

Parsha Pearls

FROM THE WORDS OF THE GEDOLIM

Shlach 5768

These are the names of the men that Moshe sent to spy out the land; and Moshe called Hoshea the son of Nun "Yehoshua". (13:16)

Rashi says that the name "Yehoshua" was a contraction of the two-letter name of G-d and the word "save". By giving Yehoshua this name, Moshe was praying that G-d save him from the advice of the spies.

Rabbi Yitzchok Yaakov Rabinowicz, the Biala Rebbe (d. 1905) asks: why did Moshe word the prayer this way? He should have simply prayed that G-d keep Yehoshua from committing the sin that the other spies committed. He answers that since man has free will to choose whether or not to sin, one cannot pray to G-d to save him from sin. He can only pray to be saved from the advice of the evil inclination or wicked people who attempt to convince him to sin.

Sometimes the wicked speak in such a way that it is not readily obvious that they are giving advice; they seem to be simply stating facts. In such cases, our prayer should be that G-d open our eyes to recognize the advice of the wicked as such, and avoid it. Such was the case of the spies. The spies were sent by Moshe to gather and report facts, not to give advice, and on the surface it seemed as if they were merely doing their job. However, a closer look reveals that they added opinions and advice: "We are not able to go up against the people, for they are stronger than us" (13:31). Foreseeing this, Moshe prayed regarding Yehoshua, "May G-d save you from the advice of the spies."

The Biala Rebbe continued, "This is similar to the advice that the wicked people of our generation have given us in regard to settling the Land of Israel. Their entire wicked desire is to cause the Jews to believe false ideas that the future redemption will come about through natural means, G-d forbid, as is known from their lies and falsehoods. Just as Moshe prayed for Yehoshua, we must pray that that G-d illuminate our eyes to see that all of this is the advice of the wicked. Once we recognize the advice of the wicked for what it is, we will automatically be able to overcome the sin. Through this, we will be worthy to see the true complete redemption, soon and in our days." (Divrei Binah)

The Biala Rebbe's words are even more true today than when he wrote them. In his time, Zionism was a fledgling movement with far-fetched ambitious goals, and their ideas were clearly in the category of advice. Today, however, many people are overwhelmed by Zionism's apparent successes and feel that we must submit to the facts and make the best of what we have. They see opposition to the existence of a Jewish state as an outdated phenomenon. We must pray to G-d that He save us by opening our eyes to see that the path of Zionism is not a fact, only the advice and opinions of wicked people. Then we will be able to overcome this trial and choose the alternative to Zionism: belief in G-d's plan of exile and the coming of moshiach.

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