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PARSHAS
SHELACH 5777

בְּשִׁיטְחָא

BY RABBI NETANEL NAAMAT

Mind your Mindset

Parshas Shelach opens up with an episode that changed the course of *Klal Yisrael* forever. The people demanded of Moshe Rabbeinu that he send spies to Eretz Yisrael to ascertain the strengths and weaknesses of their soon-to-be foes, and Moshe acquiesces. However, Moshe is aware of the disingenuous justification the people put forth for the need for spies, and therefore appointed the twelve spies with care.¹ Each *Shevet* had one representative (*Shevet* Yosef was divided into Menashe and Ephraim, and *Shevet* Levi did not send a representative).

Membership in this elite group was not open to all. Only those who were righteous and wise were allowed.² Only after ensuring the group was of the highest calibre did Moshe Rabbeinu send them off.

However, the matter does not end well. Upon arriving in Eretz Yisrael, the spies observe multiple events which they interpret in an unfavourable manner. For example, they witness an abundance of funerals – so many that they concluded that the very land must be killing its inhabitants!³ Only Kalev and Yehoshua were able to correctly recognize that the profusion of deaths were a gift from Hashem, distracting the inhabitants from the presence of the *Meraglim*.⁴ Which raises the question, why were only Kalev and Yehoshua able to interpret events correctly? If all the *Meraglim* were wise and righteous, why didn't the other ten correctly deduce that this was a gift from Hashem?

The Gemara⁵ explains that the *Meraglim* (after they were chosen) set out with malevolent intent. They had no intention of bringing back a good report, thus everything Hashem did was interpreted in a negative light. Kalev and Yehoshua did not set out with that intent, and were therefore able to understand events correctly.

We all know that our perspective colours the facts. However, these *Meraglim* were hand-picked by Moshe Rabbeinu. They were righteous and wise people, leaders within *Klal Yisrael*. At the time they were picked they were not corrupt. Only later did they develop their attitude, yet even great people are affected by the attitude with which they approach reality.

When two people are in a disagreement, it's quite possible that both are correct, and both are wrong. Very often, we only allow ourselves to see things from our perspective. The knowledge that there are other ways of seeing things should give us the courage to admit the possibility of the other party being in the right.

1 *Gur Aryeh Bamidbar* 13:2

2 *Rashi Bamidbar* 13:3, *Be'er B'Sadah*, *Sefer Hazikaron*, and *Tzeidah L'Derech ibid.* and *Ba'al HaTurim Bamidbar* 13:2

3 *Rashi Bamidbar* 13:32, see *Seforno ibid.*

4 *Sotah* 35a

5 *Ibid.*

Mind the Gap - Taking the Next Step

It's always difficult to see things from someone else's perspective, and in the midst of a heated argument it's close to impossible. One manoeuvre, though, may lower the tension, and perhaps even resolve the issue. Generally, we respond to adversaries by reiterating our position. However, instead of repeating our argument, it's very helpful to repeat the other person's claim. At the very least, it signals that you are listening, and understand what the other person is saying. Moreover, it may even help you understand the other perspective, and see why they feel the way that they feel.

Doing this in the middle of an argument is not always easy, but it can be done. If one has a disagreement, it might be prudent, after the dust has settled, to mentally review the different positions. Now that it's not "in the moment" we can sometimes see the other person's side with a little more clarity. Doing this regularly will have a spill-over effect into the argument itself. If you know, based on experience, that there is sense in the other person's perspective, the next altercation won't be as contentious.

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LOST IN SPACE

A common challenge that pilots face is a phenomenon known as spatial disorientation. Spatial disorientation is the inability to properly determine where one is in relationship to one's surroundings. For pilots, it occurs when the pilots' perception of direction does not agree with reality.

Hashem has created us with a fascinating series of systems that keep us aware of where our body is, what direction we are turning, and the distance to other objects. These systems (vestibular, vision, proprioception, and others) receive multiple pieces of information from different sources, and then the brain interprets the signals to determine one's spatial relevance. However, these systems can be fooled. For example, if one was sitting on a stopped train, and the adjacent train begins to move, often-times one believes that it is his train that is moving.

Similarly, when flying, you lose some of the input that we have on the ground. Because of this, it's unfortunately not uncommon for pilots to crash, if they fly based on their instincts and skills, but not based on reality.

To combat this problem, pilots are given Instrument Flight Rules (IFR). These are procedures a pilot uses to follow what the instruments of the aircraft are telling him, and not what his instinct dictates. By ignoring his own personal feelings and intuition, and following the instruments, the pilot can not only save his life, but the lives of his crew and passengers as well.

We often "fly by the seat of our pants," by responding to situations based on our instinct and intuition, instead of using our "instruments," – our friends, teachers, parents, and Torah to guide us. However, it is wise to recognize that by following our instruments, we too can save our life, and the lives of those around us.

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DID YOU KNOW?

- The last letters of "שלח לך אנשים" spell out חכם – a reference to the wisdom and righteousness of the *Meraglim*.¹
- The *Yetzer Harah* works by confusing and blinding us. If a person doesn't work to see things clearly, the *Yetzer Harah* can cause us to truly believe that right is wrong and wrong is right.²
- The *Yetzer Harah's* most powerful weapon is that he causes you to doubt what you know to be true.³
- As soon as the *Meraglim* left the presence of their Rebbi, Moshe Rabbeinu, they became *Reshaim* and intended to speak negatively about Eretz Yisrael.⁴

1 *Ba'al HaTurim Bamidbar* 13:2

2 *Mesillas Yesharim* Chapter 3

3 *Chovos HaLevavos, Sha'ar Yichud HaMa'aseh* Chapter 5

4 *Amar Neke Bamidbar* 13:26, *Chidushei HaLev Bamidbar* 13:3