



Parshas Shelach 2021, the irony of intelligence

The Parsha Perspective is in honor of the Refuah Shlema of Ruchma Leah Bas Sarah. May all those who need experience a speedy and quick recovery with G-d's help.

The Parsha Perspective is in loving memory of Daniel Aaron Ben Yigal, Leah Mintche Bas Ya'akov Yosef, Edward Ben Efraim, Shlomo Ben Edward, and Yirachmiel Daniel Ben Gedalia. May their souls be uplifted and their memories a blessing.

Our Parsha begins with the story of the spies' reconnaissance of Israel. The Jewish people lacked faith in what G-d had told them about the land, so they asked Moshe if they could send spies to study Israel and report back.

Moshe asks G-D, who replies that he is allowed to send spies, but He is not commanding him to do so. Moshe then picked one leader from each tribe and assigned them to this special task.

The spies headed out to perform their directives, they spent 40 days surveying the land and its people. When they returned to Moshe, they reported that the land is indeed flowing with milk and honey.

But they warned that its citizens are powerful and mighty giants, and its cities are well fortified. Therefore, it will be impossible to conquer.

The Jewish nation turned to Moshe and told him that they rather return to Egypt than be defeated in battle. Upon hearing their complaints, G-d informed Moshe that He would punish the Jewish people for their persistent lack of faith.

He exiled the Jewish nation to forty years of wandering throughout the desert and banned any male over the age of 20 from entering the land of Israel.

However, a question comes to mind: Right before Moshe sent the spies off to check out the land, he changed his student's name. He added the letter Yud at the beginning of his name, changing it from Hoshea to Yehushua.

Rashi explains that Moshe did so to give Yehushua the strength and fortitude not to follow the path of the other spies. But if Moshe already knew that the spies would return with a negative report, why did he send them to Israel to begin with? Why did Moshe choose people whom he previously recognized would fail his mission?!

The Chizkuni (*Rav Chezekiah ben Manoah, a 13th-century French commentary*) answers this question by arguing with Rashi. He explains that Moshe did not actually change Yehushua's name now, but he did so many years earlier.

The Torah mentions it now to inform us that Moshe's most trusted student was chosen to be a spy. In fact, it was when Yehushua became Moshe's most loyal and faithful follower that his name was changed forever.

However, the Abarbanel (*Rav Yitzchak Ben Yeudah Abarbanel, a 14th-century Spanish commentary*) gives a deeper and more profound explanation. He agrees with Rashi's rationale and understanding of why Moshe changed Yehushua's name. The Abarbanel writes that Moshe knew that **POTENTIALLY** the spies could come back with a negative report.

In fact, he understood that it was a great possibility that the spies **WOULD** return with an unfavorable and cynical description of the land. Hence, he added to Yehushua's name to bestow upon him extra resilience and courage to disagree and differ from the other spies.

Nevertheless, Moshe hoped that by choosing twelve immensely righteous tribal leaders, they would ultimately pick the correct and true account of the land. That they would see the same version of Israel that he saw and was told about in depth.

A land so holy that even its physicality oozed and dripped of G-d's spirituality. A country promised and pledged to be given to the descendants of people who gave everything to G-d even when the world was against them.

The only place in the world that can have a real concrete dwelling place and sanctuary for G-d's holy presence. As Moshe told the spies their mission before they left (13:18), ***“and you shall see the land for what it is.”*** A divine gift from G-d for a Jewish kingdom, the holiest of all lands.

In our daily life, it is imperative that we understand that the point of seeking knowledge is to modify and transform our actions directly. **For the aim of education is not to teach us facts but rather the understanding of values.** The more we align our conduct with our intelligence, the closer we are to achieving real and permanent success.

“Knowledge is nothing without action.

Nothing changes until you do something.

What you do will directly determine what you learn.”

Have a meaningful Shabbos,

Rabbi Sholom Yemini