



Parshas 'Shlach'

מתוך "ליקוטי שמואל"

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The Difference Between the Spies Sent by Moshe and the Spies Sent by Yehoshua

Parshas [Shlach](#)

Rabbi Yissocher Frand

Parshas Shelach contains the seminal event in Jewish history of the sending of spies and their subsequent negative report about *Eretz Yisrael*, and the resulting crying that night. Literally, Jewish history as we know it was set in motion because of this ill-fated mission.

One of the famous questions that many commentaries focus on is that the *Ribono shel Olam* told Moshe Rabbeinu “Send out for yourself men who will spy out the Land of Canaan that I am giving to *Bnei Yisrael*” (Bamidbar 13:2). Apparently, the *Ribono shel Olam* not only acquiesced to this mission; He **told** Moshe to send out the *meraglim* (spies). Clearly, had the *Ribono shel Olam* wanted to stop the mission, He could have emphatically told Moshe **not** to send the *meraglim*. He didn’t do that.

So, what is the meaning of this? How could the *Ribono shel Olam* make sending the *meraglim* into a *mitzvah*, and then it turns into such a tragedy?

A famous and beautiful Medrash – the first Medrash Rabbah in Parshas Shelach – cites the *pasuk* in Yehoshua whereby Yehoshua sent out *meraglim*: “And Yehoshua bin Nun dispatched two men – spies – from Shittim, secretly saying ‘Go, observe the land and Yericho.’” (Yehosha 2:1) History repeats itself. This is the Haftorah of Parshas Shelach. When Bnei Yisroel were on the threshold of entering *Eretz Yisrael*, Yehosuha also sent out *meraglim*. He sent out two rather than twelve *meraglim*. They stayed in the house of Rachav Hazonah and they returned with their report about Yericho.

It is reasonable to assume that Yehoshua would have been very hesitant about sending out *meraglim*, based on what happened forty years earlier with the first group of *meraglim*. Nevertheless, Yehoshua proceeded with this mission. Not only that, but it turned out well. Not only did it turn out well, but the Medrash says about the two *meraglim* whom Yehoshua sent out, “There is no one dearer before the Almighty than a messenger sent out to perform a *mitzvah*-mission who risks his life to accomplish his mission.”

The Medrash cites the two messengers that Yehoshua bin Nun sent as a prime quintessential example

of *shluchei mitzvah* who risked their lives to successfully carry out their *mitzvah mission*. The Medrash further records a Rabbinic tradition that those two *meraglim* were Pinchas and Kalev. The Medrash continues: The *pasuk* says that Yehoshua sent out two *meraglim* "*cheresh*" ('secretly'), which the Medrash takes to mean that the two spies disguised themselves as pottery salesmen so no one would realize they were *meraglim*. They would shout, "Anyone who needs an earthenware pot (a play on the word '*cheres*' as the letters '*shin*' and '*sin*' can be interchanged), come purchase from us."

The Gerer Rebbe, in his famous work *Sefas Emes*, writes that the *Ribono shel Olam* knew that the mission of the original *meraglim* sent by Moshe was fraught with danger. He saw the pitfalls, and He realized what could happen. But the people wanted it, and therefore He said, "I will give guidance so that they should be protected and not fall prey to the various temptations that they will face." What was this guidance and protection provided by the *Ribono shel Olam*? He made it into a *mitzvah* — *Shelach lecha anashim!*

The people wanted a spy mission. It could be done in one of two ways: They could do it on their own and the risk would be very high. But, instead, the *Ribono shel Olam* said "I will make it into a *mitzvah*. When people do something *l'shem mitzvah*, then the *mitzvah* protects them. Therefore, the potential danger associated with the sending of the *meraglim* would be mitigated. The only problem was that to achieve that protection, the *mitzvah* must be done ***l'shem mitzvah!*** You need to do it because the *Ribono shel Olam* said so. However, these *meraglim* had their own agenda. They were not doing it because the *Ribono shel Olam* so commanded. They were doing it for their own purposes. On a basic level, perhaps it was the

strategic thing to do. They were not “*mevatel* their *da’as* to the *Da’as* of the *Ribono shel Olam*” (negate their opinions to the Almighty’s opinion). They did it because this was Military 101. You want to capture a city? You go scout it out and figure out the best place to attack.

Since they didn’t do it for the sake of the *mitzvah*, they did not receive the protection of that *mitzvah*. Thus, the *Ribono shel Olam*’s “plan” “did not work.” The Medrash contrasts this failed mission with the successful mission of Yehoshua’s *meraglim* – that was performed by faithful messengers who **were** acting *l’shem mitzvah* and with *mesiras nefesh l’shem mitzvah*. The result was a successful mission.

The Sefas Emes makes a further observation.

The Medrash comments on the word *cheresh* as teaching that Yehoshua’s *meraglim* disguised themselves as pottery salesmen (selling *klei cheres*). One might ask why they were specifically selling pottery. Why not metal utensils? Why weren’t they shoe salesmen? The Sefas Emes answers beautifully that *klei cheres* are unique in that they have no intrinsic value. They are made out of pottery. They break. They don’t look good. They are porous. The whole purpose of an earthenware vessel is its mission. That is why the *mefarshim* say that *klei cheres* only become *tameh* from the inside. The outside of the earthenware vessel is valueless. Its whole purpose is to perform its function, which is to hold things. This, according to the Medrash, is the symbolism of Pinchas and Kalev being pottery salesmen – they nullified themselves. There was no “me”. There was no personal agenda of why they were doing this. “We are doing this only because the *Ribono shel Olam* sent us. This is our mission.” Therefore, they were successful. There is nothing as dear to the Almighty as *shluchei mitzvah* who are *moser nefesh* strictly and only for the sake of *Hashem*. In such

cases, the inherent dangers are warded off by the fulfillment of the *mitzvah* and its associated *zechus* (merit).

The Sefas Emes concludes with a beautiful practical lesson: We are all *shluchei mitzvah*. We are sent down to this earth with a mission. The *Ribono shel Olam* takes this *neschama* – this holy soul, which is a *chelek Elo-ka mi'ma'al* (portion of the L-rd above) and puts it into a body and says, 'Here, go do your mission!' We come down to this world, which is fraught with all sorts of danger and all sorts of temptations and pitfalls. It is very difficult for a person to maintain his *kedusha* and to maintain the status of being an *erliche Yid* (a Jew with integrity). Our challenge is to fulfill our mission, whatever that may be – whether butcher or baker or candlestick maker or lawyer or accountant or doctor or computer programmer or real estate broker or whatever – and to fulfill that mission completely *l'shem shamayim*. No matter what your mission may be, you will then have the protection of knowing that you are doing what the *Ribono shel Olam* wants you to do, and you are doing it solely for His sake. Not everyone is cut out to sit and learn all the time, but everyone is put here with a mission. If part of your mission is that you need to earn a living and you need to support your family and give *tzedaka*, etc., etc. – and you are doing that because it is what you perceive as your mission from the *Ribono shel Olam*, then "There is no one dearer before the Almighty than those who are *shluchei mitzvah* – who faithfully, *l'shem shamayim*, carry out their mission."

In this way, the most mundane and quotidian activity in this world can be turned *l'shem shamayim*. Once you do this, you will gain the protection that the *meraglim* of Yehoshua merited. On the other hand, when the mission becomes "your mission" – whether it is to make money or to acquire power or whatever it may be – then the *l'shem shamayim* aspect will be lost, as was the case with

the *meraglim* of Moshe, and the protection that the *shlichus* of the *mitzvah* should afford will be lost as well.

That is unfortunately what happens so often to so much of mankind. They forget the mission and the *l'shem mitzvah* of that mission, and therefore they need to deal with the vagaries and the pitfalls that are inevitable in almost every person's life.

Glass Half Full/Glass Half Empty

One of the lessons of the *meraglim* is that there are only two kinds of people in this world: The person who sees the glass half full and the person who sees the glass half empty. The ten *meraglim* who came back with the negative report were unfortunately people who saw the glass half empty. They brought back an extraordinarily large cluster of grapes, which could be viewed in one of two ways: What a lush land this is! It is going to be easy to farm. It is going to be easy to make a living here. Look at this wonderful place! Or, "The people must be giants because why on earth would the fruit be so big?"

When the *Ribono shel Olam* made it happen that the locals were busy burying the dead so that they would be preoccupied and not notice the *meraglim*, that too could be viewed in one of two ways: Look at the favor the *Ribono shel Olam* did for us! Or, "Everyone drops dead over here. What kind of land is this?" This is the classic "glass half empty/glass half full" dichotomy.

I saw a famous story in the *sefer* Me'orei Ohr, describing an incident that occurred post-World War II, in one of the Displaced Persons camps. Rabbi Eliezer Silver, *zt"l*, who as part of the *Vaad Hatzalah* went around Europe in his U.S. Army uniform, came to Mauthausen, where there were Jewish Holocaust survivors. He wanted to make a *minyán and* had nine people.

There was one Jewish survivor who refused to join the *minyan*. Rabbi Silver tried to convince him to help make the prayer quorum. The fellow told Rabbi Silver, "I will never again in my life daven or pick up a *siddur*."

He explained his bitterness to the Rabbi: When he was in the concentration camp, there was a Jew who smuggled in a *siddur*, from which he would daven. He would then "rent" his *siddur* to the other prisoners of the concentration camp. The "rent" he charged to use his *siddur* was that those who wanted to *daven* had to give him their bread rations for the day. This bitter Jew told Rabbi Silver, "When I saw a Jew that could stoop so low that he would make others forgo their meager rations to use his *siddur*, I decided that I don't want to have anything to do with *davening* or with a *siddur* or with such a religion for the rest of my life."

Rav Eliezer Silver said to this Jew: Why do you look at the Jew that rented out the *siddur* for a ration of bread? Why do you not, instead, look at the Jews who were willing to give up their rations of bread to *daven*? The bitter Jew conceded that Rav Silver was right. He decided to help complete the minyan.

Years later, this story was told by the famous Nazi hunter, Simon Wiesenthal, at a conference of European rabbis, at which the rabbinical group presented Simon Wiesenthal with an award upon reaching his 91st birthday. When Wiesenthal finished the story, he delivered the punchline: "I was that bitter Jew whom Rabbi Silver convinced to join the *minyan*."

This is one of the many lessons of the *meraglim*: The glass is either half full or half empty. In general, people who have the capacity to look at the glass as half full live happier lives. Other people don't live as happy lives. This lesson is summed up by the *pasuk*: "...And you shall see the good of Yerushalayim all the days of your life." (Tehillim 128:5)

Seeing the Good in Jerusalem

Parshas [Shlach](#)

Rabbi Yissocher Frand | Series: **Rav Frand**

“And the entire congregation raised up and issued its voice; the people wept that night” [Bamidbar 14:1]. The Spies returned with their report about the Land of Israel. They testified that the inhabitants were stronger than them and that the Jews were incapable of conquering the land. The people cried that night.

To paraphrase Franklin Roosevelt, that was a night that would live in infamy. As the Talmud [Sanhedrin 104b] teaches, that night was the night of Tisha B’Av. G-d stated that since the Jews cried on that night for no reason, He would establish that night as a night of perpetual mourning throughout the generations.

Both Temples were destroyed on Tisha B’Av. In commemoration of those events, Jews throughout the generations remove their shoes, sit on the floor, and cry on that night.

When we cry on Tisha B’Av, we do not only think back to the start of World War I, which ‘happened’ to break out on Tisha B’Av. We do not only think back to 1492 when the Jews were exiled from Spain on that date. We do not only think back to the destruction of the Second Beis HaMikdash [Temple] or even the destruction of the First Beis HaMikdash. When we sit on the floor on the night of Tisha B’Av and read from the Megilla of Eicha, we have to think back to the incident of the Spies. It all started with the Meraglim. There is an interesting Medrash which addresses the anomaly in the alphabetically arranged pasukim [verses] in chapters 2, 3, and 4 of Eicha: In those chapters, the pasukim beginning with the letter ‘Pay’ precede the pasukim beginning with the letter ‘Ayin’. (Chapter 1 follows the normal Aleph-Bet sequence of first Ayin and then Pay.)

The Medrash says that the letter Pay (which literally means 'mouth') precedes the letter Ayin (which literally means 'eye') to remind us that the Spies spoke with their mouths that which they did not see with their eyes.

We must consider, however, that the spies fabricated nothing when they spoke of seeing "Giants in the land". They were not lying when they reported having noticed that it was "a land that buries its inhabitants". Our Sages say that they in fact saw many funerals while they were spying out the land. So, what is the meaning of the Medrash that says, "They reported with their mouths that which their eyes did not see"?

Rav Shimon Schwab (1908-1995) offers a beautiful interpretation of this Medrash: Two people can see the same occurrence and see two different things. It happens all the time.

For example, the pasuk [verse] concerning the Akeidah [Binding of Isaac] says "And he saw the place from a distance" [Bereishis 22:4]. The Medrash comments that Avrohom saw the Shechina [G-d's Divine Presence] in the form of a cloud on top of the mountain. Avrohom asked his son Yitzchak if he saw the same thing. Yitzchak responded in the affirmative. Avrohom then asked Yishmael and Eliezer if they saw it. They responded that they only saw the mountain - nothing above it. They could not see the spiritual phenomenon of the cloud encircling the top of the mountain. Avrohom then told them that they could proceed no further. "Stay here together with the donkeys" [22:5]. If they could see nothing but the physical, they had no right to accompany Avrohom and Yitzchak and view the Akeidah. (The word "chamor" - donkey, is related to the word "chomer," meaning "the physical.")

This was the problem with the Spies. Eretz Yisroel [the Land of Israel] is a different kind of land. It is the Land about which the Torah says, "the Eyes of the L-rd rest upon it from the beginning of

the year until the end of the year” [Devorim 11:12]. However, not everyone sees that. Some people go to Eretz Yisroel and are merely overwhelmed with the fact that “It’s so stony! There are rocks everywhere you look!” It is, however, possible to go to Eretz Yisroel and sense its uniqueness and its spirituality.

The Medrash is teaching that the Spies failed to see with their eyes that which is there to be seen in Eretz Yisroel. When they arrived at Mount Moriah, they merely saw ‘a mountain’. They did not see the site of the Akeida, the site of the future Beis HaMikdash. When they came to Chevron, they saw just another city — they did not sense the presence of the Patriarchs who are buried there.

They spoke with their mouths. But they did not utilize their eyes to fully see and appreciate that which is there to be seen in Eretz Yisroel. This is what brought about their sin.

Eretz Yisroel must be viewed differently than other countries. If there is one eternal lesson from Parshas Shlach, it is that one must be very careful about how he perceives and certainly how he talks about Eretz Yisroel.

A popular teaching emphasizes the word ‘good’ in the pasuk “And you shall see the good of Jerusalem” [Tehillim 128:5]. Jerusalem is the type of city that one can visit and see things that upset him terribly. He can see dissention and he can see people throwing stones at each other and he can see sights that will scandalize him. One can see all the problems and negatives. But the pasuk admonishes us to see the GOOD of Jerusalem. We must look beyond the physical and beyond the surface and see with ‘different eyes’. This was the sin of the Spies. They did not look beyond the physical.

They failed to see the holiness of Eretz Yisroel.

This is a lesson that we must continuously repeat and review. We must not get caught up in only seeing the negative about Eretz Yisroel and Yerushalayim.

Why wouldn't Chezky go on any dates, and what does it have to do with the spies?

Written by Rabbi Moshe Kormornick

Appoint for yourself men, and they will spy on the Land of Canaan (13:2)

Chezky was a good learner in Yeshiva; he kept the mitzvos stringently and had been offered many marriage suggestions over the years, but it seemed that no one was good enough for him. Even the Rosh Yeshiva's daughter was someone who Chezky felt was "below" him. Realizing that his problem was haughtiness, Chezky's Rabbi suggested that he learn the Mesillas Yesharim's chapter dealing with humility. After learning it diligently, Chezky's Rabbi re-suggested the Rosh Yeshiva's daughter. Chezky was shocked: "Before I knew how to be humble, she wasn't up to my standards; now that I have mastered the trait of humility and become an even bigger tzaddik, she's even further away from me!"

The reason why the spies allowed themselves to speak badly of the Land, explains Rashi, is because they did not learn *mussar* from Miriam's punishment after she spoke badly of Moshe. How could these great and righteous men^[1] not have learned from what happened to Miriam? And how would *mussar* have helped them?

Rabbeinu Yona explains that whereas "knowledge" is a person's retention of information, "*mussar*" is the internalizing of these details and making it form part of one's being.^[2] For instance, someone can *know* that a sin is wrong, but until he is repulsed at the thought of doing it, he may come to stumble in this sin; whereas someone who is disgusted with the sin is never likely to go near transgressing it.

In the case of the spies, the Zohar explains that the spies foresaw that they would lose their prestigious positions upon entering Eretz Yisroel, and deep down — without them even realizing it — their desire for honor clouded their judgement.^[3] If the spies would have been able to internalize the *mussar* from Miriam’s punishment, however, this lesson would have been incorporated into their being and would have created an intolerance to speaking *lashon hara* despite the risk of losing their coveted positions.

When discussing the spies’ sin, we cannot fathom their level of greatness and their subsequent fall, but the lessons of the Torah are for *us* to take *mussar* from and internalize their message.^[4] If the greatest leaders of the greatest generation can succumb to sin for not internalizing the Torah’s message, how much more so do we need to take the knowledge that we have learned and make it a part of our being. As we learn from the story above with Chezky, let us take our knowledge of how to act and move it from our head to our heart.

[1] Each one was righteous as testified by Hashem Himself (Medrash Tanchuma, Shlach, 4).

[2] Shaarei Teshuva 3:3.

[3] Zohar 3:158a.

[4] Related in the name of the Vilna Ga’on’s by his brother in the beginning of his book, Maalos HaTorah.

Shelach: Feelings are real, but they aren’t reality

Written by Rabbi Aryeh Dachs

“Feelings are real, but they aren’t reality.”, I found this quote recently, and I think it's profound. In *Shelach* we learn about the fateful mission of the *meraglim*, the spies, sent to report on the land of Israel. Their mission was meant to fortify the spies and the rest of Israel with a renewed faith/*emunah* and trust in Hashem. We now know that mission was a

spectacular failure; the spies returned with a spiteful report, which led to fear. The nation of Israel was terrified to enter the holy land. As a result, the Jews were punished. The journey to the promised land was delayed significantly; they would now have to wander the desert for forty years. The very last portion of their infamous report is intriguing. The spies complained, regarding the might of the inhabitants of Canaan, “We felt as though we were mere grasshoppers, and so were we in their eyes”. The *midrash* explains that G-d would have forgiven them for feeling like insignificant insects. However, it was entirely wrong for the spies to project those feelings and conclude with certainty that the inhabitants of Canaan viewed the spies the same way they viewed themselves. This interpretation presents an enlightening paradigm. Even when the spies felt insignificant, they should have understood that although they felt small, and that was a real feeling, their feelings were not necessarily in line with reality.

At times, we can feel insecure, inept, or vulnerable. Although feelings like that are usually inaccurate and misplaced, they are forgivable. We are creatures of emotion. It is even forgivable when those feelings point to a lack of proper *emunah*, belief and reliance on G-d. However, the *midrash* teaches us that we must be very careful to separate the way we feel from the way we think. It is wrong and unforgivable to allow our fears and vulnerabilities to discolor the world at large. There is always hope; we have no right to transpose our own insecurities onto other people and other circumstances. The world is a beautiful place, and Hashem beautifully conducts the world. Our negative feelings and experiences don't change that.

Wow, it looks like the sea!

Written by d fine

The pasuk tells us that the techeiles string on the tzitzis is central to the reminding function of the tzitzis. How? For the gemarra (Menachos 43b, cited by the Ibn Ezra here 15:38) writes that the techeiles colour is to remind us of the sea, which, in turn, reminds us of the sky, which in turn reminds us

of HaShem's throne – which means we remember to do the mitzvos! Rav Leuchter pointed out from here that the Torah expects one to exhibit joined-up thinking/thinking via association. We are supposed to associate the techeiles with the sea, etc. to get to an increased awareness of HaShem. The same goes for Rashi's explanation (15:39) that the gematria of 'tzitzis' plus the knots and strings add up to 613 – we are supposed to use such mental exercises to spur us on in our avodas HaShem.

Humor

The Obituary Editor

The obituary editor of the Jerusalem Post is not one to admit his mistakes easily. One day he got a phone call from an irate subscriber. The caller complained that his name had been printed in the obituary column.

"Really?" replied the editor calmly. "And where are you calling from?"

The Pope and the Tailor

Stein, a clothing manufacturer, returns from three weeks in Italy. "How was your trip?" asks his partner.

"Terrific," replies Stein.

"Did you see the Pope?"

"Certainly."

"Nu?!"

"I figure he's a 42 regular."

The Rabbi and the Doctor

Dr. Goldstein moved into the neighborhood and began attending the local shul. Rabbi Feldman was delighted, and it wasn't long before they were helping each other in their work: Rabbi Feldman referring people to the doctor, and Dr. Goldstein telling patients about the shul.

One referral from Dr. Goldstein called the shul office asking for a written copy of the Rabbi's last four Shabbat sermons. Rabbi Feldman was most pleased until he discovered that the patient's problem was insomnia.

The Rebbetzin is Trying Too Hard

The shul's new Rebbetzin was trying her best to connect with the ladies in the shul, but she was having a little difficulty. So, she decided to take the sisterhood president Shira Solomon out for coffee.

At the coffee shop, Shira confided, "I'm fat."

"No, you're not," the Rebbetzin reassured her.

"My clothes are awful," Shira said.

"They're lovely," the Rebbetzin encouraged.

"I've never looked worse," Shira whined.

The Rebbetzin replied, "Yes, you have."

