

## SPREAD LIGHT 358



Parsha

Shelach

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Reflective  
Question:

Where can I trust Hashem's direction, even when the journey feels unclear or uncomfortable?

## Gematria on the Parshah: Shelach Lecha- The Power of Tefillah



By: Reb Moshe Herskovits

In Parshat Shelach Lecha we see the tragic downfall of ten great leaders of Am Yisrael. Amazingly, Kalev and Yehoshua had the emunah to denounce the report of the Spies. What gave Kalev and Yehoshua the power to overcome? What can this teach us about how to overcome our own life challenges?

### Kalev's Prayer

Both Kalev and Yehoshua were saved due to the power of prayer. Rashi says that when Kalev got to Eretz Yisrael he felt the persuasion to follow the counsel of the Spies. So he rushed to the Cave of Machpelah in Hebron to pray at the tomb of the Avot and Imahot. He prayed to Hashem to save him from their counsel. Amazingly, the gematria of **כלב בן יפנה+חברון** (Kalev Ben Yefuneh+Hevron) is 515, the same as **תפלה** (prayer), alluding to his action.

Often in life we rely too much on action. We have a challenge in life, we brainstorm a solution, and hope and assume action will open the door for us. The Zohar says there are certain blessings that can only be accessed through action, and there are certain blessings that can only be accessed through prayer.

Every person has negative traits inside of them, things that they want to fix. Sometimes a person has been working on this for years and the negative traits are still there, sometimes a person gives up. When the boulder is too heavy for us, we need to ask Hashem for help to lift it.

The Chida says a person should pray to Hashem daily against the yetzer hara. He should pray with the same kavanah as if his life is on the line. This is part of the problem: we accept the yetzer hara as just a normal part of our lives, when we can ask Hashem for the supernatural power to overcome it.

### Believing in Another

We know Yehoshua was saved due to the prayer of Moshe. Moshe was suspicious that the Spies would fail their mission, and so he renamed Hoshea to Yehoshua. This teaches us three lessons to overcome the yetzer. One, the power of having a relationship with the Tzaddik. Two, the power of praying for others. Three, Moshe didn't just pray for Yehoshua, he renamed him. He was instilling in Yehoshua the message that I believe in you, Hashem is with you. Every time Yehoshua would say his name he would remember this. Amazingly, the gematria of **יהושע** is 391, the same as **אל פנים** (God of Moshe) and **אלהי משה** (face to face). Moshe was communicating with the name change: I am praying for you, I believe in you, and Hashem is with you.

## Mashal: Hammering Away at the Boulder

Every prayer we pray is never lost, and eventually the prayers we have prayed collectively can break the boulder of the yetzer hara. Rebbe Nachman provides an analogy for prayer. The King orders his son to move a giant boulder. He tries for years and years and cannot do it. He sadly returns to his father, giving up hope. The King tells him: my son, I told you to bring the boulder but I never told you that you had to carry the whole thing. You can smash the boulder into pieces and bring it to me.

So too, Rebbe Nachman says, the boulder is a person's heart. We pray for years and we give up: my heart cannot be lifted to Hashem. I cannot change the negative middot inside myself. But if we pray sincerely every day and focus on hammering the boulder of the yetzer hara, eventually all those prayers will penetrate and the yetzer hara will be broken.

### Story: Tears Are Never Lost

This idea is beautifully illustrated in the following story. In the 1950s in Israel, there began to be Baalei Teshuvah returning to Torah. The Chazon Ish once asked Rabbi Galinsky to keep an eye on a certain boy and mentor him. Rabbi Galinsky asked the Chazon Ish: "Rebbe, I don't understand, I knew the bachur's parents and they were so far from Yiddishkeit, how did this boy come back?" The Chazon Ish responded: "I knew the grandmother. When her son went off the derech, she said Tehillim every single day with great tears." He said: "Rabbi Galinsky, remember, tears are never forgotten."

### Challenge

This week, identify one negative trait or challenge you have been trying to overcome on your own. Each day, take sixty seconds before davening to ask Hashem directly to help you break that specific boulder. Don't just act. Pray.

## Not Every Voice Deserves Your Ears

By: Reb Adam Klasner



This week's parsha tells the painful story of the Meraglim, the spies Moshe sent to scout out Eretz Yisrael. They came back with fear.

They saw giants. They saw fortified cities. They saw danger. They saw every reason why the mission could not work. And with their words, they broke the spirit of a nation.

The Jewish people cried that night. They lost faith in themselves. They lost faith in the promise. They lost faith in the future Hashem was trying to bring them into. And because of that, an entire generation remained in the desert.

But there is a sequel. Almost forty years later, Yehoshua sends spies again.

This time, only two. And this time, the mission succeeds.

The question is obvious. Moshe was the greatest prophet who ever lived. Yehoshua was his student.

So why did Moshe's spies fail, while Yehoshua's spies succeeded? The answer may be hidden in one word. When Yehoshua sends the spies, the pasuk says he sent them "cheresh." The word cheresh can mean silent. It can also mean deaf. And it can also mean earthenware pottery. The Midrash says Yehoshua was giving them a message. If you want to succeed in your mission, you need two things.

You need to know how to be deaf. And you need to know how to be like earthenware.

At first, that sounds strange. Why would a spy need to be deaf?

A spy needs to listen. A spy needs to hear what people are saying. A spy needs information. But Yehoshua was not telling them to stop hearing sounds.

He was telling them to stop absorbing every voice. Because anyone who tries to do something meaningful will hear voices.

"You're crazy." "It will never work."

"Who do you think you are?" "People have tried this before."

"You're going to fail." And sometimes the loudest voice is not outside of us.

It is inside. The voice that says, "I am not strong enough. I am not ready. I am too broken. I have failed too many times. I should just stay where I am."

Yehoshua was telling them: if you listen to every voice, you will never enter the land. You will stand at the border of your own future and talk yourself out of it.

There are voices we need to listen to. Mentors. Friends. Teachers. People who love us enough to tell us the truth and believe in us enough to want us to grow.

But there are other voices that are not truth. They are fear dressed up as wisdom.

They are shame pretending to be humility. They are smallness calling itself realism.

Those voices do not deserve your ears. Sometimes spiritual maturity means knowing what not to absorb.

The Kedushas Levi gives this an even deeper layer. He explains that when a person enters a place, they can absorb the energy that was left there before them.

Yehoshua knew something. These new spies were walking into the same land where the first spies had once walked with fear, anxiety, and doubt. That fear had left a spiritual residue.

So Yehoshua warned them: be deaf. Do not absorb the old fear.

Do not confuse someone else's anxiety with your own truth. Do not let yesterday's failure become

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today's identity.

This is so real. Sometimes we walk into a room and suddenly feel heavy.

Sometimes we leave a conversation and feel smaller. Sometimes we go to a family event, a community gathering, a meeting, a wedding, and we come home carrying feelings that are not really ours.

And because we are sensitive, we think, "What is wrong with me?" But maybe nothing is wrong with you.

Maybe you picked up something that does not belong to you. Maybe you absorbed someone else's fear. Someone else's pressure. Someone else's judgment.

Someone else's unresolved pain. The work is not to become cold.

The work is to become clear. To pause and ask: is this mine?

Is this my truth? Is this my mission?

Is this the voice of Hashem inside me, or is this just noise I picked up along the way? Because you cannot fulfill your mission while carrying every energy that attaches itself to you.

You have to learn how to return to your own soul. Your own center.

Your own shlichus. And that brings us to the second meaning of cheresh.

Earthenware. In halacha, an earthenware vessel is different from other vessels. A metal vessel has value in its material. Gold is valuable. Silver is valuable. Copper is valuable.

But an earthenware vessel is made from earth. Its value is not the material.

Its value is what it holds. That is Yehoshua's second message.

Do not make the mission about your ego. You are not powerful because of your image.

You are not powerful because of how impressive you look. You are powerful because of what you carry.

You carry a spark of Hashem. You carry a message.

You carry love. You carry light.

You carry a piece of healing that this world needs. The moment life becomes about proving yourself, you get lost.

You start worrying about how you look. You start obsessing over who approves.

You start needing applause. You start fearing criticism.

But when you remember that you are an earthenware vessel, something softens. It is not about me.

It is about what Hashem placed inside me. It is about what I am here to carry.

That is freedom. You do not need to be the strongest vessel.

You do not need to be the fanciest vessel. You do not need to be made of gold.

You need to stay open enough to carry what was placed inside you. This is the difference between Moshe's spies and Yehoshua's spies.

The first spies saw themselves. Their fear. Their

smallness. Their insecurity. Their inability to imagine something beyond what they could control. The second spies went as shlichim.

They knew how to be deaf to the wrong voices. And they knew how to be humble enough to carry something greater than themselves.

That is the work for all of us. Every person is sent into this world with a mission.

Not a generic mission. Your mission. Your home. Your marriage.

Your children. Your pain.

Your healing. Your community.

Your corner of the world. And on the way, there will be voices.

Some from the outside. Some from the inside.

Some from the past. Some from people who never had the courage to enter their own promised land, and now cannot bear to watch you enter yours.

Listen to the voices that help you become more honest. More humble.

More alive. More connected to Hashem.

But become deaf to the voices that make you smaller. Deaf to the voices that tell you your healing is impossible.

Deaf to the voices that say your past owns you. Deaf to the voices that say you have nothing meaningful to give.

And then remember the earthenware vessel. Your value is not in looking perfect.

Your value is in what you hold. And what you hold is holy.

## Self-fulfilling Prophecy

By: Rabbi Nachum Aaron Kutnowski



The ten spies return from Eretz Yisrael and deliver their report: "We saw the giants there... and we were like grasshoppers in our own eyes, and also in their eyes" (Bamidbar 13:33).

The spies describe their own self-perception, and then presume to know how the giants perceived them as well. Rashi, citing the Gemara, explains that they had actually overheard the Canaanites speaking among themselves. But Rashi makes a subtle departure from the Gemara's language: where the Gemara records that the giants commented that the spies were likened to grasshoppers, Rashi writes that they were compared to ants (Rashi on Bamidbar 13:33; Sotah 35a).

The Kedushas Levi explains that Rashi's choice is deliberate. The grasshopper, as it appears in the verse, reflects how the spies saw themselves - small, insignificant, and destructive. The ant is something else entirely. Shlomo HaMelech holds the ant up as a model of wisdom, discipline, and industry (Mishlei 6:6-8). By writing ants rather than grasshoppers, Rashi hints that the giants did not see the spies as contemptible, but saw them as purposeful and admirable (Kedushas Levi, Parshas Shelach).

And in truth, the reality was even greater than even this hint. The Midrash Tanchuma records that Hashem rebuked the spies specifically for the second half of their statement. "I forgave them for saying they felt like grasshoppers," Hashem said. "But how did they know what I made them appear in the eyes of others? Who

told them they did not appear as angels?" (Midrash Tanchuma, Shelach 7).

The spies projected their own diminished self-image onto the giants - and heard only confirmation of their worst fears. What they actually overheard was a description of their greatness.

Pirkei Avos teaches: "Judge every person favorably" (Avos 1:6). The plain reading of this Mishna is directed outward - toward how we judge others. But the spies teach us that the obligation runs inward as well. They failed to extend to themselves the same charitable judgment they were obligated to extend to others. Had they done so, they would never have assumed that the giants shared their diminished view - and perhaps the entire trajectory of Jewish history would have been different.

The spies believed they were reporting reality, but were actually creating it. The moment they declared "and so too were we in their eyes," they turned their own self-image into a self-fulfilling prophecy, and an entire generation paid the price. This Parsha reminds us that how we see ourselves shapes what we believe is possible. Judge yourself favorably, for the verdict you assume is often nothing more than your own voice, echoing back.

## The Staying Is Everything!

By: Rabbi Avrohom Jacks



You can witness G-d perform the greatest miracles in history, and you can still die a slave.

The Jewish people were about to enter the Land of Israel. They had seen astonishing plagues hit Egypt with surgical precision. They had walked through a sea on dry land. Every morning, for forty years, they had eaten miraculous food that fell from the sky. The water they drank in the parched desert came out of solid rock. And when the moment came to enter the Promised Land, ten leaders stood up and said, "We cannot do this. No sea will split for us here. The skies will not feed us in the new land. The miracles are behind us. G-d will not show up this time."

These leaders may have seen miracles, but seeing miracles and learning from miracles are two completely different acts.

We can witness G-d tear up the laws of physics on our behalf and still walk away with a slave's heart, unless we are prepared to do the inner work of extracting meaning from the miracles.

You, too, have miracles in your history. There were times when an opportunity emerged out of nothing. Times when a phone rang with the exact news you needed at the exact moment you needed it. Times when healing happened that no one could explain. Those moments were tuition. G-d was teaching you, in your own language, that the rules you think govern your life are, in fact, entirely under His control. If you do not catalog those moments, if you do not sit with them and let them rewire your operating system, then when the next mountain shows up, you will default right back to the slave's logic. "It cannot be done. The giants are too big for me to conquer."

This week, get specific. You could sit with a notebook and write down the big miracles you have personally experienced in your life. Then ask yourself one electrifying question. If G-d already did THAT for me, what on earth makes me think He will not do this? Your evidence will be sitting in front of you. Read it. The Promised Land is waiting for you to finally and fully believe and learn from G-d's signs.

