

UNSUNG HEROES

by Rabbi Yissocher Frand

These divrei Torah were adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Tapes on the weekly portion: Tape # 197, Carrying Medicine on Shabbos. Good Shabbos!

G-d's Favorites are the Unsung Heroes

The Haftorah that we read on the Shabbos of Parshas Shlach is from the beginning of the book of Yehoshua. Just as in Parshas Shlach we learn about the spies that Moshe sent, the Haftorah teaches us about the spies that Yehoshua sent. "A Tale of Two Spy Missions." Ironically, although the spies that Moshe sent caused a terrible tragedy for Klal Yisroel [the Jewish Nation], Yehoshua's first major decision as leader of the nation was to send spies into Eretz Yisroel [the Land of Israel] to re-reconnoiter the land. These spies were successful, and following their report Klal Yisroel entered the Land and conquered the enemy.

The Medrash in Parshas Shlach comments on the two spies that Yehoshua sent: "There is nothing as dear to G-d as an agent sent on a mission to do a mitzvah, who tries and successfully completes the mitzvah; and there is no greater example of individuals sent to do a mitzvah who carried out their mission with great self-sacrifice and dedication as those two sent by Yehoshua son of Nun." The Medrash then identifies these two agents as Pinchas and Kolev (although the text in Yehoshua itself leaves them anonymous). Kolev and Pinchas are the classic examples of a "shliach mitzvah" [an agent appointed to do a mitzvah] for all generations.

Why does G-d love an agent who is sent to do a mitzvah? Rav Bergman writes that a "shliach mitzvah" acts without the fanfare and without the limelight. He receives none of the honor or satisfaction of initiating the mitzvah -- he simply completes the job! This is the performance of a mitzvah in its highest form -- without personal gain or honor. The initiator of the mitzvah is the one who will usually get the credit.

That is why Pinchas and Kolev provide such a classic example. As Rav Bergman points out, Kolev and Pinchas were really almost contemporaries of Moshe Rabbeinu. They were certainly equal to if not greater than and older than Yehoshua. It would have been their natural inclination to ask, "Me? I

should be your errand boy?" Pinchas could say, "Yehoshua -- you are telling me to be a spy? I remember when you were a spy!" The fact that these individuals were able to sublimate their egos and honor and just get the job done in the most anonymous fashion is worthy of the greatest esteem by G-d.

I think that there is a segment of our community whose role in Jewish religious life often fits into this category of the unsung "Shiluchei Mitzvah". Such is the traditional religious role of the women of Klal Yisroel.

The lot of the traditional Jewish woman is not an easy one. It is not easy to always be behind the mechitzah. It is not easy to make sure that one's husband has the ability to learn Torah while she has that wonderful task of putting children to sleep. The men get the geshmak (exhilarating religious experience), we get the honor at the Siyum HaShas [celebration at the conclusion of learning the Talmud], but the women make it happen. They are the unsung heroes, the "Shiluchei Mitzvah" that often do not get the pleasure, the honor, or the limelight. They are not in the public. "The honor of the daughter of the King is within" [Tehillim 45:14].

They do not enjoy public glorification, the limelight. But, when they get to the World of Truth, our Sages tell us "Greater is the reward given to women than to men" [Brochos 17a] -- they will have a "box seat" up there. Nonetheless, in the meantime, it can be difficult.

It is the responsibility of men, as husbands and as fathers, to try to make life a little easier, to show the appreciation for the "Shiluchei Mitzvah". If G-d has no favorite as great as the behind the scenes foot-soldiers; that should teach us how we should regard such "Shiluchei Mitzvah" as well.

I was thinking of an analogy to this. [This drasha was delivered in June 1991.] Ask any American (who had not spent the previous six months in a cave), "Who was the head of the Allied forces in the Persian Gulf?" Everyone knows -- General H. Norman Schwarzkopf was the hero who "pulled it off".

Before the war started, I read the comment that "amateurs talk about strategy; professionals talk about logistics". The 'trick' of making war is figuring out the logistics. How do you keep 530,000 men fed? How do you bring them water? Logistics!

Schwarzkopf himself said that the big accomplishment of the war was to quickly move 250,000 troops to the west and to attack Iraq from the flank. Who got them there? It was a miracle of logistics.

So who was the general in charge of logistics? No one knows his name. Everybody talks about the brilliant Schwarzkopf. What about the brilliant logistician, the guy who made it happen -- who brought the guns, and food, and fuel there? Who is he? Why is he not making \$25,000 for every speech he delivers? The answer is because nobody appreciates logistics. Nobody knows the "Shiluchei Mitzvah". Nobody knows the people who make it happen.

In a similar sense, nobody "knows" the women. Unfortunately, their role is not appreciated. Our job is

to ensure that we show appreciation and demonstrate that there is nothing as dear to G-d as the "Shiluchei Mitzvah".

Glossary

Shliach mitvah -- an agent appointed to do a command

Mechitzah -- partition

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