

Parasha Meditation Shlach L'chah

Bamidbar 13:1-15:41

By Rebbetzin Chana Bracha Siegelbaum

Developing Inner Vision and Exploring the Spiritual Land

Introduction

Developing Inner Vision

This week's *Parasha* teaches us to develop inner vision. Only through inner vision is it possible to see the goodness of the Land of Israel. Living in the Land of Israel entails many obstacles. Life here can be tough and rough. The salaries are low, if we are lucky enough to even get a job. The beds can be hard and uncomfortable, the people can be pushy, the bureaucracy can be frustrating, not to mention the apparent mess and disorganization etc. Yet, when we discover the hidden light of the Land, although it can be so strong that it almost blinds us, our *emunah* leads us to overcome all the exterior obstacles, and connect with the holy essence of Divinity which is connected to this Land like no other. This can be compared to discovering Shabbat. At the beginning, all the forbidden works might blind us from appreciating the gift of Shabbat. Yet, by keeping Shabbat we gradually sensitize ourselves to receive its blessings. Likewise, by living in the Land of Israel we can open ourselves to receive the hidden blessings of the land.

Conquering the Land through *Emunah* in its Spiritual Nature

The *Netivat Shalom* explains that the mistake of the spies was that they didn't understand the spiritual quality of the Land of Israel, which is beyond nature. They thought that as soon as they would leave the desert, their miraculous existence being nourished directly by Hashem's miracles would cease. They, therefore, desired to spy the land in the physical sense, in order to learn the best military strategy of conquest. Moshe, however, had in mind that the spies would explore the spiritual nature of the Land of Israel. He understood that since the holiness of the Land is so great, so is its flip side. The Land of Israel is surrounded by the impure husks of the Canaanites and Amalekites. It is important to prepare oneself spiritually for entering the Land by finding out the nature of these husks in order to know how to overcome them. For this reason Hashem told Moshe to spy the land "according to his own *da'at* – mindset"¹ – rather than according to the mindset of the spies, they were to explore the spiritual rather than physical nature of the Land. The only way to conquer the Land is through steadfast *emunah* (faith) in its supernatural quality, realizing how "the eye of G-d is constantly overseeing it."² Since the spies were lacking this *emunah*, they were unable to inherit the Land.³

¹ Rashi, *Bamidbar* 13:2.

² *Devarim* 12:12.

³ *Netivot Shalom, Parashat Shalach*, pp. 62-63.



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Actualizing the Hidden Light of the Land

Kalev and Yehoshua responded to the people who complained about the Land of Israel: “The Land that we passed through to spy – this land is very very good.”⁴ If you look for the spiritual quality of the Land you realize how the land of Israel is prepared for the Jewish people alone. Then the good light which is hidden within it is revealed. The Jewish people and the Land of Israel are one, for the Jewish people become rectified through the land, and the Land becomes rectified through the Jewish people. “Your people, the children of Israel are all righteous, therefore, “they shall inherit the hidden land.”⁵ The meaning of the word לעולם/“*l’olam*,” is that although the holiness within it is hidden and concealed. (נעלם – *ne’elam*), the Jewish people have the ability to crack open the husk and thus actualize the hidden light within the Land. Therefore, it states: “The land was desolate and void...”⁶ and only afterwards: “G-d said let there be light.”⁷ In the same way, before Israel entered the land, its hidden goodness was not revealed within it. Therefore, the spies said, “The land through which we have gone to search is a land which eats its inhabitants.”⁸

The Land of Israel: Root of All Blessings

The spies didn’t understand that the Land of Israel spat out all the nations who lived there beforehand because it is prepared for the Jewish people alone. “The land will not vomit you out when you defile it, as it has vomited out the other nations that were before you.”⁹ Only Kalev and Yehoshua understood that Children of Israel have the power to reveal the hidden light within the Land when we believe in its spiritual nature. Therefore they stated, “The land is exceedingly good...if Hashem desires us, then He will bring us into this Land...”¹⁰ The Land of Israel is similar to the Shabbat. Just as it states in the holy *Zohar*, that Shabbat is the source of all the blessings,¹¹ so is the praise of Israel not recognized on the surface, yet the root of all blessings in the world depends on the Land of Israel.¹²

⁴ Bamidbar 14:7.

ויאמרו אל כל עַדְת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לֵאמֹר הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר עָבְרָנוּ בָּהּ לְתוֹר אֶתָּה טוֹבָה הָאָרֶץ מֵאֵד: (במדבר יד: ז).

⁵ Yesha’yahu 60:21. The word לעולם – “*l’olam*” is usually translated “forever.” I.e. “They shall inherit the land forever.” However, it can also mean hidden.

⁶ Bereishit 1:2.

⁷ Ibid. 3.

⁸ Bamidbar 13:32.

⁹ Vayikra 18:28.

¹⁰ Bamidbar 14:7-8.

¹¹ Zohar, Part 2, P. 88a

¹² Sefat Emet, Bamidbar, Parashat Shalach, year 5661.

Meditation:

Make yourself comfortable, take several deep breaths and relax even more.

1. Imagine one of your favorite places in the Land of Israel. It could be the sandy beach with blue frosty waves of water, or perhaps it's the green mountains of the Galilee. You may really be drawn to the plane empty vast desert, or the fervent fiery stones of the *Kotel* (Wailing Wall), or any other holy place or nature spot in *Eretz Yisrael* that you really love.

2. Imagine how the place looks. Take it in visually, the colors, shapes and textures that you see.

3. Now hear the sounds of your favorite place... The birds singing, the people praying, the water gushing, the wind blowing...

4. Touch your favorite place and feel its textures, soft, tough, dry moist....

5. Smell the fragrance of the flowers, the richness of the soil or the freshness of the grass after the rain, or perhaps the perspiration of the person sitting next to you.

6. Now taste the tastes of the place, the salty or sweet waters, the fruits growing in your chosen place, even the air has a taste. Take in your favorite place with all of your senses!

7. Feel comfortable and enjoy. Mentally thank Hashem for having created this place that your soul yearns for – *Eretz Yisrael!*

- 8. A. Inhale א/Alef – One,
- B. Exhale רץ/Ratz – run,
- C. Inhale ישר/Yeshar – straight,
- D. Exhale ל-א /E-l – to G-d.

Repeat this breathing imagery four times

9. Now imagine a place in Israel that you have a difficult time with. Perhaps it is noisy, smelly, or tense. Perhaps you may feel it is disorganized, rough and tough. Perhaps in place of a red carpet, you encounter thorns. Tune into this place; notice the things that disturb you about it.

10. Breathe Hashem's light into the challenges you face in this place, and try to get in touch with the redeeming quality of each of them. Perhaps the roughness you are faced with is an expression of honesty and sincere directness. When you open your inner vision you can transform the tense to become intense.

11. Repeat the *Eretz Yisrael* breathing imagery again, as you imagine a place that is difficult for you to relate to in the Land of Israel. Imagine each of the difficulties bursting one by one, as you breathe the letters of *Eretz Yisrael* into them. With practice you will develop your inner vision and actualize the hidden light of the Land even within its darkest places. When you are ready you can softly tap your hands and feet and open your eyes.

Notes:

Here is a poem I wrote when I first returned to the Land of Israel in 1992:

SEEING THE LAND

The land of Israel is like a nut
 which must be cracked.
 We need faith to believe
 that the fruit exists inside the shell.
 The shell which blocks our vision
 calls attention to the rough
 and difficult life.
 Yet, our faith will lead us
 to see with other eyes.
 When we let our eyes penetrate
 beneath the shell,
 then we will be ready to crack it open.
 The shell is like nature,
 the fruit is beyond..
 If we try to exist in this land
 according to the rules of nature
 the shell becomes like a wall
 which pushes us out.
 Only when we surrender to the will of G-d
 will we be able crack the nut open,
 and see the hidden light,
 which fills this land.
 We discover that the shell
 was only part of our own limitation
 a reflection of our blocked vision
 now penetrated and dissolved.
 We need not discard the shell
 but employ it in building bridges
 above struggling waters
 and channel them into canals and ditches
 like love flows from the heart
 transforming our lives
 to nurture gardens of Eden.



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About Us



Rebbetzin Chana Bracha Siegelbaum

Rebbetzin Chana Bracha Siegelbaum, a native of Denmark, is Founder and Director of Midreshet B'erot Bat Ayin. She holds a Bachelor of Education in Bible and Jewish Philosophy from Michlala Jerusalem College for Women, and a Masters of Art in Jewish History from Touro College. Chana Bracha also began her practice as a spiritual healer through Emuna, tefila and energy work.

For more than two decades Chana Bracha has taught Bible studies with special emphasis on women's issues in Israel and the United States. She creates curricula emphasizing women's spiritual empowerment through traditional Torah values. Midreshet B'erot Bat Ayin located in the Judean Hills of Israel offers a unique program to women of all ages and backgrounds to learn in a holistic Torah study environment that nurtures the mind, body and soul. Intensive textual study of Tanach, Halacha and Chassidut are woven together with creative spiritual expression, and connection with the land of Israel through organic gardening, herbology, Jewish sources of healing and sustainable living. Classes in Jewish mysticism, Chassidism and Jewish meditation are directed at the spiritual thirst so prominent in our times.

*In 2010 Rebbetzin Chana Bracha published her first book, *Women at the Crossroads: A Woman's Perspective on the Weekly Torah Portion*.*

Chana Bracha has a married son and several granddaughters. She lives with her husband and younger son on the land of the Judean hills, Israel.

If you are interested in:

Midreshet B'erot Bat Ayin contact info@berotbatayin.org or in Spiritual Healing with Rebbetzin Chana Bracha, please contact her at director@berotbatayin.org

or visit her blog: <http://rebbetzinchanabracha.blogspot.com/2010/11/emunah-healing-for-women.html>

Midreshet B'erot Bat Ayin – Holistic Torah Study for Women on the Land of Israel

At Midreshet B'erot Bat Ayin, we weave together Torah studies with creative spiritual expression, connecting with the Land of Israel, and healthy, organic lifestyles. In the heart of the Judean Hills, with its serene beauty, our students experience an approach to Judaism that bridges mind, body and soul. Midreshet B'erot Bat Ayin is designed as a micro-community within the Village of Bat Ayin where women of all ages and backgrounds engage in intense Torah learning as part of an integrated, participatory approach to Torah living.

Come Learn With Us!

Beginner and advanced levels are offered for women of all ages and religious backgrounds. Whether your interest in Judaism has recently been ignited, or you are seeking a wider perspective, Midreshet B'erot Bat Ayin offers the opportunity to improve your learning skills while strengthening your commitment to Judaism within the parameters of Halachah – all while engaging your inner creative spirituality, working the Land, and maintaining a healthy lifestyle.

Support Our School!

You have the unique opportunity to help us continue to build and amplify the light of Torah on the Land of Israel. With your help we can increase our ability to provide women an extraordinary Torah environment where they can build a solid Jewish foundation which will have an impact for generations to come.

