

THE MERAGLIM: A DEEPER LOOK

by Rabbi Pinchas Winston

Personally, it is like a birthday for me. All year round you wait for your birthday, and then all of a sudden one day it is here again, just as meaningful, if not more meaningful than ever before. That is how I view Parashas Shlach.

You wouldn't think so from meeting me, I used to be told when I traveled and lectured. "I would have pegged you as a religionist Zionist," I was once told by someone who had attended one of my speaking engagements. "I mean, you look so Charedi . . ." he said with a quizzical look on his face that said it all: Why would someone as 'black' as you take up such a cause as this? Don't your kind usually downplay Eretz Yisroel and aliyah?

Recently, yes. The road to statehood, for Israel, has been a bumpy ride, one that has often made more enemies than friends. It has been very controversial, both in the eyes of many of the nations of the world, and in the eyes of many Jews as well. It has often created the unlikeliest of allies, and turned supposed friends into enemies. How typically Jewish.

One of the reasons I took up this cause is because I came across sources that provided deeper insights into the issue and the problems that have, over history, resulted because of it. One such source comes from a Kabbalistic work called Sha'ar HaGilgulim, the Gate of Reincarnation by the Arizal. I have referred to this in the past at different times, but since it is crucial for understanding what went wrong in this week's parshah and the message that emerges for all the generations that follow, I have decided to translate and include the full text here.

The footnotes are crucial; if they do not show up in your version, you can see the PDF version here of this week's parshah here: http://www.shaarnun.org/ShaarNun_Productions/Perceptions.html.

Regarding the matter of Caleiv ben Yefuneh and the Spies, you should know that Eliezer, the servant of Avraham, was included in the curse of Canaan, ¹ but became included in the blessed when Lavan told him, "Come blessed of God" (Bereishis 24:31), ² as Chazal explain (Bereishis Rabbah 60).

Since Lavan merited this level, to remove him from being included in the cursed [of Canaan], he too became rectified and reincarnated into Naval HaCarmelli. ³ The two of them (i.e., Lavan and Naval) were reincarnations of Bilaam. ⁴

This is what they (i.e., our rabbis), z"l,⁵ wrote: "For the conductor on the death of Laben"⁶ (Tehillim 9:1): This is Naval, and had Lavan's blessing of Eliezer not been accepted Above, it would not have been written in God's Torah of truth. This is why Chazal were compelled to elucidate that he went out from being cursed.

Thus, Lavan caused Eliezer to become rectified, and later Eliezer reincarnated as Caleiv ben Yefuneh. Therefore, he is called "ben Yefuneh," that is, "the son of Lavan," as it says, "I have cleared—penisi—the house" (Bereishis 24:31) for Eliezer.⁷ He was considered to be like his son since he brought him to the side of blessing, allowing him to become rectified and to reincarnate into Caleiv because of his blessing.

For, Caleiv was the son of Chetzron, and not the son of "Yefuneh," as Chazal ask. As a result of this question, they elucidate in another way: He was ben sh'panah—he turned away—from the advice of the Spies.⁸

However, the level of Caleiv⁹ was that of the Hovayah¹⁰ of Hehs,¹¹ which is the Name Bais-Nun, the gematria of "Caleiv."¹² It has already been made known to you that this Hovayah is Torah on the level of "Rucha deDechura d'ayil b'Nukveh,"¹³ to arouse the level of M"N within her.¹⁴ This Name indicates that the Female is back-to-back with the Male, as it is known.¹⁵

Now the matter of the Spies will be explained.

Know that before the 10 spies went out to spy the land, the souls of the tribes became an ibur in them, the actual sons of Ya'akov.

This is the sod of what Yosef said to them, "You are spies" (Bereishis 42:9); it was a hint that in the future their souls would go into the spies as an ibur. This is also the sod of what it says, "All of them were heads of the Children of Israel" (Bamidbar 13:3), because they were actually the ancestors of the Children of Israel. Therefore, it does not write "heads of thousands of Israel," but rather, "heads of the Children of Israel."¹⁶

However, after they counseled amongst themselves to speak evil about the land, and wanted to return to Moshe and speak errantly, the souls of the tribes that had been in them as an ibur left them. As it is known, a soul on the level of ibur can leave when it wishes, unlike on the level of a reincarnation.¹⁷

This is why it says in the beginning, "They returned from spying the land at the end of forty days" (Bamidbar 13:25), and after it mentions that they returned it repeats that they went: "They went and they came to Moshe and Aharon" (Ibid. 26); it should only have mentioned that they came. Though our rabbis, z"l, explain this [repetition] according to the simple explanation, that "their going was

similar to their coming,"¹⁸ according to sod, "their going" refers to the souls of the tribes, which departed and left them once they returned from spying the land with an evil report.¹⁹

Thus, the word "coming" refers only to the Spies themselves, who returned without the ibur of the souls of the tribes within them. Only within Yehoshua and Caleiv did they remain b'sod ibur, Ephraim ben Yosef in Yehoshua and Yehudah within in Caleiv, since they did not sin.

This is what it says, "Yehoshua bin Nun and Caleiv ben Yefuneh survived from these men who went" (Bamidbar 14:38). The explanation is that they remained 'alive' with respect to the level of the souls of the tribes of their ancestors who were iburim within them, which did not leave them upon their return. Just as they were with them at their departure, so too were they with them upon their return.

This is what "survived from these men who went" means; "these men" refers to Ephraim and Yehudah who were with them when they departed.²⁰ And thus it writes, "who went," to allude to the those who survived from the men who went, unlike those whose coming was not like their going. (Sha'ar HaGilgulim, Ch. 36)

As deep and insight as this is into the story of the Spies, it is but the beginning. However, to go deeper than this, you'll have to check out my book, Drowning in Pshat in the Thirtysix.org Online BookStore. Sources:

1. Bereishis 9:24-27 says: "Noach awoke from his wine and realized what his youngest son had done to him. He said, 'Cursed be Canaan! A slave's slave shall he be to his brothers!' And he said, 'Blessed is God, the Lord of Shem, may Canaan be a slave to him! May God enlarge Yefes, yet may He dwell in the tents of Shem. May Canaan be a slave to them.' " Eliezer, Avraham's servant, was a descendant of Canaan.
2. After Rivkah brought him home to meet her family, her brother Lavan greeted Eliezer with these words. Apparently these words had the ability to change Eliezer's spiritual status from cursed to blessed.
3. Naval lived in Dovid HaMelech's time and spoke loshon hara about him, saying, "Who is Dovid and who is Ben Yishai?" (I Shmuel 25:10). As the Arizal explained in Chapter 29, this was a reversal of the rectification accomplished after Bilaam reincarnated to rectify his sin of trying to curse the Jewish people.
4. In other words, Lavan reincarnated into Bilaam, who later reincarnated into Naval HaCarmelli.
5. The Hebrew acronym for, "They should be remembered for blessing."
6. Which is spelled: Lamed-Bais-Nun, the same as Lavan.
7. Lavan said this to Eliezer after he removed all items of idol worship for Eliezer. Therefore, Eliezer is looked upon as the son of the one who cleared the place for him.
8. The word can either mean to clear away something or to turn away from something.
9. That is, the level of his soul.
10. Since we do not pronounce God's Four-Letter Name as it is written, it is referred to as Hovayah, a

derivation of the Name, spelled Heh-Vav-Yud-Heh, which is permissible to pronounce.

11. Though letters of the Aleph-Bais are represented by a single letter, their correct pronunciation includes other hidden letters. For example, the letter Yud, when written as it is pronounced, is spelled: Yud-Vav-Dalet, the Vav-Dalet being the hidden letters. In other languages this may not be significant, but in Hebrew it is, especially in the realm of Kabbalah and the discipline of Gematria, in which the numerical values of letters and words reveal deeper meanings and otherwise hidden conceptual relationships. The expansion of a letter or word is called the 'Milui,' which means 'fullness,' and when it is used, especially with respect to Divine Name, it alludes to an increased revelation of Divine light into Creation on some level. While some letters, like the Yud for example, have only one possible expansion—Yud-Vav-Dalet, others have multiple expansion possibilities, such as, in the case of Heh: Heh-Heh, Heh-Yud, or Heh-Aleph, all of result in a Heh sound. As to which version is used in a milui, which obviously affects the overall gematria of a word, depends upon the level of light being revealed, something that is known only because of a Kabbalistic tradition. In this case, the expanded Divine Name is, Yud-Vav-Dalet, Heh-HEH, Vav-Vav, Heh-HEH, which has a gematria of 52 (20+10+12+10), the same numerical value of the letters Bais-Nun (2+50), the milui that corresponds to the World of Asiyah.

12. As follows: 20+30+2.

13. Literally, the male spirit that ascends in the female, and it refers to light that Zehr Anpin, which is masculine, gives to the Malchus, which is feminine, in order to stimulate the separation process (birur) of Holy Sparks from the Klipos, so they can ascend and the world can become rectified (Aitz Chaim, Sha'ar HaMuchin, Ch. 9). This is what is supposed to happen while learning Torah and performing mitzvos.

14. Literally, Mein Nukveh, or Female Waters, which refers to the Holy Sparks that ascend and eventually cause additional light and blessing to descend into Creation.

15. During times of redemption the sefiros are said to be face-to-face, allowing for light to freely flow to the lower worlds, while during times of exile, they are said to be back-to-back, to limit the amount of light that the forces of impurity can draw.

16. The former implies that they were just leaders of units of the Jewish people, whereas the latter implies that they were heads of the entire nation, which, as the sons of Ya'akov, they had been.

17. The soul with which a person is born cannot leave at will, but only at death.

18. Sotah 35a; in other words, the Torah refers to their departure a second time while talking about their return from spying the land to make a connection between their returning and their going: Just as the Spies returned from spying the land with bad intentions, they had also left to spy the land with bad intentions.

19. According to this explanation there is no repetition, since the first reference is to the Spies themselves who left together with their iburim, and the second reference is to the departure of the iburim alone from their host bodies.

20. The simple explanation is that 'survivors' refers to Yehoshua and Caleiv, who remained alive after God punished the rest of the Spies. The sod explanation, however, is that 'survivors' refers to

Ephraim and Yehudah, the only two iburim to remain with their host bodies.

Text

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