

Derech Ha-rif

Excerpts from the Torah discourse delivered by The great Rabbi Yoshiyahu Yosef Pinto Shlita

For the Torah portion of Shelach lecha | Volume 32 | 27 sivan



First Shabbat Meal

"Send men - on your own account - that will spy the Land of Cana'an which I intend to give to the children of Israel." Emissaries that were appointed with ill motives will ultimately fail in their mission

The primary theme of this week's Torah portion is the spying of the land of Israel. The men that were chosen for the task were individually selected and great Sages in their own right. How did they then come to commit such an awful and ungrateful act of slandering the Land of Israel?

One possible source of their failure can be attributed to those who sent them on their spy mission. Because the intent of those who sent the spies wasn't entirely pure and clear in its communication, there was a predisposition for failure. It is critical to the success of any emissary that the objective of their mission be clear and the intent of the sender be valid and sincere.

When Avraham sent his faithful servant Eliezer to seek a wife for his son Yitzhak, he made it very clear to Eliezer what he should and shouldn't do. Additionally, Avraham focused his will to find a spouse for his son to the extent that when he sent Eliezer on the mission, it was bound to succeed. Conversely, when clarity of intent and sincerity are lacking, the mission is bound to fail.

With this teaching we can understand Hashem's insistence that Moshe send spies on his own accord. The Jewish people had ulterior motives in sending the spies they sent. They wanted to have a negative report, so that they could remain in the desert and enjoy a worry-free life with all the miraculous luxuries that Hashem provided for them during their journeys in the desert. Therefore, Hashem insisted that Moshe find reason and he be the one to send them.

The lesson is clear: any task that one delegates or messenger one entrusts must come with clear and absolutely sincere intentions. This guarantees the success of the mission and prevents harm and failure as occurred from the spies mission.

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Soul Of the Rif

Oftentimes a person experiences matters that seem uncomfortable, hurtful, damaging and generally negative. However when these matters are closely analyzed, one often finds that those negative matters ultimately yield highly positive results. This concept is alluded to in the verse (Yirmiyah 30, 17) "From your blows, I shall heal you"- that is to say- through matters that appear to be negative and damaging ('blows'), 'I shall heal you'- Hashem brings highly positive outcomes. In every negative occurrence, search for the positive, as every pattern of negative events has a great positive concealed within it; one only needs to find it.



2nd Shabbat Meal

"We were like grasshoppers in our eyes, and so we were in their eyes"
The way one presents themselves to others is how they are perceived by them.

In this week's Torah portion the spies return from the Land of Israel and recount how the inhabitants of the Land viewed them as grasshoppers. Rashi comments that the spies recounted that they heard the inhabitants of the Land telling each other that the spies appeared to them as ants.

We have for many years contemplated these words of Rashi, whose commentary is extremely precise and written through Divine assistance. If the Torah writes that they appeared as grasshoppers, why did Rashi deviate and comment that they appeared as ants?

This difficulty is commonly resolved as follows: Our Sages learned from this verse "and so we were in their eyes" that the way a person views themselves is how they are viewed by others. If one is lacking confidence in themselves, others are likely to have little confidence in them too and will not respect them. However, a person who has confidence in themselves, is likely to be respected and held in high regard by others. Rashi intended to bring out this very point- that the spies were lacking in self-confidence, and were hence held in disregard by the inhabitants of the Land- by mentioning ants which are a very small and lowly animal.

Perhaps we may explain Rashi's mention of ants further based on the following. Our Sages (Eruvin 100b) teach: "Rabbi Yochanan said: Were the Torah not to be given, we would learn modesty from the cat, and (to refrain from) theft from the ant". One's tendency to steal stems from a lack of Bitachon (trust) that Hashem will provide for them. Bitachon in Hashem may be learned from the example set by the ant, as the Midrash (Devarim Rabbah 5, 2) teaches regarding the ant: "Rabbi Tanchuma said: All of its life is a grain and a half and (yet) it gathers these? And why does it do this? Because it says: Perhaps the Holy One Blessed Be He will decree life and it will be prepared for me to eat." The Midrash goes on to teach- The ant whose life expectancy is only 6 months gathers grain that would last much longer than its expected lifetime and is careful to store its grain in such a manner that it not be spoiled by rain from above or moisture from the ground below, so that it keeps for longer.

This the ant does, because it says to Hashem "although I am predestined to only live for 6 months, I believe that You will extend my life, and therefore I gather and store grain for longer than this." From here we may learn the great trait of Bitachon displayed by the ant. When Hashem created man, our Sages teach that He asked all the created beings to donate something of themselves to the creation of man, as the Mishna (Avot 5, 20) teaches "Be brazen like the leopard, light like the eagle, swift like the deer, and mighty like the lion". In this vein we have explained the Midrash (Yalkut Shimoni Tehillim 150) which teaches that when David Hamelech completed his work of the Tehillim he felt haughty. The frog came to him and told him that he should not be haughty as it praises Hashem more than he does. David Hamelech immediately withdrew and fell silent. The reason the frog could reprimand David is because it was from the frog that man received the power to praise and sing to Hashem, as this was the frog's donation in the creation of man.

We have also used this principle to resolve a difficulty relating to the Tachash. The Gemarra (Shabbat 28b) teaches that the Tachash was a single-horned animal which was a one-time creation in the time of Moshe Rabenu for the specific purpose of the use of its beautiful skin to adorn the Mishkan. The difficulty is raised why Hashem delayed the creation of the Tachash until the time of the construction of the Mishkan, and not during Creation together with all the other animals. We may answer that Hashem did not create the Tachash at Creation, because then the Tachash would have had to donate its splendid beauty to man which would have led man to become corrupt and sin. Based on this, we may explain that Rashi chose to comment that the spies recounted that they were viewed as ants, in a positive light.- The inhabitants of the Land saw that the spies had the positive attribute of the ant in that they would not take what is not theirs, just as an ant would not steal something that belonged to another ant. Seeing this, the inhabitants of the Land did not see the spies as a threat, as they did not fear that the spies would attempt to seize the Land from them, and therefore they did not see a need to capture the spies.

Q & A with the Rif



Question:

Dear Rav, I wanted to ask how to deal with my daughter- She is twenty years old and does not keep Shabbat whilst the whole family does. She does as she pleases in her own room, but it is still in our house. Should I allow her to continue to desecrate the Shabbat in our house?

Answer:

As long as she does not negatively influence the other children, and does her actions only in her closed room, she should be drawn near and attempts should be made to positively influence her.

You should know that any actions you take will influence her greatly. If you banish her from the house, it may bring her down greatly. In this case where there is a framework in which she does keep Shabbat (when together with the family) it will slowly positively influence her to get on to a good path.

Do not make her feel distanced- Distancing children who stray off the way of Hashem is an incomparable destruction and carnage.





3rd Shabbat meal

"Send men - on your own account - that will spy the Land of Canaan which I intend to grant to the children of Israel."
A person who considers himself an emissary of Hashem in his personal life, will succeed in all his undertakings.

The Parasha begins with the episode of the spies, who were the leaders of each tribe - great men - and who failed dramatically in their strategic mission in Israel. They slandered the Land, even managing to convince the mass that "they will not be able to conquer the land," shamelessly contradicting Hashem's direct promise to grant the Land to His People.

How they arrived at such a place where they contradicted, Heaven Forbid, Hashem's direct promise. They had witnessed the greatest explicit miracles in Egypt, the splitting of the sea into twelve dry passages, the giving of the Torah from Hashem at Mount Sinai, the Manna, the Clouds of Glory, the Wellspring of Miriam...How did they come to utter a slanderous report of the Chosen Land?

The following teaching of the Talmud will give us some insight into what happened. The Talmud in Berachot 34b teaches that one who errs in their prayer should perceive it as a negative sign from Above. And if that person is leading the prayer services, then that entire community should perceive the error as an ill sign for themselves. It also reveals that the members of the minyan had insincere intentions somewhere.

This teaching reinforces the idea that a messenger draws his strength from those that send him. If they are sincere in their intent, then also the messenger will succeed. However, if they have ulterior or impure motives, the mission will fail, and oftentimes cause drastic harm.

In context of the spies, therefore, their mission failed because the ones that send them- the nation as a whole- had ill intentions they wished to bring about through the spying. Interestingly, Hashem did initially want that there be spies, to calm the spirits of the nation, and reinforce their self confidence to conquer the Land. The move was intended as a strategic move which would reinforce the will of the nation to settle in the Land of Israel. Moshe too, reflected Hashem's Will and Motivation.

If there spies had gone on their mission through the direct command of Hashem or through Moshe's instruction, they would have succeeded. Now that it was the nation that sent them, they were inevitably negatively influenced by the nation's ill-intention which ultimately brought their failure.

Yehoshua, however, who went on Moshe's direct command, and Calev Ben Yefuneh, who went on Hashem's command, both returned successfully and were not entwined in the rest of the spies' slander. The harm which came about from their action brought about the most dreadful destruction throughout the generations.

The episode of the spies teaches us a fundamental perspective and attitude we must live by. When one sees themselves as an emissary of Hashem every day of their lives, then they succeed in all their undertakings. One should adopt this outlook in life, for every action they do. Conversely, when one lacks this mindset and they accomplish Mitzvot or deeds in general from their own motivation or intention, they are not certain to succeed.

There was once a venerable Rosh Yeshiva who had promised to a close acquaintance that he would attend their son's wedding ceremony. Unfortunately it didn't work out for that Rabbi, and he sent a representative in his stead. Unusually, the representative Rabbi remained at the wedding for many long hours, which astonished all the guests. When they expressed their perplexity at the rabbi's behavior, he explained that as he then was serving as the messenger of his great Rabbi, he wished to remain in that state so as to draw as much positive and holy energy from his Rabbi. To reiterate, when we lead our lives as emissaries of Hashem, then we succeed in everything. However, when one lives from moment to the next and is motivated by their fleeting desires or improper and incomplete thoughts, then it is easy to fault.

קריאת קודש
לאור מצבו הרפואי של הארמו"ד
רבי יאשיהו פינטו שליט"א
שאמוד לעבור בשבוע הקרוב טיפול רפואי ארוך ומורכב
נקראים בזה כל איש ישראל אנשים נשים וטף לקבל על
עצמם חיווק רוחני, ולהעתיק בתפילה לרפואת הארמו"ד
רבי יאשיהו יוסף בן זורי
לרפואה שלמה
ודן א-ל כבוד לא ימאס תפילת רבים

Treasure charms from the Rif

The mystical writings teach that one who is studying a complex matter of Torah but is not able to understand it, may perform the following two Segulot.

One, is that he should hold his beard and look up to Heaven, asking for Divine assistance.

A second Segula, is that they should read the verses of the Torah that relate to the Mitzvah which they are attempting to comprehend and thereby obtain Divine assistance to resolve the difficulties they had in understanding that matter.



The fourth Post Shabbat meal

Storys from the Rif

Rabbi Yishmael the High Priest

Rabbi Yishmael the High Priest, one of the Ten Martyrs, was one of the saintly leaders of the Jewish people. Our Sages teach that Rabbi Yishmael received the holy work 'Pirkei Hechalot' from the angel Mata"t who is identified as Chanoch as the verse (Bereshit 5, 24) says "Chanoch walked with G-d, then he was no more", who is Hashem's Sar HaPanim (Minister of the Face).

Our Sages teach that Rabbi Yishmael had the Neshama of Yoshiyahu Hamelech. When the decree was made to execute the Ten Martyrs, it was Rabbi Yishmael who ascended to Heaven to ask if the decree could be annulled. The Gemarra (Berachot 7a) teaches that Rabbi Yishmael ascended to Heaven and either heard a Heavenly Voice or saw a Heavenly Vision of Hashem telling him "Yishmael my son, bless me". This profound passage has many interpretations.

The power of Rabbi Yishmael the High Priest is immense, and therefore, righteous ones of 'Shuva Yisrael', please, on the 25th of Sivan the day of the passing of Rabbi Yishmael, divide between us the Pirkei Hechalot so that we may, between us, complete it two or three times over. The Sede Chemed taught that when there are a few partners to the completion of the learning of the Zohar, Sefer Devarim or any other religious work, each partner receives reward as if they had learned the full work themselves. If there will be many partners in this learning, then Pirkei Hechalot would have been completed hundreds or perhaps even thousands of times in the honor of Rabbi Yishmael the High Priest.

We should all subdue our hearts, for it is specifically when it comes to matters of sanctity that the Satan fights with all his strength to sow doubt, lack of Emuna, strife, and hatred. The way to vanquish the darkness is not by waging war on it and smiting it with a rod, but by kindling the light of sanctity which pushes away the darkness and strengthens the light.



It is told of one Tzadik who gathered his students and asked each one to present how they thought the world ought to be, and what in their opinion the world is lacking to make it more perfect. One student responded that livelihood should come more easily to people, another who was childless responded that everyone should be granted children, and another who didn't own a home responded that Hashem should provide homes to everyone.

The Tzadik exclaimed that it is not as they had all thought. Hashem created the world in the most perfect manner. If we feel that there is something lacking, there is nothing but a lack in our Emuna.

In Birkat Hallanot (the blessing of the trees) we say "Who did not allow anything to lack in His world"- Hashem created the world lacking nothing, any apparent lack is only in our understanding. Having calm and serenity with nothing lacking would be comfortable in the short term, but would not be the ultimate long-term perfection of this world.

One who thinks to correct the world to a more comfortable world with less problems and tests, is gravely mistaken. One who sits comfortably and as a consequence doesn't exert themselves, will have no livelihood tomorrow. When one feels the pain and stress of lacking, and strives and fights to overcome obstacles, they build themselves up to succeed tomorrow as well. Only once one passes all of these tests, does one understand that all of these tests come together to form the bigger true picture, and then they see that all that happened to them is good.



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