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Parashat Shelach Lecha 5772 - #237

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### On the Haftarah...

#### Important Spies

[Yehoshua 2:1-24]

“Yehoshua bin Nun sent two spies from Shitim, secretly saying: Go observe the Land and Yericho” (Yehoshua 2:1).

Our Sages give us additional information, which is not explicit in the text, about the identity of the two spies: they are, in fact, Pinchas and Calev (Bamidbar Rabbah 16:1). This is not Calev’s first spy mission. As our parashah explains, when Moshe Rabbenu sent out the spies, Calev ben Yefuneh was the one chosen from the Tribe of Yehudah (Bemidbar 13:7), while Yehoshua himself was the one chosen from the Tribe of Efraim (ibid. v. 8). Out of the twelve individuals sent by Moshe Rabbenu to spy out the Land, only Yehoshua and Calev remained faithful to their mission and tried to convince the Nation of Israel to ascend to Eretz Yisrael. “Calev silenced the Nation towards Moshe and said: We can surely ascend and conquer it, for we can surely do it” (ibid. v. 30). To our great distress, however, their efforts were in vain. The Nation did not listen and was severely punished. Only Calev ben Yefuneh and Yehoshua bin Nun were permitted to enter the Land (ibid. 14:24 and see v. 30).

Regarding Pinchas: although he was a novice in spying, he had already shown himself to be a loyal, veteran soldier for the Nation of Israel. He had stopped the tragedy of the Nation’s licentiousness with the daughters of Moav (Bemidbar 25), and was later appointed Cohain Gadol following his grandfather Aharon and his father Elazar (Bemidbar 31:6).

Pinchas the Cohain Gadol and Calev were men of the highest stature. Yehoshua was both the army’s Chief of Staff and the Divine messenger for receiving the Torah: “Moshe received the

Torah from Sinai and passed it to Yehoshua” (Pirkei Avot 1:1). He was the loyal student of Moshe Rabbenu: “His servant, Yehoshua bin Nun, a young man, would not depart from within his tent” (Shemot 33:11). And so we see that there is no contradiction between learning and fulfilling the Torah on the one hand and serving in the army of Israel on the other. The same individual was both a brilliant yeshiva student who completely observed the Torah, and, at the same time, a courageous fighter and military Chief of Staff. This is really not surprising, seeing as one must fulfill all of the mitzvot – including the mitzvah of conquering the Land of Israel, even if it requires going to war (Sefer Ha-Mitzvot of the Rambam, positive mitzvah #4 in the additions of the Ramban).

In contrast to the other spies sent by Moshe Rabbenu, who did not understand the importance of their role, and, instead of fulfilling it, spread panic throughout the Nation, Calev and Pinchas were entirely committed to their mission. Our Sages explain that this is in fact the reason behind their success (Bemidbar Rabbah 16:1).

The Haftarah explains that Calev and Pinchas sought shelter in the house of a woman who hid them on the roof (under stalks of flax) from the guards who pursued them. She ignored the order of the King of Yericho to hand them over and sent the guards running off in the wrong direction (Yehoshua 2:1-7). The thing which is most surprising, however, is that this came from a woman who did not live a life of virtue. Her home does not seem like the most appropriate place for our spies, who are about to bring our Nation into the Holy Land. But nothing is by happenstance - it is all directed by Hashem. It was Hashem’s will that they would enter Eretz Yisrael in this way, and so He directed them to this house.

We must understand that many times, great and holy things occur through complex situations. And this is how it was with our spies. We learn from their situation that even when things happen in a way which is not ideal in our eyes, the decision for them to occur this way comes from Hashem. The ways of Hashem are hidden from us. We read in the Book of Iyov (14:4): “Who can bring what is pure from the impure? No one!” Hashem alone can reveal the pure from within the midst of impurity.

Maran Ha-Rav Kook explained at length (Orot pp. 35-36) that this parashah teaches us that in our times, in Eretz Yisrael, even if events do not parallel the pure ideals to which we aspire, we must not despair: for in the future this impurity will be transformed into great holiness.

## Rav Aviner on... In Defense of the Chief Rabbi of Tzahal

[Talk in the Yeshiva during Lunch]

### **Claim 1: My Rabbi is a greater Rabbi than the Chief Rabbi of Tzahal.**

Answer: But your Rabbi is not as great as the Sages of the Talmud, who ruled that we follow the decisions of the Mara De-Atra, the local rabbi. The Gemara states (Shabbat 130a) that in Rabbi Eliezer ben Hurkenos’ region, trees would be chopped down on Shabbat to provide coals needed to make the circumcision knife. This was the custom, even though Rabbi Eliezer ben Hurkenos alone ruled this way. Similarly, in Rabbi Yossi Ha-Gelili’s sphere of influence, people would consume fowl and milk together, because he deemed it permissible. This is despite the fact that he alone ruled this way, and the general principle that the law follows the majority. Conclusion: we follow the rulings of the local Rabbi, due to the principle of

showing honor to Torah scholars, as explained in Shut Ha-Rashba (1:253), as well as Rama, Choshen Mishpat 25:2.

**Claim 2: The army is not a locality. It's not a place. It's not a town. There is therefore no "Mara De-Atra."**

Answer: The concept of Mara De-Atra does not depend on geography, but on community. Even if a community moves elsewhere, if their Rabbi goes with them, he remains their "local Rabbi". Some argue that before the Ashkenazim moved to Israel, the Mara De-Atra of Eretz Yisrael was Rabbi Yosef Karo, the "Bet Yosef". When the Ashkenazim arrived, they therefore became obligated to rule according to him. But, despite that argument, the Ashkenazim did not conduct themselves that way (for example, see Chazon Ish on Yoreh Deah 150:10 and Shut Minchat Yitzchak 8:1-2). And even the Sefardim who moved to Eretz Yisrael, i.e., those from Morocco, are not obligated to follow the Bet Yosef. Rather, each community follows its own Rabbi, who is their Mara De-Atra.

Questions arise for soldiers. For example: if a soldier keeps six hours between meat and milk, but he cannot wait the full amount of time because, for example, he's going out to lay an ambush, what should he do? The illustrious Ha-Rav Shlomo Goren, first Chief Rabbi of the Israeli Army, said that the army is like a different country, and the soldier is considered as one living in that country. He is thereby obligated to rely on the local authority.

This point is not just relevant with ad-hoc questions but with permanent issues as well. An Ashkenazi who decides to live his whole life in a Sefardic community follows Sefardic custom. In Tiveria, for instance, the Ashkenazim recite Hallel on Rosh Chodesh without a blessing, in accordance with Sefardic practice (Bet Yosef, Orach Chaim 422:2). This is because originally, everyone in Tiveria was Sefardic. When the Ashkenazim arrived in dribs and drabs, they became Sefardim. Later, when many Ashkenazim arrived, an Ashkenazic community was reborn, but the practice of reciting Hallel without a blessing remained. All the same, if an Ashkenazic community had arrived with its Rabbi, they certainly would have recited Hallel with a blessing.

**Claim 3: The Chief Rabbi of Tzahal does not know how to rule on Jewish law. He is a total ignoramus.**

Answer: To say that is to show contempt for Torah scholars. Some, in response, engage in casuistry, claiming "they're not showing contempt for Torah scholars, for he is no Torah scholar." It's like those people who call other Jews the "mixed multitude", and when they are told that it's forbidden to call a Jew by that name they respond, "But they're not Jews! They're the mixed multitude..." You cannot say that a Rabbi does not know how to rule on Halachah unless you prove it. Show me that the Chief Rabbi of Tzahal has ruled falsely in the name of the Torah.

He ruled that women are forbidden to sing at army ceremonies, but that if women sing anyway and you can't get permission to leave, you should remain. Some Rabbis rule differently, but he rules that you should stay. He rules that way because there is a Halachah that if someone is in a place where he is hearing women sing against his will, he does not have to leave (Pesachim 25b. See Chafetz Chaim 6:6).

In a lot of Ulpanot [National Religious girls' high schools] when the girls sing, their Rabbis (and the husbands of their teachers) are there. They remain seated and do not leave. They do this every Shabbat. In the past, Rabbis would stay during all ceremonies, even when women sang. The debate over whether to leave or not is legitimate, but you cannot say that the Chief Rabbi of Tzahal does not know how to rule on Halachah just because he ruled that a soldier should not leave.

One time, at a British royal ceremony in Eretz Yisrael, a woman sang, and Ha-Gaon Ha-Rav Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld put his fingers in his ears, put his head down and withdrew into himself. His attendant asked him, "How could you stay?!" and he responded, "The glory of the crown." By contrast, Maran Ha-Rav Avraham Yitzchak Kook rose and fled the room like one fleeing fire (Mibechirei Tzadikaya by Rabbi Yosef Zussman, p. 178). One can debate

whether the ruling is correct or not, but one cannot say that Ha-Gaon Ha-Rav Sonnenfeld does not know how to rule on law. The same applies to the Chief Rabbi of Tzahal.

At many governmental ceremonies, women sing and Rabbis don't leave. Even at the funeral of Ha-Rav Chanan Porat, his daughter sang, and the two Chief Rabbis of Israel did not leave.

If the Mara De-Atra errs, one can discreetly and respectfully point it out to him. Ha-Gaon Rav Avraham Dov Auerbach, Av Beit Din (Head of the Rabbinic Court) of Tiveria, once told me about an incident that occurred there in the past: it once happened that the "eruv" was damaged, but the Rav of Tiveria ruled that it was kosher. There was a great Torah scholar who lived there and he bumped into the Rav of the city after Shabbat. They talked, the Torah scholar walked him home, and then they sat and chatted some more. The Torah scholar said, "Let's learn some Torah." The Rav of the city obviously agreed. The Torah scholar took Massechet Eruvim and they learned. Suddenly, the Rav of the city said, "Oy va-voy! If so, I ruled incorrectly today!" The Torah scholar said, "It appears so." The Rav of the city asked, "Did his honor announce in his shul not to carry on Shabbat?" "No," he responded, "since carrying in this place is a rabbinic prohibition, but honoring a Torah scholar is a Torah mitzvah. I therefore did not say anything."

Even if the Mara De-atra errs, you cannot proclaim that he has erred. You can argue gently and try to persuade him. And, by the way, everyone agrees that women's singing is a problem on the level of Rabbinic law (Berachot 24a. Rambam, Isurei Biah 21, Shulchan Aruch Even HaEzer 21, Kitzur Shulchan Aruch 152:8).

**Claim 4: The Chief Rabbi of Tzahal is under the thumb of the Army Chief-of-Staff. He takes orders from the army, and they tell him what to rule.**

This claim that he lies in the name of the Torah because he is under pressure from the Chief-of-Staff and has vested interests, also constitutes a show of contempt for Torah scholars. It is similar to the ruling of the Satmar Rebbe who said that all Rabbis of Eretz Yisrael are invalid to issue rulings regarding questions related to Israel, because they are all under the thumb of the State of the Heretics. Therefore, regarding such questions, one should ask Rabbis in America... (see Va-Yoel Moshe, Shalosh Shevuot #60, 171-172).

How do you know that he rules in a certain way because he is afraid of the Chief-of-Staff? You have no proof. You cannot make accusations against people without reason. If you do, you can say that every ruling by a Rabbi is tainted by personal interests. For example, someone claimed that Hillel ruled that one can wed a woman by giving her just a Perutah (a very small coin), because Hillel himself was poor... Some people engage in psychological analyses of Rabbis. Whenever a Rabbi says anything, they wrap it in psychological motives. You can't say such things without proof.

## Stories of Rabbenu –

### Our Rabbi, Ha-Rav Tzvi Yehudah Ha-Cohain Kook

#### Rabbis & Politics

When our Rabbi, was asked his opinion regarding the involvement of rabbis in politics, he answered as follows: "Rabbis are obligated by the Torah to involve themselves in politics, and if they refrain from doing so they are guilty of betrayal. It is written in the Torah: 'Do not fear any man!'" Once, when, as a result of the words of our Rabbi, a public commotion arose, and many claimed that rabbis should not deal in politics, our Rabbi responded: "I am not asking anybody's permission. I am obligated by the Torah to proclaim and publicize that which is just and true. The political issues of the Community of Israel are themselves Torah. They are sacred."

Special thank you to Orly Tzion for editing the Ateret Yerushalayim Parashah Sheet