



## Parshas Shlach

For the week ending 26 Sivan 5758  
19-20 June 1998

### Overview

**A**t the insistence of the *Bnei Yisrael*, and with Hashem's permission, Moshe sends twelve scouts, one from each tribe, to investigate Canaan. Anticipating trouble, Moshe changes Hoshea's name to Yehoshua, expressing a prayer that Hashem should not let him fail in his mission. They return 40 days later, carrying unusually large fruit. When ten of the twelve scouts state that the people in Canaan are as formidable as the fruit, the men are discouraged. Calev and Yehoshua, the only two scouts still in favor of the invasion, try to bolster the spirit of the people. The nation, however, decides that the Land is not worth the potentially fatal risks, and instead they demand a return to Egypt! Moshe's fervent prayers save the nation from Heavenly annihilation, however, Hashem declares that the nation must remain in the desert for 40 years until the men who wept at the scouts' false report pass away. A remorseful group rashly begins an invasion of the Land based on Hashem's original command. Moshe warns them not to proceed, but they ignore his warning and are massacred by the Amalekites and Canaanites. Hashem instructs Moshe concerning the offerings to be made when the *Bnei Yisrael* will finally enter the Land of Israel. The people are commanded to remove *challah*, a donation for the *kohanim*, from their dough. The laws for an offering after an inadvertent sin, for an individual person or a group, are explained. However, should someone blaspheme against Hashem and be unrepentant, he will be cut off spiritually from his people. One man is found gathering wood on public property in violation of the laws of Shabbos, and is put to death. The laws of *tzitzis* are taught. We recite the section about the *tzitzis* twice a day because it reminds us of the Exodus.

### Insights

AN OPEN BOOK TEST

**"Send forth men, if you please, and let them spy out the land of Canaan." (13:2)**

**A**true story: Young Man to Rabbi: "Rabbi. I don't need organized religion. I know I have a special relationship with G-d.

"A couple of years ago, I was riding my motorbike along a twisting mountain road in Colorado. It was a beautiful day. Suddenly I turned a steep bend and right in front of me was this huge Mack truck. He slammed on his brakes and so did I. I and the bike fell flat and slid all over the road, but I was going too fast. I slid and slid. There was a sheer drop from the edge of the road of about 500 feet. I saw the edge getting closer and closer. I couldn't stop! I went over the edge with the bike. It fell away beneath me. Suddenly, in front of me was this branch. I grabbed it and it held my weight. I managed to swing my way back to the side of the cliff and get back to the road. It was a miracle. I don't need to keep the Torah. I know G-d is with me. Who else put the branch there for me?"

Said the Rabbi to the young man: "Maybe you should ask yourself Who put the Mack truck there in the first place?"

At the beginning of this week's Parsha, Rashi asks, "why does the incident of the spies directly follow Miriam speaking slander about Moshe?" But this seems to be a strange question. The reason that these events are juxtaposed is because they follow one another chronologically. That's the way things happened. Why shouldn't they be written one after the other?

At some time in our lives, we have all taken an examination or a test of some kind. The essence of the test is that we don't know what the questions will be. If we knew, it wouldn't be a test. Not so is our relationship with the Creator. Hashem never gives us a test without first giving us the answers.

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Parshas **Shlach** — 26 Sivan 5758, 19-20 June 1998

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The Jewish People had wanted to send spies into the Land of Israel for a long time prior to Hashem giving permission. However, Hashem knew that there would be a temptation to speak slander about the Land, and thus He waited until after Miriam had been punished for speaking slander so that the spies should clearly know that slander was prohibited. In other words, it wasn't so much that the incident of the spies followed Miriam speaking slander, rather that Miriam speaking slander provided the object lesson which facilitated the sending of the spies.

Hashem never gives us a test without first giving us the answers.

#### **BADMOUTH**

#### **“Send forth men, if you please...” (13:2)**

**O**ne of the less felicitous expressions to enter the English language in the last thirty or so years is the verb “to badmouth” — to speak ill of someone. Consciously or not, however, the pedigree of such an idea goes back a couple of thousand years.

In this week's Parsha, the Torah describes the mission of the spies to scout out the Land of Israel. We learn that the spies erred terribly by slandering the Land.

But what's wrong with slandering land — trees and stones? The prohibition against denigrating a human being is understandable, because we can damage a person with slander and gossip. But a land? Is a land sensitive to slurs? And yet the spies are faulted for their evil report on the Land of Israel.

The Torah prohibits us from doing evil not just for the effect that it has on others, but because of the *effect it has on ourselves*. Words cannot harm sticks and stones. It's *ourselves* we damage when we speak slander.

The physical always mirrors the spiritual. The Torah calls slander *lashon hara* — evil tongue — meaning that the tongue itself has been made evil. It's not just that evil has been created in the world; not just that we have let loose a poison arrow that can never be retrieved. Our very body has been corrupted. We have made our tongue “evil;” our mouth “bad.”

#### **TARGET FOR TONIGHT**

#### **“Moshe called Hoshea, the son of Nun, ‘Yehoshua.’” (13:16)**

**A** full moon lit up the cloudless sky. The dull drone of four piston engines nagged at the night air. When the plane reached two thousand feet, two dark figures leaped into nothingness. There was a dull *whumpf* as large parachutes billowed up in the silver sky. Two men wafted silently over the fields; fields whose outlines had been embossed on their memories by weeks of training. Silently, they floated to the ground.

Two men behind enemy lines. Their jobs — the same but different. One to openly oppose. The other to infiltrate into the trust of the leadership; to pretend to agree and by gaining trust, to grab the right opportunity and voice the truth in the mass arena of the media.

There are two ways you can stand up to evil. You can meet it head on. You can shout about it from the rooftops. Or you can pretend to join in, to become a “fifth column,” an undercover agent, smiling the same patriotic smile, mouthing the same nationalistic platitudes, but inside, waiting.

Of the twelve spies whom Moshe sent to the Land of Israel, only two returned with a favorable report: Yehoshua and Calev. Before Moshe sent out the spies, he changed Hoshea's name. Moshe added a letter — a *jud* — to Hoshea's name, making it “Yehoshua.”

Why didn't he do the same for Calev?

Yehoshua and Calev are two kinds of personalities. One is the extrovert who will fight for his opinions openly and vociferously, while the other is introverted, quietly fighting behind the scenes. The advantage of covert opposition is that you are not at physical risk of attack, however there is an insidious danger: When a person voices opinions which are inimical to him and assumes a disguise, there is a danger that he will eventually become what he is pretending to be.

Yehoshua represents the extroverted personality. His overt resistance put him in real physical danger. It was for this reason that Moshe changed his name, giving him the blessing that Hashem should save him from the spies. Calev, on the other hand, was more inward. His method of opposition was to play along until the time was right to oppose. Thus, he was in no immediate physical danger. However, this subtle conditioning was also a threat to him. It was for this reason that Calev went to pray at the tombs of the Fathers that his undercover dissembling should not warp his judgment and lead him to side with the spies.

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**“The Land of Israel is very good.” (14:7)**

**H**ow many times have you heard something like this? “I don’t know how you live in this country. You’re living in the Third World. It’s dirty and dangerous. It’s beyond my comprehension why someone with a decent standard of living would uproot himself and live in a Levantine slum.”

Why is it that to some people the Land of Israel seems so beautiful while others struggle to see its beauty and leave disappointed?

Once, there was a beautiful princess who had many suitors for her hand in marriage. Obviously she could not marry all of her suitors and so she devised a plan to select the more promising candidates: When a young man would come to woo her, her servants would usher him into an ante-chamber. On the table in front of him were some fruit and some books of Torah scholarship. The servants told him that the princess would be with him shortly. They bade him make himself comfortable and to help himself to some fruit. What the suitor did not know was that there was a spy-hole in the wall of the room. Through this, the princess would observe the aspiring husband.

If he took a piece of fruit and made a bracha with the proper concentration, or if he took up a book and began to learn intently, then she would emerge in her finest apparel and appeared as a rare beauty.

If, however, the suitor took some fruit and failed to make a bracha or idled his time away and didn’t use the opportunity to study Torah, then she would put on torn rags, blacken her face and teeth and emerge looking like a hag.

Eretz Yisrael is that princess. If a person comes to the Land looking for spirituality, he will be enchanted even by the physical beauty of Eretz Yisrael. On the other hand, if a person is not worthy, everything will seem dirty and dingy.

However, Eretz Yisrael will never embarrass a person. Rather than suffering the embarrassment of being rejected by the Land, Eretz Yisrael allows the person to think that he has rejected her.

Sources:

*An Open Book Test* - Gur Aryeh heard from Rabbi Moshe Zauderer, and a story heard from Rabbi Moshe Averick

*Badmouth* - Rabbi A. Haver

*Target For Tonight* - Chafetz Chaim heard from Rabbi C.Z. Senter

*The Eye Of The Beholder* - Ramban writing to his talmidim from Eretz Yisrael; heard from Rabbi Nota Schiller in the name of Rabbi Yosef Tzeinvort

## Haftorah: Yehoshua 2:1-24

### STREETS OF GOLD

**C**an you imagine what it must be like to look for a new job almost every single week of the year? It’s bad enough trying to find and hold down one job, but to have to start again every Monday morning, pounding the tarmac to find yet another way to put bread on the table?

But that is exactly what Jews did in America at the turn of the century. To escape the pogroms of Czarist Russia, Jews fled to America — *the goldeneh medina* — a land where the streets were paved with gold.

But that gold came at a terrible price: To mine the gold meant working on Shabbos. Many found the lure of gold too much and threw aside their three thousand year heritage, bequeathing to their children a religion which consisted of bagels and lox and little else.

But there were others. They were small in number, but their steadfastness was inversely proportionate to their size. To them, to work on Shabbos was literally unthinkable. And so these Jews would get hired on Monday, work until Friday afternoon, not turn up on Shabbos and get fired again on Monday. This happened week after week. It was through this tremendous self-sacrifice that Torah was established in America.

What kept those spiritual heroes, and thus their descendants, connected to *Yiddishkeit* (Judaism) was that they never for one moment thought of breaking Shabbos. It never entered their minds for a second. You *had* to keep Shabbos! That was as self-evident as saying you had to breathe!

There is an interesting puzzle in this week’s Parsha: Why is it that the spies Moshe sent came back with a negative report, while those sent by Yehoshua in this week’s Haftorah came back positive and enthusiastic?

The difference was their attitude to the mission in the first place: The spies Moshe sent went with the attitude of *whether* to enter the Land, whereas those of Yehoshua had no question as to whether to enter the Land. That was Hashem’s will. Not to enter the land was unthinkable. *It never entered their minds for a second.* The only question was *how* enter the Land.

When a person starts off with the mind-set that is exclusively positive, his focus will be locked on achieving his objective, because the thought of not doing so never enters his mind.

Source: Rabbi Abraham Twerski

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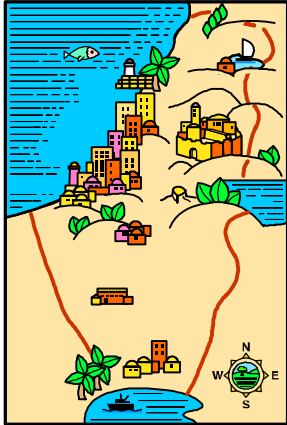
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# LOVE OF THE LAND

Selections from classical Torah sources which express the special relationship between the People of Israel and Eretz Yisrael

## THE GREAT LOVER OF THE LAND



In his plea to the Chief Butler to intercede on his behalf, Yosef asked him to remember him to Pharaoh to release him from this prison "for I was stolen from the land of the Hebrews." (*Bereishis* 40:14-15)

What was the point of Yosef mentioning to the Chief Butler his land of origin?

Yosef was not motivated to seek a release from prison for the sake of achieving personal freedom. From a spiritual point of view he was more secure in this isolation from human temptations, just as saintly men throughout history sought the refuge of caves for spiritual security. What concerned this great *tzaddik* was that the spiritual perfection he strove for could be achieved only by a return to the holy land from which he was stolen.

It was this unique passion for *Eretz Yisrael* which gained for Yosef a privilege not accorded even to Moshe Rabbeinu: To have his bones interred in the Land he loved.

*Rabbi Yonason Eybshutz in "Ya'aros Devash," Drush 14*

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