

Good Shabbos, everyone.

Thank you to the *drasha* sponsors:

- Libby and Robbie Lehman, as a *zechus* for a *refuah shleima* for Ellen Lightman, Esther Bas Sarah, may she have a full recovery, *iy”H*.
- In memory of Seymour Kleiman, Shimon Asher ben HaRav Yisrael, z”l. May his *neshama* have an *aliya*.

May the sponsors be rewarded for their support of the shul with *bracha*, *hatzlacha*, and good health.

Parshas Shelach gives a full account of the disaster of the *meraglim*. The “reconnaissance mission” to Eretz Canaan went wrong, and concluded on the Ninth of Av with mass hysteria and national self-doubt. Our tradition teaches us that the impact of this *בכיה של הינם*, needless weeping, caused a *לדורות בכיה*, a perennial weeping, which we experience to this day in *galus*, exile.

But when we read the story, the exact problem and issue with their report is difficult to identify. Let us look at the story carefully.

במדבר פרק יג: (א) וינדבר ה' אל-משה לאמר: (ב) שלח-לך אנשים ויחרו את-ארץ כנען אשר-אני נתן לבני ישראל איש אחד איש אחד למטה אבתיו תשלחו כל נשיא בהם: (ג) וישלח אתם משה ממדבר פארן על-פי ה' כלם אנשים ראשי בני-ישראל המה: *Hashem said to Moshe, “Send men to explore the land of Canaan, which I am giving to the Jewish people. From each ancestral tribe send one of its leaders.” So at Hashem’s command Moshe sent them out from the Desert of Paran....*

Moshe asked the *meraglim* to report on three issues: (1) the land (2) the inhabitants (3) the cities.

When they returned, they reported to Moshe and to the Jewish people. The Land is rich, they said, it is indeed a Land flowing with milk and honey. To demonstrate its fertility, they brought back huge clusters of grapes. They also reported specific details about the cities and the people. They ended their initial report with the following details:

עמלק יושב בארץ הנגב והחתי ותיבוסי והאמרי יושב בהר והכנעני יושב על-הים ועל יד הירדן: *Amalekites dwell in the Negeb region; Hittites, Jebusites, and Amorites inhabit the hill country; and Canaanites dwell by the Sea and along the Jordan.*

It was at that point that Calev had heard enough and strongly interjected:

ויהם כלב את-העם אל-משה ויאמר עלה נעלה וירשנו אתה כייכול נוכל לה: *Caleb hushed the people before Moses and said, “Let us by all means go up, and we shall gain possession of it, for we shall surely overcome it.*

A disagreement ensued as the other *meraglim* argued back...

והאנשים אשר-עלו עמו אמרו לא נוכל לעלות אל-העם כייחזק הוא ממנו: *But the other men who had gone up with him said, “We cannot attack that people, for it is stronger than we.”*

ויציאו דבת הארץ אשר תרו אתה אל-בני ישראל לאמר הארץ אשר עברנו בה לתור אתה ארץ אכלת יושביה הוא וכל-העם אשר-ראינו בתוכה אנשי מדות: *Thus they spread calumnies among the Israelites about the land they had scouted, saying, “The country that we traversed and scouted is one that devours its settlers. All the people that we saw in it are of great size...”*

ושם ראינו את-הנפילים בגי ענק מוהנפלים ונהי בעינינו כחגבים וכן היינו בעיניהם: *“we saw the Nephilim—the Anakites are part of the Nephilim—and we looked like grasshoppers to ourselves, and so we must have looked to them.”*

ותשא כל-העדה ויתגו את-קולם ויבכו העם בלילה ההוא: *The whole community broke into loud cries, and the people wept that night.*

וילנו על-משה ועל-אהרן כל בני ישראל ויאמרו אליהם קלה-עזה לוי-מתנו בארץ מצרים או במדבר הזה לוי-מתנו:
All the Israelites railed against Moses and Aaron. "If only we had died in the land of Egypt," the whole community shouted at them, "or if only we might die in this wilderness!"

ולמה? הנה? מביא אתנו אל-הארץ הזאת לנפל בחרב נשינו וטפנו יהיו לבז הלוא טוב לנו שוב מצרימה:
"Why is Hashem taking us to that land to fall by the sword?" "Our wives and children will be carried off!" "It would be better for us to go back to Egypt!"

ויאמרו איש אל-אחיו נתנה ראש ונשובה מצרימה:
And they said to one another, "Let us head back for Egypt."

ויפל משה ואהרן על-פניהם לפני כל-קהל עדת בני ישראל:
Then Moses and Aaron fell on their faces before all the assembled congregation of Israelites.

What did the *meraglim* say before Calev's interjection that caused this mass hysteria? And if they simply reported back and answered all of Moshe Rabbeinu's questions honestly, why were they held responsible for the hysteria of the people?

To answer these questions, let us turn our attention first to this week's *haftara*. For the past 2 years, in the weekly Tuesday morning women's *shiur*, we have been exploring each weekly *haftara* in depth, and it has greatly added to my understanding of the weekly *sedra*. The *haftara* begins with the second *perek* of Yehoshua as he prepares to enter Eretz Canaan

וישלח יהושע בן-נון מן-השטים שנים-אנשים **מרגלים** חרש לאמר לכו ראו את-הארץ ואת-יריחו וילכו ויבאו בית-אשה זונה וישמה רחב וישכבו-שמה:

Joshua, the son of Nun, secretly sent two spies from Shittim, saying, "Go, reconnoiter the region of Jericho." So they set out, and they came to the house of a harlot named Rahab and lodged there.

What in the world??!! Yehoshua was a *talmid* of Moshe Rabbeinu. He was one of the original spies and had seen first-hand what went wrong with the original spy mission, the terrible effects. Why would he dare repeat the disaster of the *meraglim*? What was he thinking?

This question is raised by the 13th century commentator, the **Ralba"g**

ולמה הסכים לשלוח מרגלים עם מה שהתפרסם לו מה שהגיע מהתאחר במדבר ביראית על דבר המרגלים אשר שלח משה
Why did he send spies, in light of the well known punishment that was the result of the first mission?

The 19th century **Malbim**, writes that, although both groups are identified as *meraglim*, there were significant differences between the two episodes. Most notable was that the men sent by Moshe were sent to tour (*la'sur*), not to spy (*le'ragel*). Their job was to report back on the beauty and resources of the land, and excite the people about their future. They were not sent to report back on a specific strategy for conquering the land. In contrast, the men sent by Yehoshua were sent specifically to report on the best way to conquer the land.

מלבי"ם יהושע פרק ב פסוק א: וישלח יהושע. בא להשיב על השאלה שתפול בזה איך שלח יהושע מרגלים אחרי שראה הרע שנמשך משליחות המרגלים בימי משה, משיב כי היו **חמשה הבדלים בין מרגלים של יהושע ובין מרגלים של משה**.
ג] משה שלח שנים עשר **תרים** ויהושע שלח שנים אנשים **מרגלים**. רצוני, כי כבר בארתי בפ' התורה (פ' מקץ ופ' שלח) שיש הבדל בין התר והמרגל, התר **מבקש את הטוב** אם טובה הארץ ואם אנשיה גבורים וכדומה, והמרגל יבקש את ערות הארץ. המקום הנוח לכבשה משם. ובארתי כי יש בזה שני מיני שליחות, אם העם שולחים תרים לראות הטובה אם רעה [שהכונה בזה אם ראוי שילחמו עליה אם לאו], ישלחו נשיא מכל שבט, כי לא יסמכו בזה על אנשים פחותים ולא יסמכו שבט על שליח שבט אחר, כי כ"א ישלח איש אשר יסמך לבו עליו כי יתור אם תהיה הארץ מוכשרת לפני שבטו ועסקיו כפי מה שהוא עובד אדמה או רועה צאן או עוסק במסחר או לחוף אניות, ועל כוונה זאת שלח משה לתור הארץ לא לרגל, ולכן שלח נשיא מכל שבט, **ולכן יצא המכשול הגדול הזה משליחותם**. לא כן אם שולחים מרגל, והוא אם הסכימו לכבשה ושולחים לראות את ערות הארץ מאיזה מקום יכבשוה בקל, ישלחו איש אחד או שנים מהמון עם, כי זה ישלח רק שר הצבא הרוצה לדעת מאיזה מקום ילחם, וע"ז

האופן שלה יהושע רק שנים ולא י"ב, ורק אנשים מההמון לא נשיאים, ורק מרגלים ולא תרים, ולכן לא היה מקום פה להוצאת דבה.

Seen in this light, the most egregious *pasuk* is the one preceding Calev's protest...where they provide detailed strategic information, which was not their job and which made the people anxious...

עַמְלֵק יוֹשֵׁב בְּאֶרֶץ הַנֶּגֶב וְהַחִתִּי וְהַיְבוּסִי וְהָאֱמֹרִי יוֹשֵׁב בְּהָר וְהַכְנַעֲנִי יוֹשֵׁב עַל-הַיָּם וְעַל-גַּד הַיַּרְדֵּן:

Amalekites dwell in the Negev region; Hittites, Jebusites, and Amorites inhabit the hill country; and Canaanites dwell by the Sea and along the Jordan."

That *pasuk* confirms that they saw their mission as military reconnaissance and fulfilled that mission truthfully. But their sin was in the fact that reconnaissance strategic analysis had not been the purpose of their mission, and their report caused a mass hysteria among the people, who did not feel ready and able to conquer the land. And their analysis was unnecessary because Hashem had promised that He would take care of the battle—their mission was to strengthen the *bitachon* of the people by exciting them about the beautiful and wonderful land waiting for them. Context is everything!

What had changed between Moshe's time and Yehoshua's time? As the **Netziv** points out, in the intervening 39 years, the people had transitioned from a world of open miracles to a world where they had to navigate the natural world. Thus, while Moshe was told to be ready to conquer with miracles, Yehoshua was ready to take the Land militarily.

The lesson for us is the importance of always understanding our unique mission based on our unique and changing life circumstances. What is the correct focus for the Jewish people in 2022 may be different than what was correct in 1922 or 1822. And this holds true, as well, in our individual lives...

But I would like to explore why did the great men sent by Moshe get it so wrong?

Rav Yisraeli points out the strange construction in one striking *pasuk*: וַנִּהְיֶה כְּעִינֵינֵנוּ כְּעִינֵיהֶם: *"We were like tiny grasshoppers in our own eyes, as well as in their eyes."* If the spies objectively were like midgets compared to the huge giants they encountered, why didn't they just say, "we were like tiny grasshoppers compared to them"? Rav Yisraeli writes that, in reality, they were not significantly smaller, but they felt so weak and insignificant that they assumed others saw them as weak and insignificant.

זה היה החטא! הביטול העצמי, חוסר ההערכה של הסגליות הישראלית, של כוחות הנפש העצומים הגנוזים בעם זה...

And, as we well know, when we think we **cannot** do something, it shapes the way we view things and the way we act, and then that thought can become the reality. When we see ourselves as small and inadequate, others begin seeing us that way as well, and we diminish ourselves, and that colors the way we see things. Others appear stronger than they truly are. Even when Hashem gives us strength, if we choose to ignore it and determine that we cannot do the job, it will not be done. This is the concept of a "self-fulfilling prophecy." Conversely, when we are **confident** that we can overcome challenges, even formidable challenges, that sense of certainty can actually empower us to accomplish the task. When we see obstacles as manageable, we can find a way to overcome them.

This lack of confidence caused the *meraglim* to err and misunderstand their entire mission. Moshe sent them to explore the Promised Land and to report back on its beauty. Their mission was not to decide **whether** to conquer the Land, because that wasn't a question, but **how to get the nation excited about this next step**. Rav Yisraeli continues:

הדור אשר ראה נפלאות בארץ חם, גוראות על ים סוף, אשר שמע קול אלקים חיים מדבר אליו מתוך האש, דור זה שכח את גדולתו ותפארתו. ענקי הרוח מתחילים להסתכל על עצמם בביטול ובלעג, הם רואים את עצמם כחגבים. לעומת זאת, וכתוצאת מזה, הם רואים את האחרים כבני ענק. הם אינם רואים אינם יכולים לראות, מה שראו יהושה וכלב, כי ענק זה עומד על כרעי תרנגולת. . .

This generation, who saw so many miracles performed for them and heard the Divine voice of Hashem on Har Sinai, forgot who they were. A nation that was chosen by God and declared to be His first born felt insignificant and small. Because of that, the Meraglim saw the inhabitants as giants and, therefore, they saw the Land as unconquerable. They were limited in what they could see, and their vision was skewed, their perception colored by this feeling of inadequacy.

זה היה החטא: הביטול העצמי, חוסר ההערכה של הסגולות הישראליות של כוחות הנפש העצומים הגנוזים בעם זה. זהו שהוליד את הפחת מפני התנגשות עם עמי נכר ועם תרבויות נכר...לא נוכל לעלות אל העם כי חזק הוא ממנו..."

He continues: *This was their great sin. They forgot who the Jewish people are, their great strength because of where they have been, their connection to God, and the great destiny assigned to them. That made the inhabitants look stronger than they were and made the cities look impenetrable—not because of the objective great strength of the enemy, but because of the Meraglim’s skewed self perception. Because of their insecurity, they saw themselves as small and insignificant.*

יותר ראוי שיהא זה לימוד לדורות שבימי מבחן נדע שלא להתפס לרגשות של ביטול עצמי ופחד מפני אפשרות עמידה במערכה. שנדע שהיעוד הישראלי מודרך על ידי ההשגחה האלוקית...

And he concludes: *This is a lesson for all time: When Jews believe in their significance and in their destiny, they can overcome all obstacles; they can achieve great things.*

That is called *bitachon*—faith and trust in the Jewish potential based on the Promises of Hashem; faith in the Jewish destiny. When the Jewish people think of themselves in small terms—like grasshoppers—then any enemy will be tough to defeat. When we are unsure of our claim to the Land, and unsure about our future and our destiny, then obstacles will loom larger, and our goals will become harder to attain. The great sin of the Jewish people, as demonstrated by the episode of the *meraglim*, was that they did not appreciate who they were and the significance of their position as a chosen nation. They did not appreciate their destiny in the Land of Israel and their connection to God through His *mitzvos*. Throughout Jewish history, when we forget who we are and what we are supposed to be doing, catastrophe occurs. That is the cause of the perennial weeping, בכיה לדורות

But the question of the hour is: How do we gain such absolute, unwavering confidence? How do we acquire the strength to face every challenge? We see two approaches in this episode of the *meraglim*. What kept Yehoshua and Calev strong, even in the face of the peer pressure, to never doubt themselves and Hashem’s promise?

Calev and Yehoshua, the two spies who did not engage in the wrong mission and negative speech, both connected to their heritage before embarking on the mission. Yehoshua went to Moshe to receive a *bracha*, and Calev went to *Mearas Hamachpela to daven* and be inspired by the Avos and Imahos.

בבלי סוטה לד:ב ויעלו בנגב ויבא עד חברון ויבאו מבעי ליה! אמר רבא: מלמד, שפירש כלב מעצת מרגלים והלך ונשתטח על קברי אבות

“And they went up into the south, and he came to Hebron” (Numbers 13:22). Why is the phrase “and he came” written in the singular form? The verse should have said: And they came. Rava says: This teaches that Caleb separated himself from the counsel of the other spies and went and prostrated himself on the graves of the forefathers in Hebron.

Our confidence as a people is rooted in our past. Our certainty in our destiny is also rooted in our past. We must always appreciate our past—on a national sense—the *avos* and *imahos*, our great *Tannaim* and *Amoraim*, our *Gedolim* through the ages...as well as our own parents and grandparents and great-grandparents. We are literally standing on the shoulders of giants. So while in this generation we may legitimately be compared to grasshoppers...as we stand on the shoulders’ of giants who came before, we need to be ever confident in our future...and ever cognizant of the expectations Hashem has for us. And this realization and actualization of our mission will end the בכיה לדורות and end this terrible *galus*. May we never forget who we are and what we represent in the world and may we merit to do our part to bring the world to an ultimate recognition of the Kingship and Glory of hashem...*bimhera u’vyamenu, amen.*