

# THE PERFECT STUDENT

by Rabbi Yissocher Frand

*These divrei Torah were adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissochar Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Torah Tapes on the weekly Torah portion: Tape# # 61, The Minyan: Who Counts? Good Shabbos!*

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## Missing Dots Hint at Yehoshua's Special Relationship to Moshe

In this week's Parsha we read about the sending of the 12 spies. The 12 spies were supposed to investigate the situation in Eretz Yisroel prior to Klal Yisroel entering the land. We know, unfortunately, of the sad outcome of this chapter.

[Ten of the twelve spies gave a false bad report. Though Calev and Yehoshua gave a good report, the Jewish people believed the spies and decided that it was not worth fighting a dangerous war for the Land of Israel, and instead demanded a return to Egypt. As a punishment, the Jews were required to remain in the desert for 40 years, until all the adults who had believed the spies passed away.]

The chapter begins with the listing of each of the 12 spies by tribe. The verse says "And from the Tribe of Ephraim was Hoshea bin Nun". The Torah uses the unique form "bin Nun" rather than "ben Nun" to express the idea that he was the son of Nun.

The Ramban explains that "bin Nun" was like a nickname, hinting at the fact that Hoshea was particularly wise and sharp intellectually. He was, thus, given the title "binNun" (from the root `Binah' -- understanding), meaning "the wise one".

I saw an interesting alternate interpretation from the sefer HaMedrashv'Hamaseh. Normally, our Rabbis tell us, there are three partners in man -- his father, his mother, and G-d. In truth, however, there can be another partner in the creation of man, and that is his Rebbe, his teacher. As Chazal, our Rabbis, say, "Whoever teaches the son of his neighbor Torah, it is as if he gave birth to him." Unfortunately, this is usually not the case. The relationship between Rebbe and Talmid (student) is usually not as strong as the relationship between father and son. There are, however, cases where the Talmid is such a dedicated student (Talmid-muvhak), that the student can truly be considered the child of his Rebbe.

Yehoshua was such a Talmid. Our Rabbis describe him as the disciple par excellence, who never left the side of Moshe, his teacher. Chaza"l say that when Moshe finished giving a shiur, the Elders would leave. There would be some Talmidim still present and then they, too, would leave. Finally, Moshe Rabbeinu would walk and Yehoshua bin Nun would follow him. Because Yehoshua was such a dedicated Talmid, he received more from Moshe than any other individual, and eventually became Moshe's successor.

Consequently, we can actually say about Yehoshua bin Nun that he had another partner in his making. That partner was Moshe Rabbeinu. That is why, thesefer HaMedrash v"Hamaseh says, Yehoshua was called Bin Nun, with a single dot (chirik) under the letter Bais rather than the three dots (segol). Yehoshua was the son of Nun, but not fully the son of Nun. The Torah, symbolically, took away from the full "Ben" (with a segol) relationship that Yehoshua had with his father, to show that in this case his teacher had an even greater role in his development than did his father.

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### **Moshe Tells Yehoshua "Just Say No' to the plan of the Spies"**

There is a very interesting and fascinating Targum Yonasan ben Uziel in this week's Parsha. The Torah tells us that before the Spies were sent out, Moshe changed the name of Hoshea to Yehoshua. Rash"i cites the statement of Chaza"l, our Rabbis, that this was a message: "May G-d save you (Yoshiecha) from the peril of the Spies." The Targum Yonasan ben Uziel adds an editorial comment here. He says, "When Moshe Rabbeinu saw the humbleness of Hoshea, he felt compelled to change his name to Yehoshua".

What does the Targum mean? Isn't humility a desirable quality?

The Avnei Shoham gives a powerful interpretation: The Tosefta in Tractate Shabbos [17:4] brings an argument between Beis Shammai and Beis Hillel [the school of Shammai, and the school of Hillel] as to what one can or must do with bones that are left on the table after a Shabbos meal. Beis Hillel says they are not muktzeh [forbidden to be handled on Shabbos or Yom Tov] and you are allowed to pick them up and discard them like you do regularly during the week. Beis Shammai say you must remove the entire table or tablecloth and shake it off, thus getting rid of the bones.

The Tosefta adds that Rav Zecharia ben Avkilos would act neither according to the practice of Beis Shammai nor according to the practice of Beis Hillel. Wanting to strike a compromise, he would pick up the bones and throw them behind the couch. The Tosefta comments that this attitude of Rav Zecharia ben Avkilos, of trying to strike a compromise between Beis Shammai and Beis Hillel - destroyed the Beis Hamikdash.

What does the Tosefta mean? The Tosefta is referring to the famous Gemara in Tractate Gittin [56a] that describes how a certain Jew went to the Caesar in Rome and told him that the Jews were rebelling against him. The Caesar knew that the Jews were loyal and refused to believe this Jew. The

Jew then said, "I'll prove it to you. Send them an Offering and have them sacrifice it on their Altar. If they refuse to sacrifice it, that means they've rebelled."

The Caesar agreed and sent an animal with this Jew, requesting that it be offered on the Altar. The Jew went ahead and secretly blemished the animal, knowing that it would then have to be rejected.

The Gemara describes that the Rabbis considered offering it anyway because of "political considerations" (mi'shum shalom malchus - peace with the King), but Rav Zecharia ben Avkilos argued against this, saying that "People will misinterpret this, and say that blemished animals may be offered on the Altar". The Rabbis then considered killing the plotting messenger, so the king would never find out what happened. Again, Rav Zecharia ben Avkilos argued against this saying "People will misinterpret this, and say that one who blemishes a Sacrifice is deserving of the death penalty".

As a result they did nothing, and the Temple was destroyed. Regarding this incident Rav Yochanan said, "The 'humility', the desire to constantly satisfy every opinion and every situation, of Rav Zecharia ben Avkilos, destroyed our Temple and exiled us from our Land".

Chazal are telling us that modesty, humility and the art of compromise and peacemaking are tremendous attributes, but sometimes one has to stand up and be counted and say "Let the chips fall where they may -- this is the way it has to be!". One cannot **always** try to make Shalom. One cannot always compromise. Sometimes one must take a stand. This was R. Zecharia ben Avkilos' failing.

Now we understand what the Targum Yonasan ben Uziel is teaching. Moshe Rabbeinu knew that Yehoshua was a lover and a pursuer of peace, one who always tried to find common ground and find a way to compromise. However, Moshe Rabbeinu, intuitively or with Ruach HaKodesh, knew that there would come a time, during the incident with the spies, that Yehoshua would have to stand up and be counted, stand up and rebel.

Therefore, the Targum says that when Moshe saw that Yehoshua needed a 'booster shot' of internal strength (shtark-keit), Moshe changed his name and gave him a Blessing -- that G-d give him the fortitude, strength and courage that if the situation called for it he would be able to stand up and say "No". This was the Blessing of "May G-d save you from the plan of the Spies".

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## Glossary

**Eretz Yisroel** -- The Land of Israel

**Klal Yisroel** -- The Nation of Israel

**Rebbi** -- Teacher

**Talmid (muvhak)** -- (Especially dedicated) student

**shiur** -- lecture

**sefer** -- book

**muktzeh** -- items forbidden to be handled on Shabbos or Yom Tov  
**Ruach HaKodesh** -- Divine Inspiration

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**Personalities & Sources:**

**Ramba"n** -- R. Moshe ben Nachman; (1194-1270); Spain, Eretz Yisroel

**Rash"i** -- R. Shlomo Yitzchaki (1040-1105); France

**Targum Yonasan ben Uziel** -- Aramaic paraphrase of the Chumash attributed by some to a disciple of Hillel.

**Tosefta** -- Tanaitic collection of Baraisos; a kind of parallel work to the Mishneh

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This week's write-up is adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissochar Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Torah Tapes on the weekly Torah portion (#61). The corresponding halachic portion for this tape is: #61 is: The Minyan: Who Counts? The other halachic portions for Parshas Shlach from the Commuter Chavrusah Series are:

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