

בס"ד

# THE RASHI OF THE WEEK

Week of

# Parshas Shelach

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## An Outline of the Rebbe's Explanation of Rashi Parshas Shelach

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### Rashi in His Own Words

במדבר י"ג, כ"ג: וַיָּבֹאוּ עַד נַחַל אֶשְׁכּוֹל וַיִּכְרְתוּ מִשָּׁם זְמוּרָה וְאֶשְׁכּוֹל עֲנָבִים אֶחָד וַיִּשְׂאֶהוּ בְּמוֹט בִּשְׁנַיִם וּמִן הָרְמָנִים וּמִן הַתְּאֵנִים:

רש"י ד"ה וישאֶהוּ במוט בשניים: ... שמונה נטלו אשכול, אחד נטל תאנה ואחד רמון, יהושע וכלב לא נטלו כלום, לפי שכל עצמם להוציא דבה נתכוונו, כשם שפריה משונה כך עמה משונה ...

**Bamidbar 13:23:** They came to the Valley of Eshkol and cut a branch with a cluster of grapes. They carried it on a pole between two people) and (they also took) some pomegranates and figs.

**Rashi Heading: They carried it on a pole between two (people):** ... Eight of them took a cluster (of grapes), one took a fig, and one took a pomegranate. Yehoshua and Kaleiv did not take anything, for the others intended to present a slanderous report (namely,) just as its fruit is extraordinary, so are its people extraordinary.

### Synopsis

This week's Torah portion, Shelach, tells the famous story of the twelve spies whom Moshe Rabbeinu sent from the wilderness to the land of Israel. We are told they brought back the extraordinary, enormous fruit from the land to show the Jewish people. Rashi explains that Yehoshua and Kaleiv returned empty-handed. Rashi explains that this was because "the intention of the others (in bringing the fruit) was to present a slanderous report, (namely,) just as its fruit is extraordinary, so are its people extraordinary."

We need to understand how Yehoshua and Kaleiv could disobey Moshe! Moshe Rabbeinu told all twelve spies, "You shall be courageous and take from the fruit of the land." It would seem that by returning without fruit, they were disregarding Moshe's words!

Rashi understands that Yehoshua and Kaleiv's reasoning was based on a Talmudic discussion of this incident. The Talmud says<sup>1</sup>, "Eight spies carried the grape cluster, one carried a pomegranate, and one carried a fig. Yehoshua and Kaleiv did not bring anything. The Gemorah gives two possible reasons that the two did not bring anything. One is because Yehoshua and Kaleiv were the most distinguished of the twelve spies. The second is because they did not wish to have a share in the plan to discourage the other Jews from entering the land.

Rashi agrees with the second explanation of the Talmud; they did not wish to be part of the plan to stop the Jews from entering Israel. However, there is a subtle difference between how Rashi and the Talmud phrase the same idea.

The Talmud concisely says, "They did not have a share in the plan." This implies that they did not wish to do anything, which could be interpreted as agreeing with the other spies, even though there was nothing intrinsically wrong with carrying the fruit. However, Rashi gives a more detailed, lengthy explanation. "Yehoshua and Kaleiv did not take anything, for the intention of the others was to present a slanderous report, (namely,) just as its fruit is extraordinary, so are its people extraordinary." The implication is that they would participate in the spy's plot by carrying fruit. However, this did not exempt them from following

1. See Sotah 34, the end of Side a.

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Moshe's direct orders.

We also need to understand how Rashi derives that bringing the fruit was to slander the land. They did not begin speaking badly about the land of Israel until after they showed the Jews the fruit. Rashi himself says that the reason they started their report by saying<sup>2</sup>, "We came to the land to which you sent us, and it is flowing with milk and honey, and this is its fruit," was because "Any lie in which a little truth is not stated in the beginning cannot be maintained in the end." In other words, the fruit was indeed of excellent quality, and they used this kernel of truth to maintain the lie.

There are certain Mitzvos in which the primary factor is the action itself, and others in which the primary factor is the result of the action. For example, regarding "Hand Tefillin," the Torah commands<sup>3</sup>, "You shall tie them as a sign upon your hand." In other words, the Mitzvah is the act of binding the Tefillin. It then continues regarding "Head Tefillin," "and they shall be as "Totafos"<sup>4</sup> between your eyes." This indicates that the main factor is the position on the head, between the eyes.

The same may be true here. Perhaps Moshe commanded them to show the fruit to the Jews, and may have commanded them to have it there. According to the Gemorah, what mattered was the fruit being there. It was irrelevant how it got there, and it did not matter which or how many spies brought the fruit.

However, Rashi's opinion is that according to the simple meaning of the Torah, it was a Mitzvah for each of the twelve individuals to bring fruit. Based on this, the only reason that could suffice for not following this instruction was "for the intention of the others was to present a slanderous report, (namely,) just as its fruit is extraordinary, so are its people extraordinary." The spies had performed no evil deed but had a hidden agenda and wanted to appear as if they were righteous to persuade the Jews to rebel.

That is why Yehoshua and Kaleiv could not participate. By participating, they would have corroborated with the other spies in a sin, namely their hidden motive. The prohibition against helping someone to sin outweighs the Mitzvah of listening to Moshe Rabbeinu. Or perhaps Moshe's original intention when he issued the command was not to bring fruit if it would aid in the performance of a sin.

### Rashi's Explanation

This week's Torah portion, Shelach, tells the famous story about the twelve men Moshe Rabbeinu sent from the wilderness to spy on Eretz Yisroel. He sent one person from each tribe, and unfortunately, all but two, Yehoshua Bin Nun and Kaleiv ben Yephuneh, returned with a negative report.

By way of introduction, I would like to point out two things. Firstly, Hashem did not command this mission directly. Instead, the Jewish people approached Moshe, asking to send spies to scout out the land which they were about to enter. Moshe asked G-d, Who responded that He would leave it to Moshe's discretion<sup>5</sup>. Secondly, when these men were appointed to serve in

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2. Bamidbar 13:27.

3. Devorim 6:8.

4. The word "Totafos" which the Torah uses is not Hebrew. Rashi explains, citing the Talmud (Sanhedrin 4, b), that it means four (referring to the four compartments of the head Tefillin). He writes that "Tat" in Coptic means 'two,' and "Pat" in Afriki (Phrygian) also means "two."

5. See Rashi's second commentary to Bamidbar 13:2.

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this mission, they were righteous<sup>6</sup>. It was only afterward that they rebelled against Hashem and Moshe and tried to dissuade the Jews from entering Israel.

In the verse, the Rebbe explains that as part of their report, they brought back the extraordinary, enormous fruit from the land to show to the Jewish people. Rashi explains that ten returned carrying the fruit; in contrast, Yehoshua and Kaleiv brought nothing. Rashi explains that the reason they did not bear fruit was that "the intention of the others (in bringing the fruit) was to present a slanderous report, (namely,) just as its fruit is extraordinary, so are its people extraordinary."

How does Rashi know that Yehoshua and Kaleiv did not return to the wilderness bearing fruit? It says so explicitly in the Talmud<sup>7</sup>. It says, "Eight spies carried the grape cluster, one took a pomegranate, one brought a fig. Yehoshua and Kaleiv did not bring anything. The Gemorah gives two possible reasons for them not carrying anything. It was either because Yehoshua and Kaleiv were the most distinguished spies<sup>8</sup> or because they did not have a share in the plan<sup>9</sup>."

The disagreement in the Talmud appears to hinge on whether Moshe's mission remained in effect even after the ten spies became wicked. According to the Gemara's first explanation, Moshe's mission was not nullified; however, Yehoshua and Kaleiv did not carry fruit for a side reason. However, according to the second explanation, perhaps Moshe's mission was canceled because of the spy's change of heart<sup>10</sup>.

Based on this, we see that Rashi agrees with the second opinion in the Talmud<sup>11</sup>, that "Yehoshua and Kaleiv did not take anything, for the intention of the others was to present a slanderous report." In other words, according to Rashi, their mission was canceled and no longer in effect.

### Difficulties in Understanding Rashi

Moshe told the spies to return with fruit from the land<sup>12</sup>. Despite whatever was happening around them, they were obligated to follow Moshe and bring fruit. From their words and actions, it would be clear that their intention to bring fruit would be to show how great the land was. We cannot explain that they were under no obligation to do so because, as stated above, Hashem did not command the entire mission. Rather, it was Moshe's initiative. They were "emissaries - Shluchim" of Moshe. How could they disobey his explicit instructions?

It is inconsistent with Peshat to say that Yehoshua and Kaleiv thought their mission was void and, therefore, not binding because of the rebellion of the other spies. They returned with the other spies, announced to all Jews that "the land is very, very

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6. See Rashi's commentary to Bamidbar 13:3.

7. Sotah 34, the end of side a.

8. It would not suit people of their stature to carry a load.

9. Meaning the plan of the other ten spies to discourage the other Jews from entering Israel. The other Jews would judge from the size of the fruit what the size of the inhabitants of the land must be.

10. It may be possible to explain this disagreement Halachically as well. The difference is whether this mission was given to all twelve men individually, or whether the twelve men that Moshe sent were considered as one unit. If they were each commanded individually, anyone of them not fulfilling his mission would not affect the others. However, if they were one unit, his command to them was a general command to all twelve of them. This would be comparable to a commandment which is incumbent upon a community. If that was the case, canceling part of the mission would cancel the entire mission.

11. The reason that Rashi does not accept the Talmud's first explanation is obvious. According to Peshat, we cannot say that people such as Yehoshua and Kaleiv who were both so loyal to Moshe, would disobey his instructions because it did not suit their stature.

12. See Bamidbar 13:20.

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good," and tried to persuade the nation not to follow the other spies. In other words, they took part in the mission because it was still in full force.

### The Explanation

We stated above that Rashi agrees with the second explanation of the Talmud, namely that they did not wish to be part of the plan to stop the Jews from entering Israel. However, there is a subtle difference between how Rashi and the Gemorah phrase the same idea.

The Talmud concisely says, "They did not have a share in the plan." This implies that they did not wish to do anything that could be interpreted as agreeing with the other spies. This was true even if there was nothing wrong with carrying the fruit. However, in his commentary on the Torah (Peshat), Rashi gives a more detailed, lengthy explanation. "Yehoshua and Kaleiv did not take anything, for the intention of the others was to present a slanderous report, (namely,) just as its fruit is extraordinary, so are its people extraordinary." The implication is that by carrying fruit, they would be participating in the spy's plot; Rashi explains that bringing the fruit was a part of their plan.

From where does Rashi derive this? How does he know that the act of bringing the fruit was to slander the land? They did not begin speaking badly about the land of Israel until after they showed the Jews the fruit. Rashi himself says that the spies began their report by saying, "We came to the land to which you sent us, and it is flowing with milk and honey, and this is its fruit," because "any lie in which a little truth is not stated in the beginning cannot be maintained in the end." In other words, the fruit's quality was the truth they used to maintain their lie.

We know there are certain Mitzvos in which the primary factor is the *performance* of the Mitzvah. There are others in which the primary factor is the *result* of the action; i.e., the action must be performed. A good example is the Mitzvah of Tefillin, specifically "Hand Tefillin" and "Head Tefillin." The Torah commands us<sup>13</sup>, "You shall tie them as a sign upon your hand," meaning the Mitzvah is the act of binding them. It continues, "They shall be as 'Totafos' between your eyes." There is no commandment to act; instead, they must be there. The primary consideration is the result of the action and not the action itself.

Similarly, we may consider this question regarding Moshe's instruction to bring the fruit. Perhaps Moshe commanded them that the fruit be there upon their return. However, he may have been commanding them to bring the fruit. This appears to be borne out by Moshe's command, "You shall be courageous and take from the fruit of the land."

We can then explain that, according to the Gemorah, what mattered was that the fruit be there. Therefore, both of the Gemorah's answers are understandable. As long as the fruit got there, it did not matter whether or not Yehoshua and Kaleiv brought it. Therefore, either of the Gemorah's explanations suffice.

However, in his commentary on the Torah, Rashi believes it was a Mitzvah for each of the twelve individuals to bring fruit. Therefore, Rashi cannot explain that they did not bring fruit because of their importance; that would certainly not be a reason to neglect the performance of a Mitzvah. The same applies to explaining that they did not bring fruit because it might be misinterpreted.

The only reason that could suffice for Rashi is that they did not bring fruit "for the intention of the others was to present a slanderous report, (namely,) just as its fruit is extraordinary, so are its people extraordinary." As we said before, when the ten spies

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13. Devorim 6:8.

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displayed the fruit, they had not yet done anything that was not in keeping with their mission. On the contrary, they wanted to show the Jews that they had fulfilled their mission precisely as commanded by Moshe. No improper deed had been performed. It was their intentions that were bad. They had a hidden agenda in bringing the fruit and wanted it to appear as if they were righteous to persuade the Jews to rebel.

That is why Yehoshua and Kaleiv could not participate. If the other ten spies had no hidden motives, they would have been obligated to participate. However, participating would have helped the other spies sin and carry out their hidden motives. The prohibition against helping someone to sin outweighs the Mitzvah of listening to Moshe Rabbeinu. Or perhaps Moshe's intention when he issued the command was not to bring fruit if it would aid in the performance of a sin.

### **A Deeper Lesson from Rashi**

It is known that the spies' mistake was in thinking it was better to remain in the wilderness, performing Mitzvos with thought and speech, rather than entering Israel, where they would be obligated to work with the physical world and perform physical Mitzvos. Our Sages teach us that action counts more than anything else. However, this can cause one to mistakenly believe that our thoughts and motives do not matter much. Rashi is coming to explain the devastating results that can come from negative intentions and hidden motives. If this is the case with negative things, how much more so is it true about positive things? This is in keeping with the teaching that<sup>14</sup> "a Mitzvah performed without thought is like a body without a soul." A soul can transform a body from life to "the opposite of life." So too, can the proper intentions bring life to a Mitzvah.

This can primarily be accomplished by studying the deeper aspects of Torah. Chassidus, which is an example of the deeper reasons for Mitzvos, will be revealed with the coming of Moshiach.

Similarly, the obligation to believe in Moshiach and await his coming must come from the depths of one's heart. This will hasten the true redemption and the fulfillment of the promise<sup>15</sup>, "I will remove the heart of stone from you, and will give you a heart of flesh," speedily in our days.

*(Adapted from a talk given on Motzo'ai Shabbos Parshas Shelach 5738)*

**I hope you gained as much by reading this as I did by translating and adapting it.**

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14. See Tanya Chapter 38.

15. Yechezkel 36:26.

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May she go from strength to strength  
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