

זכור את־יום השבת לקדשו.
ששת ימים תעבד ועשית כל־מלאכתך,
ויום השביעי שבת לה'

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TREES: A DEEPER MEANING

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SHEVET AVICHAI

This week's Parsha is known for the story of the Spies, sent by Moshe to scout out Eretz Canaan. These 12 men were chosen, one from each tribe, to report back to Moshe. Some of the conditions in the land that Moshe asks about are:

וַיִּמַּח הָאָרֶץ הַשְּׂמֵנָה הוּא אִסְרוֹהָ הַיִּשְׂבָּה עַץ אִסְיָו וְהַתְּחִיבֶתָּם
לִקְחֶתְּם מִפְּרֵי הָאָרֶץ וְהַיָּמִים יָמֵי בְכוּרֵי עֲנָבִים:

"What is the soil like is it fat or lean? Are there any trees in it or not? You shall be courageous and take from the fruit of the land." (It was the season when the first grapes begin to ripen.) (Bamidbar 13:20)

The request of "הַיִּשְׂבָּה עַץ אִסְיָו" to find out "*are there any trees in it or not*" seems like an unnecessary question. Why did Moshe want to know if there were any trees in Eretz Canaan? Additionally, at the end of the pasuk we are told that "*It was the season when the first grapes begin to ripen.*" In order for these grapes to even exist, there must already be trees in the land! Throughout Tanach and Jewish scripture, trees are used as a metaphor to depict central elements of Judaism.

Rashi does not interpret Moshe's question as requesting a report from the spies on the presence, or nature, of the trees in Canaan. Instead of translating עץ as tree, Rashi views Moshe's request in an alternative way. He comments that the question "הַיִּשְׂבָּה יִעֲצֵךְ", or "*does it have a tree*", is actually asking if the land has "*a worthy man who will protect them with his merit*" (Rashi on Bamidbar 13:20). Moshe wants to know if there is a righteous person in the land who is like a tree. Through Rashi's interpretation we are taught to understand the similarities between

the two. They is a person that people look up to and through whose merits the Canaanites could survive.

The Gemara in Bava Batra (15a) links to the idea of a meritorious person in the land, when discussing lyov, stating that he 'protects his generation like a tree'. lyov lived a long life in the merit of his righteousness. A righteous person protects individuals from harm through their shade, is among the people producing good deeds (fruit), and casts a protective shade on their surroundings, which can be felt from afar. Ramchal, in his Mesilat Yesharim (Chapter 19), discusses that an individual should be motivated in their deeds for the good of the entire generation, '*to merit them and to shield them*'. He goes on to quote our pasuk in Parshat Shelach, as interpreted by Rashi, by asking if there is '*a righteous person who shields the generation like a tree.*'

The Chief Rabbi, Rabbi Mirvis, tells the story from Masechet Ta'anit (5b) where a traveller was walking in the desert. He came across an oasis which had a tree with a stream beside it. The tired and hungry traveller drank water from the stream, ate from the tree, and sat in its shade. When the man went to continue his journey, he turned to the tree and said "אֲבָרְכֶךָ אֵילָן" exclaiming "tree, tree, with what shall I bless you?" The tree had given him so much, what could he do in return? It was pointless to bless the tree with water, because of the adjacent stream. The fruit of the tree was already sweet, and the shade was already pleasant. What more could this tree want or need? The traveller said, "May it be the will of G-d that all trees planted with your seed will be just like you."

We often don't realise the effect we could have, or do have, on other people. May we each aim to be more cognisant of our actions, and their impact on others. If we did this, imagine the trees we could become!

**RACHEL WAS A SGANIT ON BET BASE/BET CHALUTZI
MACHANE 5781.**

London In: 20:56 Out: 22:25

Manchester In: 21:16 Out: 22:54

Cambridge In: 20:56 Out: 22:31

Oxford In: 20:59 Out: 22:32

Bristol In: 21:03 Out: 22:32

Birmingham In: 21:05 Out: 22:42

Leeds In: 21:12 Out: 22:54

Liverpool In: 21:15 Out: 22:56

Jerusalem In: 19:06 Out: 20:24

SHELACH 5781: A CHANGE IN PERSPECTIVE

RABBANIT SARAH KENIGSBERG | RABBANIT SHLICHA



It almost seems as if the spies were set up to fail.

12 leaders of Bnei Yisrael were sent to scout out the land. They were told that their mission was to “see what

[kind of] land it is, and the people who inhabit it; are they strong or weak... And the land they inhabit, is it good or bad?” (Bamidbar 13:18-19)

And that is precisely what they did. The spies returned with a detailed account of all they had seen. They observed that the people who lived there were mighty, that their cities were fortified, and that the land was one which “consumes its inhabitants.” Yet rather than being rewarded for their sterling reconnaissance, 10 of those spies met an untimely death as punishment for their report. But isn’t that what they were asked to do? Were they expected to lie or not report back that which they had seen? And if not then why were they sent in the first place?

There’s an anecdote from the world of marketing that might help us to understand. The story is told of two salesmen who were sent to a foreign country to investigate the market for selling shoes. The first returned in despair. “Forget about it,” he said. “Nobody there wears shoes.” The second man sent back a different message. “It’s a gold mine waiting to happen!” he exclaimed. “Nobody here wears shoes!”

Two people went to the exact same place yet they emerged with opposite conclusions. What they saw may have been identical but it was their perspectives that caused them

to view it so differently.

Several times throughout the Parsha, Rashi points out that things are not always as they seem. Fortified cities were not really a show of strength, but a show of weakness by those who had to hide behind barriers. A land that “consumes its inhabitants,” where people were dying all around, was not something to be afraid of, but rather a temporary kindness done so that the people should be occupied burying their dead rather than notice the strangers scouting out their land. (Rashi to Bamidbar 13:32)

The tragedy of the spies lay not in the fact that they saw the strength of the inhabitants of the land. Rather it was the leap in logic that led them to conclude that “we are unable to go up against them.” Their mission was to observe and to report, not to dishearten. Of course there was nothing wrong with what they saw. It was only their perspective that led to their disastrous demise.

This message has probably never been more relevant than in today’s age of social media. As we view our lives and other’s through the lens of the perfect image or post, it’s worth remembering that things aren’t always as they appear. We need to learn to look beyond the surface and develop a healthy perspective regarding all that surrounds us.

Calev and Yehoshua proved that there was more than one way to view the situation. Every day we are faced with the same choice of how to view the world around us. The perspective that we choose is what makes all the difference.

Shabbat shalom!

AS WE VIEW OUR LIVES AND OTHER'S THROUGH THE LENS OF THE PERFECT IMAGE OR POST, IT'S WORTH REMEMBERING THAT THINGS AREN'T ALWAYS AS THEY APPEAR.

FROM THE ARCHIVES: THE COSTS OF CONFORMITY (5775)

JAKE BERGER | SHEVET LEHAVA

In the 1960s, social psychology pioneer Solomon Asch ran a series of studies that tested whether group pressure can change people's opinions, even if this would go against obvious facts. Participants in the experiments had to judge the length of a line after the line had been shown to a series of other people, all of who had selected the incorrect answer. Asch found that a considerable number of participants followed the majority, giving same answer as the other people in the group, despite it being clearly wrong.

However, was the first case study of conformity was much earlier in history? This week's parsha, Shlach, contains within it

the story of the Meraglim. Twelve representatives from each of the tribes of Israel are sent by Moshe to scout the land for forty days in order to report back on the features of the Land and its inhabitants.

Upon their return to Am Yisrael, ten of the twelve men (with the exception of Yehoshua and Calev) give an incredibly negative report about the land, culminating in the punishment of forty years of wandering in exile before being allowed to enter Eretz Yisrael – only after the death of every person who was in

the generation of the Meraglim in the desert.

From our comfortable seats in shul, it's easy to criticise the ten spies. The spies influenced each other, and the nation, to doubt Hashem. Yet as Asch and contemporary psychology have shown, it's almost inevitable that we will succumb to external pressure and engage in behaviour that we might not otherwise do, despite the true facts being

blindingly obvious. It is really, really hard to be a Yehoshua or a Calev – and this is probably why Hashem rewarded them so handsomely by being allowed to enter the Land.

However difficult it may be, I think the story of the Meraglim contains a really powerful imperative to break with conformity and act with conviction in accordance with what we truly believe in, which we all would do well to bring into our lives a little more each day. After all, as Hillel said:

אם אין אני לי, מי לי - "If I am not for myself, who is for me?" (Mishnah, Avot 1:14)

**THE STORY OF THE
MERAGLIM CONTAINS
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WITH CONFORMITY AND
ACT WITH CONVICTION**

WHAT'S GOING ON?

- Applications are **closing** for **Summer Machane 5781!** We are looking forward to a fantastic Summer Machane, with some epic residential Machanot and day camps for children in Years 3-10. **Make sure to sign up by the 7th June**, and join us for a summer experience not to be missed! Join us from **2nd-15th August** and enjoy a fantastic Bnei Akiva experience full of fun, friends and Ruach! Sign up today at bauk.org/camps or email camps@bauk.org for more information.

- **Lishmah**, our brand-new **Women's Bet Midrash** is back! Join this exciting and **dynamic Makom Torah** for the young women of our community! Join us on **Tuesday (8th June)** for **Night Seder**, sign up at tinyurl.com/lishmah-bet-midrash!

- The first session of the **Hadracha Training programme** took place this week in the London Bayit. B'hatzlacha to our Northern chaverim for their first session this Shabbat!

- **SBM is continuing!** Join us at the **Bayit on Thursdays** from 19:00-19:45 for Chaburot followed by davening, **dinner** and a **guest speaker!**

- **Mazal Tov** to **Joey Sanford** (Shevet Ne'eman) on his **engagement** to **Talia Kupferman!**

- **Mazal Tov** to **Aaron Seitler** (Shevet Ne'eman) on his **aliyah** this week!

- **Todah Rabba** to the **Mill Hill Sviva Tzevet** for an amazing year of Sviva!

- Keep an eye out for **exciting Bnei Akiva events** for all ages! **Stay Safe > Stay Inspired > Stay BA**

- Be sure to like our **Facebook page (Bnei Akiva UK)** and follow our **Instagram (bneiakivauk)** to get regular updates with what is going on in the Tnuva.

- Visit bauk.org/feedback for contact details for all Mazkirut members and to leave any general feedback!

SHABBAT SHALOM!!!



BNEI AKIVA SUMMER MACHANE

2021/5781
YEAR 3 - YEAR 11



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