

## DARCHAI NOAM - דרכי נועם

### “Its ways are ways of pleasantness”

(Mishlei 3:17)

Sh'lach  
June 2018 / Sivan 5778

[darchai.noam@gmail.com](mailto:darchai.noam@gmail.com)  
[www.darchai-noam.com](http://www.darchai-noam.com)

How can the Parsha help us grow this week?

### Sh'lach – learning to trust

In this week's Parsha of Sh'lach we read about the tragic case of the Meraglim, the spies that were sent into the Land of Israel on a reconnaissance mission. These men came back with a negative report and swayed the hearts of Bnei Yisrael against proceeding to the Promised Land. Hashem was literally just about to bring the people into the Land. However, as a result of this incident, the people's entry was delayed by 40 years. As a punishment for their negativity and rejection, most of this generation died out in the wilderness and only their children ultimately entered the Land.

Almost the entire nation became convinced that entering Eretz Yisrael would be doomed and that Moshe had misled them by taking them out of Egypt.<sup>1</sup> The people were acting in a hysterical way:

*“The entire community raised their voices and shouted, and the people wept that night.”* (Parshat Sh'lach, Bamidbar 14:1)

The fact that they were emotionally unstable led the people to make inappropriate and unfair accusations against their faithful leaders:

*“All of Bnei Yisrael complained against Moshe and Aharon, and the entire congregation said, “If only we had died in the land of Egypt, or if only we had died in this desert.”* (Parshat Sh'lach, Bamidbar 14:2)

The people then made irrational decisions:

*“They said to each other, ‘Let us appoint a leader and return to Mitzrayim!’”* (Parshat Sh'lach, Bamidbar 14:4)

Only when Moshe came to Beni Yisrael's rescue (again!) and prayed on their behalf, did Hashem agree to forgive them for their sin and allow their children to enter the Land. However that generation did not avoid punishment:

*“In this wilderness your corpses shall fall; your entire number, all those from the age of 20 and up, who were counted, because you complained against Me.”* (Parshat Sh'lach, Bamidbar 14:29)

The Gemara<sup>2</sup> teaches that Bnei Yisrael's complaints were totally unjustified because Hashem Himself had promised them the Land. Therefore, they had nothing to fear from the Land's inhabitants. Hashem said “You cried without reason, I will give you a reason to cry on **this day** for future generations.” That fateful day was Tisha B'Av. Until this very day we suffer and mourn on Tisha B'Av and we still feel the effects of that punishment.

The people's panic and hysteria caused inappropriate accusations and irrational decision-making which led to tragic consequences. Let's take a step back and explore what might have triggered or contributed to such a national error. In Sefer Devarim we read another account of this incident which provides us with additional details:

*“And all of you approached me (i.e. Moshe) and said, ‘Let us send men ahead of us so that they will search out the land for us and bring us back word by which route we shall go up, and to which cities we shall come.’”* (Parshat Devarim, Sefer Devarim 1:22).

Rashi explains that the words “all of you approached me” reveals Bnei Yisrael's disorderly and hysterical state of mind. The young were pushing aside the elders and the elders were pushing aside the leaders. Rashi contrasts this approach with the approach made at Har Sinai where the people requested that Moshe act as intermediary

<sup>1</sup> See commentary to Bamidbar 14:1-4 in the Artscroll Stone edition.

<sup>2</sup> Ta'anit 29a.

between the people and Hashem to receive the Torah.<sup>3</sup> Hashem was pleased with that request: “they have done well in all that they have spoken”.<sup>4</sup>

The incident of the spies was precipitated by panic and a heightened emotion of fear. When we are not feeling calm we are more likely to treat others inappropriately and make poor decision. The results can be tragic.

How can we learn to rule over our emotions and stay calm in pressured situations? There are a number of techniques that are tried and true, but they need to be performed regularly to have the desired effect. These solutions include:

1. Meditation
2. Deep breathing exercises.<sup>5</sup>
3. Talking the problem over with a trusted mentor.
4. Regular physical exercise, especially exercise that elevates the heart rate.

However, a more lasting approach is to increase our emunah. If we have simple faith that Hashem is in charge and that He knows best, there is no reason to panic! We can see that a lack of emunah contributed to, or even caused the sin of the spies in the following pasuk:

*“But the men [i.e. the bad spies] who went up with him [i.e. with Caleb, one of the good spies] said “We are unable to go up against the people [of the Land], for they are stronger than we (mimenu).” (Parshat Sh'lach, Bamidbar 13:13).*

Rashi explains<sup>6</sup> that the Hebrew word ‘mimenu’ (meaning that the people of the Land are stronger than **us**) can also be read as ‘mimeno’ (as if to say that the people are of the Land are stronger than **He** i.e. stronger than Hashem chas v’shalom!) The people were worried that the Canaanites were stronger than Hashem and thus they doubted Hashem’s strength and ability to protect them. This suggests that the root of Bnei Yisrael’s problem was a lack of emunah. The people did not believe that Hashem would be able to successfully bring Bnei Yisrael into the Land.

This week, we can try to learn from the sin of the spies by striving to avoid doubt and fear, and by working on our emunah. In that way, B’ezrat Hashem, we will also be able to behave more respectfully to each other and make better decisions.

Let’s try something this week:

1. Put into place some of the suggested techniques to stay calm such as meditation or physical exercise. Make sure that it is done regularly!
2. Put into practice a method for enhancing our emunah. This could include learning a sefer such as the Gate of Trust in G-d in Chovot Halevavot, the Living Emunah series by Rabbi Ashear or the Garden of Emunah by Rav Arush. Also try to reflect on how much Hashem has helped us get through difficult situations in the past. Why should it be any different going forwards?
3. Remind ourselves in stressful situations to treat others without blame and to try to make rational decisions if possible.

Shabbat shalom,

Rabbi Ledder

\*\*\* \*\*

---

<sup>3</sup> Parshat Va’etchanan, Devarim 5:20.

<sup>4</sup> Parshat Va’etchanan, Devarim 5:25.

<sup>5</sup> It is interesting that breathing exercises helps us to access deeper states of consciousness. If we don’t pay attention to our breathing, our subconscious mind controls our breath. However, if we choose to, we can consciously control our breathing. Thus we see that breathing is a bodily function that is on the border of our conscious and our subconscious minds. That’s why breathing exercises can be so powerful. (Heard from Rabbi Dovid Tsap).

<sup>6</sup> Based on the Gemara, Sotah 35a.

## **About Darchai Noam**

Darchai Noam is available online at [www.darchai-noam.com](http://www.darchai-noam.com). You can access this week's edition of Darchai Noam, archived back issues of Darchai Noam and other divrei Torah.

The pasuk in Mishlei (3:17) describes the Torah as follows: "Its ways are ways of pleasantness (Darchai Noam) and all its paths are peace". The Torah is our guidebook for life. It is packed full of good advice as to how we should live our lives.

The aim of the Darchai Noam weekly email is to examine an idea from the weekly parashah, usually relating to good middot (character traits). It will focus particularly on treating each other with respect and how to interact with each other in a more peaceful and pleasant manner. It will also suggest some practical tips for implementing these ideas in our daily lives.

By learning together each week, and making an effort to regularly put the ideas into practice, with Hashem's help we can all gradually improve our character traits and our observance of 'v'ahavta l're'echa kamocho' – loving one's fellow as oneself.

If you know someone who might enjoy receiving this email please feel free to pass it on to them or email me their details so I can add them to the subscription list.

You are welcome to use the content of this email in any way that will help to spread the learning of Torah. However please attribute credit appropriately.

Many of the ideas that I use in Darchai Noam are based on ideas that I read or heard from various sources. Where possible I try to quote the source. However, in some cases I cannot recall the source. For that I apologise. If I do discuss an idea that I heard from somewhere else, any errors are purely my own.

## **How to subscribe or unsubscribe**

If you would like to subscribe or unsubscribe to Darchai Noam, please send an email to [darchai.noam@gmail.com](mailto:darchai.noam@gmail.com) with the word 'subscribe' or 'unsubscribe' in the subject.