

# THE POWER OF ULTERIOR MOTIVES

*by Rabbi Yissocher Frand*

## Parshas Shlach

### The Power of Ulterior Motives

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These divrei Torah were adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Tapes on the weekly portion: Tape # 553, Women and Tzitzis Revisited. Good Shabbos!

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#### **Novel Interpretation of Shemen HaTov Answers Three Questions**

Parshas Sh'lach contains the well-known incident of the Spies. When describing the Meraglim, the Torah states "They were all men (kulam anashim); the heads of the Children of Israel were they." [Bamidbar 13:3] Rashi points out that the term "they were all men" is specifying more than just the gender of these individuals. Biblical use of the term "anashim" indicates people of distinction, prestigious individuals.

How did it happen that such great people committed such a grievous offense as that of slandering Eretz Yisrael? Rashi says cryptically: "At that moment, they were worthy." It was only later that they "turned evil", so to speak.

It seems confusing that just a few verses later, Rashi cites a Talmudic teaching [Sotah 34a] that seems to contradict the fact that the Spies were righteous when they set out on their mission. The pasuk says, "And they went and they came (to Moshe and Aaron and to the entire assembly of the Children of Israel...)" [Bamidbar 13:26]

The Gemara states that this pasuk contains a linkage between their setting out and their coming back. Just they returned with evil intentions, so too they set out with evil intentions (b'eitzah ra'ah).

There is another issue we must consider as well. This term "eitzah ra'ah" and the similar expression used elsewhere "atzas ha'meraglim" seems to indicate that the sin of the Spies involved something more than just speaking Lashon HaRah [slander] against the Land of Israel. "Eitzah ra'ah" seems to indicate they had some kind of evil plan. What is meant by this term "evil plan"?

Finally, there is a third question we need to ponder. The end of Parshas Nasso contains the section about the Princes. Every tribe had a Nasi [Prince] who was the leader of his tribe. It would seem that the Princes would be the most logical choice for representatives from each tribe to go on the spy mission to check out Eretz Yisrael. Why did Moshe Rabbeinu pass over the Princes and come up with a new set of tribal representatives for this important mission?

The Shemen HaTov offers a very interesting interpretation that explains all of these issues. The Shemen HaTov suggests that when Moshe Rabbeinu sent out the Spies, he wanted 12 different opinions of what Eretz Yisrael was like. He did not want a consensus report. More specifically, Moshe Rabbeinu did not want a "committee". The purpose of a committee report is to hash out an issue among a group and to produce a unified recommendation. Moshe Rabbeinu did not want that. He saw that such an approach was fraught with danger.

It was for this reason that Moshe Rabbeinu specifically bypassed the Princes for this mission. The Princes of the tribes had a track record of unanimity and uniformity. Every Prince was given the opportunity of bringing his own special offering and yet they turned around and each brought an identical set of offerings. Therefore, Moshe intended to send 12 distinct personalities -- kulam anashim -- each with his own unique perspective, each a leader, not a follower.

But the first thing that they did before they started out was... they had a meeting. At this meeting, they decided that they would come back with a consensus report -- exactly the approach Moshe Rabbeinu had been afraid of. This decision was not wicked on their part, but it was an error. This is the "atzas haMeraglim" [the plan of the Spies] that Chazal speak about. It was the idea that "we have to speak with one voice and with one voice only."

This resolves the contradiction in Rashi. They were in fact all worthy individuals at that time and yet their departure was with an "eitzah ra'ah" -- a bad plan, because it led to a uniform report that did not reflect the individuality and the unique perceptions of each of the spies. It was exactly this "eitzah ra'ah" that Moshe Rabbeinu had tried to avoid by NOT selecting the Princes for the mission. Unfortunately, Moshe was mistaken because the new group of tribal representatives also came back with a unified negative report about Eretz Yisrael.

### **The Power of Ulterior Motives**

The Targum Yonasan ben Uziel provides an interesting elaboration of the famous pasuk: "... and Moshe called Hoshea bin Nun, Yehoshua." [Bamidbar 13:16]. The Targum adds: "When Moshe saw his extreme humility, he called Hoshea bin Nun, Yehoshua." The changed name implies (as Rashi notes) may G-d (Yud-Hay) save you from the plot of the Spies."

What does this Targum mean? Where did Moshe note the extreme humility of his disciple Hoshea? Both the Koshnizter Maggid and the Avodas Yisroel offer the following idea. In fact, the idea can be traced to a passage in the Zohar.

The Spies were great and distinguished individuals. They were singular leaders of the nation. What caused them to return on that night of Tisha B'Av and caused us the troubles we are still suffering from to this very day? The Zohar explains that the Meraglim realized that when they would enter the Land of Israel, the whole system would change. There would be a new government and new leadership. They sensed that with the entry into Eretz Yisrael, they would lose their positions of leadership.

The Sefas Emes expresses this idea as follows: They enjoyed the close relationship with the Almighty that existed in the Wilderness. They felt that this unique and unprecedented type of spiritual living was the ultimate existence. They were loath to forsake this Open Hand of the Almighty by moving into a more natural existence without Manna, a Divine Water supply, the protection of the Clouds, and all that the Midbar experience implied. They knew that in Eretz Yisrael they would have to farm and work for a living. Everything would change to a natural means of living. The miraculous modes of existence that they were experiencing in the Wilderness would be a thing of the past.

Subconsciously, this ulterior motive, colored their perception of what they saw in Eretz Yisrael and what they reported back to Moshe and the rest of the people. We all know what ulterior motives can do to us. They color our judgment.

The lesson of the Spies is that even if a person is a great person -- if he is affected by personal motivation (negius) -- be it money, be it power, be it position, be it security -- that plays tricks with his mind.

There can be "treife" [improper] ulterior motives, but there can also be "kosher" [proper] ulterior motives. Last week's parsha contains an example of "kosher" ulterior motives: Eldad and Meidad were prophesizing in the camp [Bamidbar 11:27]. Yehoshua suggested that Moshe Rabbeinu "throw them in jail" (kela'em).

What was the crime of saying a prophecy? What upset Yehoshua so much? Yehoshua was upset that their prophecy was that Moshe was going to die and Yehoshua would lead the Jews into Israel. Any other second in command who would have heard such a prophecy would have been jumping for joy. Yehoshua's reaction was just the opposite: "Throw them in jail!"

Moshe Rabbeinu saw Yehoshua's great humility in that reaction. Yehoshua was a person who fled from honor. He did not want leadership. Moshe Rabbeinu concluded that Yehoshua also had an ulterior motive to not want to go into the Land of Israel. Yehoshua knew that when the Jews entered Eretz Yisrael, it would be without Moshe. Yehoshua would be the leader. Yehoshua's unbelievable modesty augured in favor of saying "I don't want to let that happen."

This is the meaning of the Targum Yonasan ben Uziel. When Moshe saw Yehoshua's great humility, he understood that Yehoshua would also be vulnerable to an ulterior motive that might lead him to color his report in favor of NOT going into Eretz Yisrael. It was a beautiful laudatory and "kosher"

ulterior motive, but it was an ulterior motive nevertheless and it could have affected his judgment. For that reason, Moshe blessed him that the Almighty spare him from lining up with the Spies who had less noble ulterior motives: "Yehoshua, don't get snared in the plot of the Meraglim."

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