

# *Reflections of Redemption*

Essays on the Weekly Torah Reading and Moshiach,  
Based on the talks of the  
Lubavitcher Rebbe,  
Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson

Reprinted for Parshat Shelach, 5782  
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**IN LOVING MEMORY OF**  
 Horav **Schneur Zalman Halevi** עי"ה  
 ben Horav **Yitzchok Elchonon Halevi** הי"ד  
**Shagalov**  
 Passed away on 21 Tamuz, 5766

Reb **Dovid Asniel** ben Reb **Eliyahu** עי"ה  
**Ekman**  
 Passed away on 5 Sivan - Erev Shavuot, 5765

Mrs. **Devora Rivka** bas Reb **Yosef Eliezer** עי"ה  
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 Passed away on the second day  
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 Passed away on the 24th day of Shevat, 5769  
 ה. נ. צ. ג. ה.

**AND IN HONOR OF**  
 Mrs. **Esther Shaindel** bas **Fraidel Chedva** שתח"ל  
**Shagalov**

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by  
Dovid Yisroel Ber Kaufmann

# Shelach

## THE LAND IS VERY, VERY GOOD

*Ten spies said the Jewish people could not conquer the land of Israel. Joshua and Caleb said that “If G-d desires us, He will bring us into the land.” Since we derive the law of a minyan from the ten spies, obviously there is a positive element in their claim. They wished to remain in the desert, without the distractions of sowing and planting, to study and pursue a deeper relationship with G-d isolated from the mundane world. Joshua and Caleb argued that the deepest relationship comes from performing mitzvos with kabbalos ol – through submission to G-d’s Will rather than reason. This transforms the world into a dwelling place for G-dliness.*

This week’s Torah reading begins with the story of the spies. After the Jewish people received the Torah, they proceeded towards the land of Israel. Before entering, Moses sent twelve spies – one from each tribe – to determine the terrain and the type of people that lived there. This was done to prepare for the coming war, for at that time Moses and the Jewish people anticipated an immediate entrance to and conquest of the land. However, ten of the spies came back with a discouraging report, claiming the land of Israel was unconquerable. Only Joshua and Caleb insisted that if G-d told them to go, they would surely succeed. But the Jewish people were persuaded by the account of the ten spies. They became afraid of the coming battles and did not want to enter the land. They complained about Moses and threatened to rebel, to return to Egypt. As a result, G-d decreed that the generation that left Egypt would wander the wilderness for forty years and die there. Their children would conquer the land.

From this negative incident we derive an important principle in Jewish law. The ten spies who spoke disparagingly about the land and its conquest were called a “wicked congregation.” From this identification we

derive the concept of a minyan – a quorum of ten men that constitutes a congregation. At first glance, this doesn't make sense. Our sages tell us that every matter of holiness requires a minyan. Why do we learn this principle – matters of holiness require a minyan – from the ten spies, who actually rebelled against G-d and are called a “wicked congregation”?

To understand the apparent contradiction requires the insight of Chassidus, the inner teachings of the Torah. For the sin of the ten spies actually teaches us how to approach Redemption and the days of Moshiach.

From one perspective, it's clear why they did not want to enter the land of Israel. In the wilderness, they did not have to worry about their material needs. They had food from heaven – the manna; they had water whenever they wanted, from the well of Miriam; the Clouds of Glory protected them, killing the snakes and scorpions and ironing their clothes. Freed from the worries of everyday life, they could concentrate on learning Torah. In their minds, this was the true way to learn Torah and be attached to G-d.

Their mistake was not realizing that there is a higher level of service, namely, fulfilling the mitzvos of the land of Israel. One's Torah study and attachment to G-d is then much greater. They mistook the secondary path – life in the wilderness – for the essential one – living in the land of Israel. Their only mistake was thinking the forty years in the wilderness was their final goal, when in fact it was only a preparation for the final stage, fulfilling the mitzvos and studying Torah in the land of Israel.

Accordingly, since their concern was to remain in a state of holiness and attachment to G-d, we derive from them the law of a minyan – ten men constitute a congregation for matters of holiness.

What was the difference between the reasoning of the ten spies and that of Joshua and Caleb, who were convinced that the generation of the Exodus could enter and conquer the land? The ten spies felt unprepared to enter the land. Having to sow, plow, reap and harvest – having to spend most of their time earning a living – would detract from their ability to fully and properly study Torah. They desired to be isolated from life's

struggles and hardships; they did not want to interact with the other nations. This would interfere with their spiritual progress. Out of their great love for G-d, they wished to focus solely on increasing in wisdom, going ever higher in their understanding of and attachment to G-dliness.

As a result of the mistaken reasoning of the spies, it would be the **next** generation, the one that followed them, that entered the land. Although the generation of the wilderness had reached the pinnacle of wisdom, had been thoroughly immersed in learning Torah, the next generation was the one that actually entered the land of Israel and fulfilled the practical mitzvos.

On the other hand, Joshua and Caleb argued that the people should enter the land immediately. They said that the land would not interfere with their attachment to G-d. Just the opposite. Living in the land of Israel, fulfilling the mitzvos and studying the Torah there, the people would reach the highest possible level. Their connection to, and the revelation of, G-dliness, would be unimaginable. On what did they base this argument? “If G-d desires us, He will bring us into the land.” That is, the entry to and conquest of the land of Israel is connected with G-d’s desire and G-d’s Will. G-d wants the Jewish people to be in the land of Israel, learning Torah and performing mitzvos **there**. When the Jewish people do enter the land, they fulfill G-d’s innermost Will. This automatically reveals the truth that G-d desires the Jewish people; it also reveals that the Jewish people’s attachment to G-d is at the deepest, most essential level possible.

Attachment to G-d in the wilderness depended on a lack of distractions. Unburdened by the concerns of daily life, the Jewish people focused on gaining wisdom. Attachment to G-d in the land of Israel depends on involvement with the mitzvos. It requires a submission to and fulfillment of G-d’s Will. The difference between these two types of attachment is highlighted by the appeal of Joshua and Caleb that “the land is very, very good.” The doubling of the word “very” indicates that the highest level of attachment, higher than exercising reason, higher than the bonds of

wisdom, is a nullification of the self, a connection to the Will of G-d.

Obviously, there is an eternal lesson in the argument of the spies, and in the counter-argument of Joshua and Caleb. According to the spies, we are not able to enter the land of Israel; we need more preparation, more education. We need forty years in the wilderness. Our generation must isolate itself, perfect itself, study Torah undisturbed. This generation must prepare the way, and perhaps the next generation will be able to enter the land. But first we must reach the highest extent of wisdom.

This, of course, is the argument of those who say this generation is not ready, or this generation is not worthy, to be the generation of Redemption, the one to greet Moshiach. The argument is, we need more time, we need more preparation, we need to isolate ourselves and concentrate on Torah study, on becoming attached to G-d through wisdom, reason or understanding.

The counter-argument is that of Joshua and Caleb. Every Jew, regardless of his or her level of understanding or accomplishments, is capable of entering the land of Israel immediately – right now. Entrance into the land – that is, bringing Moshiach – depends on conducting ourselves according to the prayer of Joshua and Caleb – “the land is very, very good.” It requires us to act in a manner of **kabbolos ol** – accepting the yoke of heaven. Our mitzvos, even our Torah study, must be in a manner that demonstrates that “G-d desires us.” True, the coming of Moshiach depends on each and every one of us. But it does not depend on our wisdom, our level of preparation, our progress through “forty years in the wilderness.” Rather, every Jew is capable of performing the mitzvos with **kabbolos ol** – to fulfill G-d’s Will simply because it is G-d’s Will, because “He desires us.” Acting in this manner, automatically and immediately we can enter the land that is “very, very good,” with the coming of Moshiach.

*(Based on Likkutei Sichos 33, pp. 85-94)*

**IN HONOR OF**

**Rabbi & Mrs. Menachem Mendel HaKohen  
and Chaya Mushka שיחי Katz**

In honor of their 6th wedding anniversary,  
First day of Rosh Chodesh Tammuz - 30 Sivan, 5782

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May they go from strength to strength  
in health, happiness, Torah and *mitzvot*.

\*

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