



From the desk of
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1

Office of the Rabbinate of Elad, Rosh HaAyin and Herzelia

עיר התורה שקרובה אליך

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TORAT

Parashat Shelach

HAMELECH

Two Men Out

In this week's *parashah*, spies are sent to investigate the Holy Land. Klal Yisroel are in the desert and they send twelve men, one per *shevet*, with a list of questions about the place they are meant to conquer and take over.

At the end of the day, the spies return with a negative report, except for two, Calev and Yehoshua, who have only good things to say about the land. Calev and Yehoshua are rewarded for their words and the other spies are punished.

We cannot help but notice a startling distinction in Calev's and Yehoshua's approaches to their challenge. Each was put into a group of men who began their mission as righteous individuals and ended up sour. It was no easy matter being the odd one out.

When Calev saw what he was up against, he decided that the occasion called for being two-faced. On the surface, he would appear to go along with the *meraglim's* plan, while underneath, he would fortify himself and figure out how to undermine their plot. Thus, even after they returned and began to speak against Eretz Yisroel, Calev was able to silence the people and make it seem like he had more bad things to say. Once everyone got quiet, he put in a good word for Moshe Rabbeinu, Eretz Yisroel and Hashem Yitborach. That was Calev's approach.

Yehoshua did no such thing. He never pretended to go along with the *meraglim*. He openly opposed them from start to finish. Moshe knew Yehoshua's personality and therefore he blessed him at the outset of the mission, changing his name from Hoshea to Yehoshua, connoting, "May Hashem save you from the evil plot of the *meraglim*."

You're Both Right!

Which way is right? Says the Chofetz Chaim (Sefer Shemirat HaLashon): Both! There can be more than one correct way! It was not a *machloket* at all! Each one (Calev and Yehoshua) did what was right for him!

If we analyze their ways, we will see that each approach has an advantage and a disadvantage. The advantage of Calev's approach is that since he seemed to go along with them, that way they would not oppose him. They would give him the floor, let him speak, and that way, he had a chance at putting in a good word and reshaping Klal Yisroel's opinion.

The disadvantage of such an approach is that if you outwardly seem to go along with a plan, that can gradually draw you in until you actually believe in it and just go ahead with it. That is why we find Calev going to pray at Meorat HaMachpeila, at the graves of the *Avot* and *Imahot*, that he not be influenced by the evil plot of the *meraglim*. Yehoshua did not join him at



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2

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this *Atzeret Tefillah*. He already felt safe enough with Moshe's blessing and his overt defiance.

Yehoshua's approach is just the opposite. The advantage is that there is less of a chance of being convinced to join the side of evil. Yehoshua made a stance. He made it clear that he is not going along with their *shtick*, and that is that.

The disadvantage is that this could be physically dangerous, as the *meraglim* could believe so fiercely in their plan that they may have been convinced that they would have to do away with any opposition. Additionally, even if they would do Yehoshua no harm, they certainly would not allow him to speak publicly, well aware of his "unpopular" view on the matter.

Nonetheless, Yehoshua was a man of truth. He stood up for the truth and would not bend. There was nothing to talk about.

Hillel's Humility

In the course of history, we sometimes find varying approaches in the conduct of the Sages. In general, we say that each approach has validity, and sometimes we are taught that a given approach is more appropriate to be adopted by the masses.

One such example is Hillel and Shammai. In Shabbat (30b) we are told: A person should be humble as Hillel and not unyielding as Shammai. The Gemara goes on to tell an amazing story of Hillel's humility, followed by three accounts in

which potential converts approached Shammai and then Hillel. In each instance, each potential convert had a certain "condition" to his conversion which was really not appropriate. As such, Shammai pushed him away from the start, not willing to allow a gentile to join our ranks unless he immediately accepts all of the Torah unconditionally.

Hillel was able to see past the misconceptions. He was able to foresee that once this individual would be given a taste of the truth, he would be in a position to become a full-fledged convert.

Later on, these three met and shared their experiences. They all lamented how Shammai's unyielding approach had threatened to deny them of living a life full of meaning and achieving everlasting bliss. Simultaneously, they endorsed Hillel's humble and optimistic approach. They were thankful that Shammai's "shove" had not discouraged them, and how Hillel's humility allowed them to become part of the Chosen Nation.

Now the Gemara does not say that Hillel was right nor that Shammai was wrong. Shammai is on the list of the greatest Tannaim who ever lived. He is part of passing down the *mesorah* from generation to generation. He had many great *talmidim*.

Shammai's Smile

In Avot Chap. 1, Shammai teaches to greet each person with a friendly countenance. He certainly



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must have fulfilled this himself, for our Sages most certainly practiced what they preached.

Nonetheless, Shammai had a certain degree of impatience and intolerance, and he knew that he could never convince these gentiles of the full truth. He knew that in his Beit Medrash, they either had to come in with a full acceptance or else conversion was not an option. Shammai's greatness lies in the fact that he knew himself and his capabilities. He did not take on a job which he could not handle. He was correct in that we cannot accept "converts" who will distort Torah truths.

Hillel's Power to Change

Hillel's greatness is his ability to see past the surface. Hillel's humility allowed him to see the potential in these people and to understand that with a little mutual respect and some give and take, he would be able to show them the truth. He would be in a position to help them discover the truth on their own. He would be able to guide them how to transform ulterior motives to pure intentions.

Therefore, the Gemara does not tell us to be "accepting" as Hillel and not "unaccepting" as Shammai. This is because Shammai, in the position he was, was totally correct for not accepting these people as converts, since he did not have the wherewithal to take them further.

The Gemara instead instructs us to be "humble" as Hillel and not "unyielding" as Shammai, for

once we excel in humility, we will be able to build relationships, in which we can be very influential.

In the Footsteps of Aharon

Hillel's approach is in line with what he teaches in Avot (1:12): Be of the disciples of Aharon HaKohen: Love peace and pursue peace. Love people and draw them near to Torah. There is only one way to draw people close to Torah; that is to shower them with love! If you scream at them, they will not listen. If you lecture them, they will not hear. If they feel that you genuinely care for them, then you have a chance.

When we were in the *midbar*, Moshe and Aharon were both our leaders. Moshe, in his position, had to sometimes be the mean disciplinarian. He had to employ *midat hadin*. Aharon was able to excel in *shalom* and display *ahava* to all.

For example, Aharon would see someone on his way to sin, and what would he do? He would go out and meet him and tell him, "Wow! It's so good to see you! Maybe you didn't know, but this area is a bit dangerous. I know that you're a righteous fellow from an upstanding family. But not everyone knows that. You wouldn't want anyone to suspect you of any misbehavior. So it's worth your while just to head back home right now and steer clear of any suspicion."

Aharon made peace between people and between husband and wife. When Aharon passed away, the mourning was greater than



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when Moshe passed away. Aharon was missed by all.

Left and Right

When it comes to *chinuch*, we are advised to “push with the left and draw near with the right.” Most people are stronger in their right arm than their left. So this statement is teaching that even when reprimand is in place, that should be so gentle and weak, immediately followed by great expressions of love and warmth.

Rambam (Ma'amar Kiddush Hashem) says not to reject sinners, even *mechallelei Shabbat*! Rather, we should show them warmth and caring and encourage them to do *mitzvot*. When a sinner comes to shul, do not disgrace him! Accept him and allow him to do *mitzvot*.

Rashba (Responsa V:238) tells the Rosh HaYeshiva of Telitola to use a “soft tongue” and make it easy for the people to ascend from level to level. Rashba suggests using repetitive friendly words of encouragement, as that has much higher chances of catalyzing repentance than harsh words of reprimand.

Rav Ovadiah Yosef testifies that certainly in our times, he was witness to many people becoming observant Jews when greeted warmly and spoken to respectfully.

Responsa Lev Avraham (18) relates how a certain Rav in Chicago allowed a *mechallel Shabbat* to receive an *aliya*, much to the disapproval of

several religious congregants. Eventually, the man became a *baal teshuvah* and he and his whole family keep mitzvot, due to the Rav's care and concern and gentle approach.

Covered and Warm

A *bochur* came to the *yeshiva* of the Chofetz Chaim to get examined for entry. He was not successful at the entry exam, but the hour was late. There would be no public transportation until the next day. The Chofetz Chaim invited him to sleep over in his home.

Late at night, after the *bochur* had retired for the evening, the Chofetz Chaim tiptoed over and gently covered him with the Chofetz Chaim's own warm coat. The *bochur* was awake, but feigned sleep.

He became a businessman, but many of his sons and grandsons learned in *yeshivot*. He attributed this to the *ahavat Torah* which was kindled within him when the Chofetz Chaim covered him that night.

A Gentle Knock

The parsha is called “Shelach Lecha”. HaKadosh Baruch Hu was not so pleased with Klal Yisrael's request to scout out the land. But He taught us a lesson in *chinuch*. He said, “If you want to go, go.”

Sometimes, children have to learn the hard way, through trial and error. Parents have to give them room to err. This is a risky statement, and must be



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used wisely. The main thing is to be soft and understanding.

A boy came home one day from cheider and his father did not let him in. The father had discovered cigarettes hidden in his son's room. He gave his son an earful of shouts and sent him outside.

The poor kid needed the facilities desperately. He went into a nearby shul, used the men's room and was still full of tears. An older man approached and softly asked what was upsetting him. It took a whole lot of gentle prodding, but eventually the story came out.

The older man said, "Don't worry, I'll help you."

He walked the boy to his home and knocked on the door. The mother opened the door, only to see her son standing there next to the Rosh Hayeshiva, Reb Gershon Eidelstein. She ran to get her husband.

Reb Gershon asked, "How can you throw a child out to the streets?"

The father answered, "I found that he had hidden cigarettes. I do not want him to ruin the other children."

Reb Gershon said, "You don't throw out a child to the streets. You try to figure out why he would do what you did not want him to do. But you must show him warmth and take him back in. If you don't take him in, he can come and live by me."

At that, the father invited his son back home.

A Bowl of Pudding

When Rav Baharan was young, he learned in Etz Chayim. Every so often, the boys were served pudding as a treat. Rav Baharan liked pudding, so he asked for seconds. When he finished seconds, he asked for thirds. At this, the cook said, "Enough! Some boys did not receive any yet!"

The young boy, upset, turned over the whole bowl of pudding. This made quite an uproar. The boy was told to go to the *mashgiach's* office tomorrow morning.

Ashamed and frightened, he entered the office. The *mashgiach*, Rav Aryeh Levine, said, "I understand you like pudding."

"That's true," said the boy.

"So have some," offered the *mashgiach*, smiling and extending a bowlful!

The boy was astonished. He was getting ready to get yelled at and instead, he's offered more! On the spot, he was inspired to rectify his ways and he yearned to become a *mechanech* with such sensitivity.

Proposal in the Cemetery

A family went to Har HaMenuchot on their father's *Yahrzeit*. As they were there, they noticed a young man and a young woman approach a certain tombstone. It seemed as if he was proposing for marriage. The girl burst out into tears.



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The family thought that all of this was quite strange. Could he not have chosen a better place to propose than a cemetery?!

As they were not too far away, the young man asked if they would mind coming over and have a kaddish said for this *niftar*. Then they explained themselves.

This girl had been expelled from high school due to severe misconduct and breach of modesty. The parents were beside themselves. The daughter said, "I'm going to get myself a much more liberal wardrobe, and tomorrow I'm leaving!"

The mother could do nothing but weep. The father begged his daughter to take a short walk with him. On the walk, he just repeated over and over, "We'll always love you, the door is always open. Whenever you're ready, please come back!"

Well, she kept to her word and was out the front door, leaving all traces of Orthodox Jewry behind. Whenever he could, the father kept sending the same message: We always love you. You are always welcome back.

It took ten years. But the day finally came. She starting thinking about life more seriously and decided to return home. That was a Friday. She decided to show up on Motzoei Shabbat. But alas, before she could get home, she received a phone call about her father's funeral!

She sat *shiva* with her family. Everyone cried, and she most of all. She cried over all the sorrow she had given him and how he just barely missed the intense *nachat* of her return.

She returned to her roots and started considering marriage. After sharing her story with the man who seemed would be her future husband, he suggested that they finalize it at the father's *kever*, as the father's encouragement is what gave her the support and fortitude to come back home.

Once again, we see how love and warmth are the tools for reaching out.

So, while there are sources of how outright opposition and gentle prodding could each be appropriate approaches when dealing with evildoers, today's *chinuch* experts strongly suggest the love-and-warmth approach. In today's fast-paced, instant-gratification society, one mean word could send someone flying out the door to a world of virtual *gehenom*.

Our best tool in *chinuch* is to create a warm, home atmosphere where *ahava* and *simcha* reign, *ahavat habriyot* and *simcha shel mitzvah*. When our children see and feel that the ways of Torah are pleasant and all her paths are peaceful, we can hope and pray for a family which will happily continue the *mesorah*.

Shabbat Shalom,
Mordechai Malka