

## Towering Tree: Parshat Shelach

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Mrs. Shira Smiles  
Summary by Channie Koplowitz-Stein

In anticipation of entering Eretz Yisrael, Moshe sends spies to reconnoiter the land. He gives them specific instructions what to look for concluding with, "Hayesh boh eitz im ayin/Is there a tree within it or not," before instructing them to bring back some of the fruit. Then the Torah adds that it was the season when the grapes ripened. If the spies are to bring back fruit, certainly there must be trees in the land? Oddly, are the spies to look for a single tree or is this a collective noun? What does all this have to do with the ripening of the grapes?

Rav Hirsch zt"l says that Moshe was instructing them to see if there were forests, seen as a collective for building and manufacturing, as well as individual trees. Or perhaps as the Ohr HaChaim Hakadosh suggests, to see if every species of tree is in the land, as it is a land with everything in it. Or perhaps, as the Torat Moshe says, the Canaanites were so fearful of the upcoming invasion that they cut down all their trees lest the enemy benefit from the fruit. If so, Bnei Yisroel need not fear, for they would easily conquer the land.

The Ozhorov Rebbe z"l posits that perhaps it must be a spiritual rather than a physical question. The Rebbe suggests, based on Rashi, that the "tree" refers to a righteous man whose merit will protect the land. If there were to be one righteous person in the land, writes the Birkat Mordechai, then no strategy

nor merit could grant them victory.

Rabbi Schwab z"l cites the Gemara Yerushalmi that Iyov who lived in the days of Moshe resided in Utz, alluded to in the phrase, "Is there an eitz/tree." If the Utz man is still alive, his merit may protect the inhabitants from harm just as a tree offers protective shade to those in its vicinity.

According to the Satmar Rebbe, Moshe was instructing the spies to look not only if there was a tzadik in the land, but also if there were pockets of his righteous students, symbolic fruit of the tree who were influenced by that righteous person. One can determine the true nature of a man by the character of the students he produces.

Oznayim Latorah tells us that the season of the ripening of the grapes refers to a season for partying. Iyov's children would go out partying every night, and each day, Iyov would offer a sacrifice to Hashem and pray for their atonement. He was the "tree" that protected his children. Each of us also has the ability to be a tree and pray for others.

Was Iyov alive whose merit could protect others? The Ohel Moshe citing the Zohar adds, was there someone who while living in the physical world could elevate it? If the spies themselves would have been worthy, writes the Chidushei Harim, these grapes could have

been elevated to inaugurate the bringing of bikurim/first fruits offering.

The Tallelei Chaim points out that by seeing what the spies brought back and what their report would be, Moshe would be able to determine if Bnei Yisroel were ready to live in the natural world after living in the spiritual bubble of the desert where all their needs were met.

When Moshe asked the spies if there was a tree there, he really wanted to know if they would find the eitz hachaim/Tree of Life in the land. Would they be able to find God in the concealment of the physical world? He asks, "Hayesh boh eitz im ayin/Is there a tree within it or not." After Bnei Yisroel had left Egypt, they asked, "Hayesh Hashem bekirbeinu im ayin/Is Hashem within us or not." The two questions are really one: Can we relate to Hashem only when He reveals Himself to us, or can we relate to Him even when He is concealed in the natural world? That first question brought the attack from Amalek; the wrong answer here led to forty years of wandering in the desert.

It is sometimes difficult to recognize Hashem's presence in the world around us, but if we persist, Hashem will help us find and connect with Him. Each of us has the ability to be a tree, strong in our own right and capable of influencing others.

## 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

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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.

## The Words of Shlomo Hamelech

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Rabbi Yitzchak Cohen

Shlomo Hamelech tells us in Kohelet, "In the morning, sow your seeds, and at night, do not rest your hand, for you do not know which will succeed, this one or that one, or whether both of them will be equally good."

The Metzudas David explains, we cannot know which direction the wind will go, whether or not one particular season will be good for the crops or not. Kohelet is telling us, plant in the seasons that are good for growth. But don't rest during other times, for it could be both times are good and perhaps only one crop will succeed. Don't take a chance on one. Be ready to work even during a bad season, because at the end it may turn out to be the most successful.

This is the simple meaning. However, the Mishna tells us more.

The sixth Mishna in Avot d'Rav Nosson tells us, "If you learned Torah when you were young, learn Torah even when you are old." In fact, learning Torah when one is old may garner even more reward. Hashem doesn't

year. Most mitzvot are not that way. If I travel three days to get to a wedding, I don't get credit for the days I traveled.

Yet the Mishna tells us, if a student travels during Sukkot to learn Torah from his Rebbe, he is exempt on the way from the mitzva of sukka. This is based on the principle, "Ha'osek b'mitzva patur min ha'mitzva-One engaged in a mitzva is exempt from another mitzva."

If one is traveling to learn Torah, the act of getting there is also part of the mitzva. Learning Torah is not an end result. The mitzva is lasok b'Torah, to busy oneself with Torah. Becoming a talmid chacham may or may not happen. There's no halacha that one must become one. Even if you don't remember what you learned, you still get reward for your efforts.

Chazal say, don't rest, plant the seeds. It may not be the best time to do it. But do it anyway. Study Torah in all circumstances, whether you are rich, poor, old, or young. "Ki heim chayeinu-For the Torah is our life."

became widowed, marry again when you are older..." Even if you are old and cannot have any children, don't rest..." And if you can still have children, have more. Each child is a blessing from heaven. Don't worry about financial burdens. Hashem provides.

Another way to understand the verse in Kohelet is: If you gave charity in the morning, give again in the evening. Perhaps one or the other may not have been necessary or perhaps they were both needed.

Tzedakah is compared to planting, because when you plant you take a chance. You don't know if the seeds will grow. When a person says he needs your help, perhaps he really doesn't. Still we have to take the chance and help him. We have to be oseh tzedakot, busy with good deeds.

We learn this from Hashem who constantly gives us life, health, financial resources, children, and numerous other blessings unconditionally. Hashem too takes a chance and plants. He gives us unlimited potential,

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