

# Zera Shimshon

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## Chapter XXXVII: Shelach (Num. 13:1–15:41)

### Essay 1. Hoshea becomes Joshua

”**וַיִּקְרָא** מֹשֶׁה לְהוֹשֵׁעַ בֶּרְנוֹן הַיְהוּדִי. פֶּרַשׁ רַשִׁי, יְהִי יוֹשִׁיעָה מַעֲצַת מְרַגְלִים. קִשָּׁה לְמַה יְהִי יוֹשִׁיעָה וְהָלֹא אֶפִּילוּ אוֹת אַחַת מִן הַשֵּׁם יָכוֹל גַּם כֵּן לְהוֹשִׁיעוֹ מַעֲצַת הַמְרַגְלִים. וְעוֹד שֶׁלְפִי הָאָמֶת לֹא הוֹסִיף לוֹ אֶלָּא הִיוּ”ד, וְעוֹד מֵה צוּרָה לְשִׁמְתֵי דְבָרִים, הוֹסֵפֶת הָאוֹת שֶׁל הַשֵּׁם וְגַם לְהַתְפַּלֵּל עָלָיו, וְהָלֹא בְּהֻדָּא מִנִּיחָהוּ סָגִי.

“**Moses called Hoshea, the son of Nun, ‘Joshua [יהושע] [Yehoshua].’**”<sup>1</sup> **Rashi explained,** based on Sotah 34b, “**He prayed for him, ‘May G-d save you [יהי יושיעה] [Yah yoshia’cha] from the [evil] counsel of the spies.’**” In other words, the interpretation of Sotah 34b and Rashi is that the name *Yehoshua* is a contraction of the words, “G-d save you.”

**It is difficult to understand why this was interpreted in that way, as “*Yah yoshia’cha.*” Wouldn’t the addition of even one letter from [G-d’s] name, i.e., from the Tetragrammaton, also be able to save him from the evil counsel of the spies? The truth is that he only added the letter *yod* for him. I.e., the change of the name from Hoshea to Joshua [*Yehoshua*] only involved the addition of one letter, a *yod*, which is one of the letters from the Tetragrammaton. Why not just say that Moses added one letter from G-d’s name as protection for Joshua? Why instead say that the new name was a contraction of sorts of the words “*Yah yoshia’cha*” [“G-d will save you”]?**

**Also, why does he need two things, viz, that he added the letter of [G-d’s] name and he also prayed for him, for wouldn’t one or the other be sufficient?**

וַיִּשַׁר לֵאמֹר דְּאִיתָא בְּסִפְרֵי הַזֹּהַר עַל פְּסוּק "כֹּלֵם אֲנָשִׁים", כִּלְהוּ זַכָּאִין הוּוּ, וְרִישֵׁי דְיִשְׂרָאֵל הוּוּ. אֲבָל אֵינּוֹן דְּבָרוּ לְגַרְמִיחָהוּ עֵיטָא בִישָׂא. אֲמַאי נָטְלוּ עֵיטָא דָּא. אֶלָּא אֲמַרִי, אִי יִיעָלוּן יִשְׂרָאֵל לְאַרְעָא, נְתַעְבֵּר אֲנִי מִלְמִיחָהוּ רִישֵׁין, וְיִמְנִי מִשָּׂה רִישֵׁין אַחֲרֵינוּ, דְּהָא אֲנִי זַכָּיִן בְּמִדְבָּרָא לְמִיחָהוּ רִישֵׁין, אֲבָל בְּאַרְעָא לָא נִזְכִּי. עכ"ל. וְכִתְבוּ הַמְקוּבָלִים שְׁשֵׁם י"ה אֵינּוּ שׁוֹרָה עַל בְּעָלֵי גְאֹנָה דְּגֵאֲנִי"ה בְּגִימְטְרֵיא י"ה, וְהוֹאִיל שְׂאֵלוּ הָאֲנָשִׁים חֲטָאוּ מִחֲמַת הַגְּאֹנָה שְׁנִתְיָרְאוּ שְׁיַעֲבִירוּ מֵהֶם הַגְּדוּלָה לְהִיֹּת רָאשִׁים.

**It can be said what is brought in the Zohar III:158a on the verse describing the spies, “So Moses, by the L-rd’s command, sent them out from the wilderness of Paran, all of them being men [of consequence], leaders of the Israelites.”**<sup>2</sup> The Zohar states: **“They were all righteous**

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<sup>1</sup> Num. 13:16.

<sup>2</sup> Num. 13:3.

and were the chiefs of Israel, but they took bad advice for themselves. Why did they take this advice? They said, if Israel enters the Land, they will remove us from being chiefs, and Moses will appoint other chiefs, because we were privileged to be chiefs only in the wilderness, but in the Land it will not be appropriate for us to be chiefs.”

The Kabbalists wrote that the name *Yah* does not rest upon the haughty, for the Gematria of “haughty” [גאונה] [*ga'a'va*] is the Gematria of 15, as does “*Yah*” [יה].<sup>3</sup> These men sinned because of their haughtiness, as they feared that the greatness to be chiefs would be taken from them.

משום הכי לרמוז על זה הוסיף אות אחת מהשם ונגזטרפה עם אות ראשונה של הושע שהיא הא, ואמר "יה יושיעך" כלומר ראוי הוא שהשם יושיעך לפי שהיה ענו, כדי שלא יחטא כמו הם וזו אינה תפלה ממש אלא שגראית כמו תפלה ובאמת אינה אלא טענה בהכרח כדי לקבל עזרו מקדש.

Because of this, in order to hint about this, [Moses] added one letter from G-d's name, i.e., the *yod*, and combined it with the first letter of the name Hoshea, which is a *he*, the *yod* and *he* forming the two-lettered name of G-d, *Yah*. Then he said ‘May G-d save you [יה יושיעך] [*Yah yoshia'cha*], as if to say, “It is fitting that G-d will save you,” for [Joshua] was humble.

Moses did this in order that [Joshua] not sin like [the other spies], and this was not exactly a prayer, rather it appeared like a prayer, and in truth was just a necessary statement in order to receive [G-d's] dedicated help.

והשתא ניקח שהתפלל על יהושע ולא על פלב, דבשלקמא יהושע היה מוחזק בו שהיה ענו דכתיב "ומשרתו יהושע בן-נון נער לא ימיש". ובנדאי שהיה מתדבק בדרכי רבו דכתיב ביה "והאיש משה ענו [עניו] מאד", אבל בפלב לא היה משה כל כך מוחזק בו ומשום הכי לא התפלל עליו. והפתוב של יונתן בן עוזיאל מסייענו, וכדי קמא משה ענו [ת]נותיה קרא משה להושע בר נון יהושע עכ"ל. ועיין עוד מזה לעיל בפרשת לך לך על פסוק "ניט אהלה" וכו'.

Now it is convenient that it is said that [Moses] prayed for Joshua and not for Caleb, for granted, he was certain that Joshua was modest, as it is written, “but his attendant, Joshua son of Nun, [serving as] deputy, would not stir out of the Tent.”<sup>4</sup> Certainly [Joshua] was adhered to the ways of his master, as it is written about him, “Now the man Moses was very humble,”<sup>5</sup> so naturally his disciple would have learned to also be humble. But regarding Caleb, Moses was not so certain about him, and because of this, he didn't pray for him.

The Targum of Yonatan ben Uzziel supports us in this interpretation, rendering Num. 13:16 as, “when Moses saw his humility, he called Hoshea bar Nun ‘Joshua.’” See also above on this matter, in Chapter III, parshat Lech Lecha, at the end of Essay 10, on the verse from Gen 12:8, “From there he moved on to the hill country east of Bethel and pitched his tent, with

<sup>3</sup> Chaim Vital, *Sha'ar Ruach haKodesh*, tikkun 7.  
<sup>4</sup> Ex. 33:11.  
<sup>5</sup> Num. 12:3.

Bethel on the west and Ai on the east; and he built there an altar to the L-rd, and he invoked the L-rd by name.”

ועוד יש לומר בתירוץ קושיות המפרשים למה התפלל משה על יהושע ולא על כלב, דקושיא מעיקרא ליתא, דמאי אולמיה דכלב משאר המרגלים, שהרי באותה שעה כלם היו פשרים ואם הנה מתפלל על כלב הנה לו להתפלל נמי על כלם שה' יצילם מהחטא וממחשבות רעות, אלא ודאי צריך לומר שתפלה זו לא שייקא, משום שכל אדם יש לו בחירה ורצון, ואין הכי נמי שמשה הנה מתירא פן כלם או רובם או מקצתם יתהפכו להרע, וכלב נמי אפשר שיהנה כמוהם, ובעיני משה היו אז כלם פשרים דאי לאו הכי לא הנה שולחם כלל, אלא שאף על צד הספק רצה לתמוך ידי יהושע בתפלה ניצחת שמן השמים לא יניחוהו להיות ניסת בעצתם אם יבאו לכלל עצה רעה הואיל שהנה ענו כנ"ל.

**It can also be said, as a solution to the question of the commentators as to why Moses prayed for Joshua but not for Caleb, that there's no initial difficulty, for in what way was Caleb better than the other spies? For at that time, before they set out to the Land of Israel, they were all considered to be equally proper, and if [Moses] had prayed for Caleb, he would have had to also pray for all of them, that G-d should save them from the sin and from bad thoughts.** That is, in hindsight, we see that Joshua and Caleb were the righteous ones, and the other ten were sinners. But at the outset, Moses was only certain about Joshua.

**Rather, it certainly needs to be said that this prayer was not relevant, for every man has a choice and a will, and it is indeed so that Moses was afraid lest all of them, or most of them, or some of them would turn to evil, and it was possible that Caleb could be like them. Thus, in the eyes of Moses, all of them were fit, for if not, then he would not have been sending them at all. Rather, because of the doubt, he wanted to support Joshua with an irrefutable support prayer from Heaven, that he would not be left to be seduced by their counsel if they would come to the category of bad counsel, since he was modest, as discussed above.**

ועוד יש לומר בתירוץ קושיות המפרשים דלמה התפלל משה על יהושע ולא על האחרים שה' יצילם מיצר הרע ונראה משוא פנים בדבר, דאיתא בספר זרע ברך בשם האר"י זכרוננו לשי העולם הבא שעתה בקניסתם לארץ רצה הקב"ה שיתעבר באלו י"ב נשיאים נשמות י"ב שבטים כדי לתקן אותם ולא יחטאו ועם כל זה לא הועיל כלום וכו', אמנם לוי נתגלגל ביהושע פי שבט לוי לא שלח מרגל כיון שאין לו חלק בארץ וכו' עכ"ל בקיצור.

**Another solution can also be said for the question of the commentators as to why Moses prayed for Joshua and not for the others that G-d would save them from the evil inclination, and for the commentator's concern that this appears to be favoritism. It is brought in the book Zera Berach<sup>6</sup> in the name of the Ari,<sup>7</sup> may he be remembered for life in the World-to-Come, that now upon their entrance to the Land of Israel, the Holy One, Blessed be He, wanted these 12 chiefs to be impregnated with the souls of the 12 tribes, i.e., the 12 sons of Jacob, in order to correct them so they wouldn't sin, but with all this, nothing helped, etc.**

<sup>6</sup> Rabbi Berachia Berech ben R' Yitzchak Izaak Shapiro, Zera Berech (Krakow 1646), commentary on the Torah.

<sup>7</sup> Chaim Vital, *Likutei Torah*, parshat Shelach.

That is, in addition to a *gilgul*, where a person is a reincarnation of a deceased person, there is a concept of a *sod ibur*, which is a temporary and beneficial possession of a living person's body by a righteous soul. The living person may know that it has taken place, and may have consented to it, or may not even know that it has taken place. The objective of the righteous soul is to complete an important task, such as to fulfill a promise or to fulfill a commandment.

The 12 spies were chiefs of 12 tribes. The Tribe of Levi was excluded, as it was not given a portion of real estate in the Land of Israel, the Levites being supported by the other tribes. Joseph's half-tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh were both represented, so that there were 12 spies. G-d decided to strengthen each of the 12 spies by granting each a *sod ibur* of one of the 12 brothers.

The Arizal learns this from Gen. 42:9, where Joseph's ten older brothers appear before him in Egypt, not recognizing him, and he tells them, "You are spies, you have come to see the land . . ." These were prophetic words, as not only the ten older brothers, but even Benjamin and Joseph himself would become spies, in the Land of Israel, by their participation as a *sod ibur*.<sup>8</sup>

Thus, the spies included: (1) Shammua, with a *sod ibur* of Reuben; (2) Shaphat, with a *sod ibur* of Simon; (3) Caleb, with a *sod ibur* of Judah; (4) Ammiel, with a *sod ibur* of Dan; (5) Nahbi, with a *sod ibur* of Naphtali; (6) Geuel, with a *sod ibur* of Gad; (7) Sethur, with a *sod ibur* of Asher; (8) Igal, with a *sod ibur* of Issachar; (9) Gaddiel, with a *sod ibur* of Zebulun; and (10) Palti, with a *sod ibur* of Benjamin. Regarding the final spies, from Joseph's half-tribes: (11) Gaddi, from the Tribe of Menashe, received a *sod ibur* of Joseph. Finally, there was (12) Joshua, from the Tribe of Ephraim. But Joshua's ancestor of the 12 brothers, Joseph, was already present as a *sod ibur* of Gaddi, from the Tribe of Menashe. Thus, the remaining brother, **Levi, was reincarnated into Joshua** as a *sod ibur*. Levi was available to serve in this capacity, **as the Tribe of Levi did not send a spy, since they did not have a portion in the Land of Israel. This is the language of the Zera Berach, in short.**

ומעתה הואיל שנשמת לוי היתה ראש שבטו של משה רבינו ע"ה שפיר עבד להיות מקפיד עליו יותר מעל אחרים, וליכא משוא פנים כלל מפני שעתה הוא דבר הנוגע לעצמו ממש.

**Now, Moses was himself a Levite, and since the soul of Levi was the head of the tribe of our master Moses, may he rest in peace, he acted well to be stricter upon [Joshua] than on the others. Thus, there was no favoritism at all, because now we understand that this singling out of Joshua for special treatment was a matter that was truly relevant to [Moses], because Moses understood that Joshua carried within him the *sod ibur* of Moses' ancestor, Levi.**

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<sup>8</sup> Chaim Vital, *Sha'ar haPesukim*.