



## Parshat Shelach: Simple Faith

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Rabbi Hershel Reichman

Parshat Shelach discusses the sin of the spies who were sent by Moshe and the Jewish people to look at the Land of Israel. In Parshat Devarim, Moshe reviews the story of the spies in his farewell speech. He tells them that Hashem did many miracles for them in Egypt during the Exodus, during the Splitting of the Sea and in the desert. Indeed, the whole episode seems puzzling. How could the Jewish people think that Hashem was weaker than the seven nations of Canaan? How could they ignore their daily miracle of survival in the desert? How could they think that Hashem would not do any further miracles for them when they reached Israel?

The Shem MiShmuel explains, based on the comments of Ramban in Parshat Vaeira. Hashem tells Moshe at the beginning of his mission to Paro that He appeared to Avraham with the name *Kel Shakai* and not with the name *Yud Keh Vuv Keh*. Generally, Hashem runs the world based on the laws of nature. However, sometimes Hashem will perform open miracles that involve a complete breakdown of natural order, like the ten plagues of Egypt. There, Hashem used the name *Yud Keh*, which means that He is the source of existence and therefore has the power to reform existence. When Hashem manipulates events within the laws of nature it is called a hidden miracle and Hashem uses the name *Kel Shakai*. *Kel* connotes power, while *Shakai* is the formulation of the laws of nature.

Hashem conducts the world with *midat hadin*, justice, and *midat harachamim*, mercy. *Yud Keh* is *rachamim*, and *Kel Shakai* is *din*. The Shem MiShmuel expounds based on the writings of the Chozeh, the Seer of Lublin, that the greatest motivation for Hashem to perform a miraculous act in this world is kiddush Hashem. When Hashem performs an open miracle, even children and uneducated simpletons will recognize it as a *nes* and praise Hashem. However, a hidden miracle is shrouded within nature and requires a certain sophistication and sensitivity to discern the hand of Hashem in the event.

When Hashem uses *rachamim* and *Yud Keh* to perform an open miracle, it will automatically result in kiddush Hashem and, therefore, there is no opposition in heaven. However, when Hashem employs *Kel Shakai* and *din*, kiddush Hashem's involvement is not as apparent, and, therefore, a hidden miracle does not get a free pass in heaven. Many angels rise against it. The hidden miracle precipitates a time of judgment, when Hashem weighs the worthiness of the people to receive the miracle or not.

When the Jews left Egypt they were sunk in the 49th level of *tumah*. They did not deserve miracles, and Hashem took them out with the name *Yud Keh*, the *mida* of *rachamim*. This was the difference between the miracles performed by Moshe, which were based on *chesed* and the miracles of the *avot*, which were based on *din*.

The Jews did not accept Moshe's words of faith because they knew that he would die and Yehoshua would lead them into the land. Unlike the Jews, Moshe was still unaware that he would not enter Israel. The Jews thought, that with Yehoshua as their leader, they could at best expect that Hashem would perform hidden miracles for them based on *din*. They believed themselves unworthy to withstand Hashem's judgment and they worried that they would be destroyed. Nonetheless, they made a terrible mistake. Moshe was Hashem's messenger. If he told them to enter the land and that they would succeed with Hashem's help, they should have had simple faith.

Our commitment is *Naase V'nishma*. The Gemara in Chulin quotes a verse in Tehilim, "*Adam u'behema toshia*." Hashem, save man and animal. Sometimes our sophistication may fool us. A Jew's task is to work on believing in Hashem with blind faith, just as an animal does not question his master.

The Shem Mishmuel notes that *emuna peshuta*, simple faith, by itself will stand as a merit for the judgment in heaven to tip in our favor. The greatest entity we can rely on is Hashem. This is the lesson of the *meraglim*. Hashem does things above our understanding and we need to work on having simple faith in Him. *Emuna peshuta* has sustained the Jewish nation throughout the travails of our long *galut* and this merit will help bring the *geulah* speedily in our days.

## Achieving Balance: Class #2

Excerpted from Rebbetzin Tziporah Heller's Question and Answer series on Naaleh.com

### Question:

I try to make all the mitzvot I perform more meaningful by being mindful to bring Hashem into my life with my heart and concentrating on feeling grateful to Him. But despite this, I usually find myself just going through the motions. The feeling of real closeness to Hashem happens only once in a while and I feel like I need to sense it more. I have a non-observant sister who practices Eastern Healing. She is able to get her spiritual high without the obligation of keeping Torah and mitzvot. Why can't I experience this same elation from davening and concentrating on brachot?

### Answer:

I suspect your problem is that you don't see the

connection between the mitzvot and how they bring a Jew closer to Hashem. I suggest you study Horeb and Rav Hirsch's commentary on the Torah. It may be difficult to learn because it was originally written in German and the English translation is somewhat stilted. Get through it anyway. He will show you how the connection works. Once you understand the mechanism, you'll feel different.

The more you understand the workings of a mitzva and how Hashem's wisdom is an intricate part of it, the easier it will be to develop that spiritual bond. He knows our souls and defined the mitzvot to create connection. If you can bring your mind into it, it will inform you more than you think.

Eastern healing does this inside out. There's the external sensation of meaning without reality.

People think they are connected but they really aren't. You can have the feeling of *tikun* without actual *tikun*. On the other hand, you can have what really gives you *tikun*, not necessarily with the accompanying feeling, unless you work to understand it better.

The numerical value of *Elokim* is *hateva*, nature. Nature is from Hashem but Hashem is not nature, He's far more. When you worship nature, which is the essence of Eastern religion, there are consequences. You make Hashem so small that there is no accounting, no World To Come, no direct link, and no prophecy. Embarking on that spiritual path will only lead you downhill. Concentrate on developing a deep understanding of the mitzvot and use that as a springboard to come closer to Hashem.

# Bringing Torah to Life

## Helping Our Children Make Good Choices, part 3

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Mrs. Shira Smiles

Preteens and teens often feel they have no choices. This stems from improper chinuch during their younger years. How does one get one's teenager to look at possibilities instead of getting autocratic about how things should be? Teenagers are much more sensitive to impositions of their parents for the parent's sake rather than for their sake. In situations when you limit their choices, their resentment level may rise to the point where they won't see any other options. Even if you present them with other choices, if the options don't come from the teenager himself, he will probably not be receptive. Do what you can to make your child see that it's not you against him, while remaining firm. Be willing to compromise and help your child explore other avenues of fulfillment.

Teenagers will often say, "It's not my fault, it's all Hashem's fault," or "I can't help it, this is the way I am," or "Hashem knows how it will turn out, what's the point of trying?" Most of the time, it's not worth getting into deep philosophy with your child. Make him aware that his previous choices brought consequences. Illustrate this with examples from the child's own life.

As your teenager grows older, try to refine

his choice-making skills beyond, "What are your options? Let's choose one," to, "On what basis do you choose one thing over another?" Teach them to select the options that are important and enduring. Help them evaluate choices based on what will bring them closer to what they want to be as a person, as opposed to doing what will bring them immediate pleasure. Find opportunities to tell them stories about people who made choices and the good and bad consequences that resulted. Discuss with them what choices made the person into a hero and what other options were available. For example, you can tell your kids, "Look at the life of Rav Aharon Kotler. What are some ways he could have made bad choices and still lived with himself? He could have said, 'America is different. Torah won't grow here. I don't have the strength to start again.' What do you think made him choose differently?"

Having an intelligent discussion with your teenager about a story you both know will build intimacy between you and open your child's mind. Expect that your child's answers might not necessarily be your own. You can offer your opinions but remember to respect his too. Sometimes your teenager might tell you a true story that he heard or

witnessed. Every so often you should say, "Do you think he made the best choice? What were his other choices? What are his choices now?" Make them aware that there are options in life.

As teens mature and begin to make life altering decisions such as which seminary or yeshiva to attend or whom to marry, ask them how they are making their decision. Let them hear their own voice. For example, if your son comes home from a date and says he's not interested in the shidduch, you can explore with him on what basis he decided that. You don't want your child to take thought, logic, or spirit out of the picture.

The final and most important component of all choice making is to ask Hashem to open our hearts to make the right choices. Pray to Him every day, "Show me your way. Let me see your will, let me not forget what my choices are really all about." Before making critical decisions, daven to Hashem, "Don't trap me by my previous choices. Don't make me blind or allow me to falter because of improper judgment. Open my mind to know your will." With heartfelt *tefilla* and *siyata d'shmaya*, Hashem will surely guide us on the straight and true path.

## Class Spotlight: Pirkei Avot #4 Teachings of Hillel

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Rabbi Michael Taubes

*Pirkei Avot presents the ethical teachings of our sages, as opposed to purely halachic lessons. It is a powerful guidepost for every Jew attempting to perfect his or her character and behavior. In this course, Rabbi Taubes teaches the Torah mode of conduct based on Pirkei Avot in a stimulating series of classes..*

Hillel Hazaken was one of the great leaders of the Jewish people during the time of the destruction of the second Beit Hamikdash. He bequeathed to us a number of important teachings found in Pirkei Avot. Hillel tells us, "One who spends his life trying to build up his name will end up losing his name." The Torah permits a person to take credit for his good deeds. In fact, the Rashba rules that a donor may put up his name on a Yeshiva building because this will inspire other people to give. However, if a person's intent is not to do good deeds, but rather to see his name in lights, he will eventually be forgotten.

Then Hillel says, "One who does not increase, diminishes." Many people understand this statement refers to learning. If a person does not continue studying, he will lose what he already knows. A person who has not used his physical limbs for a long time needs physical therapy to get back in shape. If a

person does not exercise his mind, he will forget his learning. Indeed, a noted psychologist points out that one of the reasons older people's minds deteriorate is because the brain does not work as hard as it did when the person was young. Many commentaries write that the key to success in Torah learning is review. All of our great *gedolim* knew this and spent countless hours reviewing what they learned. In fact, the Gemara says that until one has reviewed something four times, it is not even called review.

The Mishna writes that one who does not review will forget, and one who doesn't learn deserves death. This seems strange, but in a certain sense if you stop learning, you stop living the way Hashem wants a Jew to live, which is a form of death.

Hillel continues, "One who makes personal use of the crown of Torah shall perish." The Gemara says that Rabbe Yehuda Hanasi, who compiled the Mishna, said of himself before his death, that although he spent his

entire life learning, he never derived any personal benefit from it. Using the Torah for one's own grandeur and pleasure is a terrible thing.

Hillel continues, "If I am not for myself, who is for me? And if I am only for myself, what am I?" Some people suffer from debilitating depression, which leaves them with the feeling that they can't do anything for themselves. A person has to recognize his responsibilities and do what needs to be done.

In order to accomplish in life, one needs a certain measure of self dignity and pride. Every person needs to recognize the gifts Hashem gave him and use them to sanctify His name. However, Hillel admonishes us, you may not care only about yourself. You cannot step over others to accomplish your goals.

May Hillel's ethical teachings serve as our guidepost through the bumps and turns on the path of life.