

# Parsha Ponders

Shelach | June 19, 2020 | 27 Sivan 5780

## *Humble matters*<sup>1</sup>

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: Yehoshua<sup>2</sup>

When the Jews had almost arrived at the land of Israel, they had the idea to send spies to scout out the land<sup>3</sup>. They wanted to know not only about the landscape, but about the inhabitants<sup>4</sup>. 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 student<sup>5</sup>, 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 spies<sup>6</sup>. What prompted Moshe to give this name change to Yehoshua? One explanation<sup>7</sup> is that Moshe saw Yehoshua's great humility, and thus felt he needed this prayer<sup>8</sup>. What does one have to do with the other?

A possible explanation is that really, there shouldn't have been any concern regarding Yehoshua. There was no chance he would conspire with the spies. What was the spies' motive for denigrating the land of Israel in the eyes of the Jewish people? These leaders in the desert saw through a vision<sup>9</sup> that they would not remain leaders once the Jewish people entered the land of Israel<sup>10</sup>. They would lose their position<sup>11</sup>. Since they wanted to maintain their power, they formed a plan to discourage the Jews from trying to conquer the land. However, Yehoshua had no reason to fear he'd lose his position of leadership.

Last week's *parsha* described how the elders of the nation received a portion of Moshe's power of prophecy<sup>12</sup>. There were two<sup>13</sup> who were repeatedly prophesizing that Moshe would die, and Yehoshua

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<sup>1</sup> Based on Be'er Yosef to Numbers 13:16

<sup>2</sup> Numbers 13:16

<sup>3</sup> Deuteronomy 1:22

<sup>4</sup> Rashi to Numbers 13:18, with Minchas Yehudah

<sup>5</sup> See Exodus 24:13 with Rashi

<sup>6</sup> Sotah 34b, brought by Rashi to Numbers 13:16

<sup>7</sup> Targum Yonasan *ad. loc.*

<sup>8</sup> One could understand the *Targum* to be saying that since Yehoshua was so humble, he was *worthy* of this prayer. However, many of the commentaries understand it means Yehoshua *needed* the prayer, due to this humility

<sup>9</sup> This is the Be'er Yosef's understanding of what motivated the spies (Be'er Yosef to Numbers 16:1, see <https://parshaponders.com/korach-5777/>), although the original sources only mention that they were concerned they would lose their position. I'm not sure if this is the Be'er Yosef's insight, or an earlier commentary understands the sources similarly

<sup>10</sup> Zohar III *parshas Shelach* p. 158a, brought by Shenei Luchos HaBris *Torah Sh'B'Kesav parshas Shelach Torah Ohr* § 3 and Mesillas Yesharim Chapter 11 s.v. יתרה עליה חמדת הכבוד

<sup>11</sup> Their prophecy came true, as they died before the Jews entered the land. They were thus not leaders in the land of Israel. In reality it was a self-fulfilling prophecy, as their attempt to maintain their leadership led to them losing their position (see Be'er Yosef *loc. cit.* for more on this theme)

<sup>12</sup> Numbers 11:16-17,24-29

<sup>13</sup> Their names were Eldad and Meidad. Interestingly, Targum "Yonasan" to v. 26 brings an interpretation that Eldad and Meidad were Moshe's half-brothers. During the Egyptian enslavement, Moshe's father Amram divorced his wife Yocheved (Sotah 12a, brought by Rashi to Exodus 2:1). During this time, Yocheved married someone else, and had Eldad and Meidad with them. Yocheved must have become divorced or widowed, as Amram eventually

would lead the Jewish people into the land of Israel<sup>14</sup>. Yehoshua heard this, and thus wouldn't have had any concerns that he would lose his leadership. There was no reason then to suspect that Yehoshua would conspire with the spies, who themselves were worried they would lose their power. Why then did Moshe pray that Yehoshua not be influenced by them?

However, Moshe saw Yehoshua's extreme humility. Where did he see this? When Yehoshua heard the prophecy that Moshe would die and Yehoshua would become the leader, Yehoshua was infuriated. He was so upset that someone would dare say that his dear teacher and leader, Moshe, would die before entering the land of Israel. His emotions were so strong that he told Moshe to punish them, even though it was inappropriate to rule in front of his teacher<sup>15</sup>. Moshe saw that Yehoshua had no concern for himself, only his teacher's honor. He saw his great humility.

As such, this caused Moshe to be concerned for Yehoshua. The fact that Yehoshua heard a prophecy that he would become the leader was of no importance. Due to Yehoshua's great humility, he wouldn't take this to heart. He wouldn't keep it in mind. What would then happen is the influence of the spies was still a danger. The spies were afraid they would lose their current positions of leadership, and conspired to slander the land of Israel. Yehoshua, who in his mind had no assurances, could be swayed by their motives<sup>16</sup>. Therefore, Moshe prayed for Yehoshua not to be influenced by the spies<sup>17</sup>.

Good Shabbos

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remarried her. She then gave birth to Moshe. This would make Eldad and Meidad older than Moshe. Even more interesting is Da'as Zekeinim to v. 27 have a different explanation for how Eldad and Meidad were Moshe's half-brothers. They point out that when the Torah was given, certain familial relationships became forbidden (see Rashi to Numbers 11:10, quoting Yoma 75a and Sifrei Bamidbar § 90). Amram was married to his aunt, Yocheved, and this was now a forbidden relationship. As such, they had to divorce. Amram went and married someone else, who gave birth to Eldad and Meidad. According to the chronology, the Torah was only given around a year earlier. Assuming Amram remarried and conceived right away, that would still make Eldad and Meidad only a few months old. It's interesting then that the Torah calls them "elders"

<sup>14</sup> Rashi to v. 28 and Targum "Yonasan" *loc. cit.*, quoting Sanhedrin 17a, Bamidbar Rabbah 15:19, Sifrei Bamidbar § 95

<sup>15</sup> Indeed, Eruvin 63a teaches that Yehoshua was punished for this

<sup>16</sup> Although, I would have thought that due to Yehoshua's humility, he would have no interest in maintaining his position of power

<sup>17</sup> This all assumes that Moshe knew why Yehoshua was so infuriated by Eldad and Meidad's prophecy. Maybe he didn't know what they said? In fact, Sanhedrin 17a says this is why Moshe was pleased to hear that Eldad and Meidad prophesied. He wished that all the Jews would receive prophecy (Numbers 11:29). This would make sense if Moshe wasn't aware of what they said. However, Targum "Yonasan" *ad .loc.* (who is the one that says Moshe saw Yehoshua's humility) disagrees with the *gemarra*, as he says that Moshe knew what Eldad and Meidad said