

SHEVA BROCHOS MATERIAL

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Parshas Shlach

Sheva Brochos Material

These divrei Torah were adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Tapes on the weekly portion: Tape # 729, Making Tzitzis. Good Shabbos!

June is a popular month for weddings and I have had more than one person come over to me recently and ask, "Do you have a nice thought I can say over at a Sheva Brochos?" The following short thought from Rav Yaakov Kaminetsky is a nice idea to share at a Sheva Brochos.

In the beginning of Parshas Shlach, Moshe changed the name of Hoshea Bin Nun to Yehoshua [Bamidbar 13:16], saying (according to the Medrash) "May G-d save you from the counsel of the other spies" [Tanchuma 6; Sotah 34b]. Apparently, Moshe had a premonition that Yehoshua would need to stand up to the other Meraglim and therefore granted him this blessing.

Many ask why Moshe was only worried about Yehoshua. Why did Moshe not also feel it necessary to bless Kalev with extra fortitude to stand up to the bad counsel of the majority report of the other Mergalim [spies]? Rav Yaakov Kaminetsky gives the following very interesting answer. Kalev was married to Miriam, who was a righteous woman. Knowing that he had a righteous wife, Moshe was confident that Kalev would be safe from bad influences. Yehoshua, as far as we know, was not married at that time. He subsequently married Rachav haZonah. At this time, to the best of our knowledge, Yehoshua was still single. Since Yehoshua did not have a wife to back him up, it was he, rather than Kalev, who needed the blessing of "May G-d save you from the counsel of the spies".

If one needs to speak at a Sheva Brochos this month, let them take this thought and run with it (if the bride is worthy of this analogy).

"Yud-Hay" Will Save You from the Counsel of the Spies

Over the years, we have spent much time analyzing the exact aveyra [sin] of the Meraglim. The reason why there are so many opinions as to the nature of their aveyra is because it is very difficult to take at face value the simple reading of the Torah's narration, which implies that such great

leaders of the Tribes of Israel acted so inappropriately. Our Sages tell us that each was a distinguished person and each was righteous. For them to have done a 180-degree reversal and question the Almighty's ability to take them into Eretz Yisrael is very difficult to explain.

We recently mentioned the opinion of the Zohar that the problem of the Meraglim was that they fell victim to the disease of "negius" [conflict of interest]. They were afraid that when they entered the Land of Israel, they would lose their respective positions of prominence. When people have a personal agenda, they fall prey to the phenomenon that "Bribes will blind those who have sight and pervert the words of the righteous" [Shmos 23:8]. The greatest and wisest amongst the judiciary can become influenced by personal attachment to the outcome of their own judgment. The Meraglim were afraid of the "new world order" that awaited them once they entered Israel, which would strip them of their leadership roles. Hence, their vision was skewed to the extent that what could have been interpreted in a completely positive fashion was given a negative and ominous "spin."

At this time, I would like to share an approach found in the Chidushei haRi"m, the Gerrer Rebbe, zt"l. The Chidushei haRi"m suggests that the problem the Meraglim had with going into Eretz Yisrael was due to the very fact that they were righteous individuals. Because they were Tzadikim, they loved and longed for the type of existence that they experienced in the Wilderness. This existence -- a completely spiritual life -- was unprecedented in the annals of humankind, before or since. Bread came down from Heaven daily. Their eating experience was completely spiritual. They did not need to worry about food, they did not need to worry about drink, and they did not need to worry about heat or air-conditioning. They literally had an "Olam haZeh" [this-worldly] experience that is similar to "Olam haBah" [the next world]. They knew that this type of intense and continuous spirituality would end once they entered Eretz Yisrael and began a more "normal" type of existence. "Vacation" would be over. It would be necessary to plow the land and sow the seeds, to fertilize, prune, harvest and to endure all the trials and tribulations of earning a living that have been plaguing us along with all of mankind ever since those miraculous 40 years of Wilderness experience.

The Meraglim, fearing the impending dramatic spiritual decline from the heavenly existence of the Wilderness era to the materialistic existence of having their own land, opted not to enter the land. The Chidushei HaRim compares it to the setup of his time in Eastern Europe, whereby a young couple would move in with the bride's family after marriage and the in-laws would support the children for the first few years of marriage while the son-in-law pursued his Torah studies. The young newlyweds did not need to worry about food, shelter, or making a living. The father-in-law took care of everything for X number of years; after that point, the father-in-law would tell the children "You're now on your own".

How did the son-in-law feel when the days of the father-in-law's promised support were counting down and the period of such untroubled existence was ending? Inevitably, there was trauma in the anticipated transition. The son-in-law needs to start worrying about food and shelter and health insurance and finding a job and the whole business.

The analogy in today's world is the bochrin [single young men] who go to learn in Yeshiva in Eretz Yisrael. They all love it. They have just one thing in their lives to worry about -- learning Torah, nothing else. They do not need to worry about college, they do not need to worry about grades, and they do not need to worry about shidduchim. Their father gives them a credit card and they just sit and learn with no worries in the world! What could be better?

They know that when they come back to America, they will start needing to worry about earning a living, finding a marriage partner, and about all the other challenges of "normal existence."

How does it feel when one has to "say good bye to the father-in-law?" How does it feel when one has to "come back to America?" Multiply that many times for these great righteous people who were living a 100% spiritual existence in the Wilderness. They knew that the minute they crossed the Jordan River, this "next-worldly" existence would be history. That is why they did not want to go into Eretz Yisrael. Their reticence did not reflect a lack of "love of G-d" or "fear of G-d" or "faith in G-d". On the contrary, their attitude was "Who needs this "Olam haZeh"? Let us stay here. What could be better than our current situation?"

Where, then did they go wrong? The ultimate answer is that the Almighty does not want us to live that way. This is not the life of a Jew. The life of a Jew is to live a life where he has to worry about making a living and deal with all the physical requirements and needs of this world -- while at the same time remaining a holy person.

The Sefas Emes adds to what his grandfather the Chiddushei haRi"m wrote: This is why following the narrative of the Meraglim, the Torah gave us three mitzvos in Parshas Shlach. The three mitzvos are the mitzvah of Nessachim [wine libations on the altar, accompanying certain sacrifices], the mitzvah of Challah [separating a portion from our kneaded dough for the Kohen], and the mitzvah of Tzitzis [fringes worn on the corners of our four-cornered garments]. Why do these three mitzvos appear in this parsha?

The Sefas Emes writes that these 3 mitzvos stand in contrast to the philosophy of the Meraglim. The Meraglim held that the two worlds cannot be molded. "Olam haZeh" and "Olam haBah" -- never the twain shall meet. There is an eternal dichotomy and an unbridgeable chasm between spirituality (Ruchniyus) and physicality (gashmiyus). The Meraglim felt that you cannot have both, the Torah counters that you can have both and you MUST have both!

HaShem wants us to plant a vineyard, sit out in the hot sun, and sweat and worry about the grapes. "Will it be too hot or too cold; will there be bugs or birds that will consume my crop?" After we toil and sweat and break our back, HaShem wants you to take those grapes into which we invested our physical 'kishkas' and make them into wine and offer them on the holy Mizbayach. HaShem wants to show us that there are not two worlds. The end result of all those physical efforts is an act of sanctification of the produce of this world."

The same is true regarding the efforts needed to sow the seeds, grow the wheat, make the grain

into flour, and then bake it into bread. All these physical efforts culminate in the mitzvah of the separation of Challah. We must transform the physicality of this world into spirituality and holiness.

The same is true regarding the raising of sheep, shearing of wool, spinning of yarn, and making of clothing. What can be further from spirituality than spending time with smelly sheep all day? Yet all those physical efforts culminate in placing fringes on the corners of our garments, such that we may look at what we have accomplished through our efforts "and remember thereby all the commandments of Hashem."

This is the name of the game. This is what Judaism is all about. We are not like other religions who believe that we cannot bridge the worlds of spirituality and physicality.

The Kotzker Rebbe emphasized the first two words in the pasuk that begins, "Anshei Kodesh tiheyun Li" [Men of Holiness you shall be to Me - Shmos 22:30]. HaShem wants MEN of holiness, not just angels of holiness. G-d wants Man with all his evil inclinations and lusts and laziness. G-d desires to see such a creature become holy. Holy MEN, not holy angels!

To return to our point of departure, the Belzer Rebbe took note of Moshe's blessing to Yehoshua, upon changing the latter's name. He added the letter Yud to the start of the name, which now begins with the letters Yud-Hay, as if to say "Yud-Hay (G-d) will save you from the counsel of the spies". Why, the Belzer Rebbe asked, did Moshe choose this specific name to save Yehoshua from evil counsel? Chazal tell us that the next world was created with the letter Yud and this world was created with the letter Hay. The next world is symbolized by the smallest of letters, suggesting that few people make it there, and this world is symbolized by a letter whose bottom is open -- suggesting that it is easy to fall out of this world.

The Meraglim felt that there was no synthesis between the "Yud" (the next world / spirituality) and the "Hay" (this world / physicality). Each one remains distinct and apart from the other. Moshe told Hoshea that the correct philosophy that would spare him from the erroneous opposite philosophy of the Meraglim is "Yud-Hay" -- the synthesis of this world and the next, the idea that the two worlds merge together in man's existence.

Achieving spirituality in a physical world is a difficult task. The Meraglim legitimately had what to fear, but that is how the Almighty wanted life to be. He put us here and made us physical beings but our life's work is to try to transform the mundane into the holy -- to take the wine and make it into Nesachim, to take the bread and make it into Challah, and to take the wool and to turn it into Tzitzis.

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. The complete list of halachic portions for this parsha from the Commuter Chavrusah Series are:

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