



Parshas Shelach 2023, inferiority complex

The Parsha Perspective is in honor of the Refuah Shlema of Ruchma Leah Bas Sarah and in loving memory of 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 exploring the land of Israel. The Jewish people started doubting what G-d had told them about the land and its inhabitants. They asked Moshe if they could send spies to study Israel and report back.

Moshe asked G-d, who allowed him to send the spies but didn't command him to do so. Moshe then selected one leader from each tribe for this task. The spies set out to fulfill their mission, spending 40 days surveying the land and its people.

When they returned to Moshe, they reported that the land was abundant with resources. But they warned that the people living there were powerful giants and the cities were heavily fortified, making conquest seem impossible.

Upon hearing this, the Jewish nation expressed a desire to return to Egypt rather than face defeat in battle. In response, G-d informed Moshe that He would punish the Jewish people for their persistent lack of faith. They would wander in the desert for forty years, and males over the age of 20 would be barred from entering the land of Israel.

However, a question comes to mind: When the spies conveyed their findings to the Jewish nation, they made an intriguing statement. They said (13:33), "*We saw the Nephilim – giants, the children of Anak, and we felt like grasshoppers, and that's how we must have appeared to them.*" But how did the spies know how the giants perceived them? Why did they feel like grasshoppers in the giants' eyes?

Rashi, Rav Shlomo Yitzchaki, the leading Torah commentary gives a simple explanation. He quotes the Talmud in Sotah (35a) which suggests that the spies overheard the giants likening them to ants in a vineyard. This implies that the spies felt small and insignificant in comparison to the towering and powerful giants.

However, the Ohr Hachaim Hakadosh, Rav Chaim Ben Attar, a great scholar and Kabbalist, gives a deeper and more profound explanation. He agrees with Rashi that the spies may have overheard the giants' conversation, but their interpretation stemmed from their own feelings of inferiority.

The Ohr Hachaim explains that the physical disparity between the spies and the giants was evident, but that alone didn't make them feel like grasshoppers. They perceived themselves as such because they felt inferior, doubting their status as the chosen people blessed by G-d and destined for greatness.

The purpose of taking the Jewish nation out of Egypt was not for them to remain in the desert but to inhabit the Holy Land and create a dwelling place for G-d.

The spies' inferiority complex stemmed from a lack of faith in G-d's plan for the Jewish nation. Given the challenging odds and overwhelming numbers, they believed it was impossible to conquer the land. Some even questioned their worthiness for such greatness, still haunted by the pain and trauma of slavery.

The Ohr Hachaim continues that the punishment of wandering in the desert for 40 years and being denied entry into Israel mirrored the lack of faith and trust in G-d. How could a nation that experienced such kindness and benevolence from G-d continue to doubt that He had their best interests in mind?!

G-d had hoped that the miracles of leaving Egypt, crossing the sea, and receiving the Torah would instill the nation with presence, confidence, and poise. These miracles should have demonstrated to them and the world that G-d had chosen them as His representatives on Earth.

In our daily lives, it is crucial to recognize that an inferiority complex hampers our ability to see our inner beauty and the unique light of our soul. Allowing our shortcomings to overshadow our perspective hinders our personal growth. It restricts us from stepping outside our comfort zones and exploring new possibilities.

Overcoming this weakness begins by cultivating a sense of self-acceptance, enabling us to acknowledge where we currently stand and where we aspire to be. By realigning our perceived flaws with a foundation of value, worth, and significance, we can move forward on the path of achieving our potential.

"Your value doesn't decrease based on someone's inability to see your worth."

*Have a meaningful Shabbos,
Rabbi Sholom Yemini*