

פרשת שלח לך תשפ"ו

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ואמי מורתי מרת מרים בת ר' גדליה ע"ה

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An inspiring look at a point in the Parsha

"A Timeless message from Kolev!"

In this week's Parsha, the Torah tells us about the Meraglim. Rashi (י"ג:ב) gives us some background as to what happened. Klal Yisroel approached Moshe in a panic, telling him to send Meraglim to spy out the land. Moshe asked Hashem whether he should do so, Hashem answered him, "I have told them that the land is good so there is no need. If they do, I swear that I will give them room to err through the words of the Meraglim so that they won't take possession of the land." Due to this concern, the posuk (י"ג:ט"ז) tells us that Moshe davened for his prized Talmid, Yehoshua, and also added an extra letter Yud at the beginning of his name in order that he should be saved from the plot of the Meraglim. The Meforshim explain that the reason why Moshe specifically added a Yud to his name is because the Gematria of Yud is ten, thereby he was implying that he should be saved from the plot of the ten Meraglim. Although Moshe didn't daven for Kolev, Kolev was saved through davening at the Me'oras HaMachpeilah. As a result, both Yehoshua and Kolev were protected from the plot of the Meraglim.

A question

The question is, why didn't Moshe daven for the rest of the Meraglim too, especially when we consider that Hashem had told Moshe that He would give them a place to err in their judgement and prevent them from taking possession of the land? The ספר (מ"א) explains that the reason was because they had already made the wrong choice and been בורע ברע. So, what exactly was this wrong choice that they had made?

The answer is, since Hashem had told Klal Yisroel that the land was good, by displaying a lack of trust in Hashem and deciding to send Meraglim, this was a wrong choice and it had the powerful outcome that the Meraglim would return with a negative report

about the land. There was also another difficulty now which made the situation that much harder, because besides for them making the wrong choice, Hashem had made a powerful statement that He would give them a place to err.

The explanation here is that due to Klal Yisroel's desire to send Meraglim against the Rotzon Hashem, it created a very powerful pull of negativity "Kochas of Tumah" to speak badly about the land. The Rambam in (ו'א') tells us that it's human nature for a person to be greatly influenced by the people in his surroundings. All the more so here in such a situation, since they had made the wrong choice and Hashem had said that they would err. Therefore, Moshe felt that his Tefilah wouldn't be able to protect them. However, Yehoshua and Kolev were different, since they weren't בורע בוחר they had an advantage over the rest of Klal Yisroel and the Meraglim, that Moshe's Tefillos indeed helped Yehoshua, and Kolev's own Tefillos saved him.

What about Yehoshua?

The question is, we can understand why Kolev was later rewarded by Hashem since he made the effort to go to Kivrei Ovos to daven. However, the posuk tells us that Yehoshua was also rewarded, but for what exactly was he rewarded? What effort did Yehoshua do to save himself from the Meraglim when the posuk only tells us that Moshe davened and added a name to him?

The ספר עץ חיים (קי"ח) answers, that by the very fact that Yehoshua was rewarded this reveals to us that besides for Moshe Rabeinu's input into helping him, Yehoshua himself made extraordinary efforts to save himself from their influence. Indeed, Yehoshua and Kolev were both faced with a formidable battle here. And so, both Yehoshua and Kolev were found to be truly deserving of great reward since it was so difficult for them to succeed against the negativity of the Meraglim, and yet they managed to.

The two approaches

The question asked by many is, why didn't Moshe actually daven for Kolev? After all, he knew that Kolev didn't side with the Meraglim and he was also Moshe's brother-in-law - Miriam's husband? (Regarding the other Meraglim we explained that they were בוחר ברע making it impossible for Moshe to daven for them, however Kolev wasn't.)

The answer given by the חפץ חיים על התורה (ק"א) is that there two types of dangers that a person can face - a physical danger and a spiritual one. Moshe understood that regarding Yehoshua his main challenge was that the Meraglim could physically endanger him. To daven for someone else's physical welfare is possible, therefore, he davened for Yehoshua - who protested against the Meraglim during their exploration of Eretz Canaan. The Meraglim knew that he was the Talmid of Moshe and had heard the Nevuah from Eldod and Medad that Yehoshua would bring them into the land. Therefore, there was a very real danger that the Meraglim would harm Yehoshua to prevent this from happening, and so Moshe davened for him and added a Yud to his name.

Kolev's approach

Kolev's way of combatting the Meraglim was different. He kept quiet throughout the time that they were together exploring the land, giving the impression that he was one of them. In truth, he didn't support their views and was hoping to eventually surprise the Meraglim by stating that indeed the land was very good. This explains why later on when Kolev stood up he managed to quieten Klal Yisroel, because the Meraglim presumed that he was taking their side.

As a result, Kolev's challenge was unlike Yehoshua's. His was an internal challenge to avoid letting himself be influenced on a daily basis by the opinions of the Meraglim. Now, regarding spiritual dangers, according to some Meforshim, it's possible to daven for someone else's spiritual situation, however, the brunt of the Tefillah still lies on a person himself having to plead with Hashem to be

saved from spiritual danger. Due to this, Moshe didn't daven or give Kolev a Brocha and Kolev understood that if he wanted to escape the plot of the Meraglim, he would have to daven himself to be saved from their detrimental influence. Therefore, he stormed the Heavens at Kivrei Ovos and as a result, succeeded in being saved from the plot of the Meraglim.

Equal in greatness

The Chofetz Chaim makes an interesting observation regarding the two approaches in combatting negative influences. He notes that at times, Yehoshua is mentioned in the posuk before Kolev whereas sometimes, Kolev is mentioned first. Why? Wasn't Yehoshua greater than Kolev? Yehoshua gave us the Mesoras of Torah from Moshe Rabeinu and he brought Klal Yisroel into Eretz Cana'an? The answer is, that the Torah is teaching us that as long as a person acts Leshem Shomayim, then whether he has to take the path of Yehoshua - of openly protesting against wrongdoings and negative influences, or the path of Kolev - to keep quiet and wait for a suitable moment to have an influence, they are both praiseworthy paths in Avodas Hashem. And so, the Torah sometimes mentions Kolev before Yehoshua to teach us that they were both equal in greatness whatever their approach, because both these paths are sometimes necessary!

Kolev and the children of the giants

Let's elaborate regarding the different measures that Kolev took to actually save himself from the Meraglim. The sefer זכרון משה brings the posuk (י"ג:כ"ב) which tells us: "They ascended in the south and he arrived at Chevron where there were Achimon, Sheshai, and Talmai, the offspring of the giant". Rashi explains that the word "he" arrived at Chevron is a reference to Kolev arriving there alone in order to prostrate himself in Tefila at the Kevorim of the Ovos so that he shouldn't be persuaded by his companions to be a party to their plan. The זכרון משה asks, why does the same posuk continue by telling us that the children of the giants were there? What is the connection between Kolev visiting Chevron and the giants?

“עת צרה” An

He brings a Zohar HaKodosh to answer this which states the following: “He went to the Kevorim of the Ovos and he endangered himself since the posuk tells us that the children of the giants were there, because when a person is going through a difficult situation, he doesn’t have the head space to be able to focus on his surroundings. So too by Kolev, since he found himself in such a difficult situation - עת צרה, he didn’t realise that the children of the giants were there and endangered himself by travelling there.

Indeed, this reveals to us the Mesiras Nefesh that Kolev displayed to save himself from the Meraglim’s influence that he regarded his situation so severely that it became an עת צרה for him and he was willing to travel to Chevron with no thought given for his own personal safety, so as not to fall into the Meraglim’s nefarious plot which could affect him spiritually!

Kolev takes action

It’s worth noting another point here in how Kolev dealt with the situation. Kolev understood that the power of a bad influence is so immense that he didn’t just rely on davening Tefillos in his own tent. Rather, he felt he had to do much more, and so he travelled to beseech Rachamim at Kivrei Ovos. The ספר דרשת הר"ן (ח'י"א) explains that the reason why Tefillos have a greater chance of acceptance when they are davened at Kivrei Tzadikim is because the powerful Kedusha that emanates from such places gives the Tefilla far greater potential to be accepted.

A Love for Eretz Yisroel

The (קנ"ג) brings another reason why he went to Kivrei Ovos. Due to the situation with the Meraglim, Kolev felt that he had to reinforce himself with a powerful love for Eretz Cana'an. Therefore, he chose to daven at Kivrei Ovos, since the Ovos themselves displayed a tremendous love and yearning for the land. By doing so, he was hoping that he would be positively influenced by the Ovos’ love for Eretz Yisroel and remain firm in his stance against the plot of the Meraglim.

Kolev's internal struggle

The ספר חידקל (שי"ח) makes another observation which highlights further how great the challenge of overcoming the Meraglim's influence was for Kolev. Indeed, this also gives us a deeper insight as to why he went to beseech for Rachamim at Kivrei Ovos.

He brings the well-known Zohar HaKodesh which explains that one of the reasons why the Meraglim plotted against Klal Yisroel entering Eretz Canaan was because it was revealed to them that when they would enter, they would be replaced by other Nesi'im. This bothered them so much that they ended up speaking badly about the land causing Klal Yisroel to lose heart to conquer it. Kolev also had this concern because he would also lose his נשיאות when they entered Eretz Canaan. This reveals to us how Kolev didn't just have to contend with the Meraglim's opinions regarding the land but at the same time, he was fighting an internal struggle against wanting to stay in the Midbar and remain a Nosi.

Eliezer's internal struggle

Overcoming such a struggle is truly remarkable and praiseworthy. He brings an example of a similar situation regarding Eliezer the servant of Avrohom. Eliezer was sent by Avrohom to find a wife for Yitzchok. Chazal tell us based on the expression "אלי" in the posuk (חיי שרה כ"ד:ל"ט) that Eliezer actually had a daughter who he was hoping would marry Yitzchok. However, Avrohom told him that this was impossible since Eliezer descended from Chom who was cursed whereas Yitzchok the son of Avrohom was blessed. Now under such circumstances, you would expect that Eliezer wouldn't put much effort into finding a wife for Yitzchok since he really wanted Yitzchok as his own son-in-law. Despite this, the Torah tells us that Eliezer overcame his inclination to have his daughter marry Yitzchok and went all out to ensure that Yitzchok would find a suitable match in Rivka. As a result the Torah tells us something phenomenal happened. Eliezer was zoche to receive the title of

becoming "ברוך" - blessed rather than cursed because he went against his nature in wanting to take Yitzchok as a wife for his daughter and put great efforts into finding him Rivka.

Kolev is rewarded for every step

Similarly here, Kolev, was zoche to live and enter Eretz Cana'an, and receive the town of Chevron where the Ovos are buried as an inheritance. Why was he so rewarded? Because, every step that he took in Chevron to daven for Rachamim at the Kivrei Ovos, was so cherished in Shomayim since by doing so, he went against the influence of the Meraglim and against his natural desire to want to remain a Nosi in the Midbor.

The need to constantly be vigilant

The tremendous efforts of Yehoshua and Kolev give us a new perspective into the seriousness with which we must address the dangers that negative influences have on us. Indeed, this is the way of Tzadikim as the following stories demonstrate.

After WW2, a large number of Yidden settled in the Tel Aviv area of Eretz Yisroel. However, as the years went by with Tel Aviv becoming more secular, most of these Yidden moved to other cities in Eretz Yisroel. There was a Yid with young children who lived in Tel Aviv who approached the Brisker Rav zt"l with the following question: "Should he move away from Tel Aviv since he was worried about the negative effect that living there could have on his children?" The Brisker Rov answered him, "What about the negative effect that it can have on you! Because no one is immune from the effects of negative surroundings!"

Reb Elya is shaken

Another story: Reb Elya Lopian zt"l, in his later years, was the Mashgiach in Yeshivas Kfar Chasidim in the north of Eretz Yisroel. Once, a bochur approached him, asking for permission to go out of town to a Chasuna of a relative. Reb Elya asked him, "Will there be difficulties with Shemiras Einayim there?" The bochur replied, "Possibly," but then said to Reb Elya, "Don't worry, I will be ok". Reb Elya was shaken and said, "I am extremely old and blind in one eye

and every time I need to go out, I worry about seeing forbidden sights, and you are a young bochur with two healthy eyes and you aren't worried!"

In the context that we have been discussing, this story doesn't just teach us about the care that we must take to avoid seeing forbidden sights. There is more to it. The message that Reb Elya was imparting to the bochur was: How can you stand there brimming with self-confidence when you know that you are potentially putting yourself into spiritual danger? Aren't you worried about the dangers of placing yourself into such a difficult environment?!

To take the dangers seriously

This Parsha teaches a timeless message to Klal Yisroel of the need to be vigilant against the dangers of negative influences, and that it is a continuous Avoda. We cannot afford to sit back and be complacent in the hope that we won't be affected; rather we must take this challenge very seriously, just as we find that Yehoshua and Kolev did each in their own way. Before placing ourselves and our families into difficult situations where there is a potential for harmful influences, we must step back and truly evaluate the spiritual risks of doing so. When we avoid harmful influences, and beseech Hashem to always protect us from them, we will find favour in Hashem's eyes to be protected, as the Torah tells us that Kolev was due to his great efforts!
