

Yehoshua, Caleb and “Attributing Miracles to Moshe”

A Torah Thought on *Parashas Shelach*

by

Yonason Noach ben Avraham

Minneapolis, MN

612-812-6946

The following *D’var Torah* is based upon certain conclusions this author has drawn regarding the vast majority of Torah Observant *Yidden* alive today. These conclusions – which the vast majority of Torah Observant *Yidden* alive today disagree with – include:

a) **There is a propensity amongst human beings towards *Avodah Zarah* (Idolatry);** and while the urge toward overt *Avodah Zarah* was quelled in the days of the Men of the Great Assembly, the draw toward covert *Avodah Zarah* is still with us today. {See the excerpt included in the Endnotes from Rabbi Moshe Eiseman’s book, “*I Brought You unto Me*,” where Rav Eiseman makes a claim that should not be a *chiddush* – as HaShem’s Torah, and the Torah found within the *Navi’im* (Prophets) and *Kesuvim* (Writings) deal with issues that apply to us today, with a special emphasis on *Avodah Zarah* – but that many of today’s Jews will find troubling as they misunderstand the difference between overt and covert Idolatry.}

b) **HaShem, when He sent Moshe to talk to Pharaoh, orchestrated the way that the Exodus from Egypt unfolded in a way that Moshe would be seen as His “messenger,” and nothing more.** {See the *D’var Torah* included in the Endnotes from Rav Reuven Feinstein, where Rav Reuven makes this point so perfectly clear that this author’s heart raced as he read it for the first time over Chol HaMoed Pesach 5767.}

c) **Even though HaShem had orchestrated events so that Moshe’s role in the Exodus from Egypt would be understood as minimal** – so minimal that Moshe is only mentioned once in the *Pesach Haggadah* – **the *B’nei Yisroel* failed to learn the lesson that Moshe was merely a “messenger/spokesperson” and nothing more.** {This thesis will be evidenced by *Divrei HaTorah* from some of our most distinguished *Gedolim* of the past, as well as some *chiddushim* by this author – who himself hates any true *chiddushim* that he might develop as there have been ample *Meforshim* over the past two thousand years to discover anything and everything he might put together, and who sees himself as merely taking pieces of a puzzle and putting them together into a coherent picture.}

d) **Moshe and Aaron were prevented from entering Eretz Yisroel because they had failed to make a clear distinction between themselves as the “messengers,” and HaShem Who was The Power behind all of the wonders associated with the Exodus from Egypt, the Giving of the Torah at Mt. Sinai, and the Forty Years in the Desert.** {This thesis was once considered by this author to be one of his “hated *chiddushim*,” but virtually every element in his *chiddush* is part of a *D’var Torah*, that will be included in the Endnotes, by Rabbi Ari Kahn of Aish HaTorah, *Yerushalayim* – and, as a matter of interest, Rav Kahn’s *chiddush* is based upon the *Meshech Chochmah*’s understanding of HaShem’s Torah.}

e) **It was the thoughts (*hashkafos*) and words (*lashonos*) of Moshe and Aaron’s students that were to blame for Moshe and Aaron’s exclusion from The Land. More pointedly, even though Moshe (and Aaron) tried and tried over the Forty years in the**

Desert to get the lesson home that they were but mere “messengers,” and that all of the emphasis and focus should be directed to HaShem, their students failed to grasp the lesson. {This focus on the “messengers” of HaShem was not/is not a *chiddush*. The Rambam educates us in *Hilchos Avodas Chochavim* about how the initial slide into Avodah Zarah began with a focus on HaShem’s “messengers,” and after a few generations the world had all but forgotten The Power behind all of the “perceived powers.” This failure on the part of Moshe and Aaron’s students, coupled with our assertion in “a” above, that *Avodah Zarah* is a natural inclination of human beings that can only be remedied by a clear and correct understanding of HaShem’s Torah, should be carefully considered before being dismissed outright. }

f) **Even though the over-emphasis on Moshe has been discovered and developed by many of our *Meforshim* – and it will be on this point that many/most readers will voice their loudest objections – *Yidden* of today have failed to apply the lessons learned to our future “king of flesh and blood,” HaShem’s (mere) “messenger,” the *Mashiach*.** {It is the way that *Yidden* of today speak about the End Times, with their emphasis being overwhelmingly on the *Mashiach*, that convinces this author (sadly) of the correctness of this conclusion. }

g) **And the apologetic to the above conclusion that goes something like, “*Well we might say the Mashiach, but we mean HaShem,*” will be shown to be an un-kosher *heter (leniency)* from its inception.** {The gift of the *Neshamah*, which includes with it the ability to speak, will be shown to be that attribute of us that we are most likely to abuse, and also most likely to excuse. }

* * * * *

This *D’var Torah* looks at the interaction between the ten dissenting spies (and, ultimately, almost the entire nation), and Caleb; then we will observe Moshe and Aaron’s reaction to the goings-on; and lastly we will examine Joshua and Caleb joining forces for a final reaction, noting the change in who v. Who will ultimately be responsible for the success of the nation in inhabiting The Land.

We are going to look at the *passukim* in question in two different ways. First we will look at the *passukim* as they are, and according to our impression of them. Then we are going to look at the *passukim* through Rashi’s commentary in order to see what additional light can be shed on our initial understanding.

In *Parashas Shelach* we learn about the disastrous episode of sending the spies, which culminated in the *B’nei Yisroel* being exiled into the Desert for a total of forty years. After he spies returned, and after all of them, except for Joshua and Caleb, proceeded to disparage The Land, we find the following *passukim* upon which we will be basing this *D’var Torah*:

Bamidbar 13:30. And Caleb quieted the people before/to Moses, and said, “*Let us go up at once, and possess it; for we are well able to overcome it.*” 31. But the men who went up with him [the ten spies] said, “*We are not able to go up against the people; for they are stronger than we.*” 32. “*...The land, through which we have gone to spy, is a land that eats up its inhabitants; and all the people that we saw in it are men of a great stature...*” 33. “*...we were in our own sight as grasshoppers, and so were we in their sight.*” **14:4.** “*...Let us choose a chief, and let us return to Egypt...*” 6. And [then] Joshua ... and Caleb ... [spoke ... saying]... 8. “*If the Lord delights in us, then He will bring us into this land, and give it to us; a land which flows with milk and honey.* 9. *Only do not rebel against the Lord, nor fear the people of the land; for they are bread for us; their defense is departed from them, and the Lord is with us; fear them not.*”

Now we will place emphasis on the text (*with colored fonts and underlining*) in order (*hopefully*) to make obvious to the reader what is obvious to us:

Bamidbar 13:30. And Caleb quieted the people before/to Moses, and said, “Let **us** go up at once, and possess it; for **we** are well able to overcome it.” 31. But the men who went up with him [the ten spies] said, “We are not able to go up against the people; for they are stronger than **we**.” 32. “...The land, through which **we** have gone to spy, is a land that eats up its inhabitants; and all the people that **we** saw in it are men of a great stature...” 33. “...**we** were in our own sight as grasshoppers, and so were **we** in their sight.” 14:4. “...Let us choose **a chief**, and let us return to Egypt...” 6. And [then] Joshua ... and Caleb ... [spoke ... saying]... 8. “If **the Lord** delights in us, then **He** will bring us into this land, and give it to us; a land which flows with milk and honey. 9. Only do not rebel against **the Lord**, nor fear the people of the land; for they are bread for us; their defense is departed from them, and **the Lord is with us**; fear them not.”

What we see in the above *passukim* is an over-reliance on human strength and ingenuity (*rather than counting upon the promises of HaShem that He would displace the inhabitants of The Land with His “Chosen People”*) on the part of the dissenting spies, as well as Caleb in his initial retort. After the spies say, “*the people, who live in the land, are strong, and the cities are walled, and very great...*,” Caleb says, “*Let us go up at once, and possess it; for we are well able to overcome it.*” The retort of the spies was an immediate, “*We are not able to go up against the people; for they are stronger than we.*” Further evidence that the spies were successful in convincing the nation that reliance upon human strength and ingenuity was not only proper, but – in fact – all that they had to go on, was the suggestion, “...*Let us choose a chief, and let us return to Egypt ...*” If they had only themselves to rely upon when conquering The Land, then it makes sense to them that they could appoint another “Moshe” to lead them back to Egypt. It was only then that Joshua steps in to help Caleb. It was Joshua and Caleb together who realize Caleb’s error in reliance on human strength and ingenuity without including any emphasis on HaShem, and who then place (correctly) all of the emphasis on HaShem. They clarify Caleb’s well intentioned, but vaguely worded response to the spies, saying, “*If **the Lord** delights in us, then He will bring us into this land, and give it to us; a land which flows with milk and honey. Only do not rebel against the Lord, nor fear the people of the land; for they are bread for us; their defense is departed from them, and **the Lord is with us**; fear them not.*”

Next, when we consider Rashi’s commentary on Caleb’s retort, things – at least in our understanding – get even worse, with MORE reliance and emphasis placed on a human being, this time Moshe, the “messenger” of HaShem. Rashi on Bamidbar 13:30, quoting the Gemara (Sotah 35a) reads:

“Caleb ... cried out, ‘*Is this the only thing the son of Amram has done to us?*’ He said, ‘Didn’t he split the sea for us, bring down the manna for us and cause the quails to fly down to us?’ We can surely go up even to heaven; if he tells us, “*Make ladders and go up there,*” we will succeed in whatever he says.”

Our reaction to this Rashi, after coming to the conclusion that there was indeed an over-emphasis on Moshe that had such dreadful ramifications, was to shake our head and think that if the Gemara is crediting Moshe with “splitting the sea,” or “bring down the manna,” then we are never going to win our battle over proper accreditation for the miracles associated with the Exodus from Egypt to their proper Source, The Source, HaShem. We understand, of course, that it was HaShem ALONE Who brought us (and Moshe) out of Egypt. We understand that it was HaShem ALONE who parted the Sea of Reeds, without any help (other than the announcement of the impending miracle) from Moshe. We understand that it was HaShem ALONE Who provided

us the manna. We understand that it was HaShem ALONE Who caused the quail to fly. BUT we have heard yeshiva students defend the statement, “Moshe took us out of Egypt,” or, “Moshe parted the sea,” based upon this Gemara.

We have, in turn, countered with the lesson taught in **B’rachos 50a**, “R. Yochanan says: *‘If one says ‘let us bless Him of whose bounty we have partaken’ he shows himself a scholar; if he says ‘let us bless the one of whose bounty we have partaken’, he shows himself an ignoramus’* [Because this form may be taken to refer to the host]. Said R. Aha the son of Raba to R. Ashi: “But do we not say ‘*We will bless the one who wrought for our ancestors and for us all these miracles’?*” [In the Haggadah on Passover] — He replied: “*There the meaning is obvious, for Who performs miracles? The Holy One, blessed be He.*” And we would like to suggest that if, based upon this Gemara, one is an ignoramus in the eyes of the Torah for failing to make clear Who is the Source for our food, how much more so would one be an ignoramus for being unclear as to Who performs miracles. Now we want to be clear – we are not doubting that the words found within the Gemara were the words Caleb used to quiet and challenge the people – there can be not doubt about that. However, we are making the assertion that by using the words that he did, by attributing the miracle to Moshe, Caleb was not making a clear argument, but rather was falling into the trap that the spies had already fallen into – placing their successful conquering of The Land on human strength and ingenuity. Again we stress our opinion that Caleb himself realized his error, that is why he joined with Joshua and made it clear that it was up to HaShem to bring them into The Land, and that it would be through Divine intervention, rather than human effort, that they would be successful.

Now, dear reader, before you read further, ask yourself how you feel about this author’s interpretations and understandings that have been offered above. Has he made his case, or do you find yourself feeling that he has not only not made his case, but rather has called into question interpretations and understandings that you, dear reader, may have held for quite some time. Well, before you decide to drum this author out of Yiddishkeit through ex-communication, perhaps you, dear reader, should consider the following words of sages greater than anyone who might be reading this D’var Torah.

Before we proceed, though, we must say that we have placed the above concerns, interpretations and understandings of this exchange between Caleb and the spies before several Yidden who we consider to be Torah Scholars, as well as friends. For the most part, we have been rebuffed and rebuked about our chiddushim on this piece of Torah, yet we still hold to our positions. And, as the following Words of Torah from The *Meshech Chochmah* and the Ramban will show, perhaps we were correct to stubbornly hold onto our positions. As we hope you will agree, dear reader, the understanding of the *Meshech Chochmah* on Caleb’s words found in Meseches Sotah – which we will deal with first – makes this author’s objections to attributing the miracles to Moshe a bit more palatable, even to the most hardened opponent of this author’s views. Then we will take excerpts from the Ramban’s commentary of the Chumash, which will nicely coincide with this author’s understanding of the text without taking Rashi into consideration.

Excerpt from *Sha’arei Aaron* by Aaron Yeshiyah Rotter
The *Meshech Chochmah* on Rashi, *Bamidbar* 13:30:

“[Some explain that] because the people heard from Eldad and Madad¹ that Moshe would die and Yehoshua would be the one to bring them into the land, and they saw that Moshe did not

¹ **Ben Avraham** – It should be noted that a negative prophecy does not – necessarily – have to come true. *T’shuvah* by Moshe (or, in our estimation, *t’shuvah* by the spies, and ultimately the people, so that they would have a proper *hashkafah* regarding Moshe as a messenger ONLY) could, possible, have allowed Moshe to enter the land.

rebuke them [Eldad and Madad] for saying so, therefore they [the people] were afraid, “How is it possible to enter this fortified land, and to fight with Amalek (with whom they had already stumbled once), and the with giants without Moshe? Would they not all fall by the sword?” Therefore, Caleb silenced the people for attributing all of the wonders to Moshe². On the contrary, he [Caleb] argued, the greatness of Moshe is dependant upon you. As we see that all the time that they were excommunicated in the desert, HaShem did not speak to Moshe. Therefore, he said, Let’s go up on our own, without Moshe, because Moshe is not the reason that HaShem leads us in a miraculous way. Rather, the Jewish nation itself is worthy of personal Divine Guidance, which is what Yehoshua said (Yehoshua, Perek Gimmel), “*With this you will know that the Living G-d is in your midst.*” Meaning that you should not think that Moshe was in your midst, and that he did all of the great things, but is was only G-d, Who lives forever, and not Moshe who has already died. But G-d lives forever, and He is able to drive out the nations before you.

This author doesn’t think he could have stated “his case” any better! Now for the Ramban on the episode of the spies and Caleb, then the spies and Caleb with Joshua. The following are excerpts (as opposed to copying them in context and in their entirety), but they truthfully represent the Ramban’s opinion on this exchange, and while they do not go quite as far as this author does to suggest any *t’shuvah* by Caleb when he restated himself and his argument with Joshua, the commentary of the Ramban does make all of the other points that this author has tried to impart.

Ramban, Bamidbar 13:2 – SEND FOR THYSELF MEN ... G-d said, “I told them [at the time of the exodus] that it is a good [Land], as it is said (*Shemos 3:17*), ‘*I will bring you up out of the affliction of Egypt ... [(Shemos 3:8) unto a Land flowing with milk and honey]*’. By their lives! I will give them an opportunity to fall into error through the incident of the spies ... G-d, Who knows the future, commanded Moshe to send *one man from each of the tribes of Israel, every one a prince among them*. G-d wanted all the great men to be equal in this matter, so that perhaps (*Tehillim 22:28*) they would remember and turn unto the Eternal, and if not, so that the decree [of punishment] would apply equally to the whole people ... In the opinion of our Rabbis³ their sin was in saying (*Devarim 1:22*) Let us send men before us, because they had seen (*Shemos 14:13*) the salvation of the Eternal, which He continuously did for them, and they should have followed the cloud (*Yechezkel 1:12*) wherever the spirit was to go, and Moshe accepted their request to fulfill their desire ... And G-d commanded him that he send *one man of every tribe of their fathers*, etc., just like it is said in the case of Shmuel (*Shmuel Alef 8:7*), listen to the voice of the people in all that they say to you; for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected Me, that I should not be King over them

Ramban, Bamidbar 13:27 ... [T]hey intended to tell the people ... by way of an evil report (*Bamidbar 13:32*), it is a Land that eats up its inhabitants, [implying] that its people are few but very strong. Now the people understood their intention and so all the congregation which was present began to murmur, this being the sense of the expression (*Bamidbar 13:30*), *We should go up at once, for we are able to overcome (lah) it*, meaning: “It is true that the people are strong, but we shall be stronger than them and their fortified cities.” Therefore Caleb said *lah*

² “*Vayahas Caliev el Moshe*” – The words of our *passuk* fit perfectly with the *Meshech Chochmah*’s understanding, that Caleb is chastising the people for being too dependant upon Moshe, and for attributing the wondrous miracle to Moshe rather than to HaShem. “We don’t need Moshe. Our success is dependent upon HaShem.” Which is our *p’shat* exactly!

³ **Rashi, Bamidbar 13:2** – He [God] said, “I told them that it is good, as it says, ‘I will bring you up from the affliction of Egypt...’ (*Shemos 3:17*).

[“it” – we are able to overcome ‘it,’ the word ‘it’ referring to the Land, and including the people and their fortifications]. Then the spies spoke up again, explaining their words clearly, and said (*Bamidbar* 13:31), *We are not able to go up against the people, for they are stronger than we [are]*, meaning (*Shmuel Beis* 11:23), *“Even if the people came out to us into the field, we are not able to contend with them in battle, and we surely cannot capture any of their great and fortified cities.”*

Ramban, Bamidbar 13:32 ... Caleb said (*Bamidbar* 13:30), *for we are able to overcome it*, the people [rather than the spies] hesitated [between two opinions], and *there were some of them who trusted in their power and strength*, and *some of them [who trusted] in the help of the Eternal against the mighty*. Then the spies spread the evil report ... until they caused (*Bamidbar* 14:2) *the whole congregation* to complain, this being the sense of (*Bamidbar* 14:36) *and they returned, and made all the congregation to murmur against him [Moshe], by bringing up the evil report against the Land*. This happened because *when the spies saw the people (Amos 2:9) whose height was like the height of the cedars, and who was strong as the oaks (Esther 8:17) the fear of them was fallen upon them, and (Devarim 1:28) they made the hearts of their brothers melt ... [T]he evil report of the spies consisted in saying that the Land has an overpowering atmosphere and a heavy nature ... [the fruits] grow to a very large size, such that people of an average temperament cannot take them, unless they are giants and men of powerful build who are naturally strong and exceptional in their height and stature ... The spies then continued and emphasized the strength of the giants ... in order (Divrei HaYomim Beis 32:18) to frighten them, and to terrify them.* Therefore the spies said now (*Bamidbar* 13:33) *and we were in our own sight as grasshoppers, and so were we in their sight.*

Ramban, Bamidbar 14:3 ... Moshe said in the Book of *Devarim* (1:25-26), *And they brought us back word, and said, ‘Good is the Land which the Eternal our G-d gives to us.’* Yet you would not go up, but [instead] rebelled against the commandment of the Eternal your G-d. The meaning thereof is that the spies did tell Moshe and Aaron and all of the congregation that (*Devarim* 1:25) *the Land is good, (Bamidbar 13:27) and surely it flows with milk and honey*, and [yet] the people rebelled against the commandment of the Eternal in not wanting to go up because of the statement [of the spies] that (*Bamidbar* 13:28) *the people that dwell in the Land are fierce – [and they failed to realize that] (Divrei HaYomim Beis 25:8) G-d has the power to help, and to cast down*, as is stated clearly there (*Devarim* 1:30), *The Eternal your G-d Who goes before you, He shall fight for you*. Therefore, since there was nothing to deter them [from entering the Land] except for the strength of the people, they should have trusted in the Name of G-d, for (*Shmuel Alef* 17:47) *the battle is the Eternals*.

Ramban, Bamidbar 14:9 [Caleb with Joshua said] **ONLY REBEL NOT AGAINST THE ETERNAL**. This means that [Moshe and Aaron had told the people], “Your being afraid [to go up] because of the strength of the people that dwell in the Land is [in itself] a rebellion against (*Bereshis* 50:18) *the Glorious name*, for it was not because of your [own] strength that you came out of Egypt, but it was the Hand of the Eternal (*Yoel* 2:26) *that has dealt wondrously with you*. And He has assured you that He will drive them out before you; if so, believe [in Him] and you will succeed.”

Note that Caleb’s original retort to the spies suggested a reliance on human strength, but when he spoke in conjunction with Joshua, he clarified himself and placed the onus of their success on HaShem.

* * * * *

ADDENDUM: Yehoshua, Caleb and “Attributing Miracles to Moshe”

There are several questions regarding Caleb and the spies that we have come across in our preparation of the above D’var Torah. We would like to identify and address these details, and offer possible ways of understanding the seeming differences that are presented.

First of all, we know from Rashi (*Bamidbar* 14:24, quoting *Yehoshua* 14:7) that “[Caleb] brought back word to him [Moshe] s was in [his] heart – but not according to what [he] had said.” And we know what Rashi teaches us there about the “two spirits” that Caleb had within him, “one [which he spoke] with the mouth, and one [he concealed] in his heart. He told the spies, ‘I am with you in your plot,’ but in his heart he intended to say the truth. Because of this, he was able to silence them, as it says, ‘Caleb silenced...’ (13:30), for they thought that he would concur with them.” However, we find this explanation difficult because even though, at first, Caleb (according to *Sotah* 35a) pretended to be with the spies in order to quiet the crowd, he then backed Moshe with his remaining words. Thus his words were mixed, and this does not (in our opinion) concur with the plain meaning of his words in *Yehoshua* 14:7 which seems to say that he was one way in his heart, and another way with his words.

We would like to suggest the following: In our *D’var Torah* above, we have quoted the Gemara (*Sotah* 35a) where Caleb is depicted attributing the miracles that occurred with the Exodus from Egypt to Moshe, while the understanding of the Meshech Chochmah is that Caleb chastises the people for attributing the miracles to Moshe. These seem to be to contradictory positions – unless we take *Yehoshua* 14:7 literally, and understand that what Caleb “said” is accurately depicted in *Sotah* 35a, while what was in Caleb’s “heart” was how the Meshech Chochmah depicts his words (which would dovetail nicely with Caleb and Yehoshua’s joint declaration to the people, attributing their success to HaShem alone).

But even before the spies were sent, we find that Moshe (who was against sending the spies, but only did so to appease the desires of the people) might have given the spies, and the nation, a clue about how to understand anything and everything that the spies might see when reconnoitering The Land. We learn that (*Bamidbar* 13:16) Moshe changed Hoshea’s name to Yehoshua. Rashi understands that this was a sign that Moshe prayed for Hoshea/Yehoshua, that he not fall into the counsel of the spies. But that would have been a private matter – Moshe praying for Hoshea/Yehoshua. What about the public message that Moshe may have been sending to the nations as the spies were about to embark on their enterprise. Is it not possible that Moshe was telling the entire nation that no matter what the spies found in The Land, “*Yehoshua*” – “*HaShem will save*”?

Chiddushai Yonason – When Moshe added the “yud” to Hoshea’s name, the first two letters of his name was “Yud-Kay” ... There are only two places in the entire Chumash where HaShem’s Name is spelled with only its first two letters – the Song at the Sea and with the Attack of Amalek ... **Shemos 3:12**. “And he said, Certainly I will be with you; and this shall be a sign to you, that I have sent you; When you have brought forth the people out of Egypt, you shall serve God upon this mountain.” ... *Shemos* 14:30-31. “Thus the Lord saved Israel that day from the hand of the Egyptians; and Israel saw the Egyptians dead upon the sea shore. And Israel saw the great work which the Lord did upon the Egyptians; and the people feared the Lord, and believed the Lord, and his servant Moses.” ... Rambam, *Hilchos Yesodei HaTorah*, on *Navi'im* ...

The Ramban attributes the words of Yehoshua and Caleb to Moshe and Aaron ... How can this be? Perhaps, because Moshe and Aaron were the teachers of Yehoshua and Caleb, and that because their intent was to place the onus on HaShem (which was the unrealized goal of Moshe and Aaron), thus any clear Torah Teaching would properly be attributable to their teachers

... w/Hitting the Rock and “failing to sanctify HaShem ... Rav Ari Kahn on the Meshech Chochmah ... “Don’t let this (shittuf) be a stumbling block ...”

There is an opinion brought down on Sotah 35a regarding how to understand the words of the spies. The Gemara states:

But the men that went up with him said: *We will not be able* etc. [Bamidbar 13:31.] R. Chanina b. Papa said: A grievous statement did they make at that moment, viz. For they are stronger than we — read not than “we” but than “He⁴”; [*a difference of pronunciation in the Babylonian Mesorah, in order to distinguish between the 1st. masc. plural and 3rd. singular.*] as it were even the master of the house cannot remove his furniture from there. [Even God is powerless against them.]

We would like to suggest the following: First of all, if we understand that the word is interpreted as “we” then we can go back to our D’var Torah above, and understand that the spies were wrongly placing the success of the nation on the strength of the warriors of the nation, rather than on HaShem. But, if we consider the opinion of R. Chanina b. Papa that the word should (could) be translated as “he,” could not the “he” of our *passuk* (according to this alternative explanation of the word) be understood to be a reference to Moshe rather than HaShem? After all, Caleb was “quieting the people to Moshe” and extolling all that Moshe had done for them. It would be consistent with the *passuk* and the intent of Caleb’s words that the “he” would indeed be Moshe, rather than a reference to HaShem. But, of course, Moshe was (merely) HaShem’s messenger who “presented” HaShem’s miracles to Klal Yisroel and the world. Thus the over all lesson of the Gemara is not lost, but rather is augmented by “he” Moshe rather than “He” HaShem.

We can see that R’ Chanina bar Pappa’s understanding is borne out in the following *passukim* (Bamidbar 14:9-10): “Only do not rebel against the Lord, nor fear the people of the land; for they are bread for us; their defense is departed from them, and **the Lord is with us; fear them not.** **But all the congregation said to stone them with stones.** And the glory of the Lord appeared in the Tent of Meeting before all the people of Israel.” Thus, even though they had been reminded that it was HaShem Who would lead them to victory, and after all that He had done for them in the desert, “the congregation” still sought to stone Moshe and Aaron....

But, also, our *chiddush* in the above D’var Torah, and our desire to attribute the miracles to He Whom true attribution belongs (Bamidbar 14:11): “And the Lord said to Moses, How long will this people provoke Me? And **how long will it be before they believe Me, for all the signs which I have shown among them?**”

Here is a paraphrase of the ArtScroll Commentary regarding “*mimenu*”, Sotah 35a (note #12) states: “The word ‘*minenu*’ has two meanings: ‘than we’ and ‘than he’. Simply understood [which compliments our *chiddush*], the spies intended the former meaning, saying that the Canaanites are stronger than Israel. R’ Chanina bar Pappa states that they intended the latter meaning – i.e., that the Canaanites are stronger than the Almighty.

What is the source that they intended this meaning [that the Canaanites are stronger than HaShem]? *Maharal* (*Gur Aryeh* ad loc.) explains that ‘they are stronger than we’ implies an

⁴ **Ben Avraham** – Could not the “he” of our *passuk* (according to this alternative explanation of the word) be understood to be a reference to Moshe rather than HaShem? After all, Caleb was “quieting the people to Moshe” and extolling all that Moshe had done for them. It would be consistent with the *passuk* and the intent of Caleb’s words that the “he” would indeed be Moshe, rather than a reference o HaShem. But, of course, Moshe was merely HaShem’s messenger who presented HaShem’s miracles to Klal Yisroel and the world. Thus the over all lesson of the Gemara is not lost, but rather is augmented by “he” Moshe rather than “He” HaShem....

equivalency between the Canaanites and the Israelites – as if to say: we are strong, but they are stronger still (see Rashi, *Devarim* 9:1⁵). But having just⁶ said that the Israelites are like grasshoppers⁷ against the Canaanites, the spies could not very well imply that they are comparable in strength. Perforce, they meant to say ‘they are stronger than He.’

Rashi deletes the words ‘do not read as *mimenu* but as *mimenu*,’ for there is no difference in the way the two forms of the word are pronounced. The Gemara is simply saying that the verse carries another meaning as well – that they are stronger than He.”

Thus we can see that the two views of the Gemara, along with our chiddush, meld together in bring us a full picture of exactly what happen in this episode, and the need for Lashon Emes, as well as clear speech when it comes to Who to attribute miraculous acts to.

* * * * *

Notes on Parashas Shelach

⁵ **Devarim 9:1.** Hear, O Israel; You are to pass over the Jordan this day, to go in to possess nations greater and mightier than yourself, cities great and fortified up to heaven.

Rashi, Devarim 9:1 – greater and mightier than you *You are mighty, but they are mightier than you.*-[*Sifrei* on Deut. 11:24] (**Devarim 11:23. Then will the Lord drive out all these nations from before you,** and you shall possess greater nations and mightier than yourselves. 24. *Every place where the soles of your feet shall tread shall be yours; from the wilderness and Lebanon, from the river, the river Euphrates, to the uttermost sea shall be your border.* 25. **There shall no man be able to stand before you; for the Lord your God shall lay the fear of you and the dread of you upon all the land that you shall tread upon,** as He has said to you.)

Ben Avraham – Regarding reliance upon HaShem v. reliance on “flesh and blood”:

Devarim 20:2. And it shall be, when you have come near the battle, that the priest shall approach and speak to the people, 3. And shall say to them, Hear, O Israel, you approach this day to battle against your enemies; let not your hearts faint, fear not, and do not tremble, nor be you terrified because of them; 4. **For the Lord your God is He who goes with you, to fight for you** against your enemies, to save you.

Rashi, Devarim 20:4 – For the Lord, your God... They are coming with the victory of flesh and blood, whereas **you approach with the victory of the Omnipresent.** The Philistines came with the victory of Goliath—What was his end? He fell, and they fell with him. **Who goes with you** This refers to the camp of the ark.-[*Sotah* 42a]

Shemos 14:13. And Moses said to the people, Do not fear, stand still, and **see the salvation of the Lord, which he will show to you today;** for the Egyptians whom you have seen today, you shall never see them again. 14. **The Lord shall fight for you,** and you shall hold your peace.

Devarim 1:30. The Lord your God who goes before you, **He shall fight for you,** according to all what he did for you in Egypt before your eyes... **3:22.** You shall not fear them; for **the Lord your God shall fight for you.**

Ben Avraham – Maris Eyin/Lashon Emes: IF one were over hearing a conversation between *Yidden*, and the *Yidden* were talking about how the Mashiach was going to lead us to victory in the End Time Wars, how would he NOT come to the conclusion that these *Yidden* were relying on “*the victory of flesh and blood*”? As HaShem’s purveyors of His Truth, do we not owe it to all who might over-hear us to speak in a way that will not be misunderstood? *Hilchos Lifnei Ever* tasks us with not making our words or actions a stumbling block to any Yid or non-Jew who hears our words or witnesses our actions.

⁶ **Ben Avraham** – However, this statement, that “we were in our own sight as grasshoppers, and so were we in their sight” is in a *passuk* (*Bamidbar* 13:33) that follows the current *passuk* (*Bamidbar* 13:31), thus the interpretation, while not without merit, does seem to strain the flow of the *passukim* of this episode.

⁷ **Bamidbar 13:33.** And there we saw the Nefilim, the sons of Anak, who come from the Nefilim; and we were in our own sight as grasshoppers, and so were we in their sight.

Haftaras Shelach is, in our opinion, the “Haftarah of *T’shuvah Shalaymah*” ... We see that Yehoshua can send spies, and this time they can pass the test that they had failed some thirty-eight years earlier ... According to the Rambam (*Hilchos T’shuvah*), complete repentance is achieved only when the “entity” (person/nation) that has sinned is placed in a similar situation, and then passes the test that they had failed when they committed the “mistake.”

* * * * *

The Following is still under development; however the above understanding of the *Meshech Chochmah* confirms that the *hashkafah* of Yonason Noach ben Avraham is indeed found to be consistent with the thoughts of one of our great sages.

Bamidbar 13:25. And they returned from searching the land after forty days. 26. And they went and came **to Moses, and to Aaron**, and to all the congregation of the people of Israel, to the wilderness of Paran, to Kadesh; and brought back **word** to them, and to all the congregation, and **showed** them the fruit of the land. 27. And they told him, and said, **We came to the land where you sent us⁸, and surely it flows with milk and honey; and this is its fruit⁹.** 28. **Nevertheless¹⁰ the people, who live in the land, are strong, and the cities are walled, and very**

⁸ **Bamidbar 13:1.** And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, 2. **Send men**, that they may spy **the land of Canaan, which I give to the people of Israel**; of every tribe of their fathers shall you send a man, **every one a leader among them**. 3. And Moses by the commandment of the Lord sent them from the wilderness of Paran; **all those men were chiefs** of the people of Israel... 16. ...And **Moses called Oshea the son of Nun Joshua**. 17. And Moses sent them to spy out the land of Canaan....

Rashi, Bamidbar 13:2 – Send for yourself men Why is the section dealing with the spies juxtaposed with the section dealing with Miriam? Because she was punished over matters of slander, for speaking against her brother, and these wicked people witnessed [it], but did not learn their lesson.- [Midrash Tanchuma Shelach 5] **Ben Avraham – The spies, too, spoke against Moshe in Moshe’s capacity as HaShem’s spokesperson, and that even with Moshe, whom they saw as “taking them out of Egypt,” :parting the sea,” “Causing the munn to fall,” “and the quail to fly,” as their leader, the spies could not see them conquering the people of the land. This is evidence that they thought that the mission was theirs, and the success was dependent upon their strength. This is akin to what Moshe thought when HaShem told him at the Burning Bush to go to Pharaoh and to take Israel out of Egypt. Moshe thought – originally – that the mission depended upon his strength, but HaShem disabused him of that notion: “The mission is Mine.” (see Rashi, Shemos 3:12) But when we are lacking Emunas HaShem, we forget that He is the Source of all of our successes, as well as failures.]** **Send for yourself** According to your own understanding. I am not commanding you, but if you wish, you may send. Since the Israelites had come [to Moses] and said, “Let us send men ahead of us,” as it says, “All of you approached me...” (Deut. 1:22), Moses took counsel with the *Shechinah*. He [God] said, **“I told them that it is good,** as it says, **‘I will bring you up from the affliction of Egypt...’** (Exod. 3:17). By their lives! Now I will give them the opportunity to err through the words of the spies, so that they will not inherit it.” -[Midrash Tanchuma 5]

⁹ **Bamidbar 13:17.** And Moses ... said to them, Go up this way southward, and go up into the mountain; 18. And see **the land**, what it is; and the people who live in it, whether they are strong or weak, few or many; 19. And **what the land is that they live in**, whether it is **good or bad**; and what cities they are that they live in, whether in tents, or in fortresses; 20. And **what the land is, whether it is fat or lean**, whether there is wood in it, or not. And be you of good courage, and bring of the fruit of the land. Now the time was the time of the first ripe grapes... 23. And they came to the brook of Eshkol, and cut down from there a branch with **one cluster of grapes**, and they bore it between two on a pole; and they brought **of the pomegranates, and of the figs.**

Ben Avraham – IF HaShem had already told them that the land was good, why was Moshe asking the spies to confirm that established fact (Bamidbar 13:19, 20)? The answer cannot be that Moshe was attempting to focus their attention on the land and to keep the people of the land off of their minds because Moshe also told them to make an assessment of the people as well (Bamidbar 13:18, 19).

¹⁰ **Ben Avraham – The spies had spoken well of the land, but then they turned the focus to the peoples who inhabited the land, as well as the lands surrounding Eretz Yisroel. It was the size and the number of people whom they thought it was impossible for them (Moshe, and Klal Yisroel) to conquer. Again, our p’shat is based upon the people lacking in Emunas HaShem as exemplified by their belief that**

great; and moreover we saw the children of Anak there. 29. **The Amalekites** live in the land of the Negev; and **the Hittites**, and **the Jebusites**, and **the Amorites**, live in the mountains; and **the Canaanites** live by the sea, and by the side of the Jordan. 30. And Caleb quieted the people before/to Moses, and said, Let **us** go up at once, and possess it; for **we** are well able to overcome it. 31. But **the men** who went up with him said, **We** are not able to go up against the people; for they are stronger than **we**. 32. And they brought up an evil report of the land which they had spied to the people of Israel, saying, The land, through which we have gone to spy, is a land that eats up its inhabitants; and **all the people that we saw** in it are men of a great stature. 33. And there we saw the Nefilim, the sons of Anak, who come from the Nefilim; and **we were** in our own sight as grasshoppers, and so were **we** in their sight.

Bamidbar 14:1. And all the congregation lifted up their voice, and cried; and the people wept that night. 2. And **all the people of Israel murmured against Moses and against Aaron**; and the whole congregation said to them, Would God that we had died in the land of Egypt! or would God we had died in this wilderness! 3. And why has the Lord brought us to this land, to fall by the sword, that our wives and our children should be a prey? were it not better for us to return into Egypt? 4. And they said one to another, Let us choose a chief, and let us return to Egypt. 5. Then Moses and Aaron fell on their faces before all the assembly of the congregation of the people of Israel. 6. And Joshua the son of Nun, and Caleb the son of Jephunneh, which were of those who spied the land, tore their clothes; 7. And they spoke to all the company of the people of Israel, saying, The land, which we passed through to spy, is an exceedingly good land. 8. **If the Lord delights in us, then He will bring us into this land**, and give it to us; a land which flows with milk and honey. 9. Only **do not rebel against the Lord**, nor fear the people of the land; for they are bread for us; their defense is departed from them, and **the Lord is with us**; fear them not. 10. But **all the congregation said to stone them with stones**. And the glory of the Lord appeared in the Tent of Meeting before all the people of Israel.

Bamidbar/Numbers 13:30. And Caleb **quieted** the people before Moses, and said, **Let us go up at once, and possess it; for we are well able to overcome it.**

These words of intended support for Moshe, in actuality, made the situation worse. If it was to be the strength of Moshe, Aaron and the B'nei Yisroel v. the strength of the inhabitants of the land.... [CLUE: Instead of reliance on HaShem, the spies and the people believed that they would have to rely upon themselves....]

Bamidbar 13:31. But the men who went up with him said, **We are not able to go up against the people; for they are stronger than we**. 32. And they brought up an evil report of the land which they had spied to the people of Israel, saying, The land, through which we have gone to spy, is a land that eats up its inhabitants; and **all the people that we saw** in it are men of a great stature [*while we have only Moshe and Aaron!*]. 33. And there **we** saw the Nefilim, the sons of Anak, who come from the Nefilim; and **we were** in our own sight **as grasshoppers**, and so were **we** in their sight.

Rashi, Bamidbar 13:30 -- Caleb silenced Heb. סתקו, he silenced them all [the spies so that the people could what he was going to say]. **to Moses** to hear what he would say about Moses. He cried out, **“Is this the only thing the son of Amram has done to us?”** Anyone listening might have thought that he intended to disparage him, and since there was [resentment] in their hearts against Moses because of the spies’ report, they all became silent so they could hear his defamation. But **he said, “Didn’t he split the sea for us, bring down the manna for us**

the mission to take the land was based upon their strength and not upon HaShem being with them. Se Devarim 20:1, 4 and Rashi, Devarim 20:4).

and cause the quails to fly down to us?”-[Sotah 35a¹¹] We can surely go up even to heaven; if he tells us, “Make ladders and go up there,” we will succeed in whatever he says.-[Sotah 35a] **silenced** Heb. שתי, a term denoting silence; similarly, “Silence (שתי) all flesh” (Zech. 2:17); “Still (שתי) ! This is for not mentioning [the Lord’s Name]” (Amos. 6:10). Similarly, it is the custom for someone who wants to silence a group to say, “Shhh!”

Who really did these miracles? HaShem, of course. But did the words of Caleb lead those who wanted to return to Egypt down a path toward avodah zarah? If they felt that Moshe had done all of these things, couldn’t they pick a leader “equally” as qualified who would take them back to Egypt?

Devarim 1:9. And I spoke to you at that time, saying, *I am not able to bear you myself alone.*

Rashi, Devarim 1:9 – I cannot alone ... Is it possible that Moses could not judge Israel? The man who brought them out of Egypt, split the sea for them, brought down the manna, and caused the quails to fly, could not judge them?

Ben Avraham – We believe that Moshe was emphasizing to the Children of Israel that he was but a mortal human being, and that as great as he was in their eyes, even he needed help. We also believe that this danger of placing too much emphasis on Moshe was what Yisro saw when he observed the people waiting in line to speak to Moshe. Yisro knew of all of the flavors of Avodah Zarah in the world (he had been an advisor to Pharaoh – who believed he was divine!) and he sought to make it clear to the people that Moshe was in need of help. There is, of course, only one Being Who needs no help – HaShem. This is what Moshe was trying to teach when he reminded them that he was “not able to bear” them by himself.

Excerpt from *Sha’arei Aaron* by Aaron Yeshiyah Rotter Meshech Chochmah on Rashi, Bamidbar 13:30:

“[Some explain that] because the people heard from Eldad and Madad¹² that Moshe would die and Yehoshua would be the one to bring them into the land, and they saw that Moshe did not rebuke them [Eldad and Madad] for saying so, therefore they [the people] were afraid, “How is it possible to enter this fortified land, and to fight with Amalek (with whom they had already stumbled once), and the with giants without Moshe? Would they not all fall by the sword?” Therefore, Caleb silenced the people for attributing all of the wonders to Moshe¹³. On the contrary, he [Caleb] argued, the greatness of Moshe is dependant upon you. As we see that all the time that they were excommunicated in the desert, HaShem did not speak to Moshe. Therefore, he said, Let’s go up on our own, without Moshe, because Moshe is not the reason that HaShem leads us in a miraculous way. Rather, the Jewish nation itself is worthy of personal Divine Guidance, which is what Yehoshua said (Yehoshua, Perek Gimmel), “With this you will know that the Living G-d is in your midst.” Meaning that you should not think that Moshe was in your midst, and that he did all of the great things, but it was only G-d. Who lives forever, and not

¹¹ **QUESTION:** This quote from Rashi does not match the *lashon* found in **Meseches Sotah 35a...** Why the difference?

¹² **Ben Avraham** – It should be noted that a negative prophecy does not – necessarily – have to come true. T’shuvah by Moshe (or, in our estimation, t’shuvah by the people so that they would have a proper hashkafah regarding Moshe as a messenger ONLY) could have allowed Moshe to enter the land....

¹³ “*Vayahas Caliev el Moshe*” – The words of our *passuk* fit perfectly with the Meshech Chochmah’s understanding, that Caliev is chastising the people for being too dependant upon Moshe, and for attributing the wondrous miracle to Moshe rather than to HaShem. “We don’t need Moshe. Our success is dependent upon HaShem.” Which is our *p’shat* exactly!

Moshe who has already died. But G-d lives forever, and He is able to drive out the nations before you.