

Divrei Torah on Jerusalem by Rabbi Yosef Bronstein 5778 Parashat Sh'lach / פרשת שלח-לך

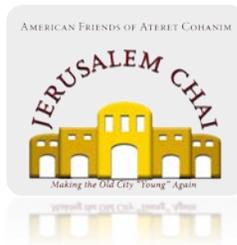
A City With God's Name

A look at the parsha and its haftorah are a study in contrasts. Both relate a story of sending spies into the Land of Israel, but with diametrically opposed results. While in the parsha the spies return to slander the Land and Moshe needs to pray from the very survival of the Jewish people, the haftorah relates how Yehoshua's spies perfectly execute their mission and return with important information and an encouraging message. What differentiated them?

One suggestion lies in the Torah's presentation of the spies. In the haftorah the spies are anonymous, referred to simply as "men" that Yehoshua sends into the Land. Before, during and after their mission we never discover the identities of these brave individuals. In the parsha, however, the Torah carefully lists the names of the spies, even dedicating a separate verse for each spy.

Rav Re'em HaKohen of Yeshivat Otniel once explained that perhaps this detail is important for the ultimate outcome of their respective missions. In order to enter the Land and fight its wars, one needs to be brave, courageous and an initiative-taker. However, the key is to remain totally dedicated to God throughout the process. The spies of the haftorah were talented and unique individuals, but fundamentally they were not in it for their themselves – but for God alone. This is literarily expressed through the omission of their names. The spies of the parsha, in contrast, are identified by their name, indicating that they were engaging in this dangerous task at least partially for their own ego and fame. Therefore, they failed in their mission.

Perhaps this is the meaning of the episode of Yehoshua's name change. Before embarking on their mission, Moshe changes his pupils name from Hoshaya to Yehoshua, adding a "Yud" that creates God's name. Yehoshua's "name" does not hurt him on his mission as his own identity is enveloped in God's name – he is totally dedicated to God. All of Yehoshua's prodigious skills and talents are intertwined with his self-identity of being a servant of God.



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With this in mind, the name Yerushalayim takes on greater significance. The Torah teaches us that the word Yerushalayim includes God's name: "And Avraham named that place, God will see, as it is said to this day: On the mountain, God will be seen." Yerushalayim, as a city, has its own unique flavor, rhythm, history and spiritual beat. All of this adds to the lives of those who visit it and especially those who merit to live within its environs. However, it is crucial to remember that Yerushalayim includes God's name. All of its uniqueness, specialness and history needs to help us dedicate ourselves to the One who is fully intertwined with the city – to God. Only with this consciousness will we be able to fully appreciate and benefit from the