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Parashat Shelach 5770

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## Rav Aviner on... The Israeli Navy Operation against the Flotilla

[Talk in the Yeshiva during lunch]

We are fortunate to have merited being a free Nation in our Land. We are fortunate to have an army that does not allow our enemies to abuse us. The period has ended when we were a sheep among seventy wolves and we needed to be saved by a miracle. Now, with the kindness of Hashem on us, we protect ourselves. We are the ones in control here, even over the Gaza Strip. We give them autonomy because we want to do so. And we decide who is allowed to enter. When we do not want someone to enter, he cannot. It was justifiable that we did not allow the people on the flotilla to enter, since if they really wanted to bring supplies to the Arabs in Gaza, they could have given it to us and we would have passed it to them. In any event, the claim that they do not have food is a lie. Tons of supplies are passed along to them every day. I believe that the two largest areas of Israeli exports are Europe and Gaza, since Gaza only receives supplies from us. The fact that there are starving and miserable people in the Gaza Strip is that the rich take all of the supplies and do not leave anything for the poor.

Perhaps you will say, what do we care if they come with supplies? Let them bring it. No, this is the honor of the Nation. King David sent soldiers to console Chanun, King of Amon, over the death of his father and they were attacked. They shaved off half of the soldiers' beards and tore off half of their clothes, and King David went to wage over it (Shmuel 2 10). This is a reason to go to war? Yes, mostly definitely. One goes to war for the Nation's honor and one responds with force. The enemy is then afraid and deterred.

Regarding the ship, we also deterred them, since instead of firing a missile from far away, we went onto the ship without fear. There are obviously difficulties when done in this way but we showed them that we are not afraid of anything.

And now the Nation is united. And Turkey (who sent the ship) deserved a big "Yashar Koach!" for strengthening the unity within the Nation of Israel!

## On the Parashah... The Sin which Haunts Us

[Tal Chermon, Parashat Shelach Lecha]

On the way to Eretz Yisrael through the vast threatening desert, the Nation of Israel continued to undergo crisis after crisis. These crises taught them the values of the Torah and what it means to belong to the Nation of Israel. The greatest crisis was that of the Spies. Their failure revealed Israel's rejection of the Promised Land. The severity of the sin may be deduced from the severity of the punishment: "Your carcasses shall fall in this wilderness" (Bemidbar. 14:29). All adults who accepted the evil report of the spies were to die in the desert.

But that was not the end. This sin has haunted us throughout the centuries. The maxim, "The deeds of the fathers are a precedent for the sons" (see commentary of Ramban to Bereshit 12:6) holds in both positive and negative cases. It is not merely a case of formal precedent-setting; the deeds of the fathers set a precedent for us because we are their continuation, cut from the same cloth. We have inherited their character traits, and our deeds therefore reflect and repeat theirs, both positively and negatively. The sin of the spies revealed a certain spiritual flaw, a lack of faith and of love for the Land, of indifference, emotional distance, and even rejection. This flaw has passed from one generation to the next, infecting the sons and their sons after them.

Historically, the phenomenon of rejection of Eretz Yisrael repeated itself during the Second Temple Period, when only a small fraction of the Nation chose to return to Eretz Yisrael. In general, it was the poor and underprivileged who followed Ezra. The scholars, the wealthy, and the Levi'im chose to remain in Babylonia, a prosperous, flourishing, Jewish community (See Ezra 2 with Rashi. See Ketubot 25, Kiddushin 69a with Rashi). According to the Kuzari (2:24): "Only a few of them responded to Ezra's call, most, including the important people, remained in Babylonia."

A similar phenomenon occurred in the past century when many great rabbis and leaders ignored the national revival and preferred to remain in the Exile. Sadly, just as the spiritual flaw and the sin repeat themselves in history, so too does the punishment. The weeping which occurred that night, the eve of Tisha B'Av, has become "a weeping for all generations." (Ta'anit 29a).

Both the First and the Second Temples were destroyed on Tisha B'av. The exile from Spain and World War I, among others, began on Tisha B'Av. Only partial punishment was meted out to the Generation of the Wilderness. We have been receiving the remainder bit by bit ever since.

Who were the men who spoke evil of Eretz Yisrael? "And Moshe sent them from the wilderness of Paran according to the word of G-d, all of them important personages,

the leaders of the Children of Israel" (Bemidbar 13:3). "They were important men, and the righteous ones at that time" (Rashi *ibid.*). There was no sudden change in their personalities, the weakness which had existed in potential simply now found its expression: "And they went ... and they came" (*ibid.* 13:26). "Just as they returned with bad intent, so too did they start out with bad intent" (Sotah 35a). Were they wicked or were they righteous?

The answer is that there are different kinds of righteousness. There are people who are personally Torah observant, but when it comes to national concerns, their behavior leaves much to be desired. In contrast, there are those who are devoted with all their hearts to their Land and Nation, but are not personally devout. King Shaul, for example, was more righteous in his personal life than King David (Yoma 22b and Moed Katan 22b), but he failed as a King when it came to leading the Nation in the war against Amalek.

This also explains the conclusion of the Chesed L'Avraham (Ma'ayan 3, Nahar 12) that anyone who lives in Eretz Yisrael may be considered righteous, otherwise the Land would expel him.

Superficially, this is hard to comprehend. However, if this refers NOT to the righteousness of his private life - how observant he is of the 613 Mitzvot - but rather to how devoted he is to his Land and Nation, then it is quite reasonable. Both types of righteousness are needed, and the Redemption will come when each type perfects himself by becoming wholly righteous (Orot of Maran Ha-Rav Kook, p.84).

The Spies, like many other righteous men, did not behave in such an admirable fashion in their public lives.... The Zohar tells us about the special evil impulse reserved for the very (personally) righteous: "The Serpent nests in the highest mountain tops - i.e. the sages and the righteous" (Tikunei Zohar, end of Tikkun 13 and commentaries). This evil impulse feeds on spiritual motivation. Defense of Torah observance and the need to combat evil practices among those who build the Land become excuses for not supporting our national redemption. This is the evil impulse disguised as Torah observance. "And the great leaders of Israel will have to stand trial in the Heavenly Court for this matter. G-d will hold them responsible for humiliating His House" (Or Ha-Chaim Ha-Kadosh, Vayikra 25:25).

How could such great men commit such a sin? What were the spiritual and psychological elements which led them to do it?

An important factor in any sin is personal interest. When a man imagines that he will suffer some personal setback, it is difficult for him to remain objective. As Mesilat Yesharim teaches in chapter 11: "The heart may be deceived, and if we investigate, we discover that it had some slight unworthy desire .... for man is by nature weak and it is easy to deceive him into permitting things in which he has a personal interest." According to our sages, the Spies had reason to believe that once they entered the Promised Land, they would no longer be the leaders of the Nation, as they had been in Egypt and in the desert.

There is another explanation, that it was not personal wealth or honor which the spies sought, but rather spiritual wealth. They did not share the vision of "Malchut Israel" [the Kingdom of Israel], as the only way to bring about the greatest sanctification of

G-d's Name and the means by which G-d's rule in this world evidences itself, as we pray every day in "Aleinu". According to the Kuzari (2, 24), the Holy One rebukes the righteous of each generation, saying: "You righteous! Although the words of my Torah are dear to you, it is unseemly that you yearned for My Torah and not for My Kingship."

The Spies panicked at the idea of the Nation of Israel settling the Land. They worried that preoccupation with politics, military and economic affairs would estrange them from the Torah. It was the "Eidah," the Sanhedrin, who were responsible for the spiritual welfare of the Nation, who wanted to stone Moshe Rabeinu. They claimed Eretz Yisrael was "a Land that devours its inhabitants," that the temptations there would spoil their character (Chidushei Ha-Rim). This same claim reappears at the beginning of the Second Temple Period, when many of the great leaders of the Nation refused to leave Babylonia and go to Eretz Yisrael, because Jewish life in Babylonia was much more established and secure (see Kuzari 2:22-24). This is a negative phenomenon, even if motivated by spiritual considerations, as our Sages taught: "One should always try to live in Eretz Yisrael, even in a city where the majority are idol-worshippers, rather than live outside of Israel, even in a city where the majority are Jews (Ketubot 110b).

There is no doubt that it is difficult to sustain a spiritual existence while concurrently leading a public life, however, it is not impossible (see Rav Kook's introduction to Shabbat Ha-Aretz). Although the spies, "the heretic Tzadikim" (see Sotah 48b), warned: "We cannot go up against the people [of Canaan], for they are stronger than us" (Bemidbar. 13:31), Calev and Yehoshua were adamant that "We shall surely go up and possess it, for we are certainly able to" - Even if Eretz Yisrael were in the sky, and G-d had commanded us to build ladders and climb up, we would be able to do it! (ibid. v. 30, and Rashi's commentary there). Eretz Yisrael is the ladder by which we reach heaven. It is precisely the "earthly" preoccupation with settling the Land which raises us to the highest spiritual heights, by virtue of the sanctity of the Promised Land.

## Stories of Rabbenu – Our Rabbi, Ha-Rav Tzvi Yehudah Ha-Cohain Kook

### Tzitzit

Our Rabbi would encourage his students to wear their tzitzit hanging outside of their clothing, and he made no distinction between Sephardic and Ashkenazic Jews. One of our Rabbi's leading students, Ha-Rav David Chai HaCohen, once asked if this ruling to wear tzitzit outside of one's garments applied to him as well, for his family's custom was to wear tzitzit tucked in (Ha-Rav HaCohen's uncle was an important Torah scholar and a faithful follower of the Ben Ish Chai). Ha-Rav HaCohen said that he would abide by whatever ruling our Rabbi gave. Our Rabbi told him that he did not have to wear his tzitzit outside of his clothing. (From the article "The Appearance of a Meticulously Observant Jew" by Ha-Rav Eliezer Melamed)

Our Rabbi would often emphasize the words of the Magen Avraham (Orach Chaim 8:13) that the essence is that the tzitzit be seen outside of one's clothing. (Gadol Shimusha p. 71)

A newly observant Jew asked our Rabbi for the source for wearing a kippah. He answered that according to the opinion of the Vilna Gaon (Orach Chaim 8:2), there is no ancient source for a kippah, but wearing tzitzit outside of one's clothing is from the Torah. The newly-observant Jew immediately bought long tzitzit, and obviously also wore a kippah. (Gadol Shimusha p. 70)

#### Tzitzit at night

Our Rabbi would wear his tzitzit during the day as well as sleep with them at night. (Ha-Rav Yechezkel Greenwald)

#### Wearing Tzitzit Out

Our Rabbi would say that one should wear his tzitzit hanging outside of his clothing. A student asked: And what about the Arizal (who said that one should wear the tzitzit inside – although there is a dispute regarding the meaning of his words)? Our Rabbi responded with a smile: I know the Arizal. And he added: And do you perform everything that the Arizal says? (see Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim 8:11, Magen Avraham ibid., Mishnah Berurah ibid. Ha-Rav Yosef Bedichi)

#### Jewish Clothing

Our Rabbi would teach that one should wear his tzitzit out, and that Jewish clothing is not necessarily a kippah, but tzitzit and tefillin. Regarding a kippah, he would quote the words of the Vilna Gaon that wearing a kippah is an act of righteousness (Biur Ha-Gra, Orach Chaim 8). (Ha-Rav Yechezkel Greenwald)

## **Shut She'eilat Shlomo - Questions of Jewish Law**

#### Blessing One's Children after Getting Married

Question: My daughter is getting married. When she comes to visit us with her husband for Shabbat, should I continue to "bless" her as I did before she was married? What about my son-in-law - should I bless him as well?

Answer: You should continue to bless your daughter and you can bless your son-in-law if he wants. You should do what is comfortable for him.

#### *Family Matters - Ha-Rav writes weekly for*

*the parashah sheet "Rosh Yehudi" on family relationships*

#### Song of Praise for the Reservist's Wife

*This is a song of praise for you, wife of a reservist. Your husband also deserves a song of praise, since so few serve in the reserves, and your husband is willing to miss work, crawl in the thorns and mud and eat straw. He is truly a hero, but so many songs have already been written about the reservist.*

*This song is therefore for you. Please know, he is there in your merit. If you expressed any negativity, he would not go, he would stay at home. Although it is difficult for him in the reserves, it is much harder for you. You are alone with the kids, who are as hard to care for as an entire unit, and your unit includes a crying baby, a child running around getting into all sorts of things, a young girl going through all*

*sorts of crises. You fall onto your bed late at night, and suddenly feel lonely and you immediately fall asleep from exhaustion. But this is not always the case, because you worry about your husband. He is not worried, since there is no time to worry or think on the front line during the fire of battle. But your thoughts do not allow you to rest, you therefore cannot fall asleep. It is sometimes more difficult on the home front than the front line.*

*Yasher Koach, heroine of Israel, the courageous reservist's wife, a heroine day after day, hour after hour.*

## Text Message Responsa

Ha-Rav answers hundreds of text message questions a week. Some appear in the parashah sheets "Ma'ayanei Ha-Yeshu'ah" and "Olam Ha-Katan." Here's a sample:

A Convert and Honoring Parents

Q: Does a convert need to honor his biological parents?

A: Yes, just as a non-Jew would honor his parents (Shulchan Aruch Yoreh Deah 241:9. See Shut Igrot Moshe Yoreh Deah 2:130 and Shut Yechaveh Da'at 6:60).

Motorcycle

Q: Is it permissible to ride a motorcycle? I am very careful!

A: No, being careful is not enough. There are other drivers who are not careful, and a motorcycle is exposed. This is an extremely dangerous vehicle (see Shut She'eilat Shlomo 1:473).

Damage during Game

Q: A friend poured water on me. I poured water on him and his cell phone was damaged. Do I have to pay?

A: No. He accepted on himself the general rules of the game that you would pour water on him (Shut She'eilat Shlomo 2:390-391).

Tzedakah

Q: When I visit the Kotel, there are so many people asking for money, should I give money to the beggars?

A: If you are certain that they are not swindlers. Most Beggars are Swindlers (Estimation of Rabbis. See Shulchan Aruch Yoreh Deah 241:10).

Modesty

Q: Is it permissible for a girl to wear a short shirt and pants when she is home with just her brothers?

A: One always needs to be modest even when alone and in the dark (see Gan Na'ul).

Book of Tehillim

Q: I soaked a Book of Tehillim belonging to a hospital with my tears. Do I have to pay?

A: No, this is its use (Shulchan Aruch, Choshen Mishpat 340:1).

### Guidance for Groom

Q: I learned the laws of Family Purity in preparation for my wedding with a guide. Should I pay him?

A: Certainly. This is the most important preparation for the wedding. You should therefore pay 1000 Shekels. And the same applies for the woman who taught your bride.

### Paystub on Wife's Name

Q: Is it permissible to have a husband's paystub under his wife's name, since it is better tax-wise for them?

A: 1. It is forbidden according to the law. 2. It is dangerous, since if something happened to him, it is possible to demand millions from her.

### Messiah and Shabbat Clothing

Q: I wait to see the Messiah every day. Should I carry my Shabbat clothes with me everywhere I go?

A: No, since the Messiah will do many things when he arrives that require weekday clothes. See Rambam, Melachim 11:1.

### Herzl

Q: Is it true that Herzl had a plan for all of Israel to convert to Christianity?

A: A delusional idea when he was young that the weak convert to Christianity. It was not a plan which was ever suggested but something he wrote for himself in his diary, when he was a "Tinok She-nisha" (literally Jewish children captured and raised among non-Jews but meaning a Jew who did not receive a proper Jewish upbringing and education). He later worked to establish a State of the Jews and a Jewish State (Herzl: A New Reading from Dr. Weiss).

### Mistaken Grade

Q: I received a grade higher than I deserved on a test because the teacher miscounted. Do I have to tell him?

A: Yes, so you do not violate "genivat da'at" (deception).

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