



THE INSPIRE

SHELACH

MAZAL TOVS

Stanley Baskin Saturday
Paul Sugarman Saturday
Elise Wise Sunday
Lindsey Morris Monday
Levi Abrams Tuesday
Shirley Lane Tuesday
Natali Baskin Wednesday
Raymond Rains Friday

ANNIVERSARIES

Mr & Mrs Paul Joseph Thursday

TIMES

SHABBAT & SERVICE TIMES

5th June candle lighting 8:56pm
Shabbat end 10:25 pm

Kabbalat Shabbat 7pm
Shabbos morning 9am

YARTZEIT

Curtis, Philip & Geoffrey mother Hilda Hinda bas Oyhser

Tuesday 8/6/21 Sivan 28, 5781

Davis, Richard mother Davis, Golda Chaya Golda Chaya bas

Shmuel Tuesday 8/6/21 Sivan 28, 5781

Posner, Karen father Hart, Harold Herschel ben Tovya

Tuesday 8/6/21 Sivan 28, 5781

Baskin, Natalie mother Brown, Matilda Toba Leah bas Chaim

Dovid Friday 11/6/21 Tammuz 1, 5781

PARSHAH POINTERS

Moses sends twelve spies to the land of Canaan. Forty days later they return, carrying a huge cluster of grapes, a pomegranate, and a fig, to report on a lush and bountiful land. But ten of the spies warn that the inhabitants of the land are giants and warriors “more powerful than we”; only Caleb and Joshua insist that the land can be conquered, as G-d has commanded.

The people weep that they’d rather return to Egypt. G-d decrees that Israel’s entry into the land shall be delayed forty years, during which time that entire generation will die out in the desert. A group of remorseful Jews storm the mountain on the border of the land and are routed by the Amalekites and Canaanites.

The laws of the nesachim (meal, wine and oil offerings) are given, as well as the mitzvah to consecrate a portion of the dough (challah) to G-d when making bread. A man violates the Shabbat by gathering sticks and is put to death. G-d instructs us to place fringes (tzitzit) on the four corners of our garments so that we should remember to fulfill the mitzvot (divine commandments).

DRAW YOUR OWN CONCLUSION?

YOSSY GOLDMAN

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Some conclusions are more obvious than others. Sometimes the most obvious conclusion isn't necessarily correct. Drawing our own conclusions can often be a risky business.

Take the case in this week's Parshah. The spies sent by Moses return from their reconnaissance mission of the Promised Land with a frightening report about the fierce warrior nations of Canaan. The Jewish people are dejected and frightened, and even weep at the thought of their impending invasion, convinced it can only be a suicidal mission impossible. The Almighty is angered, the people are punished for their lack of faith in His promise, and the spies go down in history as the villains in the story.

But why? What, in fact, was their sin? Moses asked for a report of the land. They came back and reported exactly what they had seen. They told no lies. The land was formidable. The inhabitants were huge and powerful. The fruits were extraordinarily large. They even brought back samples to prove it. So, if it was all true, why were they punished?

The answer lies not in the report, but in their conclusion. The facts as the spies presented them were entirely accurate. The sin was their conclusion, "We will not be able to go up to that people, for it is too strong for us." Moses had sent them on a fact-finding mission. Their job was to bring back information. Nobody asked them for their personal opinions. The whole point of their mission was to gather the data necessary for the Israelites to find the best way of conquering the land. That they would do so was a given. G-d had promised them the land, told them of its natural beauty and assured them of success.

The same G-d who just miraculously delivered you from Egypt, the mightiest superpower on earth; split the sea for you; and revealed Himself in all His glory to you at Sinai—has now said that the Promised Land is there waiting for you. And, after all He has done for you, you turn around and publicly doubt His power to help you succeed? This is not only a mistake in judgment. This is shameful, sinful and faithless. The spies' report was correct, but their conclusion was disastrous.

A high-school teacher decided to demonstrate to his class the dangers of alcohol abuse. So he conducted an experiment. He took one glass of water and one glass of whiskey. He then took a little worm and dropped it into the glass of water. The worm had a nice swim, and then the teacher removed the worm unharmed. He then dropped the worm into the glass of whiskey. In no time at all, the worm was dead. He then turned to the class and asked them what the experiment proved. Whereupon one wise guy at the back piped up and said, "Sir, it proves conclusively that if you drink enough whiskey, you will never suffer from worms!"

The facts are there for all of us to see. The question is how to interpret them. If we have a preconceived position and then manipulate the data to draw conclusions that suit us, we may come off clever at first, but in the end we may well go the way of the spies. Without faith, even the most accurate information can lead to the wrong conclusion.



Rochelle has four daughters, and each of her daughters has a brother. How many children does Rochelle have??

Answer: A Bank

JOKE

Patient: "Doctor, what I need is something to stir me up... something to get me fired up and put me in a fighting mood. Did you put anything like that in this prescription?"

Doctor: "No, not in the prescription. You'll find that in the bill."

It was perhaps the single greatest collective failure of leadership in the Torah. Ten of the spies whom Moses had sent to spy out the land came back with a report calculated to demoralise the nation.

We came to the land to which you sent us. It flows with milk and honey, and this is its fruit. However, the people who dwell in the land are strong, and the cities are fortified and very large... We are not able to go up against the people, for they are stronger than we are... The land, through which we have gone to spy it out, is a land that devours its inhabitants, and all the people that we saw in it are of great height... We seemed to ourselves like grasshoppers, and so we seemed to them.”

This was nonsense, and they should have known it. They had left Egypt, the greatest empire of the ancient world, after a series of plagues that brought that great country to its knees. They had crossed the seemingly impenetrable barrier of the Red Sea. They had fought and defeated the Amalekites, a ferocious warrior nation. They had even sung, along with their fellow Israelites,

a song at the sea that contained the words:
The peoples have heard; they tremble;
Pangs have seized the inhabitants of Philistia.
Now are the chiefs of Edom dismayed;
Trembling seizes the leaders of Moab;
All the inhabitants of Canaan have melted away.

They should have known that the people of the land were afraid of them, not the other way round. And so it was, as Rahab told the spies sent by Joshua forty years later:

I know that the Lord has given you the land, and that the fear of you has fallen upon us, and that all the inhabitants of the land melt away before you. For we have heard how the Lord dried up the water of the Red Sea before you when you came out of Egypt, and what you did to the two Kings of the Amorites who were beyond the Jordan, to Sihon and Og, whom you devoted to destruction. And as soon as we heard it, our hearts melted, and there was no spirit left in any man because of you, for the Lord your God, He is God in the heavens above and on the earth beneath.

Only Joshua and Caleb among the twelve showed leadership. They told the people that the conquest of the land was eminently achievable because God was with them. The people did not listen. But the two leaders received their reward. They alone of their generation lived to enter the land. More than that: their defiant statement of faith and their refusal to be afraid shines as brightly now as it did thirty-three centuries ago. They are eternal heroes of faith.

One of the fundamental tasks of any leader, from president to parent, is to give people a sense of confidence: in themselves, in the group of which they are a part, and in the mission itself. A leader must have faith in the people they lead, and inspire that faith in them. As Rosabeth Moss Kanter of the Harvard Business School writes in her book Confidence, “Leadership is not about the leader, it is about how he or she builds the confidence of everyone else.” 1 Confidence, by the way, is Latin for “having faith together.”

The truth is that in no small measure a law of self-fulfilling prophecy applies in the human arena. Those who say, “We cannot do it” are probably right, as are those who say, “We can.” If you lack confidence you will lose. If you have it – solid, justified confidence based on preparation and past performance – you will win. Not always, but often enough to triumph over setbacks and failures. That, as mentioned in our study of parshat Beshallah, is what the story of Moses’ hands is about, during the battle against the Amalekites. When the Israelites look up, they win. When they look down they start to lose.

That is why the negative definition of Jewish identity that has so often prevailed in modern times (Jews are the people who are hated, Israel is the nation that is isolated, to be Jewish is to refuse to grant Hitler a posthumous victory) is so misconceived, and why one in two Jews who have been brought up on this doctrine choose to marry out and discontinue the Jewish journey. 2

Harvard economic historian David Landes, in his *The Wealth and Poverty of Nations*, explores the question of why some countries fail to grow economically while others succeed spectacularly. After more than 500 pages of close analysis, he reaches this conclusion:

In this world, the optimists have it, not because they are always right, but because they are positive. Even when wrong, they are positive, and that is the way of achievement, correction, improvement, and success. Educated, eyes-open optimism pays; pessimism can only offer the empty consolation of being right. 3

I prefer the word “hope” to “optimism.” Optimism is the belief that things will get better; hope is the belief that together we can make things better. No Jew, knowing Jewish history, can be an optimist, but no Jew worthy of the name abandons hope. The most pessimistic of the Prophets, from Amos to Jeremiah, were still voices of hope. By their defeatism, the spies failed as leaders and as Jews. To be a Jew is to be an agent of hope.

The most remarkable by far of all the commentators on the episode of the spies was the Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson. He raised the obvious question. The Torah emphasises that the spies were all leaders, princes, heads of tribes. They knew that God was with them, and that with His help there was nothing they could not do. They knew that God would not have promised them a land they could not conquer. Why then did they come back with a negative report?

His answer turns the conventional understanding of the spies upside down. They were, he said, not afraid of defeat. They were afraid of victory. What they said to the people was one thing, but what led them to say it was another entirely.

What was their situation now, in the wilderness? They lived in close and continuous proximity to God. They drank water from a rock. They ate manna from heaven. They were surrounded by the Clouds of Glory. Miracles accompanied them along the way. What would be their situation in the land? They would have to fight wars, plough the land, plant seed, gather harvests, create and sustain an army, an economy and a welfare system. They would have to do what every other nation does: live in the real world of empirical space. What would become of their relationship with God? Yes, He would still be present in the rain that made crops grow, in the blessings of field and town, and in the Temple in Jerusalem that they would visit three times a year, but not visibly, intimately, miraculously, as He was in the desert. This is what the spies feared: not failure but success.

This, said the Rebbe, was a noble sin but still a sin. God wants us to live in the real world of nations, economies and armies. God wants us, as He put it, to create “a dwelling place in the lower world.” He wants us to bring the Shechinah, the Divine Presence, into everyday life. It is easy to find God in total seclusion and escape from responsibility. It is hard to find God in the office, in business, in farms and fields and in factories and finance. But it is that hard challenge to which we are summoned: to create a space for God in the midst of this physical world that He created and seven times pronounced good. That is what ten of the spies failed to understand, and it was a spiritual failure that condemned an entire generation to forty years of futile wandering.

The Rebbe’s words ring true today even more loudly than they did when he first spoke them. They are a profound statement of the Jewish task. They are also a fine exposition of a concept that entered psychology only relatively recently – fear of success. 4 We are all familiar with the idea of fear of failure. It is what keeps many of us from taking risks, preferring instead to stay within our comfort zone.

No less real, though, is fear of success. We want to succeed: so we tell ourselves and others. But often unconsciously we fear what success may bring: new responsibilities, expectations on the part of others that we may find hard to fulfil, and so on. So we fail to become what we might have become had someone given us faith in ourselves.

The antidote to fear, both of failure and success, lies in the passage with which the parsha ends: the command of tzitzit . We are commanded to place fringes on our garments, among them a thread of blue. Blue is the colour of the sky and of heaven. Blue is the colour we see when we look up (at least in Israel; in Britain, more often than not we see clouds). When we learn to look up, we overcome our fears. Leaders give people confidence by teaching them to look up. We are not grasshoppers unless we think we are.

Two simple tailors worked as partners in Vilna. They weren't making much money in the large city, where there were already many established and well-known tailors around.

They decided to circulate among the small cities of the region to find their luck. With G-d's help, they were successful, serving simple villagers and peasants.

In one town they passed through, they saw that the Jewish village manager was distraught. He explained that the nobleman, who was the local landowner, would soon be holding a wedding, and had asked the manager to bring the best Jewish tailors to his service. However, the nobleman had not been satisfied with any of the work and was now threatening to fire the manager, and perhaps also expel the Jewish tenants from his properties.

Upon hearing this, the tailors said, "Why don't you present us to the nobleman?"

"Well," the manager warily replied, "you aren't acquainted with high fashion clothing."

"True," they replied, "but the nobleman has been dismissing the high fashion, so maybe he'll appreciate our simpler style." The manager agreed to give it a shot.

The nobleman asked for a sample dress, and after seeing what they had created, he was thrilled. He contracted them to tailor the wedding clothing for his entire extended family and all of his servants.

After the job was done, they walked away with a hefty sum of money. They also felt good that they had saved the livelihood of the village manager and the Jewish people of the vicinity.

When the tailors were about to leave town, the nobleman's wife spoke to her husband. "Look," she said. "We see how these Jews care so much about their co-religionists. Perhaps we should tell them about our Jewish prisoner who couldn't pay the rent for his inn and is still languishing in prison. Maybe these tailors would care enough to pay off his debt and free him."

She approached the Jewish tailors. When they asked how much the man owed, they were told that he owed 300 rubles. One tailor said that this was too steep a price to pay. The other, however, said, "How can I just walk away from another Jew's plight?"

He told his partner: "Let us split up our partnership, and see how much each of us truly owns." It turned out that each was left with precisely the amount needed—300 rubles. The generous tailor immediately gave the money to the nobleman's wife, and said, "Let the prisoner go free."

Both tailors returned to Vilna. The one who kept his money was able to establish a professional business in the big city. The other was empty-handed, with no partner, and no cash with which to restart his business. He fell into a deep depression, and the only thing he could manage was to collect donations. He became a beggar, and it seemed to the local population that he had lost his mind.

Very desperate one day, he directly approached a wealthy man, asking him to spare a few coins. The wealthy man asked what he would receive in return, and the beggar answered, "I will pray for you."

The wealthy man chuckled, and said: "What will your prayer do for me? But here's a few coins either way." The wealthy man went on with his business meetings that day and was very successful. He thought that perhaps it had something to do with the beggar's blessing.

So the next time he was to have a business meeting, he made a point to pass by the beggar again. After giving him a few coins, he asked for a blessing. Again, he was fabulously successful with his business affairs.

This went on for quite a few months, until one day, while gathered with family, they asked what was the secret to his newfound, absolute success. He told them about the blessings he made sure to receive, and how they were always fulfilled.

Before long, the erstwhile tailor had a large following of people who would seek his blessings, which consistently came true.

A group of the Baal Shem Tov's disciples were passing through town and heard the peculiar story of the beggar whose blessings were always fulfilled. They told their master about it, and he said that this must be a very special man, with an especially lofty soul. "Bring him to me," he said. "I'd like to speak with him."

The Baal Shem Tov questioned him, asking what special deeds he had done. The beggar said that he really did not know of any exceptional heroics he could claim. "I'm just a simple man," he said, "No one unique or important."

The Baal Shem Tov had the man tell his entire life story. When he reached the part where he parted with 300 rubles to save a man from prison, the Baal Shem Tov exclaimed, "Aha! This is it! This eminent and selfless action of yours is what causes your blessings to come true."

Hearing this from the Baal Shem Tov, and realizing the uniqueness of his act, left a great impression on the man, and he was able to crawl out of his depression.

The Baal Shem Tov spent time with the sincere tailor and taught him Torah. Eventually, he became an accomplished scholar and a great tzaddik.

FOOD 4 THOUGHT

"They are stronger than us." —The spies.

"They meant to say that the people of the land are stronger than G-d. So to speak, the homeowner can't remove his own belongings from his home." —Talmud, Sota 6b.

They saw the miracles in Egypt, they witnessed Pharaoh and his army drowning in the sea.

They ate manna from heaven and they heard the mighty voice of G-d at Mount Sinai.

How could they imagine any people or any force in this world to be more powerful than the G-d who created everything from nothing?

But the problem was that they had witnessed G-d disrupting the natural order of things. They had yet to see Him play by the rules of the game.

They had witnessed a G-d beyond all things, but had not yet seen that the same G-d was also within all things.

And so now, when they were to enter the land themselves, as mortal beings with mortal powers, to conquer the land, plow the land, sow and harvest from the land by their own hands—

Now they said, "Only by an open miracle can we win. But here we are asked to win by natural means. That is not possible."

If they had asked Moses, what would he have said?

That these laws of nature, they are nothing but G-d's miracles in disguise, doing His will and concealing themselves within a weave of endless patterns.

Go out into the world and you will see: He created a world in which He can achieve anything He desires in any way He pleases.

And not only that, but He can do it through you.