

Parsha Ponders

Shelach | June 28, 2019 | 25 Sivan 5779

The paths of two greats¹

אלה שמות האנשים אשר-שלח משה לתור את-הארץ ויקרא משה להושע בן-נון יהושע

These are the names of the men who were sent by Moshe to scout out the land. Moshe called Hoshea the son of Nun: Yehoshua²

When the Jews had almost arrived at the land of Israel, they had the idea to send spies to scout out the land³. They wanted to know not only about the landscape, but about the inhabitants⁴. Were they a conquerable force, or not? Twelve men, one for each tribe, were selected for the task. One of them was Moshe's faithful student⁵, Yehoshua. He was originally called Hoshea, but Moshe, as a form of prayer, added the letter *yud* to his name, making it Yehoshua. Moshe was concerned that the spies had evil intentions, and would falsely give a negative report. He therefore added a letter from G-d's name to Yehoshua's, pleading that Hashem should save Yehoshua from the council of the spies⁶.

Another one of the spies was Kalev. We know that he was also righteous from start to finish⁷. Why didn't Moshe pray for him? He was also vulnerable to the negative influence of the other spies. We are taught that he sought Divine assistance by praying at the graves of Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov⁸. We see that he himself was concerned that he would be swayed by their negative attitude. Why didn't Yehoshua join him to pray there? Finally, the Torah ends the story of the spies with Hashem praising Kalev for having a "different spirit" than the other spies⁹. Why isn't Yehoshua mentioned as well?

There are two paths in the service of Hashem. If there are a group of people who are mistaken, going in a bad direction, and negatively affecting others, is it better for a righteous individual to take a stand right away and make it clear they disagree? Or is it better to keep quiet, appear like they agree, until the

¹ Based on [Chofetz Chaim Al HaTorah](#) to [Numbers](#) 13:16

² [Numbers](#) *loc. cit.*

³ [Deuteronomy](#) 1:22

⁴ [Rashi](#) to [Numbers](#) 13:18, with [Minchas Yehudah](#)

⁵ See [Exodus](#) 24:13 with [Rashi](#)

⁶ [Sotah](#) 34b, brought by [Rashi](#) to [Numbers](#) 13:16

⁷ [Numbers](#) 14:24

⁸ [Rashi](#) to [ibid](#) 13:22. [Rashi](#) only says that Kalev was על קברי אבות, prostrated on the graves of the forefathers, and he prayed. [Rashi's](#) source, [Sotah](#) 34b, says more than that. It adds: אמר להן, אבותי בקשו עלי, רחמים שאנצל מעצת מרגלים, he said to [the forefathers]: "My fathers! Beseech mercy for me that I be saved from the council of the spies". This is seemingly problematic, as the [Mishnah Berurah](#) 581:4 § 27 rules that it is forbidden to make requests of the dead. Rather, a person who is praying at the grave of a righteous individual should pray to Hashem **in the merit** of the deceased buried there. His source is [Sefer Maharil Hilchos Taanis](#) § 18, brought by [Be'er Heitev ad. loc.](#) § 17, and [Elya Rabbah ad. loc.](#) § 39. See also [Chochmas Adam](#) 89:7, who says this is close to the prohibition of being דורש אל המתים ([Deuteronomy](#) 18:11; [Sefer HaMitzvos Lo' Saaseh](#) #38). Perhaps this is why the [Chofetz Chaim Al HaTorah](#) explains Kalev's actions as ונשתטח על קברי אבות שיעזרוהו בזכותם, he prostrated on their graves so that He (Hashem) would help him in **their merit**. This topic is a major discussion, as many have the practice of asking the deceased to beseech Hashem on their behalf. See [Teshuvos Maharam Shik Orach Chaim](#) § 293. See also [Minchas Asher Rosh Hashanah](#) 1:2 who brings many sources, including from Kalev (see [Tosafos ad. loc.](#)), [Taanis](#) 16a, [Sefer Chassidim](#) § 450 (brought by [Maharak Shik](#)), [Magen Avraham](#) 579:3 § 11 (ironically brought by the [Mishnah Berurah ad. loc.](#) § 14, although he probably rereads it like he did above), that make it clear that it's permissible to ask the dead to beseech Hashem on our behalf. He is astounded at those that forbid the practice for not reading these sources according to their clear and simple meaning

⁹ [Numbers](#) 14:24

opportune time to deny their ways in front of the masses? Each one has an advantage and a disadvantage.

The first path has an advantage that if they were to keep quiet for a prolonged period of time, there could be a gradual erosion of values. Over time, they could actually come to agree with these mistaken people. For example, someone who goes outside in the cold winter without proper attire, their internal warmth will diminish until they pass away. Not so if they consistently deny these false ways and make it clear their opposition. However, this path has a disadvantage that this evil group can scheme together against this individual, and they'll need Divine assistance to protect themselves.

The second path has an advantage that these people won't scheme against them, as they think that this person is one of them. A greater advantage is that when this individual is in front of the masses, the wicked group will be excited to share that this honorable person is on their side. This gives this person the opportunity to make the truth known to everyone that they disagree. The disadvantage is the prolonged exposure to negative influences.

Moshe sensed with his prophetic insight the strengths of Yehoshua and Kalev. Yehoshua's inclination was towards the first path of consistent opposition. Therefore, he needed Divine assistance to protect him from the spies' evil schemes against him. That's why he prayed that Hashem protect Yehoshua from the council of the spies. However, Kalev's strengths were in the second path, so he didn't need Moshe's prayers. When the spies decided to speak badly about the Land of Israel, Kalev decided to play along. This gave him the opportunity later to rebuke them publicly and contradict their words in front of the entire Jewish people¹⁰. However, he was personally concerned that by playing along with them, that he would gradually become swayed towards their evil ways. Therefore, he prayed to Hashem at the graves of the forefathers, for help that he not be influenced by them.

When the spies returned from their scouting out the land, they told the Jews that they unanimously agreed, besides for Yehoshua, that the Land of Israel was not worth their time. At that moment, Kalev stepped up and revealed his true feelings on the manner. This is why Hashem praises Kalev for having a different spirit than the others. His strategy gave him an opening to silence the spies.

In truth, both paths are proper modes for serving Hashem. Even though the first path is the safer option, if someone follows the second path for the sake of Heaven, it's also good. We see this with Kalev. This resolves our Sages' explanation¹¹ for why the Torah one time mentions Kalev before Yehoshua¹², even though it usually mentions Yehoshua before Kalev. They say it teaches us that they were equal in stature. On the surface this is hard to understand. Clearly Yehoshua was greater, as Moshe gave over the entire Torah to him, and he was appointed by Hashem to succeed Moshe. It must be that this teaching is referring to their two paths in serving Hashem. Both are of equal value.

Good Shabbos

¹⁰ [Numbers 13:30](#)

¹¹ [Tosefta Kerisos 4:7](#)

¹² [Numbers 14:6](#)