

GREAT FOR SHARING
AT THE SHABBOS TABLE!

בְּשִׁיטְיָחָה

BY RABBI AVICHAI BENSOUSSAN
RABBI NETANEL NAAMAT
RABBI NAFTALI ZIONS



PARSHAS
SHELACH

ROT OR RISE

Parshas Shelach presents a contrast in spies. While the Parshah contains the tale of the spies whose report brought destruction to the Jewish people, the Haftorah narrates the tale of the spies sent by Yehoshua, who laid the groundwork needed for the Jewish people's victory.

However, R' Yeruchom Levovitz¹ (1873–1936) points out another contrast, a contrast in one's spiritual journey. The Ten Spies were not simple people. These were leaders, great men of stature, some even greater than Yehoshua and Kalev.² Rashi³ explains that Hashem allowed the spies to stumble, as this was in actuality the direction they had chosen. Hashem had already told the Jewish people that *Eretz Yisrael* was very good, yet they wanted to confirm this for themselves. In mistrusting Hashem, they chose a path of terrible consequences.

On the other hand, we have Rochov, the woman who hid the second set of spies in her inn. In fact, she put her life on the line, telling the authorities they had left, when in fact they were still hidden. Because of her heroism, she and her family were spared, and she eventually ended up marrying Yehoshua, the leader of *Klal Yisrael*.

When we contrast these two stories, the difference couldn't be starker. The spies were leaders in a generation of leaders. They experienced the miracles of the Exodus, the crossing of the *Yam Suf*, and hearing Hashem at *Har Sinai*. They stuck with Hashem against those who sinned with the *Egel Hazahav*, and stuck with Moshe against Korach's rebellion. Yes, they should have trusted in Hashem, and all signs point to the fact that they did — but not enough.

Then you have Rochov, a simple innkeeper, surrounded by idols and idolatry. Yes, she had great trust that the Jewish people would be victorious, but against the shining lights of the spies, it would seem she would pale in comparison. What was the secret of her success?

R' Yeruchom explains the difference is the direction of one's journey. Though the spies were indeed great, they already had the nucleus of rebellion in their hearts. Rochov, though she was small, already had the core of *avodas Hashem* in her soul. This difference makes all the difference, it's not just about where you are, but where you are planning to go.

1 *Da'as Chochmoh U'Mussar*, Vol. I, pg. 216

2 *Ramban* on *Bamidbar* 13:4, s.v. למטה ראובן

3 *Bamidbar* 13:3, s.v. שלח לך

**It's not just
about where
you are, but
where you are
planning to go.**

Mind the Gap - Taking the Next Step

It is not uncommon to 'coast' through life, accepting who we are, and where we are. Most of us recognize that we're basically good people who want to do the right thing. But striving for greater heights, choosing a direction and getting there, how does one do that?

The most basic way is through learning *mussar*. *Mussar* development occurs through the trifold of *Chochmos HaMussar* (the understanding of *middos*, and the human being), *Limud HaMussar* (the emotionally intense study of *mussar*), and *Chinuch HaMussar* (the incorporation of *mussar* into our actions).¹

By studying a *mussar sefer*, one can accomplish the first two steps of *mussar* development.

Consistency is key. It is common and expected to not see any gains at first, but after constant repetition, one will undoubtedly see great changes to their nature and their character.²

1 Building Jewish Ethical Character, pg. 55

2 *Ohr Yisrael*, Letter Six

Have you thought about sponsoring Beshivticha?

Sponsor in honor, or in the merit of a loved one!

To sponsor, or receive by email, please contact us at info@ohr-yisrael.com or call 732-451-GROW

“
Everyone — youngsters, the elderly, rabbis, kollel men, working professionals and businessmen — has a daily obligation to study sifrei mussar. And those who do so, will see the blessings and benefits of mussar study. - R' Michel Yehuda Lefkowitz zt"l, *Imrei Da'as*, Vol. II, pg. 411

THE SEEDS OF SHABBOS

Michael Kivelevitz* walked from his corner office to the water cooler. He wasn't particularly thirsty, but he just needed a break from staring at a computer all day long. He strolled past a line of cubicles, each one housing an employee who worked under him. In fact, they worked under the fellow who worked under him. Michael smiled at this thought, but not because it made him feel important. No, he smiled because he realized how meaningless it truly was.

Standing at the cooler was Eddie Ritz, who nodded to Michael as he approached. With his smile still in place, Michael took a cup and placed it beneath the spout at the cooler. Eddie was like Michael, born Jewish, but not very knowledgeable in Jewish law and tradition.

"Hi there, Michael," said Eddie. "I have to admit, your smile is infectious. What's going on?"

Michael's smile grew wider as he looked at Eddie. "Kinda hard to explain," Michael said with a shrug.

Eddie and Michael knew each other since the second grade. They had both grown up in a suburb of Chicago, and as luck would have it, both wound up moving to Houston. Eddie was a good employee of Michael's, but a better friend. "Oh, c'mon Michael, you'll have to tell me, because the other option is going back to work on the Delson account, and no one wants that..."

Michael laughed. The Delson account was indeed something that people didn't want to touch, despite the considerable financial gain to the company. "Ok, I'll tell you. But don't laugh." Michael lost his smile, and Eddie could see that Michael was serious.

"This past week, I kept Shabbos."

Eddie's eyebrows shot to the top of his forehead. "What? You did? How? Why?"

"I told you it was hard to explain. Remember the rabbi I told you about? We've been studying together for years now. I finally decided to take the plunge, and I did it."

"Wow. I never thought you would do that. So, is that the plan going forward?"

"Eddie, I never thought I would either! But learning with this rabbi was like planting a seed. This thing just kind of grew out of me, after studying for so long, I just had to do it. Is this the plan going forward? Maybe. Probably. I don't know if it will work out, but I do think this is the direction I'm headed."

"Like I said, wow. I bet you never thought you would do this when you agreed to study with that rabbi!"

"That's true! But it's pretty amazing what a little seed can do."

**Based on a true story, names have been changed.*

DID YOU KNOW?

- Despite his personal past, and the actions of his future descendants, once Yishmael chose to cling to Hashem, Hashem accepted him, and even saved his life.¹
- By choosing the right path, one can instantly turn a life of evil and regret into a life of piety and wisdom.²

¹ Rashi on Bereishis 21:17, ס.ו. באשר הוא

² Avodah Zarah 17a

info@ohr-yisrael.com

Ohr Yisrael is a global initiative seeking to energize, enlighten, and empower Klal Yisrael to make lasting personal change, using the profound systems and guidance that have been crystallized and in the classic Sifrei Mussar, presented in the language of today.