



Weekly Insights by Rav Meir Goldwicht

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Parashat Shelach

The majority of *parashat Shelach* deals with the *cheit hameraglim*. When we examine the *pesukim* on the level of *pshat*, several questions arise: In our *parasha*, the Torah indicates that the idea to send the *meraglim* came from *Hashem*: "*Vayedaber Hashem el Moshe leimor shelach lecha anashim v'yaturu et Eretz K'na'an*, And *Hashem* spoke to *Moshe*, saying, 'Send men, that they may spy out the Land of Canaan' (*Bamidbar* 13:1-2). In *parashat Devarim*, however, the Torah indicates that the idea to send the *meraglim* came from *B'nei Yisrael*: "*Vatikrevun eilai kulchem vatomru nishlecha anashim l'faneinu v'yachperu lanu et ha'aretz v'yashivu otanu davar et haderech asher na'aleh bah v'et he'arim asher navo aleihen*, And you all approached me and said, 'Let us send men before us, and they will search the land for us and report back the way we must go up and the cities to which we must come' (*Devarim* 1:22). These *pesukim* seem to contradict each other! *Rashi* at the beginning of our *parasha* resolves the contradiction, explaining that the original idea came from *B'nei Yisrael*. *Moshe Rabbeinu* was unsure whether to grant their request or not, so he consulted *HaKadosh Baruch Hu*. *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* replied that He did not think it was worthwhile, but that if *Moshe* wanted to send spies, he could – "*Shelach lecha – l'da'atcha*, as you wish." Our first question: Why did *Moshe Rabbeinu* go ahead with the plan to send the spies after *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* indicated that it was not worthwhile? This question is strengthened by *Rashi* at the beginning of *parashat Devarim*, where he writes that *Moshe* also thought it was a bad idea, and he agreed so readily only in the hopes that they would abandon their request when they saw how confident *Moshe* was that the land was truly as good as *Hashem* promised. If *Moshe* thought it was such a bad idea, why didn't he nix the plan himself after he saw that *B'nei Yisrael* still wanted to go through with it?

Furthermore, at the beginning of *parashat Devarim*, the Torah says that the nation wanted to send the spies only to find out the most strategic way to enter the land and ultimately conquer it. The information they wanted was entirely of a strategic nature. In our *parasha*, however, *Moshe* adds a list of other things the spies should check: the richness of the land, the strength of its inhabitants, the strength of its cities, among others. Why did *Moshe* add to the original mission of the spies, when arguably these are the questions that caused the *meraglim* to speak poorly of the land?

When *B'nei Yisrael* approached *Moshe* to determine the best way to conquer the land, *Moshe* saw that finally the nation had come to truly believe in *Hashem* and rely upon Him, ready to enter the land even though once they got there they would lose the easy lifestyle they had enjoyed in the desert. After all of the whining and griping, the nation finally understood that everything is in the Hand of *Hashem*, and when they trust in Him and fulfill His Word, they will readily merit everything they need. *Moshe* took great joy in this display of *emunah* and believed the nation could now handle the entire picture, so he added a list of questions for the *meraglim* report back about – even though the inhabitants of the country are mighty and the cities within it well-fortified, even though the giants live in the land, *Moshe* was convinced that *B'nei Yisrael* would truly rely on *Hashem* despite the apparent dangers and difficulties.

This was *Moshe's* mistake. He did not realize that the nation's *emunah* was in fact too weak to withstand these challenges. Their nature was to complain constantly, an indication of a lack of *emunah*, as the Torah says, "*Uvadavar hazeh einchem ma'aminim baShem Elokeichem*, Yet in this thing you do not believe in the *Hashem*, your L-rd" (*Devarim* 1:32), and, "*Uvishloa'ach Hashem etchem...leimor alu urshu et ha'aretz...v'lo he'emantem lo v'lo shematem b'kolo*, And when *Hashem* sent you...saying, 'Go up and inherit the land'...and you did not believe Him and you did not fulfill His Word" (*Devarim* 9:23).

When the nation's *emunah* is weak, the ability to conquer the land is lost. The *passuk* in *Tehillim* demonstrates that trust in *Hashem* must precede dwelling in the land: "*B'tach baShem va'aseh tov, shechon eretz ur'eh emunah*, Trust in *Hashem* and do good, dwell in the land and cherish faith" (37:3). For this reason, the first time *emunah* is found in the Torah – when *Avraham* trusts in *Hashem* that he will have offspring at the *brit bein habetarim* – *Eretz Yisrael* follows immediately, with *Hashem's* promise that *Avraham's* offspring will inherit the land. Where there is *emunah*, there can be inheritance of the land.

R' Yehuda HaLevi explains in the first *ma'amar* of the *Kuzari* (ot 24) that in the time of *Ezra* and *Nechemiah*, the potential existed for the nation to return to the land and remain there forever and ever, as *Zechariah* says, "*Roni v'simchi bat Tzion ki hineni va, v'shachanti v'tochech ne'um Hashem*, Sing and rejoice, daughter of Zion, for here I come, and I will dwell in your midst, says *Hashem*" (2:14). Ultimately, we lost the opportunity because the majority of the nation was complacent in the exile, and only 42,360 Jews returned home to the land.

The *cheit hameraglim* comes to teach us that the more we increase our *emunah* in and partnership with *HaKadosh Baruch Hu*, meaning combining *emunah* and action, the closer we will come to meriting the land. Perhaps this is also the reason why the three *mitzvot* that close our *parasha* are *nisuch hayayin* on the *Mizbe'ach*, separation of *challah*, and *tzitzit*. Each of these *mitzvot* is performed in partnership with *HaKadosh Baruch Hu*. In the desert, we were accompanied by the *be'er*, which provided water with no effort on our parts. The *nisuch hayayin* corresponds to the *be'er* – unlike the water, however, we take part in the winemaking process. In the desert, *man* fell and provided sustenance with no effort on our parts. The separation of *challah* corresponds to the *man* – unlike the *man*, however, we are partners in making bread. In the desert, the *ananei hakavod*, the Clouds of Glory, surrounded us with *kedushah*. With *tzitzit*, we surround ourselves with *kedushah*, taking part in making the garments and the *tzitzit*. The *gemara* expounds that the *tzitzit* have a law of *ta'aseh v'lo min ha'asui*. These three *mitzvot* allow us to make the transition to action with *emunah*, to partnership with *Hashem*. The *parasha* closes with these *mitzvot* in order to indicate that the more we believe and the more our actions are inspired by our belief, the greater the opportunity to inherit the land.

There are three events from the past which we are commanded to experience as if they are happening currently: *Yetziat Mitzrayim* – "*B'chol dor vador chayav adam lirot et atzmo k'ilu hu yatza miMitzrayim*, In every generation, a person must see himself as if he left Egypt" (*Haggadah shel Pesach*); *Kabbalat haTorah* – "*B'chol yom yih'yu b'einecha kachadashim*, Every day they must be in your eyes as new" (*Rashi, parashat Yitro*); and *Eretz Yisrael* – "*t'hei b'einecha k'ilu n'tanah lecha bo bayom v'al t'hei b'einecha kirushat avot*, Consider it as if it was given to you today, not as an inheritance" (*Rashi, parashat Bo*). As we grow to realize that *Eretz Yisrael* is given every day anew, and that that *netinah* is dependent upon our *emunah* and our actions, so will we grow to merit the

speedy fulfillment of "*Ufaratzta yamah va'kedmah v'tzafonah va'negbah v'nivrechu vecha kol mishpechot ha'adamah uv'zarecha*, And you shall spread to the west and to the east, to the north and to the south, and in you and your seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed" (*Bereishit* 28:14).

Shabbat Shalom!

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