



פרשת שלח

But the Grapes Are So Heavy! The woman's special koach By Rebbetzin Shiffy Friedman

This shiur has been dedicated as a zechus for an anonymous Ner Leragli talmidah for a smooth and uneventful birth. May it be beshah tovah. And may the inspiration from the teachings of Rav Moshe Wolfson zt"l serve as a zechus for the illui neshamah of this great tzaddik.

Welcome, dear sisters, to this week's Ner Leragli shiur!

Let's take a look into Parshas Shelach and draw our illuminating lessons from this week's *parshah*.

How can Parshas Shelach be a guiding light for me this week?

What's just one message that I can apply to my life so I can feel more of the *Ner Mitzvah veTorah ohr*?

It's summertime... What a lovely season, ripe with opportunities for rejuvenation. As mothers, we might find that this time of year affords us more chances to connect to our children—in a more relaxed setting, with homework and tight schedules out of the way. This change of pace may afford us countless other opportunities to connect to others in a way that the harried year-round life does not. But what does true connection look like? The good news is that it requires a specific trait that we women have been blessed with in abundance. Let's understand its essence.

Commenting on one of the most significant verses in this week's *parshah*, Shelach, the Kli Yakar makes a statement that is a profound compliment to us women. Quoting the Medrash (Parshas Pinchas), he writes, that since women have a great love for Eretz

Yisrael, Hashem communicated to Moshe Rabeinu, **“According to your opinion, men should be sent to scout out the land. But according to My understanding, it would be better to send women...”**

שלח לך אנשים... אמרו רבותינו (ספרי קלג) הנשים היו מחבבות את הארץ... על כן אמר הקב"ה 'לפי דעתי שאני רואה בעתיד, היה יותר טוב לשלוח נשים המחבבות את הארץ כי לא יספרו בגנותה...' (כלי יקר במדבר יג:ב)

Our Special Koach

Why women? Let's understand the special *koach* that we women have, one that enables us to see beauty and greatness everywhere. Fashioned from an inner organ of Adam HaRishon—his rib—the very first woman, Chava, personified a characteristic that is inherent in all of us: She was a being who saw **beneath the surface**. And as women, even centuries later, we too have been gifted with that innate strength. It's the *koach* of *penimiyus*, of *binah yeseirah*, of being able to look past the outer layers to unearth the core. **To live an inner-centered life is to always see beyond the veneer, to peel away those coatings in our desire to discover “the real thing.”**

A Life of *Penimiyus*

This week, klal Yisrael lost a giant in Torah and *avodah*, a tzaddik who led a life of *penimiyus*. Rav Moshe Wolfson *zt"l*, the Mashgiach of Torah Veda'as and the Rav of Emunas Yisrael, espoused an inner-focused life above all else, evident in his unparalleled humility. His avodas Hashem was entirely centered on the internal core of the matter. Far away from a checking-off-the-list service, it was one that facilitated a deep, alive connection between him and his Creator.

In one of the Mashgiach's teachings on Parshas Shelach, this is the message that reverberates: When Moshe Rabeinu instructed the Meraglim to take from the fruits of Eretz Yisrael, his intention was for them to consume them and rise to the great spiritual heights which fruits from Eretz Yisrael have the *koach* to engender. Alluded to in their instruction of

, (digging) ויחפרו

they were meant to “dig deeper” to unveil the true essence of the Land. The Meraglim, however, didn't do that. **They didn't see the internal quality hiding in those luscious fruits.** All they saw was the outer layer—a cluster of grapes that was so heavy that eight people had to carry it back to the *Midbar*:

Why Grapes?

(הימים ימי ביכורי ענבים (במדבר יג: כ)

Why is it important for us to know that this was the season of the harvesting of the grapes? What significance do *davka* grapes have that is directly related to the cheit of the Meraglim and what we can be *mesakein* today?

Rav Shamshon of Ostropolia, a great *mekubal* who lived in the 17th century, writes in his *Sefer Likutei Shoshanim* that the reason the Meraglim were not successful on their task of *veyachperu*, of digging deeper to see the beauty of Eretz Yisrael, was because it was during the days of *bikurei anavim*. What's the connection?

It was a time—Chodesh Tamuz and Av, forty days from Rosh Chodesh Tamuz until Tisha B'Av, that the *yetzer hara* has a *shelitah* (as the Zohar tells us—the three months when he is most in control are Tamuz, Av, and Teves) which is why the Meraglim failed (on ט"ו סיון כ" they were still אנשים, pious men). How do we see that in the name of the season, *bikurei anavim*? *Bikurim* refers to the first fruit, the very beginning. Tells us Rav Shamshon, that if we take a look at the letters that precede those in the word ענבים, we get the letters סמאל—the name of the ס"מ, the *yetzer hara*.

And what is his *koach* *davka* at this time of year? It's the *koach* that is similar to that of grapes—from which wine is made. As the Kli Yakar writes in Parshas Vayishlach (בראשית (לב: כה):

מלאך זה הוא סמאל"ל שרו של עשו הנקרא סמאל"ל עשו, כי כל הפצו וישעו לסמא עיני האדם ולהכותו בעורון ולעשותו סומא מעין השכלי, עד אשר לא יוכל הרואה לראות במראות האמת לבא ולראות פני ה' ולבוא בסוד ה' ליראיו בסתרי התורה, כי הוא שטן, הוא מלאך המות, הוא יצה"ר (ב"ב טז). ורמז לדבר כי סמאל שותפו של ענב"ם באלפ"א ביתא ואותיות שניות, כי כמו שהיין היוצא מן הענבים כשהוא משכר את האדם הרי הוא עור בסתם עיניו, כמו שנאמר (בראשית מט. יב) הכלילי עינים מיין. וסתם שיכור הולך כעור וסומא, כך סמאל זה שותפו, כל מזימותיו לסמא עיני האדם עד אשר לא יוכל לראות את השמש. ואם כן הענבים מסמאים עין הגשמי, וזה סמאל שותפו מעור עין השכלי, שלא יראה במראות האל וזהו סמאל מלה מורכבת.

The most hazardous effect of inebriation, intoxication, is that it distorts our perception, it blinds us, it deprives us of clarity—crystal-clear vision. It only allows us to see a part of the picture.

The Distortion of Western Culture

When we get stuck on the heavy weight or giant size of the grape and we can't see past its shell, we deprive ourselves of recognizing and appreciating its priceless essence. We're living by a value that Western culture espouses: the external above all else. It's all about the glamour and glitz, the outer trappings, the petty stuff—be it fame, prestige, appearance, assets, success. It's about the branding, the label, the designer everything—even designer schools and *shidduchim*. In Western culture, even those who appreciate values with a more internal slant, such as education and the humanities, can easily get carried away by the glitter of titles, Ivy League awards, sophisticated letters after their name. None of that is the real thing.

The *chein* of Eretz Yisrael, on the other hand, while in many ways externally breathtaking as well, is primarily internal. **If all I see when I look at Eretz Yisrael is the externally displeasing parts, how can I connect to her true beauty, a beauty that's more than skin deep?** As a born-and-bred Brooklynite from Hungarian stock now living in Yerushalayim, that's something I need to remind myself often, especially when I attend *simchos* here (or when we plan our own). Just the other day, I attended a wedding of a friend's daughter. If I'd be there to rate the decor of the venue, the menu, or the music (just drums), I'd be in bad shape. The grapes would feel *really* heavy... But scratching beneath the petty surface, I was privy to a most beautiful detail at the event. In my

search for the *kallah* during the dancing break, I noticed that she wasn't on the dance floor. But this *kallah* hadn't gone to redo her makeup or fix up her appearance. She was in the corner of the room, taking a few moments to *daven* Ma'ariv, connecting to Hashem, on one of the holiest days in her life.

FIREWORK

Points to Ponder (in your journal):

In which areas in my life can I use more of these “beneath-the-surface” glasses?

Put It Into Practice

The message about living a life of *penimiyus* is not only about seeing the greatness of Eretz Yisrael per se. It's a message that pertains to all of us, regardless of where on the globe we reside. And there's no better time than now, during the months of Tamuz and Av, during which the Meraglim failed to scratch beneath the surface, that we can counteract that error by utilizing our special womanly gift of doing the opposite. Their sin led to destruction, to *churban*, to distance from Hashem. **When we tap into our unique strength to scratch beneath the surface, we open ourselves up to experiencing true connection.** Let's look at 4 primary areas in our lives as wives, mothers, Yidden, and human beings that can be exponentially impacted when we allow this inner gift to come to life.

1. Parenting

In all relationships, tapping in to our gift of seeing others at their essence facilitates profound connection. As parents, doing so becomes imperative. First, it's the only way we can see the greatness that is inherent in each of our children even when their behavior does not reflect that. Second, when they come

to us with a question, comment, or request, or when we have a hard time understanding their conduct, by looking beneath the technical conversation and asking ourselves, “What is she really asking here? What is this child really looking for in this interaction? What might this child be desperate for that he’s behaving like that?” We can gain so much clarity and understanding about the child and their particular emotional needs at that time.

So often, what we see as petty or even repulsive means so much to them, and the more we can try to understand where they’re coming from, and how much certain pursuits mean to them, the more of a relationship we’ll be building between us.

A parental response that emanates from such a place can lead to the real bonding experience the child craves.

2. Marriage

In the same vein, seeing our husband through truly feminine eyes—eyes that look out for the core—is perhaps the greatest gift we can give to our marriage. **Tapping in to our “feminine vision,” we can make it our business to notice our husband’s kindness and goodness, instead of focusing on the those outer layers that constantly keep getting in the way of our closeness.** And when our husband makes a comment or request that rubs us the wrong way and risks creating distance between us, instead of going with our knee-jerk surface responses like anger, revenge, or withdrawal, by wearing those “beneath-the-surface glasses,” we can ponder, “What is really going on here that’s causing this friction? What is it that I really want to say and how can I say it in a way that will best facilitate the kind of relationship I wish for? What is it that *he* wants that I can bring more of into our relationship?”

3. Yiddishkeit

Listening to/reading this *shiur* is just one indication of your desire to lead a more inner-focused life, so that’s a point for you right there :) By making it our business to learn Torah, listen to *shiurim*, engage in spiritual pursuits, and make our Yiddishkeit more meaningful and mindful, we’re doing what we can to live a more *penimiyus* life. Two powerful ways to make our relationship with Hashem more real is to converse with Him throughout the day in our own words and to make it a focus to do good deeds that are only between us and Him. The less outer-focused our Judaism is, the more real it becomes.

Also, the less Western-culture distractions we allow into our life, the more we set ourselves up for focusing on what really matters. **It’s hard to tap in to our inner world and our spiritual essence when the buzz and glitz of everything that espouses the opposite is ringing loudly in our ears and sparkling before our eyes** (one great perk of living in Eretz Yisrael!). Surrounding ourselves with inner-focused people also plays a significant role in helping us toward this endeavor.

4. Self-Development

Of course, the more attention we pay to the core of things, the more attuned we become to our own inner selves. The #1 asset toward true self-development is recognizing our greatness, which once again requires... seeing our core—our pure *neshamah*, the great person we already are right now, and the even greater person we have the potential to become once we recognize this essence.

Living a *penimiyus* life also helps us navigate through our internal struggles and understand ourselves better. Self-compassion necessitates that we see beneath



our *own* layers. “Why am I so triggered by this person?” “Why am I finding it *so* hard to commit to this/that/the other?” “Why do I find this child/relationship so challenging?” By looking inward instead of resorting to self-criticism, we can come away with immense clarity regarding our struggles.

When we make it a focus to utilize our feminine gift of living a more internal-focused life, plowing beneath the surface in ourselves and others, we get to unearth the most breathtaking and valuable of treasures. By being true *meraglim*, scouting out to see the good, we can break free from *regilus*, habit, the surface vision that doesn't allow for connection and depth.

⚡ SPARK (tefillah/mantra)

ברוך אתה ה'... פוקה עורים

Hashem, please help open my eyes so I can see beneath the surface. Help me see the beauty in the life You have destined for me, to see the good in everyone and everything around me, to tap into this special feminine gift so that I can experience true connection.

🎵 SONG

This is a very special song that my friend's son wrote and recorded after he *l"o* lost his vision as a young *bachur*. May the inspiration of this song serve as a *zechus* for the *refuah sheleimah* of Yosef Meir ben Raizel Hadas.

May all of us women be *zocheh* to see the beauty in our lives and to enjoy the deeper connection to Hashem, others, and ourselves that this beneath-the-surface vision engenders.

Enjoy your journey in the light!

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