

## **Shabbos: Ta'am HaChaim**

### **Shelach 5779**

## **Our Mission in This World**

### **Introduction**

In this week's parasha the Torah records the incident of the Meraglim, the spies that Moshe sent to ascertain if the Jewish People would be capable of conquering Eretz Yisroel. The spies returned from their forty-day journey with a slanderous report, and this report was the catalyst for the Jewish People to die out in the Wilderness. There are many aspects to this episode, but I wish to focus on one subtle point that is the underlying theme of this tragic incident. It is said (Bamidbar 13:3) *vayishlach osam Moshe al pi HaShem kulam anashim roshei vinei Yisroel heimah*, Moshe sent them forth from the Wilderness of Paran at HaShem's command; they were all distinguished men; heads of the Children of Israel were they. Rashi writes that from the fact that the Torah states that the spies were all distinguished men, we learn that at the time that they were sent on their mission they were righteous. This statement, however, is very difficult to understand, as we see that after a mere forty days they had become traitors to their people and they caused a tragedy for all future generations. This tragedy was manifest in the destruction of both the first and second Bais HaMikdash, which, like the return of the spies, occurred on Tisha Baav. One must

wonder, then, how it is possible that the spies commenced their mission as righteous individuals and yet their mission culminated in such treachery.

### **What is in a name?**

In order to understand this transformation in the character of the spies, we must first gain an insight into a number of statements that appear in the Gemara and Medrash. The first statement that requires explanation is that the Gemara (Sota 34b) states that Rabbi Yitzchak said that we have a tradition that the spies were called by their actions and we only have a tradition regarding one of the spies. This spy was Sisur ben Michael, as Sisur means that he demolished (so to speak) the actions of HaShem, and Michael means that he made (so to speak) HaShem weak. Rabbi Yochanan added that we also have a tradition regarding the name Nachbi ben Vafsi, as Nachbi means that he concealed, (so to speak) the words of HaShem, and Vafsi means that he skipped over, so to speak, the character traits of HaShem. The Medrash (Bamidbar Rabbah 16:10) goes even further and states that there are those whose names are nice and their actions are despicable. There are those whose names are despicable and their actions are nice. Then there are those whose names and actions are nice, and there are also those who both their names and

their actions are despicable. Regarding the spies, both their names and their actions were despicable. What is the meaning of this Gemara and Medrash? How is it that the names of the spies were despicable and contained negative connotations?

### **Name and soul are synonymous**

Let us understand the significance of a person's name. It would seem that the word sheim, meaning name, is associated with the word neshama, soul. Not only are the words closely related because of the word sheim that is contained within the word neshamah, but they are intrinsically associated with each other as it is logical that the essence of the person is his neshama. Thus, when we refer to a person's name, we are referring to his neshama, which is the unique imprint that HaShem gave him to fulfill his mission in life. The Medrash (Bamidbar Rabbah 16:1) states that there is no one more beloved to HaShem than shluchoi mitzvah, those who are sent on a mission regarding a mitzvah and they sacrifice themselves to fulfill their mission. The Sfas Emes writes that in this sense every person is a shilach mitzvah, a messenger with a mission in this world. The spies had great neshamos, souls, and their mission was to maintain that high level of spirituality. One must wonder, then, where they went wrong? It would seem from the reading of this episode that the spies failed to see themselves as messengers of HaShem and of the Jewish People. Rather, they transformed their mission to a mission of

selfishness, where they chose to see what they felt would be to their benefit and not for the benefit of the rest of the people.

### **Seeing the land for the good**

It is worth noting that specifically regarding this mission Moshe conferred upon Hoshea ben Nun the name Yehoshua. By adding the letter yud to his name, Moshe was demonstrating that Hoshea was charged with a mission of maintaining the purity of his neshama, and furthermore, that he should elevate the mission, as the letter yud reflects righteousness (Likutei Moharan I 34:6). It is also noteworthy that Moshe charged the spies with the mission of seeing the land. It is for this reason that when Moshe repeats the incident of the spies, he said (Devarim 1:23) vayitav bieinay hadavar, the idea was good in my eyes and Rashi (Ibid) writes that we can infer from this that it was good in the eyes of Moshe but not in the eyes of HaShem. How is it possible that Moshe disagreed, Heaven forbid, with the wishes of HaShem? Perhaps the answer to this question is that the Gemara (Nedarim 38a) states that regarding Moshe it is said (Mishlei 22:9) tov ayin hu yivorach, one with a good eye will be blessed. Moshe desired that the spies should see the good in the land, and had they done so, it would have been a reflection of the exalted level of their souls. When they failed to see the good in the land, it became necessary for HaShem to show Moshe himself the land, as it is said (Devarim 34:1) vayareihu HaShem es

kol haaretz, HaShem showed him the entire land. The Sforno (Bamidbar 22:41) explains that whereas Balaam had an evil eye, Moshe had a good eye, and he used his good eye to see the good that is contained in Eretz Yisroel. Thus, we see that one has to look into his name and his soul, i.e. his essence, and determine what his mission is in this world. One who lives up to his mission will certainly be deemed a shilach mitzvah.

### **The Shabbos connection**

The Sfas Emes (Mishpatim 5631) writes that the six days of the week are referred to as sheishes yimei melacha, the six days of work, and the word melacha is similar to malach, an angel. Everything in this world has within it life from HaShem and one was sent to this world to perform the will of HaShem, as there are mitzvos contained within every action of man. Nonetheless, the life from HaShem and mitzvah are concealed and one must realize what is contained within every action that he performs. The Sfas Ems writes that on Shabbos everything is revealed, as Shabbos is a semblance of the World to Come. The Zohar states that all illnesses of the body and of the soul are due to excess eating and drinking, whereas on Shabbos one's consumption is all considered to be a mitzvah. Hashem should allow us to fulfill our mission in this world and to merit the day that will be completely Shabbos and rest, for eternity.

## **Shabbos in the Zemiros**

### **Shimru Shabsosai**

The composer of this zemer is Shlomo, a name formed by the acrostic of the first four stanzas. Nothing definite is known about him, although some speculate that he was the famous Shlomo ben Yehudah ibn Gabriol. The zemer concentrates on the requirement to honor the Shabbos with culinary delights and closes with the assurance that the observance of the Shabbos will herald the final Redemption.

וְהֵייתָם לִי סִגְלָה, לִינִי וְאַחַר תֵּעָבְרוּ, and you shall be My treasured one, endure your exile-night, afterward you shall cross. Although throughout history the Jewish People have been singled out for persecution and suffering, we must know that we are HaShem's treasured nation. When we are cognizant that HaShem causes us to suffer for a reason, we will merit the imminent Redemption.

## **Shabbos Stories**

### **All in a day's work**

In the city of Vienna about two-hundred years ago lived a wealthy and famous banker, R' Shimshon Werthheimer z"l. In the secular world, he was known for his great wealth and uncanny business acumen. Among Jews, he was famous for his love and support of Torah foundations, yeshivos, and generosity towards those less fortunate than him. Everyone knew: Those who knocked on

R' Shimshon's door would not be turned away empty handed.

A short while after he passed away, the holy Rabbi Chaim of Sanz zt"l gathered his disciples. "Let me tell you," he began, "what transpired in Heaven when the neshama (soul) of R' Shimshon arrived, and the time came for him to give his ultimate reckoning:

"Let me tell you how I spent my day,' R' Shimshon began his testimony before the Heavenly Tribunal. 'More or less, my days were always the same. I got up early, and went to shul to pray shacharis (morning prayers). After praying, I returned home for breakfast. After breakfast, I had a coffee and cigar as I read the daily newspapers. A banker, after all, must always be well informed. I recited Birkas Ha-mazon (Grace), and went to the bank.

"In the late afternoon, I returned home for lunch, and after eating a healthy meal and bentsching, I had a small rest. When I arose, there was invariably a line-up of collectors waiting for me. I gave each one of them my time, and tried to always give as generously as I could.

"At this point, it was already time to daven mincha. Between mincha and ma'ariv, I attended a shiur (Torah lesson). After praying ma'ariv, I had yet another shiur before going home to eat supper with my family. After supper I usually relaxed by playing some chess; it helped me overcome some of the day's stresses.

"Before going to bed, of course, I recited the bedtime k'rias Shema, and that, give or take, was my schedule.'

"R' Shimshon, as we all know, was a righteous man of great integrity, and after bearing witness, he was immediately ushered into Gan Eden among the righteous of Israel.

"It just so happens," continued R' Chaim, "that another banker, an associate of R' Shimshon, also passed away that very day. After escorting R' Shimshon to his exalted spot in Gan Eden, the Heavenly Tribunal once again adjourned.

"Not having been much of a shomer Torah u'mitzvos (Torah-observant Jew), he was quite terrified of having to bear testimony. Hearing R' Shimshon's testimony, and the Tribunal's reaction, though, seems to have calmed his nerves.

"I was also a banker,' he began. 'In fact, my schedule was in many ways identical to that of my contemporary, R' Shimshon. I too arose early. I ate breakfast, and read the dailies while savoring a hot coffee and smoking a cigar. I went to the bank, where I worked hard all morning, and returned home in the afternoon for a late lunch and a rest. I usually spent the rest of the afternoon keeping fit with some sports. After supper, I also liked to play a round or two of chess, and then I went to sleep. So you could say that, for perhaps four-fifths of our days, our schedules were identical.'

“Of course,” said R’ Chaim, “it takes no genius to realize that the Heavenly Tribunal did not view the second man’s daily schedule as being worthy of the reward given R’ Shimshon.

“‘Tell me something,’ the soul of the poor man protested, ‘my friend, R’ Shimshon, is he being rewarded for a lifetime of good deeds, or only for the few hours a day he spent studying Torah, praying, and giving charity?’

“‘R’ Shimshon was a righteous man,’ they said, ‘of course he will be rewarded for a lifetime full of righteousness.’

“‘Yet is it not true,’ he persisted, ‘that twenty out of the twenty-four hours of our days were identical? We slept, we ate, and we worked. If he’s being rewarded for all twenty-four, why shouldn’t I get my reward for at least twenty?’

“An original argument, no doubt, yet a foolish one all the same. The Beis- din shel ma’alah had no problem answering him.

“‘Suppose a farmer sells raw wheat at the marketplace,’ they told him. ‘To separate the straw and stones is too difficult, so he sells the wheat by the wagonload, ‘as is.’ Of course, all of this is taken into account when calculating his price, so his buyers know what to expect.’

“‘One day, he is struck by a brilliant idea. He goes around gathering lots and lots of stones and straw, and puts them in big sacks. He takes them to the

marketplace, placing them alongside his regular wagonloads of grain. To his shock, no one seems the least bit interested in buying them.

“‘Tell me,’ he asks one of his regular buyers, ‘why is nobody buying any of these bags of straw and stones I prepared—I spent lots of time gathering them?’

“‘But who on earth would pay money for straw and stones?’ he replied. ‘And to boot, you’ve priced them identically to your grain! Who ever heard of such foolishness?’

“‘Yet you do pay me for straw and stones all the time,’ he replied. ‘You know that; there’s not a single wagon load of grain that I sell that doesn’t contain tens of pounds of them. When you pay me by weight, don’t you realize you’re paying me for the straw and stones too?’

“‘Of course I realize that. When I buy grain, I know there is invariably going to be some straw and stones too. I take that into account. I don’t need the chaff, but who ever heard of grain without it? When you buy grain, you’re always going to accept some straw and stones. But without the grain? It’s useless! Please don’t waste my time.’

“‘A G-d-fearing Jew,’ they told him, ‘who lived a life of Torah and mitzvos, and used his business not only for his personal well-being, but to support Torah study and aid the poor, is rewarded for his whole day—all twenty-

four hours! His work, his leisure time— it’s all part-and-parcel of the life of a dedicated Jew and philanthropist. The chaff, so to speak, joins the grain on the scale of life.

“But you lived a life void of Torah, of mitzvos, and of charity. Your days, so to speak, were all chaff and no substance. For what shall we reward you?” [Ma’yan ha-shavua]

### **The Chozeh’s clock**

**as told by Rabbi Michel Twerski  
Shlita of Milwaukee**

When the holy Chozeh of Lublin passed away, all of his Chassidim found themselves in a time of extreme aveilus [mourning]. It seemed to them that there would be no one, nowhere, to whom they could turn, that would replace the giant who had served as their guide and inspiration for so many years. Most grief-stricken of all was his son, R. Yossele Tulchiner, who was in his own right a man of great righteousness, he was himself a tzaddik of great repute, and he could find no consolation. He remained behind in Lublin for many weeks, trying to find someplace where he might comfort himself. At long last, he realized that he needed to move on.

Before he left, he went to see if he might collect some of his father’s belongings, so that when he returned home he would have some physical mementos with which to comfort himself. He threw a number of articles into a bag – amongst which was a wall clock. It was kind of a

cumbersome thing, but it was something that reminded him of the room in which his father, the Chozeh, had learned, davened and received his Chassidim.

So he set out along the way, to return home to Tulchin. We must remember that R. Yosef, not unlike other tzaddikim of his time, was essentially destitute and penniless. And so he was very much dependent upon the goodwill of whoever happened to be traveling – that they might give him a lift in their horse-drawn wagon. Finally, someone pitied him, and as it turned out – as the Gemara says, “poverty follows the poor.” This fellow who gave him a ride, had an open carriage. A number of hours into the trip, it began to pour – it was a deluge! They were soon soaked to the bone, and a cool breeze began to chill them.

He knew that unless he found some haven, that he would catch the death of a cold. And so, he ran for the first shelter that he could find. He finally found an inn – the innkeeper was very hospitable and took him in, built a warm fire, offered him a warm drink, and something with which to cover himself in his discomfort. He spent the night there. The next day, the rain continued and he spent another day and night there.

Finally, the weather cleared, and he was able to set out again. It came time to negotiate with the innkeeper for his shelter and food. When presented with the bill, of course, R. Yossele had no money. So he turned to him and said, “Look, I have nothing. But I do have some of the mementos, the things that

belonged to my illustrious father. Perhaps there is something here that would be of value to you.”

The innkeeper was no Chassid, and none of these things meant anything to him. So he searched through the bag. Finally, his eyes set on this clock. “This is really not worth it,” he said, “but it’s the only thing you have that even approaches in value, so I’ll take the clock.” Reluctantly but nonetheless gratefully, he surrendered the clock. R. Yossele left and continued on his way.

Many, many years passed. One of the Chozeh’s esteemed Chassidim, who was now a leader of a Chassidic community in his own right, [known as] the Saba Kadisha of Radoshitz, Rebbe Yissachar Ber, was traveling with his Chassidim. As they were traveling, they sought a place to spend the night, and they found this particular inn. The innkeeper was again very hospitable and gave the Rebbe his finest room.

The Chassidim did the best they could with the little bit of room that was left. Night fell, and everyone went to sleep. The proprietor of the inn went to bed. He heard sounds coming from the Rebbe’s room. At first he ignored them, but they became increasingly disturbing. The Rebbe was clearly marching around his room. Soon the marching turned into a dance. He could hear the Rebbe singing to himself and dancing.

At first, he thought it would soon end. Ten minutes. Half an hour. An hour. Throughout the night, the Rebbe danced.

Finally, early in the morning, the innkeeper knocked on the door and said, “Rebbe, all night you’ve been awake dancing – I heard you! What’s happening?”

The Rebbe said, “I, too, would like to know what’s happening. Please tell me – where did you get this clock – the one in my room?”

The innkeeper replied, “There was once a traveler who couldn’t pay his bill. And he said that his father was a great Rabbi; I don’t remember the name. But some objects belong to him, and I claimed the clock in payment.”

The Radoshitzer said, “What did this traveler look like?”

The innkeeper described him. The Radoshitzer called his Chassidim. “It’s clear to me that R. Yossele must have traveled this way after his father’s petirah [passing]. And when he couldn’t pay his bill, he gave up the clock. I remember the clock well. When I used to go in to the Rebbe, the Chozeh, I would see that clock on the wall. I knew that this clock had to be the Rebbe’s!”

“What gave it away?” asked the Chassidim.

The Rebbe replied, “Every clock in the world, when it ticks, it’s depressing. Every tick signifies another second of life gone, spent, never again to be claimed. That’s how most of us deal with time.

“But the Rebbe had a command and appreciation for time; that every moment to him was a moment closer to the Geulah Shileima, to bias Moshiach Tzidkienu [the complete Redemption and coming of the righteous Messiah]. His clock did not tick with sadness or sorrow; it was not a mournful tick. It was positive – full of hope, not a tick of despair. The tick-tock of the Rebbe’s clock was one that marched towards the Geulah Shileima.

“When I came, I wanted to sleep – I was tired! But that clock – it kept me constantly moving towards the Geulah. How can you sleep when you have a clock that reminds you every moment that we are a moment closer to the Geulah Shileima? So I danced all night!”

Rav Michel Twerski adds: This clock of the Holy Chozeh represents something that we learned about, something which has the capacity to do two opposite things: the Parah Adumah [the red heifer], which defiles the pure, and purifies the defiled. For all of us, life presents many opportunities. For some of us, they turn into problems. We look at them – another problem, another nail into our hide, another difficulty, barrier, obstacle; another cause for sorrow, sadness; another area to drain us of our energy. And because we take that attitude, it cripples us; it turns into a shackle which won’t release us.

On the other hand, there are people who have very much the same kinds of challenges and tests. To them, they are opportunities, doors, gates – into bigger

and better things – developing new strengths, insights; commanding new perspectives, and ways for us to be able to rise above the things that challenge our way in life. The same test – trial – tribulation; but attitude makes all the difference.

For some of us, those tests are the “tick in the clock,” which is a tick of despair, a sound of life wasted. For others, it brings us closer to our own Geulah, to redeeming all of the potential and all of the resources in ourselves. Something else to bring out the kochos hanefesh [soul powers] that we have. It is one move closer to our own personal Geulah, and ultimately, through us, a contribution to the Geulah Shileima.

### **I’ll Keep the Mitzvah**

Rabbi Paysach Krohn in his wonderful work *Around the Magid’s Table* tells a beautiful story.

One Shabbos afternoon when young Yitzchak Eisenbach was in Jerusalem, he spotted a very valuable gold coin shining in the distance. The value of the coin was enough to support his entire family for 2 weeks! But it was Shabbos and young Yitzele knew that the coin was muktzeh, prohibited to be picked up and taken on the Shabbos.

He decided to put his foot on top of the coin and guard the coin until sunset — a good number of hours — but worth every moment of the the wait.

An Arab boy saw Yitzchak with his foot strangely and obviously strategically

placed, and decided to investigate further.

“What’s that you’re hiding?” the Arab asked.

“Nothing,” replied Yitzchak as he shifted his body to hide the fact that he was guarding a golden treasure.

It was too late. The Arab boy pushed him, saw the prize, quickly grabbed it and ran away. All Yitzchak could do was watch in horror as his attacker melted into the Arab market place.

Dejected, Yitzchak sulked to the nearby Tzernobel Bais Medrash (synagogue) where he sat in a corner. Normally, Yitzchak would help prepare the final Shabbos meal, but today he sat — dejected and depressed — until the Sabbath was over. The Rebbe inquired about young Yitzchok’s sullen mood and was told the story.

Immediately after Shabbos the Tzernobel Rebbe (1840-1936) summoned Yitzchak into his private study. In his hand he held a gold coin, exactly the same size as the one Yitzchak had almost secured earlier that day.

“I am very proud of you,” said the Rebbe. You did not desecrate the Shabbos even for a tremendous monetary gain. In fact,” he continued, “I am so proud of you that I am willing to give you this same coin.” The Rebbe halted. “On one condition. I want you to give me the reward for the mitzvah you did.”

The boy looked at the Rebbe in utter disbelief. “You want to trade the coin for the Mitzvah?”

The Rebbe nodded, slowly.

“If that’s the case, keep the coin. I’ll keep the mitzvah.”

The Rebbe leaned over and kissed the child. ([www.Torah.org](http://www.Torah.org))

## **Shabbos in Halacha**

### **Opening Food Packages**

#### **D. מוחק - Erasing**

When opening any wrapper that has printed words or pictures, it is forbidden to tear through the words or pictures, as this violates the prohibition of מוחק, erasing.



**Shabbos Ta'am HaChaim:  
Shelach 5779**

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