

Good Shabbos, everyone.

Mazel Tov to Kobi Taragin on his Bar Mitzvah! Mazel Tov also to Kobi's parents, Ari and Esti Taragin. Mazel Tov to his grandparents and entire family on this simcha. May they have much continued nachas from their children and grandchildren.

I want to thank the sponsors of today's drasha:

- Barry and Barbara Bass, "in gratitude to HaKodosh Baruch Hu for allowing us to celebrate our 52nd wedding anniversary this week."
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- Mayer and Arlene Teles, "in honor of our 55th wedding anniversary and in the honor of Rabbi Marwick and the new board members."

Thank you all for your sponsorships. May you all have much bracha and hatzlacha, and may the neshamos have an aliya...amen.

במדבר פרשת שלח פרק יג פסוק א - ב

(א) וַיִּדְבֹר יְהוֹנָן אֶל־מֹשֶׁה לֵאמֹר:

(ב) שְׁלַח־לְךָ אַנְשִׁים וַיְהִירוּ אֶת־אֶרֶץ כְּנָעַן אֲשֶׁר־אָנֹכִי נֹתֵן לְבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֵישׁ אֶחָד אֵישׁ אֶחָד לְמִטֵּה אֲבוֹתָיו תִּשְׁלְחוּ כָל נָשִׂיא כְּהֵם:

Parshas Shelach begins with the commandment to send spies to explore the Land of Canaan. This episode did not end well. They returned with a negative and discouraging report, causing a major setback in their journey to Eretz Yisrael, literally setting them back decades. Given the calamitous results, we wonder whose idea was it to send the spies?

According to our Sedra, it looks like it was **Hashem's idea**.

במדבר פרק יג

(א) וַיִּדְבֹר ה' אֶל־מֹשֶׁה לֵאמֹר:

(ב) שְׁלַח־לְךָ אַנְשִׁים וַיְהִירוּ אֶת־אֶרֶץ כְּנָעַן אֲשֶׁר־אָנֹכִי נֹתֵן לְבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֵישׁ אֶחָד אֵישׁ אֶחָד לְמִטֵּה אֲבוֹתָיו תִּשְׁלְחוּ כָל נָשִׂיא כְּהֵם:

(ג) וַיִּשְׁלַח אֹתָם מֹשֶׁה מִמִּדְבַר פָּאָרָן עַל־פִּי ה' כָּלֵם אַנְשִׁים רֵאשֵׁי בְנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל הֵמָּה:

Hashem said to Moshe, "Send some men to explore the land of Canaan, which I am giving to the Jewish people. From each ancestral tribe send one of its leaders." **So at Hashem's command Moshe sent them out from the Desert of Paran.**

But, according to Moshe Rabbeinu's account in Devarim, it appears it was the Jewish people's idea:

דברים פרק א

(כב) וַתִּקְרְבוּן אֵלַי כָּלֵכֶם וַתֹּאמְרוּ נִשְׁלַחְנָה אַנְשִׁים לְפָנֵינוּ וַיַּחְפְּרוּ־לָנוּ אֶת־הָאָרֶץ וַיָּשִׁבוּ אֵתְּנוּ דִבְרֵי אֶת־הַדֶּבֶר אֲשֶׁר נִעְלָה־כָּה וְאֵת הָעָרִים אֲשֶׁר נָבֵא אֱלֹהֵינוּ:

(כג) וַיֵּיטֵב בְּעֵינַי הַדֶּבֶר וְאָקַח מִכֶּם שְׁנַיִם עָשָׂר אַנְשִׁים אֵישׁ אֶחָד לְשִׁבְטוֹ:

"Then all of you came to me and said, **"Let us send men** ahead to spy out the land for us and bring back a report about the route we are to take and the towns we will come to." **The idea seemed good to me; so I selected twelve of you, one man from each tribe.**

Rashi reconciles the apparent contradiction.

רש"י במדבר פרשת שלח פרק יג פסוק ב
שלח לך - לדעתך, ב אני איני מצווה לך, אם תרצה שלח, לפי שבאו ישראל ואמרו (דברים א, כב) נשלחה אנשים לפנינו,
כמה שנאמר (שם) ותקרבון אלי כלכם וגו'.

You send (more lit., for yourself) — i.e. according to your own judgment: I do not command you, but if you wish to do, so send them. — Hashem said this because the Israelites came to Moses and said. “We will send men before us, etc.”, as it is said, (Deuteronomy 1:22): “And you approached me, all of you, [saying, We will send men, etc.]”, and Moses took counsel with the Shechinah (the Lord),

Rashi writes that the people came to Moshe with their request to send spies. Moshe asked Hashem what he should do, and Hashem gave him permission to send the spies.

This seems to be an application of what Chazal teach us in **Makkos 10b**

תלמוד בבלי מסכת מכות דף י עמוד ב
בדרך שאדם רוצה לילך בה מוליכין אותו. מן התורה,
“Where a person wants to go, that is where he is led”

If people are intent on a course of action, Hashem does not stop them, even though He knows that it may end in tragedy. Such is the nature of the freedom of choice that Hashem has given us. It includes the freedom to make mistakes.

But according to **Rav Tzadok HaKohen of Lublin**, it was not simply a matter of Hashem reluctantly allowing the Jews to send spies. Instead, Hashem approved their request because He wanted them to take the initiative in this journey, to seek ways to help shape their destiny and to actively mold their future. Rav Tzadok connects this to the idea of תורה שבעל פה the aspect of Torah based on human initiative, which Hashem built into the system, along with the תורה שבכתב the unchanging law emanating solely from Hashem. He wanted us to be a part of the system.

Rav Tzadok further compares the sending of spies to man's role in the second luchos. Whereas Hashem Himself created the first luchos, He asks Moshe to carve the second luchos. **you** carve the luchos. He focuses on the word לך and the similarity of the language of שלח לך in today's parasha and the language of פסל לך in the story of the second luchos. Hashem felt that a mission as important as the conquest of the Land of Israel could not take place without the people's enthusiastic approval and active participation.

Hashem was teaching the Jewish people that He was willing to take a chance. Sending a reconnaissance team was risky—and did not end well. But Hashem intentionally did not create a world of malachim or robots. He created human beings and asked us to partner with Him in running the world. He wants us to be involved in the process. And, in truth, only through our initiative and own work can we fully transform our character and perfect ourselves.

So far, we have two examples of such language שלח לך and פסל לך,

I believe this idea may be hinted to in a third example: the great Avraham Avinu, was told, twice, לך לך.

The **Abarbanel** makes the connection between these three places שלח לך, לך לך, פסל לך
אברבנאל יחזקאל פרק ה
והוא על דרך לך לך מארצך וממולדתך (בראשית יב, א) שפי' בו במקומו שילך הוא בלבד ולא עם אביו וקרוביו כאשר
הלך בראשונה מאור כשדים עד חרון, וכן ולך לך אל ארץ המוריה (שם כב, ב) ר"ל שילך הוא לבדו מבלי נערינו כמו

שעשה, וכן פסל לך (שמות לד, א) שיהיה משה פוסל הלוחות ולא אחר, וכן שלח לך אנשים (במדבר יג, ב) שהוא לבדו ישלחם ולא ידע העם מהליכתם,

In all these places **the message is that you must actively** participate in your journey of growth and advancement. Belief is just the beginning. Now you must actively a part of a process called religious growth.

In לך לך Hashem says to Avraham: I could magically make you appear in the Land of Canaan, but if you don't travel there yourself, with the attendant blood, sweat, toil, and tears, you will not become the great person you are destined to become. If you want to become great, לך לך you must travel, you must put in the work, you must be part of the process.

And then again, after Avraham had withstood nine tests, beginning with לך לך...he was told for his final and tenth test—לך לך...again

בראשית פרשת וירא כב פסוק א - ב

(א) וַיְהִי אַחֲרֵי הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה וְהָאֱלֹהִים נִסְּהוּ אֶת־אַבְרָהָם וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו אַבְרָהָם וַיֹּאמֶר הֲגִנִּי:
(ב) וַיֹּאמֶר קַח־נָא אֶת־בְּנֶךָ אֶת־יִצְחָק אֲשֶׁר־אַהַבְתָּ אֶת־יִצְחָק וְלֹד־לְךָ אֶל־אֶרֶץ הַמְּרִיָּה וְהַעֲלֵהוּ שָׁם לַעֲלֹה עַל אֶתֶד הַקְּהָלִים
אֲשֶׁר אָמַר אֱלֹהִים:

What is the connection between the phrase לך לך and the akeda? What is this last test really about?

Consider the following enigmatic statement from the **Gemara Rosh Hashana 17:**

גמ' ראש השנה: אמר רבי אבהו: למה תוקעין בשופר של איל? - אמר הקדוש ברוך הוא: תקעו לפני בשופר של איל, כדי שאזכור לכם עקידת יצחק בן אברהם, ומעלה אני עליכם כאילו עקדתם עצמכם לפני.

Rabbi Abahu stated: Why do we use a ram's horn for Shofar (on Rosh Hashana)?

He answered: Hashem said: blow the horn of a ram, to remind me of Akedas Yitzchak, and I will treat it as if you have offered yourselves in front of me.

Why do we remember the ram that was slaughtered on that day? Avraham Avinu was ready to slaughter the only son of his beloved wife Sarah. Despite the fact that he waited so long for Yitzchak to be born, he was completely prepared to follow Hashem's directive. Only at the last minute was he told to stop. Then, when a ram became available, he slaughtered the ram instead. In light of what Avraham was prepared to do, to slaughter his beloved Yitzchak, a ram seems insignificant!

But if we look carefully in the Pesukim, we notice something quite fascinating

בראשית פרק כב

(יב) וַיֹּאמֶר אֵל תְּשַׁלַּח יָדְךָ אֶל הַנֶּעֱר וְאֵל תַּעַשׂ לוֹ מֵאוֹמָה כִּי עֵתָה יִדְעֵנִי כִּי יִרְאֵה אֱלֹהִים אֶתָּה וְלֹא חִשַּׁכְתָּ אֶת בֶּן אֶת יַחֲדָךְ מִמֶּנִּי:

When the malach told Avraham not to slaughter Yitzchak, Hashem had finished with His directions for Avraham. Avraham was off the hook—he was given no further instructions

It was Avraham who looked for a ram to slaughter--

(יג) וַיִּשָּׂא אַבְרָהָם אֶת־עֵינָיו וַיִּרְאֵה וְהִנֵּה־אֵיל אֲחֵר נֹאֲתָו בְּסֻבָּה בְּקִרְבָּיו וַיִּלָּךְ אַבְרָהָם וַיִּקַּח אֶת־הָאֵיל וַיַּעֲלֵהוּ לַעֲלֹה תַחַת בְּנֵי:

Rav Yisrael Salanter (*Otzros HaTorah*, p. 233) writes that the ram represents Avraham's initiative in his avodas Hashem—his devotion—לך לך—you be a part of this--to look for an opportunity to express his passion for Hashem.

And that is why, only then, did he receive a bracha. He had finally passed the test of the second לך לך. He had truly become part of the process—by taking initiative in avodas Hashem—looking for opportunities for spiritual growth.

(יז) קיי־ברך אברךך והרבה ארבה את־זרעך ככוכבי השמים וכחול אשר על־שפת הים וירש זרעך את שער איביו:
(יח) והתברכו בזרעך כל גויי הארץ לקב אשר שמעת בקלי:

Avraham Avinu teaches us that we must search out opportunities to express that devotion. We must always look to see how we can make ourselves better—to improve our relationship with Hashem and with others. To see how we can give of ourselves—push ourselves towards that goal.

When Hashem created the world, a puzzling phrase is used...אשר־ברא אלהים לעשות... *which Hashem created, to do...*

As one of the **Baalei Tosafos** explains, Hashem created the world—with the intention of man partnering with Him...being an active part of building the world Hashem created.

ר' חיים פלטיאל בראשית פרשת בראשית פרק ב פסוק ג
(ג) ברא אלהים לעשות. כי עד הנה ברא ה' ומכאן ואילך לעשות שהבריות יעשו העולם.

And that is why Hashem allowed, and even encouraged, the meraglim—because He wants us to take our destiny in our hands, to be active in our expression of Yiddishkeit, and take ownership over our lives and decisions.

He wants us to be consumed with a passion and excitement, and to be His active partners in this world. We must live with a sense of mission and purpose, empowered by the knowledge that Hashem gave us the ability to build His world along with Him...and we must accept that role, and dedicate ourselves to that mission.

The Holy **Piacezner Rebbe**, the Rav of the Warsaw Ghetto, in a 1940 drasha, on Parshas Bechukosai, (*Holy Fire*, pp. 44-45) said “we must imbue every aspect of our lives with that sense of ‘I am my beloved’s.’ This means, first of all, that we must fulfill the Torah and the commandments in thought, word, and deed... We should realize that the foundation and goal of our lives is fulfilling the Torah and commandments, and being a Jew. We should realize that Hashem created us for that purpose... We must dedicate ourselves to Hashem with every fiber of our being...looking for opportunities to sanctify Hashem’s name in our world. May we fulfill our mission as Hashem’s partners and see the days of Mashiach, bimhera viyamenu...amen.