

PORTION	DATE	HEB DATE	TORAH	NEVIIM	KETUVIM
Shelach	20 June 2020	28 Sivan 5780	Num. 13:1-15:41	Josh. 2:1-24	Matt. 10:1-14

In this week's Torah portion Shelach, we will continue to discuss the original sin of the spies, how they entrapped Moshe, how Moshe benefited from the sin of the spies, that ultimately resulted wandering in the desert for forty years. We first need to ask, what was the original source of the great evil that resulted from sending the spies? The sages say that there was an initial smaller sin that led to the terrible sin of the Spies. A sin as terrible as the one the Spies committed could not have come out of nowhere. Since they were not initially wicked, and the act of spying was not wrong in and of itself, the mission should not have ended in such disaster. So, there has to be a seed of sin from the beginning that sprouted the great sin. What was that initial sin?

Initially, the Yisraelites gathered before Moshe to ask that Moshe send spies, and he refused. He said to them, "Hashem already promised us the Land. Spies are not needed." To convince Moshe, they said, "Since the Canaanite nations know that we are coming to drive them out, they are certainly hiding their valuables. So that when we arrive, we would find nothing. And since Hashem's promise includes abundant riches (Deut. 6:11), if we don't find anything, then it would nullify Hashem's promise." Hearing this, Moshe looked favorably upon their suggestion (Deut. 1:22). Their argument of sending spies is to discover these hiding places. Once, Moshe heard this, he fell into their trap.

The sages clarify how Moshe "fell into their trap." There are two types of spying. One type of spying is done prior to a battle. This is like a report given by the spies sent against the city of Ai, who brought the word to Yehoshua (Joshua). "Let not all the people go up, but let about two or three thousand men go up and smite Ai. Do not make all the people toil up there, for the people of Ai are few." (Josh. 7:3) This type of report helped Yehoshua to formulate tactics for the battle.

The second type of spying is not meant to prepare for a specific battle, but is spying done in a general way, to learn about an entire land. For example, they wanted to see what the land is like; to assess whether they (Yisraelites) have the strength to conquer it. It was a mission to encompass the entire Land of Canaan (Num. 13:17-20). This form of spying implied a lack of faith in Hashem, and a desire to complain against Him. Since Hashem had promised this Land to the Yisraelites, sending spies to evaluate whether it could be conquered showed that they did not believe in Hashem's promise.

The Yisrael deceived Moshe by saying that the reason to send spies was that valuable were hidden there. This false reason justified sending spies throughout the entire Land of Canaan. (vv. 21-23) And Moshe fell into their trap by sending spies for this purpose of finding the treasure, because there is nothing wrong with doing that. The people fooled him by pretending that they had a legitimate reason to send spies throughout the country. Their real reason, though, was to assess the land to see if it could be conquered.

Another explanation for why Moshe did not act on Hashem's warning is that Moshe did understand that Hashem was warning him about the wicked motives of those requesting spies. Since Moshe saw that Hashem was not preventing him from sending them, he went ahead and did it. He reasoned that if Hashem had not seen fit to stop them from being sent, it was not for Moshe to do so. And although Hashem had revealed to him the people's true motives, he assumed that this was done because Hashem "generally" wishes to reveal hidden matters to His servants, and also, so that Moshe would know the reasons behind everything that would emerge from this matter. Hashem saw that if the spies had not been sent, the people would have been even more rebellious, and would have caused even a greater upheaval than they caused

by sending the spies. Rather than leave them at risk of an even worse sin, Hashem allowed Moshe to send the spies.

Now, the sages say that initially these spies were righteous as the Torah generally refers to distinguished individuals as אנשי (a-na-shim; men). (Num. 13:2) Thus Rashi said that at this point, the spies were still righteous. Therefore, the verse says, "Send you אנשי (a-na-shim; men)," meaning as long as they are standing before "yourself" they remain righteous, but the moment they turn away to go on their mission, the crown of righteousness shall fall from them,¹ and they will go with evil intent, as the verse says (v. 26), "And they went and came." The sages² say that the Torah is comparing their going with their coming. Just as they came back with evil intent, to give a derogatory report about the Land, so too they went with evil intent. By saying, "Send for yourself men," Hashem informed Moshe that the spies would remain righteous "men" only as long as they were in Moshe's presence ("for yourself"), but not once they left him and went on their way.

Moshe, being warned by Hashem, he perceived the need to intervene on Yehoshua's behalf, and therefore, he prayed that Yehoshua would not go in the way of the wicked ones. If Moshe had not been told that the spies would turn toward wickedness, he would have assumed they would remain righteous, and would not have prayed for Yehoshua. He prayed only because of Hashem's warning.

How did Moshe benefit from all this? The sages³ refers to Shemot 6:1, "Now you (Moshe) will see what I shall do to Pharaoh." The sages drew an inference from the word "now," which implied that now you "will" see Hashem's salvation, but you (Moshe) will not see the war with the thirty-one Canaanite kings, when the People enter the Land. If the People would have entered the Land in the second year after the Exodus from Mitzrayim, as would have occurred had they not sent the spies, then the Word of Hashem that He said, "Now you will see," would have been fulfilled. And at that point, Moshe would have been forced either to settle outside of the Land as an ordinary person, since the rulership would have passed to Yehoshua, or to enter the Land as an ordinary person. However, because the spies were sent, the People remained in the Wilderness forty years, and thus, Moshe did not need to step down from his position as leader. Rather, he was king over "Yeshurun" (Deut. 33:5) for another forty years, until the end of his life. This is alluded to in the verse "Send for yourself," which suggests that "you (Moshe) will have a benefit" "for yourself". The additional years the People remained in the Wilderness as punishment for the sin of the spies was a benefit to Moshe personally, because it allowed him to remain ruler for forty years.

As for the lack of faith of the People, it is written, "Send you men, that they may spy out the land of Canaan, which I give to the children of Yisrael" (Num. 13:1). Following above understanding, Hashem is attaching the condition to the sending of the spies. First condition is learned from the term "for yourself," which means that the spies should be Moshe's agents with respect to his intentions about the purpose of spying (i.e., to uncover the Canaanites' hiding places), and they should not be the agents of the People whose intentions were improper. Second condition is the word, אנשי (a-na-shim; men), which informed Moshe that the spies had to be righteous. Third, the spying should be of the Land "that I am giving to the children of Yisrael", meaning the spies must be made to realize that the purpose of the spying is not to assess whether the People have the strength to conquer the Land and drive out its people, because it is absolutely certain that using only their own strength, they are not able to stand even against the smallest of cities. Rather, they must understand that this is the Land "I am giving" to the children of Yisrael. It is not a conquest, but a gift

¹ BT, Bava Basra 8a

² BT, Sotah 35a

³ BT, Sanhedrin 111a

from Hashem. And since it is a gift, it falls upon the Giver (Hashem) to expel those who have seized it (Canaanites). Fourth, during their spying, when the spies encounter the might of Canaan, they were expected to perceive this as a sign that Hashem would do wonders to bring down the towering ones of Canaan, and that Hashem showed them the might of Canaan only so that the beneficiary of Hashem's miracle in Canaan would be aware of the miracle.

In Yalkut Shimoni⁴ (an aggadic compilation of Torah) said that the word Canaan alludes to the merit of the person who caused this gift of the Land to be given. This refers to Yitzchak who was born to Avraham and Sarah. Avraham was 100 years old and Sarah was 90 years old. The numerical value of Hebrew word Canaan (כְּנַעַן) is 190 (50+70+50+20) equivalent to their combined age when Yitzchak was born. The *peshat* (literal) meaning is that Hashem meant to deliver the same message that Moshe delivered to the People, "Not for your righteousness, or for the uprightness of your heart, do you go in to possess their land; but for the wickedness of these nations YHWH your Elohim do drive them out from before you, and that He may establish the word which YHWH swore to your fathers, to Avraham, to Yitzchak, and to Ya'akov." (Deut. 9:5). Thus, we can conclude that Hashem gave the People the land of Canaan, not because of their righteousness or uprightness as a gift, but rather because the wickedness of the people of Canaan. The name Canaan implies the wickedness of its inhabitants. Hashem specified "Canaan" to indicate that this wickedness was the reason He was driving the Canaanites from the Land, just as Moshe stated in Devarim.

It is written, "And these are their names." (Num. 13:4) The Talmud⁵ said that the spies were called names that matched their deeds. For example, Setur the son of Michael (סֵטוּר בֶּן-מִיכָאֵל; *Se-tur ben-mi-cha-el*) was called Setur because he denied (*sasar*) the words of Kadosh Baruch.

Now, why did Yehoshua included amongst them? (v. 16) And Moshe changed his name Hosea to Yehoshua? It is written, "And Moshe called Hosea the son of Nun Yehoshua." In Hebrew, מֹשֶׁה לְהוֹשִׁיעַ בֶּן-נוּן, יְהוֹשֻׁעַ (mo-she le-ho-she-a bin-nun, ye-ho-shu-a), meaning Moshe prayed for Yehoshua to be saved from the sin of the ten wicked spies. Why did Moshe find it necessary to pray on Yehoshua's behalf? What made him think that prayer might be needed? Therefore, the verse (v. 4) begins by saying, "These are the names of men," to inform you that through their names, Moshe became aware of their potential for wicked deeds, and it was for this reason, that is to protect Yehoshua from their evil influence, that Moshe needed to pray for Yehoshua, as the verse (v. 16) concludes, "and Moshe called Hosea bin Nun, Yehoshua," to indicate that the names of the spies alerted Moshe to the need for prayer.

Names are not random; they reveal the essence of those who bear them. When Adam named all living things on earth (Gen. 2:19), he did not give the creatures arbitrary names; the names he chose reflected their fundamental natures. Similarly, a person's given name expresses his essence. This is because Hashem inspires parents to give their child the very name by which He Himself calls the child's soul in the Heavenly realms. Thus, a name reflects the essence of a person's spiritual nature. This is not to say that a name determines one's actions; rather, the possibility for both good and evil are inherent in one's name.⁶ The potential for great wickedness was foreshadowed in the names of ten of the spies; therefore, Moshe prayed that Yehoshua should not be influenced by them.

Moshe added י (yud) to Hosea to strengthen Yehoshua's name since yud has a numerical value of ten; to withstand the bad influence of the ten spies who sinned. Moshe added the yud to the name so that Yehoshua

⁴ Yalkut Shimoni §742

⁵ BT, Sotah 34b

⁶ Zohar, Vol. 1, 58b

would receive the merits and reward of all ten wicked spies. The sages⁷ teach that if he merits it, a righteous receives his own portion in Gan Eden, as well as the portion of his wicked fellow. Thus, Moshe prayed not only that Yehoshua would resist the evil of the ten, but also that he would receive the Divine reward of whatever good deeds they had done.

⁷ BT, Chagigah 15a