

Beit Hamidrash Hameir Laarets | Issue 109

Shelach Lecha | Fulfilling Your Mission



MESILLOT

Pathways to the Soul

illuminating teachings and insights on the weekly parasha
by **Rabbi Yoram Michael Abargel zt"l**

From the weekly lectures of his son,
Rabbi Israel Abargel shlita

...PATHWAYS TO THE SOUL...

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Parashat Shelach Lecha

Even If The Whole World Says Otherwise...

The awakening was sudden. In the middle of a regular weekday mincha, Zelig felt a burning sensation in his heart, a desire to draw closer to the Creator of the world... The *tefillah* concluded, but the fire only became stronger...

Zelig began his journey of holiness... Then, after much wandering, he arrived at the Beit Midrash of Rebbe Menachem Mendel of Kotzk zt"l.

Zelig arrived in Kotzk on Erev Shabbat, and there, a new world was revealed before his eyes. He observed the disciples of the Rebbe of Kotzk as they prepared themselves to receive the Shabbat. Their faces were like fire. They walked back and forth throughout the Beit Midrash.

One of them was standing next to Zelig, one foot on the bench and the other on the floor, his eyes glowing, fixed on the

small window near the ceiling of the Beit Midrash. He stood in such a manner for ages, humming with such soft, bone-breaking, sinew-piercing pleasantness. All of his limbs were motionless, not even blinking. Nevertheless, how much liveliness, movement, and vitality abound in his entire being!

Another one, standing across from him at the other end of the Beit Midrash, looked like he was analyzing a book. But the smile on his face, which continuously became more and more bright, indicated that the letters of the book he was looking at were just a point of reference for his eyes not to wander while he himself was immersed in deep thought, seeing and hearing nothing but the voice of his heart.

In the corner, not far from him, two people stood, one

Parashat Shelach Lecha - Even If The Whole World Says Otherwise

uttering a few words and the other listening, and then both remaining silent. Then the other answers him with a few words and long and attentive silence again...

It was clear to Zelig that Hashem's entire world had shrunk and entered the hearts of each one of these people. They perceived the whole operation and the One who operated it. There was only one thing in the world from which they were utterly oblivious, from themselves. Thus, how pleasant and delightful it was for them to walk throughout the upper worlds through their thoughts without any barriers between them and those worlds.

Zelig saw himself as a dwarf in the midst of giants. But if he had only come to Kotzk for the *kriyat shema* he just read and for the Shabbat prayer he prayed after accepting the yoke of the kingdom of heaven among the faithful servants of the palace, it was enough for him.

The group finished their *tefillah*. They finished praising and placing the royal crown on the head

of their King. They now sat in joy at their table to eat the Shabbat meal in honor of their King, for "it is an eternal sign, that in six days Hashem made the heavens and the earth..."

Zelig sat among them, his eyes surveying those around him with admiration... The disciple beside him poured a glass of fine wine and handed it to him, "Drink Zelig. In honor of the holy Shabbat!"

Zelig drank the glass, and then came another glass, and another glass, and another...

Those sitting at the table prolonged the eating, singing, and *Divrei Torah*. They didn't rest their heads until two in the morning.

The feast was over, and the drunken Zelig fell onto his bed with no strength...

Warm, caressing sun rays burst through the window and bathed Zelig's face. His eyes opened, and he looked anxiously at the cuckoo clock on the wall.

It was a minute to nine.

Zelig observed his surroundings, and to his astonishment, he saw that all the beds around him were

occupied! All the men were lying on their cots. None of them moving...

Zelig didn't judge them, *chas v'shalom*, but he had to decide whether he should get up to serve the Creator as he was accustomed and be awake among those sleeping, making his presence stand out among the Torah giants, or remain lying down until one of them gets up from his bed and he'll only follow suit...

He ultimately decided it's best to "lie down and refrain from action." Zelig didn't impassion his soul with the courage to be first among the greats. He felt it was haughty to hasten before the zealous. "I have no intention to be haughty. Nevertheless, it's better that my colleagues reveal a bad *middah* within me and eradicate it from me than to reveal a good *middah* and praise me for it, thus bringing me to pride," he said to himself and remained on his bed.

There was still some time before the latest time to recite *kriyat shema*, so he decided, "It's forbidden to say *divrei Torah*

aloud, but I can contemplate in thought on *divrei Torah* while lying on my bed. Thus lying here won't be considered an iniquity..."

But the latest time for *kriyat shema* was approaching, and everyone was still sleeping on their beds. "Could it be that they're lenient in this Halacha, exempting themselves from reciting *kriyat shema* at its allotted time because of being overcome by sleep?" It couldn't be, for Zelig knew that they bore the yoke of the kingdom of heaven, and no burden was as heavy and no sacrifice as precious to them as *kriyat shema*! "If so, what is it that I am seeing? If indeed they can absolve themselves because they were overcome by sleep, how can I absolve myself, for I am awake!"

He forced himself to get up.

While Zelig shook himself out of bed, he raised his head, and at that moment, his lying neighbor fixed a pair of eyes on him. Perhaps he woke up momentarily, fixed his gaze on him, but then went on sleeping... At first, Zelig didn't take note as to know who his neighbors were, but now that he

saw his neighbor's face, and especially his eyes, he immediately recognized him as the head of the group, Reb Chaim, the man to whom all looked up to last night.

But why did Zelig hesitate? He said that he would get up. Why isn't he getting up? Why is he afraid to get up? Is there some evil deed, *chas v'shalom*, in his thought of getting up to recite *kriyat shema* at its allotted time? It could be that this was nothing but a childish act of being shy in the company of new people... Nonetheless, Zelig was absolutely astonished at Reb Chaim. If he had already woken up, why did he return to sleep?!

He didn't allow himself to lie any longer, for Zelig knew that if he lingered any longer, the time to recite *kriyat shema* would surely pass. He doesn't remember ever missing *kriyat shema* at its allotted time before. Could such a thing happen to him in this particular place, in Kotzk?

Zelig then said to himself, "I don't care what will happen. I'm getting up on my feet!" The

exact moment he got out of his bed, everyone else quickly got up, washed their hands, put on their clothes hastily, and ran outside to recite *kriyat shema*. The allotted time for *kriyat shema* didn't pass... Zelig then said, "Hashem doesn't bring about a stumbling block through the tzaddikim..."

When they returned to the room, they put all their beds in a corner, brought water to wash their hands, and restored the order of last night. The table was in the middle of the room, and the people sat in their places.

"Surely, they're sitting down to study Torah," Zelig thought, "For one only stands in prayer after studying Torah..."

"Yankel'e!" a voice was suddenly heard calling, "The world is waiting!" "Right away!" Yankel'e replied apologetically. Zelig then witnessed how Yankel'e ran hastily and took out a bottle of fine wine from one of the knapsacks and, from another knapsack, took out yeast cakes and put them on the table.

“**Mizmor** *L’David*,” was heard aloud. The *kiddush* concluded, and the group cut thick slices of cake for themselves and began to eat them slowly...

One man sitting to the right of Zelig, known as “Chatzkel” by the group, pulled Zelig’s sleeve and urged him, “Well...” Zelig answered, “I haven’t prayed yet...”

He smiled at him with the rest of the people at the table. Chatzkel then said to him, “We woke up together, come on!” The words came out of Zelig’s mouth by themselves, “It’s not my custom to eat and m... make *kiddush* before prayer.” Chatzkel’s face contorted like someone who heard something obscene. The ears of everyone who sat there and heard Zelig’s words perked up to the sound of his words, “It’s not my custom...” Even Zelig himself admitted in his heart that his mouth had failed him by saying “I” in a place where there is no one but Him...

Zelig sat in his place as several people stood around him. Some reprimanded him for his stubbornness and his audacity to

oppose those who are greater than him, and some gave him a pressuring smile as if to say to him, “Because you’re just a baby, you’re not subject to punishment, but a baby must obey those who are bigger than him...”

They pressured him more and more until his world went dark. The pressure peaked, and their anger increased, wanting to make of pile of bones of him because of his rudeness and stubbornness... However, Zelig was unambiguous and accepted upon himself in his heart, “No matter what happens to me, I won’t listen to them. I won’t drink wine or eat cake before prayer!”

Indeed, Zelig remained in his place for a while, withstanding all the pressure, until an elder from among the group approached him and saved him from those standing around him. “Bring him to Reb Chaim. Whatever Reb Chaim says, he’ll do.”

Zelig’s neighbors, who heard the elder’s advice, didn’t wait until he clearly stated that he agreed...

In the blink of an eye, they brought him before Reb Chaim. Zelig stood before him in great fear.

Reb Chaim didn't raise his eyes to Zelig, for his spirit would've broken if Zelig had seen his eyes. Rather he just sat thoughtfully with his eyes lowered and listened to what Zelig's "friends" had to say...

After Reb Chaim heard the entire incident of his stubbornness, he let out a few words under his breath that weren't all heard. However, what Zelig did hear was enough for his stomach to drop and have all feelings of "rebellion" depart. "All who are haughty in their heart are an abomination to Hashem" – this verse certainly came out of Reb Chaim's mouth. "Anyone who separates from the congregation..." – this also caught his ears. Who can stand in front of a large crowd and oppose the words of their great Reb Chaim?

Zelig's spirit didn't rise again. He kneeled down and surrendered. His "friends," who brought him before Reb Chaim, returned him to his place and sat him down. They brought before

him cakes and placed a full *kiddush* cup in his right hand...

"V'Shamru *Bnei Israel Et HaShabbat,*" he got all choked up with tears. "*Zachor Et Yom HaShabbat L'Kadsho. Sheshet...*" tears flowed down his cheeks. He wouldn't have had the strength to withhold his tears if he hadn't heard a voice of rebuke, "*Shabbos !!!*"

Poor Zelig gathered the rest of his strength and continued with the *kiddush*, "*Al Ken Berach...*" "*Savri Maranan...*" "*Baruch Ata...*"

Before Zelig could say Hashem's name, the cup was knocked out of his hand, the cake was stolen, and with his hands and feet clutched, he was laid on the bench, and in the blink of an eye, he received numerous strikes, accompanied by harsh reprimands:

"How small in your eyes is the G-d that you serve that Reb Chaim is stronger than Him!? You're a fool for nullifying the will of your Creator before the will of those who are criminals in your eyes and for letting them cause you to doubt what you are sure of!

Parashat Shelach Lecha - I Will Give It To Your Descendants !

Beat him! Beat him! Don't spare him! He sees people sleeping and doesn't want to be awake among them. He sees people awake and is afraid to be asleep among them. Only his G-d Who is his life and strength, Him alone he doesn't see and of Whom he is not afraid!

Beat him! Beat him! Don't spare him! Here's one – for not getting up to serve your Creator and being ashamed of those who mock you! One and one – for suspecting the innocent! One and two – for being persuaded to do what you know is wrong! One and three – for turning to 'foreign gods' and worshipping your 'I'!"

It turns out that by the time Zelig had woken up at his regular time, the group of disciples had already gotten up at dawn, prayed

with *kavana* at sunrise, and engaged in their holy *avodah*. They then returned to their beds to teach a lesson to Zelig, who desired to enter true *avodat Hashem*, the first lesson in Kotzk...

But for Zelig, the harsh rebukes were nothing but myrrh oil to his bones, for it was the beginning of his apprenticeship...¹

A Jew must fulfill the will of their Father and King in heaven, even if it is difficult, even if they stand alone against many who incite them, and even if the whole world tells them otherwise...

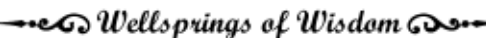
So long as a person takes into consideration what others will think or say about them, they are far from the truth...

About that in our parasha. But let's start from the beginning...

I Will Give It To Your Descendants !

It all started with the Covenant between the Parts. Hashem promised Avraham

Avinu that he would grant Am Israel the Land of Israel...²



1. Chassidim VeAnshei Maasei (Vol. 1, p. 354).

2. **In** a lecture delivered by Rabbi Shimshon David Pincus zt"l (Moadei

Parashat Shelach Lecha - I Will Give It To Your Descendants !

HaShanah – Exile and Consolation, p. 274), he said the following...

Sefer Bereishis does not mention a promise from Hashem to the Avos that He would give them and their descendants Torah and mitzvos. The only thing He promised them was Eretz Yisrael. Yet, the Jewish people have been in *galus* for almost two thousand years now. As we see, we can live without Eretz Yisrael for an awfully long time; but we can't live without Torah and mitzvos for even a moment. The Torah is our only connection with Hashem. Not only that, but if we don't keep Torah and mitzvos properly, Eretz Yisrael loses all its value. It is like a body without a soul.

If so, why did Hashem promise Eretz Yisrael, rather than Torah and mitzvos ?

The matter may be compared to a *chasan* and *kallah*. When a couple gets married, we bless them, “*Tizku livnos bayis ne’eman b’Yisrael* – May you merit building a faithful house in Yisrael.” Why do we bless them that they should have a house? Is a house the most important thing? After they get married, theoretically they could live in a hotel, and raise their children there, and even grandchildren. What is so crucial about having a “house”?

Clearly, owning a house is not the most essential thing in married life. Marriage is much more profound than that. Nevertheless, sharing a home defines marriage. The essential thing in married life is to have privacy together, and a “house” expresses this privacy. A house

is a closed place – four walls and a roof – where they can be alone together.

Privacy is inherent to a home. You don't just walk into someone's house, even if the door is not locked. You first knock, because you are about to enter someone's private space. This is why a house expresses the special relationship of marriage.

Judaism is essentially the relationship between us and Hashem; and this is what Eretz Yisrael represents. (Surely, the content of Judaism is Torah and mitzvos. Only this creates the connection between us and Hashem. When Torah and mitzvos are lacking, it is like a husband and wife who share the same physical living quarters but have nothing to do with one another. This is not called a “*bayis ne’eman*.”) Eretz Yisrael generally, and the Beis HaMikdash specifically, are the shared “home” of Hashem and the Jewish people. Here is where the relationship can come to expression.

Chazal call our shuls a miniature Beis HaMikdash. This means that the same idea that the Beis HaMikdash represents is to be found in a shul. A synagogue or a *beis midrash* is the place where we find privacy with Hashem. No one reads the newspaper or listens to the radio in a shul, because it is a place to be alone with HaKadosh Baruch Hu. Doing so would be like a *chasan* taking out a newspaper and reading it in front of his *kallah* in the *cheder yichud*.

The best way for us to understand what it was like when the Beis HaMikdash stood is to say that it was like living in a shul or a *beis midrash*. For hundreds of years, the Jewish people lived that

Four hundred twenty-nine years passed since that promise, and then, Hashem appeared to Moshe Rabbeinu and commanded him, “Go inform Am Israel that I will redeem them from Egypt and bring them to the Land of Israel.”

Thus it says, “Go, gather the elders of Israel, and say to them: Hashem, the G-d of your forefathers appeared to me... I

have said, I will bring you up from the suffering of Egypt, to the land of the Canaani, the Chitti, the Emori, the Perizi, the Chivi, and the Yevussi, to a land flowing with milk and honey” (Shemot 3:16-17).

A year after Moshe informed them, Am Israel went out of Egypt, leaving behind them scorched soil and frightened inhabitants...

The Bitter Results of Complaints

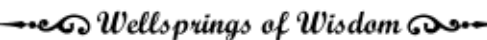
Am Israel began their journey towards the Promised Land, but the route wasn't to their liking. They complained and defied Hashem's will, time and time again. We'll mention them briefly...

1. Standing in front of the waves of *Yam Suf*, Am Israel complained, saying to Moshe, “Were there not enough graves in Egypt that you took us out to die in the wilderness? What have you done to us, bringing us out of Egypt?!” (Shemot 14:11).

2. After the splitting of *Yam Suf*, Am Israel continued their journey and found no water to drink, “And the people complained to Moshe saying: What will we drink?” (Shemot 15:24).

3. On the 15th of Iyar, the thirtieth day after their exodus from Egypt, Am Israel ran out of bread that they took with them before they left, and they complained again.

4. That same day (the 15th of Iyar), the *mann* began to fall, and Moshe



way, in privacy with Hashem. It is hard for us to truly grasp the significance of

this, but we know that these were the best times the Jewish people ever had.

Rabbeinu gave Am Israel several instructions, one of which was, “Let no person leave any over until morning” (Shemot 16:19) – That is, it was forbidden to keep the *mann* for tomorrow, rather they had to collect new *mann* every day.

A number of people thought: He wants us to be dependent on him?! No way... “They didn’t listen to Moshe. There were people who left some over until morning” (Shemot 16:20).

5. Moshe gave Am Israel another instruction regarding the *mann*... On Shabbat, no *mann* will fall. Therefore, on Friday, collect two portions.

There were people who thought, “Who said he’s right? Maybe it will fall on Shabbat, and we’re just wasting our time...”

“**On** the seventh day, some of the people went out to gather, but they found nothing” (Shemot 16:27).

6. “The entire congregation of Bnei Israel journeyed from the Sin Desert, traveling according to the word of Hashem. The people quarreled with Moshe and said: Give us water to drink! Moshe said to them: Why are you quarreling with me? Why are you testing Hashem?” (Shemot 17:1-2).

7. At the foot of Mount Sinai, they committed the sin of the golden calf...

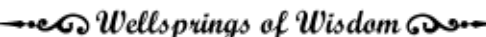
8. Am Israel traveled from Mount Sinai and quickly strode toward Eretz Israel. Then they complained that Hashem had been directing them for three consecutive days without rest...

9. The *erev rav* complained about the fact they constantly eat *mann*. They craved eating meat and other delicacies.

The ninth complaint arose to heaven, and there, judgment was awakened...

One More Chance!

The Mishna says,³ “Whoever engages in Torah study for its own sake, merits many things... and the secrets



of the Torah are revealed to him.”

The secrets of the Torah are revealed to anyone who learns Torah for its own sake (there are several methods of revelation), and if they weren't revealed to them, it's a sign that they haven't yet merited learning Torah for its own sake...

One of the myriads of holy rabbis who merited learning Torah for its own sake was Maran, Rabbi Yosef Karo, the author of the Shulchan Aruch. An angel, who would teach him Torah, was revealed to him, and a very small part of its words was printed in the book *Maggid Mesharim*.

On the 23rd of Sivan, on Shabbat night, the angel appeared to Rabbi Yosef Karo and taught him the following about parashat Shelach Lecha...

Am Israel complained several times about Hashem's conduct with them, which caused *Middat HaDin* (the trait of judgment) to come before Hashem and demand that all the Jews who complained (all the men between the ages of 20 to 60) be forbidden to enter Eretz Israel!

However, *Middat HaRachamim* (the trait of mercy) begged before Hashem and asked, "Please, Hashem, Merciful Father, give them another chance!"

Hashem agreed, saying, "Now, in their current state, they don't have enough merit to enter the Land, but I'm ready to give them another chance. If they take advantage of the opportunity, the judgment will be sweetened, and they'll enter Eretz Israel!"

I will cause the love for Eretz Israel to awaken within their hearts, and after they merit the love for Eretz Israel, they'll be able to enter! For the merit of loving Eretz Israel is enough to be allowed to enter the Land!

I'll make them want to send spies to scout the land, and the spies will return, praising Eretz Israel. Following their words, a longing for Eretz Israel will arise in the hearts of Am Israel, and in that merit, they'll be worthy to enter and inherit the Land!"

In heaven, the plan was made, and on earth, Am Israel approached Moshe...

Sending the Spies

Moshe Rabbeinu sees a mass of people approaching him, and thus it says, “You approached me, all of you, and said: Let us send men ahead to spy out the land for us” (Devarim 1:22).

Rashi comments: “You approached me, all of you” – in a crowd, children pushing the elders, and the elders pushing the leaders.

Moshe asked them, “What’s going on?”

They replied, “You’ve been telling us stories about a mysterious land for over a year. A land where rivers of milk and honey flow. A land whose harvest is inconceivable! We’re afraid of the unknown. Thus we want to send spies to go ahead and see what’s going on there and come back and inform us.”

Moshe agreed to their request, called for 12 righteous people, and assigned them the mission. Thus he said to them: Go and observe “how

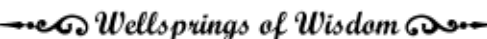
the land is... is it good, or bad... is it rich or poor... and strengthen yourselves, and take of the fruit of the land” (Bamidbar 13:19-20).

It was clear to Moshe Rabbeinu that the Land was good and rich, for thus Hashem testified about it. If so, why did Moshe ask to find out if maybe it was “bad or poor?”

Rebbe Yitzhak Meir Alter, the Chiddushei HaRim, explains as follows...⁴

Moshe Rabbeinu told them, “Even if it seems to you that the Land is bad or poor, you should know that concerning Eretz Israel, plain sight isn’t enough. You have to look deeply!” But they didn’t heed his advice, and ultimately, they spoke according to what their eyes saw. Thus Moshe said to them, “strengthen yourselves” – in Eretz Israel, one needs to strengthen themselves and not despair.

We’ll clarify his holy words...



4. His words are quoted in the book Emet V’Emuna (p. 345).

The Truth About Eretz Israel!

Eretz Israel. The land that millions of Jews for hundreds of years longed for, yearned for, and dreamed of reaching.

No matter what the status of the Jew was in exile, whether poor and wretched or extremely wealthy, within every Jewish heart pulsed the intense desire, “Were I given the wings of a dove, I would fly and dwell” (Tehillim 55:7) in Eretz Israel! When will we merit getting out of this exile, leaving the gentile lands, and dwelling under the protection of Hashem in Eretz Israel?!

The land of Eretz Israel is holy in and of itself because of the Shechina that dwells there. For Hashem chose only the Land of Israel to rest His Shechina in, as it says, “the Land... in which I dwell” (Bamidbar 35:34).

Thus *chazal* say...⁵ A Jew should always reside in Eretz Israel even in a city that is populated mainly by gentiles, and

not reside outside of Eretz Israel even in a city that is populated mainly by Jews. Because everyone who resides in Eretz Israel is considered as one who has a G-d, and everyone who resides outside of Eretz Israel is considered as one who doesn't have a G-d, as it says, “To give you the land of Canaan, to be your G-d” (Vayikra 25:38).

Therefore, there is no land worthy of the Beit HaMikdash and for the Shechina to dwell in but the Land of Israel.

“Because of this, you should know,” Moshe said to the spies, “that it is forbidden to view Eretz Israel negatively. And in order to see the beauty of Eretz Israel, one requires a very high spiritual level. Thus, I ask of you, even if you see flaws, that it is “bad or poor,” ascribe the flaws to yourself, that you aren't refined enough and don't have the merit to see the spiritual beauty of Eretz Israel. Inevitably, when you return, you won't

Parashat Shelach Lecha - The Result – Failure !

verbalize what you saw, rather you'll declare the truth as it is !”

The spies listened to Moshe's words and set out...

The Result – Failure !

The spies trekked the paths of Eretz Israel for 40 days. They forced their way through trees laden with fruit and huge vegetables...

Forty days later, the spies returned to the desert, gathered Am Israel, and told only the truth !

They didn't listen to Moshe to praise the Land of Israel. Instead, they expressed what their physical eyes saw ! Their report extinguished all the Jew's longing and yearning for Eretz Israel. Am Israel burst into tears and lamentation, “The entire congregation raised their voices, and the people wept that night” (Bamidbar 14:1).

In heaven, *Middat HaDin* celebrated its victory. An order was issued to prevent the exit of all men

between the ages of 20 to 60 from the desert... In the desert they will live, in the desert they will die, and in the desert, they will be buried...

But why did the spies fail ? What was the root of their failure ?

Rebbe Menachem Mendel of Kotzk zt”l explains as follows...⁶

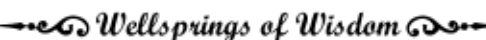
“**We** were like grasshoppers in our eyes, and so we appeared in their eyes” (Bamidbar 13:33) – This was one of the sins of the spies. But the question arises, we can understand them when they said, “We were like grasshoppers in our eyes,” but why did they say, “and so we appeared in their eyes,” why did they care how they looked in the eyes of others ? !

We'll clarify his holy words...

How Do You Appear in Who's Eyes ? !

One of the strongest forces that act on a person and

influence their behavior is public opinion. “Public,” meaning their



6. Emet V'Emuna (p. 344).

neighbor across the street, their aunt, the people walking down the street, as well as all the inhabitants of the world. Their opinion influences them without exerting any actual strength.

It's enough for a person to see a pair of eyes staring at them or to know that people will talk about them behind their back for them to change their behavior and adjust themselves to their surroundings.

There is something positive in the fact that a person is sensitive and influenced by the opinion of their surroundings, for it creates harmony between the individual and the whole and builds the unity of the public.

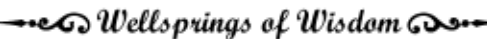
However, there is also a negative side to this... when public opinion opposes what your conscience feels is your obligation and truth. It would be wrong, in this case, if you let public opinion influence you. When caught in this

challenging situation, it is very difficult for a person to gather the courage to stand against the opinion of those surrounding them. People recoil from a mere glance, even from people they don't know!

And this is no wonder, for since our childhood we heard from our educators, "If you do this or that, everyone will laugh at you," or "no one does that or thinks that way." These, and other similar sayings, shape us from our childhood to be sensitive to "what others will say" and to obey public opinion.

This causes us to become distanced from our inner truth!

It is forbidden for a person to live like this! A person must live their own selves, feeding on the batteries of their own truth, without being a spiritual parasite. To toil, to sweat, to fail, to try again and again without lowering their heads in despair, without considering "what will so-and-so say."⁷



7. **This** is, of course, according to the Torah and its Halachot. Only that each individual Jew has their own virtue in

which they excel in *avodat Hashem* and in which they connect to Hashem the most. Some are drawn to Torah study,

Parashat Shelach Lecha - How Do You Appear in Who's Eyes?!

This was the root of the sin of the spies!

The spies returned to Am Israel and told only the truth, "We came to the land you sent us to, and it indeed flows with milk and honey, and this is its fruit (true!). However, the people who inhabit the land are mighty, and the cities are greatly fortified, and we also saw the offspring of the giants there (true!). Amalek dwells in the south of the land... (true!). It is a land that devours its inhabitants, and all the

people we saw in it are huge (true!). There we saw the Nephilim, the sons of the giants, and we were like grasshoppers in our eyes (true!), **and so we appeared in their eyes**" (Bamidbar 13:27-33).

When the Kotzker Rebbe reached these words ("and so we appeared in their eyes"), he stopped and shouted, "Oy!"

The Rebbe uttered one syllable containing a comprehensive explanation of the entire sin of the spies and the reason for their spiritual

...*~* Wellsprings of Wisdom *~*...

and within the *avodah* of Torah study, one is drawn to Gemara, one to Halacha, the other to Mussar, another to Chassidut, and yet another to Kabbalah.

Others are drawn to the *avodah* of *tefillah*, and there, they excel in *avodat* Hashem, pouring out their hearts to Hashem and drawing down abundance to Am Israel.

And there are others who are drawn to *chesed*, and within this *avodah*, there are those who do *chesed* by physically helping others, some by mentally or spiritually helping others by listening to them and encouraging or guiding them, and yet others do *chesed* by financially helping needy Jews through *tzedakah*...

The main thing is that within each person's individual *avodah*, they direct

their heart to Hashem, and do everything *leshem shamayim*.

(As a side note: every Jew must strive to excel in all these aspects of *avodat* Hashem, i.e., everyone must set time for daily Torah study (and how precious is your portion if you merited sitting and toiling in Torah the entire day); everyone must pray *shacharit*, *mincha*, and *arvit* with a minyan every day (women are only obligated to pray once a day); everyone must do *chesed* and *tzedakah*. Only that one must know where their soul most connects to Hashem.)

Each person must know who they are and what their *kelim* (lit. vessels, i.e., their virtues and abilities) are. For if one doesn't, they could serve Hashem for 120 years, and yet when they arrive in heaven, they'll be told that they didn't fulfill their mission, they didn't fulfill their purpose in life...

deterioration. One “oy” in the right place. One “oy” that contains everything. That’s it, that’s the lie, that’s the disaster !

An “oy !” screaming, “What do you care !? How do you know who you are in their eyes ?! Why does your appearance in their eyes occupy a place in your own inner world ? Why does it concern you ? !”

It is forbidden for one’s inner truth to face these questions. The eyes of others are the minefield where the chosen ones of Israel, the spies, failed ! This mine is the entrance to the abyss into which humanity descends. Throughout

life, a person should constantly ask themselves, “How do I appear in my own eyes ?” Not in the eyes of others...⁸

This feeling of “How do I appear in the eyes of others” was the root of their failure !

This is what caused their “physical vision” to overcome their “spiritual vision” and thus to express what their physical eyes saw...

This is what confined Am Israel to the desert for 40 years, and this is what confines every person throughout their entire life...

Before we connect this to our own lives, a little preface...

The Light of Darkness

During creation, Hashem created countless spiritual worlds. Within those worlds dwell sublime spiritual angels who serve their Creator with all their might.

But despite this, despite the incredibly holy *avodah* of the angels, Hashem mainly

receives *nachat ruach* (pleasure) precisely from our coarse, physical world.

The reason for this is very simple.

The spiritual worlds are entirely pure, clean, and holy. Therefore, isn’t difficult to serve Hashem, and since that’s the case,

there's no need for *mesirut nefesh* to fulfill Hashem's will.

In contrast, in our world, where *Elokut* is concealed, where the pleasures of this world are tangible, and the pleasures of Olam Haba are only part of our *emuna*, we require a tremendous amount of *mesirut nefesh* to serve Hashem.

Thus, a great light from our *mesirut nefesh* rises above and gives Hashem immense *nachat*.

This secret was revealed to us by Shlomo HaMelech, who said, "Light is superior to darkness" (Kohelet 2:13). That is, the virtue of light is evident precisely in the darkness.

Light is visible and emanates precisely from the darkness, and good is revealed precisely because of the shadows of evil...

This isn't evident only between our world and the worlds above, but also within each and every Jew.

Every Jew experiences a different kind of darkness. Every

Jew encounters a different kind of difficulty in their *middot*, emotions, and understanding. But when one merits working on themselves and illuminates their darkness, a breathtaking, immense light emerges from them, a new light that has never emerged before and will never emerge from anyone else. A unique light that belongs only to that person (for, as mentioned, the darkness of each Jew is also their own unique darkness).

Every Jew has a special mission. The soul of a Jew descended to this world in order to infuse holiness, joy, power, and intense light into the physical world and to transform the physical into spiritual. To make the physical a vessel for the divine light of Hashem to enter.

And the darkness that precedes the light is precisely where the soul needs to reveal its light...⁹

After this introduction, we can now connect this to our lives...

...*~* **Wellsprings of Wisdom** *~*...

9. We'll give two examples of this: **Hashem** calls for the soul of Shimon

and says to him, "Shimon, you will now descend into the world."

Parashat Shelach Lecha - The Light of Darkness

Shimon asks, “Master of the world ! Why ? I have it so good here ! I’m here in heaven, basking in the light of the Shechina ! Why descend into a world full of concealment ? !”

Hashem responds, “I want to assign you a mission. I want you to educate the Jewish children.”

Shimon begs, sheds tears, and pleads. But there is nothing to be done, “Against your will you were formed, against your will you were born, and against your you will live !” (Pirkei Avot 4:22).

A cry is heard in a small town somewhere in the big world. A baby is born. Mazal Tov ! And his name shall be, “Shimon !”

Shimon grows up. He’s already in first grade. But his head is impenetrable. He “merited” all possible difficulties in learning.

The best educators look at him as an incarnation of a granite slab, of a ceramic tile.

When they see that he’s embarrassed, they feel sorry for him, and they instead define him as a broom. No one gives him a chance; they give him no hope...

But Hashem helps him and instills in him a desire to progress. He begins to learn...

While all his friends receive compliments left and right. While his friends receive 100s effortlessly. While his whole environment is advancing and everyone is happy, learning, understanding, and dancing, he’s trying with all his might to learn, but he doesn’t understand. He doesn’t grasp anything...

They see him smiling, but the smile is only superficial because he doesn’t feel

comfortable. Inside, he’s scorched. He’s a pile of ashes. His heart is dry, miserable, and depressed. And no one understands him.

Truthfully, no one can understand him. Even his father and mother, who raised him, can’t understand him, because they didn’t go down his path.

In truth, Shimon is a diamond of infinite value, but he’s covered by two tons of rock. He has to face many difficulties, the hardest of which is loneliness. Shimon faces all the difficulties alone ! He grows up without any compliments. Even in the compliment or encouragement he receives once in a few months, there isn’t a single word of truth. It’s all superficial. Those around him think he doesn’t understand. But his soul understands perfectly well...

Seemingly, Shimon has every reason to despair. But the holy soul inside him tells him, “Do not despair, rather ask for mercy.” Thus he pours out his soul in prayer, sobbing before Hashem.

Suddenly an opening appears, and another opening, and another opening. Twenty years pass, during which he shed endless tears. A pure, holy wellspring finally opens within him. Aged wine, from which the elders derive pleasure. What ancient wisdom !

He begins his mission, and becomes an educator. He becomes a true educator !

From all the hardships he went through, he will be able to identify every child. When he sees a talented child, he will tell him, “Way to go !” and direct him to the next stage. And

Parashat Shelach Lecha - The Light of Darkness

when he sees a child struggling, not only will he not discourage him, he will know how to guide him. He will know how to find shortcuts for him. He will know how to challenge him appropriately. He will know how to give him the right compliments.

A child knows whether compliments given to them are true and accurate compliments or false compliments. A child must know that whoever is talking to them genuinely loves them as they are, without conditions.

You have to love a child unconditionally without imposing any conditions. It doesn't matter if they get a zero or if they get a hundred, the love for them must be pure, clean love.

One who experienced a mountain of difficulties will be able to tolerate and accept all the souls that pass by them. Anyone who hasn't experienced such doesn't know the language.

One who doesn't know French, if you put them among French people, they won't understand them whatsoever. It's a different language.

Those who haven't experienced heaps of difficulties can't understand any child who has difficulties. But those who have experienced heaps upon heaps of difficulties, will be able to understand doubly, both the struggling ones and the brilliant ones. Understanding the brilliant child isn't a problem. Challenging brilliant children is simple. But embracing and empowering the weak child, the struggling child, is no small matter...

We'll give another example:

A person whose mission is to be a philanthropist, a *baal tzedakah*, Hashem will put them through many years of poverty. When they want to eat a slice of bread, they'll have to estimate that if they eat three slices now, they won't have enough in the evening. If so-and-so, then so-and-so... If they accidentally find a pair of shoes near the trash, it'll be a gift for themselves for the holidays. It doesn't matter at all who wore them before...

You ask, "What, such poverty?" Yes, but wait, it's part of the path.

One day, Hashem grants them wealth, and then they become such a great *baal tzedakah*, so merciful; there's no end to the measure of their mercy. Do you know why? Who caused them to be so merciful? The poverty they went through!

But those who grew up with abundance, those who grew up in a house where they talk about nine figures or more, who change cars every few months. They haven't yet had the chance to remove the plastic seat covers, and they're already replacing the car. And not some Subaru, but cars worth half a million and up. Tell them, "You know, there's a person here who has no money to buy food for Shabbat." They don't understand that language. Even if they try to understand, they won't be able to grasp it. They don't know the reality of lacking; they don't understand what it's like to stand in front of a child who cries for a slice of bread.

Thus, what did Hashem do to that philanthropist whose mission in the world, whose tikkun in the world is to be a *baal*

Where You Are Going...

One of the most famous Mishnayot is the Mishna said by Akiva ben Mahalalel.¹⁰ Thus he said, “Reflect upon three things, and you will not come to sin: Know from where you came, where you are going, and before Whom you are destined to give a judgment and accounting.”

Dear Jew! “Know from where you came” – Know that your soul descended from the loftiest of heights, and therefore

it is more precious than all of creation!

Know “where you are going” – If you merit fulfilling the 613 mitzvot, you will merit going (advancing) from level to level.

And after longevity, when you “give a judgment and accounting” – You will merit an enormous, immeasurable reward!

We’ll focus on the middle stage, “where you are going...”

Your Own Path!

Hashem paved a path for every Jew. Everyone has a predetermined, individual path. No one can walk the other’s path. Because every Jew has their own mission, they’re the only ones who can fulfill that specific mission.

Hashem gave every Jew the strength and abilities they need in order to carry out their own personal mission.

But, for there to be the power of free will, Hashem created the *yetzer hara* that would try to hinder one from fulfilling their mission.

The *yetzer* will allow a person to make a lot of money, it will allow a person to have all the time in the world, it will even allow them to fulfill mitzvot!

...**Wellsprings of Wisdom**...

tzedakah? He put them through a path of poverty, of difficulty, of lack, and struggle. Out of great distress, Hashem

suddenly opens a door for them. He opens a new channel of immense light...

10. Pirkei Avot 3:1.

Parashat Shelach Lecha - Stand Strong!

Everything! Except for their mission!

The Tanna of the Mishna warns us and says, “Dear Jew! Know where you are going! Know your own individual path, and stick to it. Then you will merit knowing who you really are!”

This is what we learn from the two words that our parasha is named after, “שְׁלַח־לְךָ” (Send, for yourself).

Shelach Lecha – “שְׁלַח־לְךָ” expressing the מִשְׁמֵחָה (mission) that every Jew has, their personal

mission that only they can fulfill, and no one else.

And by fulfilling your personal mission (מִשְׁמֵחָה) you merit knowing yourself (אֵלֶיךָ), who you really are.

When a Jew fulfills their own mission, they get to know their soul and the abilities hidden within them. And then they merit possessing the power to illuminate the world.

But the *yetzer hara* causes the person to take other people’s opinions into consideration and thereby neglect their mission in the world...

Stand Strong!

“You must have read my article from last week. Well, what do you say? How was it? I wrote impressively, didn’t I?”

We glance at the questioner from the side, seeing a submissive man crouching down with sullen eyes staring at the embarrassed questionee, who probably didn’t see the article at all.

The questioner is a brilliant person with extensive knowledge and a talent for writing. The wonder is why he needs the approval and praise of the questionee who doesn’t know anything about writing and lacks the ability to criticize.

The above-mentioned questioner isn’t the only one suffering from this disease of lack of self-confidence, of

constantly needing the approval of other people for everything he does. The number of such people is rather large. But we distinguish mainly those who suffer from it excessively. They're the ones that attract our attention.

Those who possess it aren't stupid, they aren't ignorant, they are even quite wise to understand that others are less knowledgeable in so-and-so matters than they are. And nevertheless, they always seek the approval of other people, of any other person, even though they aren't at all certified to give such approval.

A person with a milder form of insecurity doesn't always race to receive approval from others for their actions. However, when others express an opinion contrary to their own, in which they are confident, their certainty weakens somewhat, and they may even withdraw from their previous position, which they were completely sure of a few minutes ago.

To us, it is clear, Baruch Hashem, that we have no

connection whatsoever to such ailment. We are confident in ourselves and do not depend on the approval of others. When we are sure of something and do it, the other person's opinion about it doesn't matter to us in the slightest.

A little more in-depth investigation reveals that things aren't that simple.

A researcher asked a person to join a particular group of people and told him that his aim was to examine one's perceptual ability. That person didn't know that all the members of the group were in on the study, that the researcher's prior instructions directed all their actions, and that the only one being researched was himself.

Two circles were projected on the screen, and each participant said which of the circles, in their estimation, was larger. The other participants' answers were consistent with the answer of the research subject. The same went for the following ten questions: which is wider,

which is taller, etc., the answer of the research subject corresponded to the answers of the others.

Then, two lines were projected on the screen, one clearly longer than the other. To the surprise of the research subject, the first participant answered that the shorter line was the longer one. The research subject was sure that the others would immediately react negatively to this obviously incorrect answer, but to his complete astonishment, they answered, one after the other, like the first participant.

The order of the participants was pre-planned so that the research subject would be the last to answer. As it came closer to his turn, the research subject became less and less confident in his original answer. He tilted his head to the right and left, to one angle and another, to compare the lines in a more “correct” way than he first thought. And indeed, when his

turn arrived, **his answer was the same as everyone else’s...**

When the research subject was told what the purpose of the experiment was, and he was asked directly why he gave an incorrect answer or changed his first, clear opinion, he stammered a kind of “explanation.” But what emerged clearly from this experiment was **the tremendous power of “everyone says so” even when their words are devoid of truth and clearly illogical.**

Those who believe that the research subject was particularly weak-minded and lacked a strong character and that such a thing couldn’t happen to a serious, strong-minded person, are invited to refer to the Mishna in Sanhedrin, which states that regarding *dinei nefashot* (capital cases), when the *Dayanim* (judges) are asked one by one for their opinion as to whether the defendant

is innocent or guilty, they must start with the opinion of the smallest of *Dayanim*, whereas the greatest of *Dayanim* will express his opinion last, even though it's below his honor.

The Sages feared that if the order were reversed, a *Dayan* might change his mind when it was established that his opinion differed from what the other *Dayanim* ruled. This is because our Sages already knew the crushing power of the other person's opinion many years before contemporary psychologists began researching and discovering it.

A prominent, *senior Dayan* debating *dinei nefashot*, who was up all night scrutinizing the testimonies over and over again until he formed his opinion regarding the defendant's innocence or guiltiness, may, the Mishna fears, abandon his confident, sure opinion, to the overhearing of the opposite opinion of the other *Dayanim*.

Are we still so sure now that we wouldn't be able to be moved like the above-mentioned research subject and that we would firmly stand by our clear opinion to the end?

A person who lives in an environment whose views aren't the same as their own and the constraints of reality don't allow them to change their surroundings, must be aware of this natural weakness of every normal person, and do everything in their ability to have the inner security and confidence in their beliefs, opinions, and principles, giving them the importance they deserve, so that not just any random futile speech or weird or disagreeing look of humanity will shake them from their positions and sweep them into the flow of opinion, or lack of opinion, of society.

The power to stand against the opinion of others can be acquired both by strengthening one's own opinion and creating self-confidence in what one is

Parashat Shelach Lecha - Shabbat Shalom !

sure of and by giving the of society, which is often a
appropriate weight to the opinions featherweight...¹¹

Shabbat Shalom !



The Pathway...

1. One of the strongest forces that act on a person and influence their behavior is public opinion. "Public," meaning their neighbor across the street, their aunt, the people walking down the street, as well as all the inhabitants of the world. Their opinion influences them without exerting any actual strength.
2. It's enough for a person to see a pair of eyes staring at them or to know that people will talk about them behind their back for them to change their behavior and adjust themselves to their surroundings.
3. There is something positive in the fact that a person is sensitive and influenced by the opinion of their surroundings, for it creates harmony between the individual and the whole and builds the unity of the public. However, there is also a negative side to this...
4. The negative side is when public opinion opposes what your conscience feels is your obligation and truth. It would be wrong, in this case, if you let public opinion influence you. When caught in this challenging situation, it is very difficult for a person to gather the courage to stand against the opinion of those surrounding them. People recoil from a mere glance, even from people they don't know ! And this is no wonder, for since our childhood we heard from our educators, "If you do this or that, everyone will laugh at you," or "no one does that or thinks that way." These, and other similar sayings, shape us from our childhood to be sensitive to "what others will say" and to obey public opinion.
5. This causes us to become distanced from our inner truth ! It is forbidden for a person to live like this ! A person must live their own selves, feeding on the batteries of their own truth, without being a spiritual parasite. To toil, to sweat, to fail, to try again and again without lowering their heads in despair, without considering "what will so-and-so say."
6. This was the root of the sin of the spies ! The spies returned to Am

The Pathway...

Israel and told only the truth, “We came to the land you sent us to, and it indeed flows with milk and honey, and this is its fruit (true!). However, the people who inhabit the land are mighty, and the cities are greatly fortified, and we also saw the offspring of the giants there (true!). Amalek dwells in the south of the land... (true!). It is a land that devours its inhabitants, and all the people we saw in it are huge (true!). There we saw the Nephilim, the sons of the giants, and we were like grasshoppers in our eyes (true!), **and so we appeared in their eyes**”

(Bamidbar 13:27-33).

7. When the Kotzker Rebbe reached these words (“and so we appeared in their eyes”), he stopped and shouted, “Oy!” One syllable containing a comprehensive explanation of the entire sin of the spies and the reason for their spiritual deterioration... What do you care!? How do you know who you are in their eyes?!

Why does your appearance in their eyes occupy a place in your own inner world? Why does it concern you?!”

8. It is forbidden for one’s inner truth to face these questions. The eyes of others are the minefield where the chosen ones of Israel, the spies, failed! This mine is the entrance to the abyss into which humanity descends. Throughout life, a person should constantly ask themselves, “How do I appear in my own eyes?” Not in the eyes of others...

9. This feeling of “How do I appear in the eyes of others” was the root of their failure! This is what caused their “physical vision” to overcome their “spiritual vision” and thus to express what their physical eyes saw... This is what confined Am Israel to the desert for 40 years, and this is what confines every person throughout their entire life...





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Shelach Lecha

21st of Sivan, 5783



City	Candle Lighting	Shabbat Ends	Rabbeinu Tam
New York	8:08 pm	9:17 pm	9:39 pm
Miami	7:53 pm	8:51 pm	9:24 pm
Los Angeles	7:45 pm	8:48 pm	9:16 pm
Montreal	8:23 pm	9:40 pm	9:55 pm
Toronto	8:39 pm	9:53 pm	10:11 pm
London	9:00 pm	10:30 pm	10:30 pm
Jerusalem	7:29 pm	8:19 pm	9:15 pm
Tel Aviv	7:26 pm	8:16 pm	9:11 pm
Haifa	7:27 pm	8:17 pm	9:13 pm
Be'er Sheva	7:24 pm	8:14 pm	9:09 pm

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