, they had to present their request for sending spies in a specific context. They needed to present their request in a manner that it would seem that they were trying to avoid a desecration of G'd's Name. They therefore said to him, "We want send spies into the Land to avert a desecration of G'd's Name. G'd had promised us that when we enter into the Land we will find houses filled with all goodness (wealth). Do you think that the nations of Canaan are fools? Knowing that the Jewish people were going to conquer the Land, would they not bury their wealth before we enter into the Land, so that we should not be able to locate it? If this should happen, the word of G'd will not be fulfilled, thus causing His Name to be desecrated. By sending spies we will know where to locate the wealth." It was because they understood Moshe's sensitivity to the desecration of G'd's Name that their presentation ensnared him to bring about their own objective. Seemingly, even within this context,

Moshe should have rejected it because if G'd had promised that they would come upon the wealth of the Canaanites, regardless of what the Canaanites do, the Word of G'd would be fulfilled. If so, why did Moshe agree to present their request before G'd?

The Torah tells us that during the Sabbatical year one is not permitted to engage in agricultural activities and the fields in the Land must be left fallow. The Torah also tells us that the harvest of the sixth year will be enough to sustain the Jewish people through the seventh and eighth year until the new crop can be harvested. The Torah states, "**The Land will give forth its fruit and you will eat until you are sated; you will dwell securely upon it. If you will say: What will we eat in the seventh year? - Behold! We will not sow and not gather in our crops! I will ordain My blessing for you in the sixth year and I will yield a crop sufficient for the three-year period.**" If the Torah initially states that the crop of the sixth year would be sufficient to satiate the Jewish people for three years, why then is it necessary to have a three-year yield in the sixth year that will last until the eighth year?

Sforno explains that initially the statement of the Torah, "**...you will eat until you are sated...**" is referring to the fact that the crop of the sixth year alone will be sufficient to sustain the Jewish people until the harvest of the eighth year. He cites the *Toras Kohanim*, "When one eats even a small amount of food it will bring blessing to his innards. They will merit that a miracle should occur. Eating less will be the equivalent of eating the larger quantity of food." Therefore, the produce of the sixth year will be sufficient to sustain them until the yield of the eighth year is harvested.

However, if one did not have faith in G'd's promise and would ask "**How will we eat?**" then G'd will cause the harvest of the sixth year be the equivalent of the three-year yield that would carry them through the eighth year. The question demonstrates a lack of faith, thus causing the Jewish people to be unworthy of a miracle. Therefore, G'd will manifest His blessing through natural means, which is a larger yield.

Moshe understood that if the Jewish people had sufficient faith in G'd, they would have never been concerned about a desecration of G'd's Name. This is because if G'd had said that they would come upon houses filled with good, there is no concern about finding the wealth in the houses, despite the actions of the Canaanites. They would have merited finding the wealth in a supernatural manner. However, because they did voice their concern, which indicated a lack of faith, they were no longer worthy of a miracle to occur. Moshe was therefore compelled to present their request to G'd to send spies to scout-out the Land in order to prevent a desecration of His Name.

2. Yehoshua's Transformation

The Torah states, **“And Moshe called Hoshea Bin Nun ‘Yehoshua.’”** The Midrash explains that Moshe added the letter “yud” to Hoshea's name because this letter connotes the Name of G'd (*Yud Kay*). Meaning, “G'd (Ka) should come and save you.” Rashi explains that Moshe prayed that Yehoshua should be protected from the evil plotting of the spies. Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh asks, “Why did Moshe need to add the letter ‘yud’ to Hoshea's name? One would think that Moshe's supplication on his behalf would have been sufficient to protect him.” Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh answers that it was necessary for Moshe to add the letter “yud” to Hoshea's name because the Name of G'd needed to be integrated into his name. The letter “yud” has the numerical value of ten, and thus was necessary to counter the influence of the ten spies.

King David writes in Psalms “With the Name of Hashem, G'd formed the worlds (*B'kah (Yud Kay) Hashem tzur olamim*).” The Gemara in Tractate Menachos explains, “The physical world was created with the spirituality contained within the letter “*hay*” and the world to come was created with the spirituality contained in the letter “*yud*.” Moshe added the letter “yud” to Yehoshua's name, since the spiritual destiny of the Jewish people was dependent on his being able to resist the negative influence of the spies. Yehoshua was meant to be the successor of Moshe.

The Gemara in Tractate Sanhedrin tells us that King David pleaded with G'd to forgive him for his sin regarding Bathsheva and remove the entire mention of the incident from the text. Before Sarah, our Matriarch was able to conceive Yitzchak, the future Patriarch of the Jewish people, G'd changed her name from Sarai to Sarah (The name Sarai ends with the letter “yud.”). G'd said to King David, “Since I removed the letter ‘yud’ from the name of Sarai, it has been screaming and protesting to be

associated with something.” It was only after Moshe added the letter “yud” to Hoshea in order to transform him to Yehoshua was the letter “yud” consoled. Thus, the “yud” that was added to Yehoshua's name came from Sarah, our Matriarch. As a result Hoshea's name having the letter “yud” added he became linked to the Matriarch of the Jewish people. An aspect of her spirituality became an integral part of Yehoshua's destiny.

Chofetz Chaim writes that the Torah tells us that the G'd initially created two large sea serpents “*ha ta'ananim*.” Chazal tell us that the word “*ta'ananim*” is written with the letter “yud” deleted in order to indicate that although G'd had created a male and female of this species, He killed one of them. Had G'd not done so, they would have procreated and destroyed the world because of their enormity. However, G'd salted away the one that He killed for the end of time for the feast of the devoutly righteous (*tzaddikim*). G'd wanted the devoutly righteous at the end of time to benefit from His handiwork. This was considered to be a greater reward because the Leviathan was a direct creation of G'd and not a product of His Creation. Chofetz Chaim explains that the text of the Torah that is studied by the Jewish people is the handiwork of G'd. The words of the Torah are the same words that G'd communicated at Sinai. When one reads the words, **“*Bereishis bara Elokim....In the beginning G'd created...*”** one is reading and studying the original text of G'd. Although it has been thousands of years since the giving of the Torah at Sinai, it remains at the same level of spirituality since it is the original handiwork of G'd.

The Midrash tells us that G'd had shown Adam all the future generations until the end of time. Adam had seen a special soul among the generations. He had inquired as to whose soul it was. G'd told him that it was a soul that had exceptional potential, but it is destined to survive for only a few hours. Adam, who was initially destined to live for 1,000 years, asked G'd if He could give 70 years of his life to this special soul. G'd agreed. As a result of this transfer, King David was born into existence and lived exactly seventy years. Moshiach, who will bring about the ultimate redemption, will descend from King David. King David's level of spiritual accomplishment during his lifetime was unusual and unlimited because the 70 years that he lived were the original 70 years that were endowed to Adam, who was G'd's original Creation of man. The potential of those years was special and unique.

Similarly, because the “yud” that was added to Hoshea's name emanated from a person who was endowed with a special spiritual dimension, to be the founding Matriarch of the Jewish people, the value of the “yud”

empowered Yehoshua spiritually to be able to resist the plotting and influence of the spies.

3. Seeing the Light

The Torah tells us that after twelve spies had been sent to scout-out the Land, ten of them returned with devastatingly negative reports to share with Moshe and Aaron about what they had seen. They had said that it was a land that devours its inhabitants, a land of giants, and thus could not be conquered or inhabited. In contrast, Yehoshua and Calev reported that everything that they had seen was a confirmation that the Land was filled with blessing as G'd had promised and the Jewish people would be able to conquer it. The ten spies that had presented negative reports about the Land had done so because they did not have sufficient trust in G'd. They believed that G'd had planned to take the Jewish people into the Land only to destroy them. However, Yehoshua and Calev, whose trust in G'd was secure, believed that G'd would fulfill all that He had promised.

The Torah tells us that G'd brought a plague upon the ten spies that had offered negative reports about the Land and killed them. Their tongues were extended to their navel and worms penetrated them and crawled into their innards. As a result, of believing the negative reports of the spies and bemoaning their unfounded plight, G'd decreed that they should wander the desert for forty years. During this period of time all the males between the ages of 20 and 60 would die and not merit to enter into the Land. If the basis for their initial distrust of G'd was that they believed that He was going to bring them into the Land only to destroy them, how did wandering in the desert for forty years allay that fear? After the forty years would end, He would bring them into the Land and destroy them at that time. The Torah tells us that as a result of the decree the Jewish people recognized their mistake and repented. They had failed because of their distrust in G'd.

Chazal tell us "The Torah was only given to those who consumed the Manna." Because the Jewish people were not sufficiently spiritualized to internalize the Torah at a sufficient level, they needed to be nourished and sustained by the Manna, which was a spiritual food. If they had entered into the Land of Canaan without having spent the forty years in a spiritual environment and partaking of the Manna, they would have become preoccupied by their mundane agricultural responsibilities and not engage in Torah sufficiently. Thus, it was only after eating the Manna for forty years and being engulfed with the Clouds of Glory and being under the tutelage of Moshe, did the

Jewish people develop the capacity to develop their spirituality. Thus, the experience in the desert left an indelible imprint on their souls until the end of time.

If G'd truly wanted to destroy the Jewish people He could have done so immediately after allowing them to enter into the Land, without wandering. It was only after G'd had decreed that they cannot enter into the Land and must wander, did they realize that they were mistaken. They understood that G'd had provided them with this environment of spirituality, which was the equivalent of Paradise, only for their best interest.

Although one may experience difficulties in life, which are not understandable; nevertheless, one must understand from our past history that G'd has always demonstrated His love for His people. Everything that He allows to come about is ultimately in the best interest of the Jew. Therefore, despite the unanswerable questions, one must continuously have trust in Him.

4. Tracing Something to Its Source

The Torah states, 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 cites Chazal who explain, "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." The Torah states at the beginning of the Portion Shelach, regarding the spies, "**Send forth for yourself men...**" Rashi cites Chazal who explain, "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?

The Torah initially states, 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. The Midrash states, "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, He 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.

The Gemara in Tractate Shabbos states, “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.

5. Moshe’s Contribution Regarding the Menorah

The Torah states regarding the Menorah, “**This is the workmanship of the Menorah, hammered-out (*mikshah*) gold...according to the vision that Hashem showed Moshe...**” Rashi cites Chazal who explain that the word “*miksha*” means that the Menorah was not comprised of many components that were pieced together,

but rather it was hammered out from a solid piece of gold. The Midrash states, “What is the meaning of ‘*miksha*?’ It means that the making of the Menorah was difficult, ‘*kasheh*.’ As much as Moshe toiled to understand how to form the Menorah, he was not able to do so. G’d said to Moshe, ‘Take a block of gold and put it into the fire and then remove it. The Menorah will come about by itself fully formed ...’ What did Moshe do? He took the block of gold and he cast it into the fiery kiln and supplicated G’d, ‘Master of the Universe! The gold has been thrown into the fire. Whatever is Your Will, let it be so. If You want the Menorah to be formed, then so shall it be.’ Immediately after Moshe had offered his supplication, the Menorah emerged from the fire fully formed. Therefore the verse states, ‘**according to the vision that Hashem showed Moshe.**’” G’d had assured Moshe that all he needed to do was to cast the block of gold into the fire and the Menorah would be formed. If G’d had only instructed Moshe to put the gold into the fire, why was it necessary to supplicate G’d? Putting the gold into the fire should have been sufficient as G’d had instructed him.

Although one may perform a mitzvah believing that he is doing it with a proper intent, at a subliminal level there may be a degree of self-interest. Moshe, being the most humble man who ever walked the face of the earth had no self-interest. He existed, functioned, and performed only for G’d. This is why he verbalized his intent when he placed the block of gold into the fire. By verbalizing his intent, when he followed G’d’s dictate, Moshe guaranteed that there should not be any degree of spiritual deficiency at the time of its formation.

On the Festivals when the Thirteen Attributes of Mercy are stated we pray “...May You give us the merit to do good deeds in Your eyes....” It would seem that if one performs good deeds it would be considered good in the eyes of G’d. However, we understand from the text of the supplication that although one may perform mitzvos, they may be tainted with some level of self-interest, which diminishes the quality of the mitzvah. This is the reason we pray to G’d that our good deeds should in fact find favor in His eyes.