

MESSAGE OF THE YUD

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 # 243, The Concept of Prison in Jewish Law. Good Shabbos!

Sarah's Message Passes to Yehoshua by Way of the Yud

Many of us are familiar with a very famous Chazal, a statement of our Sages, in this week's parsha. Before Moshe sent out the spies, he changed the name of 'Hoshea' bin Nun to 'Yehoshua'. The letter 'Yud', which was added to the start of the name, symbolized 'G-d' -- as if to say "May G-d save you from the plan of the spies". Our Sages tell us that this 'Yud' was the same 'Yud' that was dropped from Sarai's name when Avraham's wife's name was changed to Sarah.

Virtually everyone who has picked up a pen to write a commentary on the Torah discusses this Rabbinic teaching. Why Sarah? I would like to share two insights into what it was about Sarah's name that might have been beneficial to Yehoshua at precisely this time.

Rav Elyakim Schlesinger, in his commentary Beis Av, suggests that Yehoshua was in need of strength to help him avoid falling in with bad company. Sarah exemplified such strength. When Yitzchak was a young boy, Sarah realized that he was falling under the influence of Yishmael, and she insisted that Hagar and Yishmael must be sent out of the house. She knew what type of influence the 'wrong crowd' could have on a person. As cruel as it might have seemed at the time -- to force Avraham to send out his own son -- Sarah realized that it was absolutely necessary -- because of the power and influence of the wrong associations. This is what Sarah stood for.

When Moshe Rabbeinu suspected that Yehoshua would need the inner fortitude and strength to go against the crowd, he imbued Yehoshua with a portion of the name of Sarah -- so that he should gain this aspect of Sarah's own strength of personality.

Rav Nissan Alpert suggests a different interpretation. There is another difficulty in this Parsha. When Moshe Rabbeinu sent out the spies, he gave them a variety of instructions. First, he asked them to make a military assessment of the people and cities of the land. In addition, Moshe asked them to assess the land itself -- in terms of its fertility and intrinsic goodness. When spies are sent on a

mission, we usually view them as a strategic tool. We can readily understand the instructions to assess the military potential. However, the instructions to investigate the land itself in terms of the quality of the fruit and its fertility seems out of place in a spy mission.

The explanation is that Moshe Rabbeinu was not only sending them as strategic spies. Moshe was also trying to instill an attitude in them -- the attitude that "This is your land". Moshe did not want them to go as mere spies, but as "Ba'alei Batim" -- the owners of the land. "Go check out your land -- where your homes will be located. Check out the real estate, check out the farming, check out the productivity." Why? "Because this is going to be your land. You must look at it as if it is already yours."

Approaching Eretz Yisroel [Land of Israel] with the attitude "this is mine" is totally different than the attitude of a normal strategic spy. A spy thinks in terms of whether we will be able to succeed; the owner thinks in terms of how -- what method should we use. That is the spirit that Moshe Rabbeinu wanted to instill in the spies -- that the question is not "whether" -- the question is "how".

Moshe Rabbeinu considered it vital for Yehoshua to understand this idea. There will be no compromise. There is no question. It is ours. Who, in Tanach, said that Eretz Yisroel is ours, lock - stock - and barrel? It was Sarah: "This one will not inherit with my son" [Bereishis 21:10]. Yishmael will not have a portion in this land. It belongs completely to Yitzchak, with no partnership and no compromise. Eretz Yisroel belongs to the Jewish nation. It does not belong to Ishmaelites [descendants of Yishmael]. It is ours.

Therefore, Moshe Rabbeinu took the 'Yud' from the Matriarch Sarah and gave it to Yehoshua. One must enter the Land of Israel with Sarah's attitude.

I am not here to make political statements. This is not an endorsement of any political position. But this is the attitude that we must have -- regarding true ownership of Eretz Yisroel. It is ours because G-d gave it to us. This is the attitude that the spies needed to have upon entering the land - - "Look over your real estate. It is yours and it does not belong to anyone else." That is the only way to conquer Eretz Yisroel.

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This week's write-up is adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Torah Tapes on the weekly Torah portion (#243). The corresponding halachic portion for this tape is: The Concept of Prison in Jewish Law. The other halachic portions for this parsha from the Commuter Chavrusah Series are:

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