

Reb Pinchas of Koretz

Imrie Pinchas

Parshas Shlach

Siman #314	
Introduction	
<p>This discourse presents a penetrating exploration of how spiritual descent—falling into a state of <i>katnus</i> (smallness or constriction)—can paradoxically signal the beginning of <i>gadlus</i> (greatness or expansion). Reb Pinchas of Koretz uses the symbol of the enlarged Samekh in the verse “וַיְהִי כִּלְבֹב” to show that Divine support arises precisely at the moment of collapse. Drawing on Talmudic, Midrashic, and Zoharic sources, the teaching reveals a redemptive view of failure, suggesting that true elevation only begins when one has fallen so low there’s no further to fall. The appearance of miracles (<i>nissim</i>) is thus not in spite of downfall—but born from it.</p>	
<p>And Kalev silenced (Num. 13:30). The enlarged Samekh (ס) indicates that when a matter reaches the lowest level of smallness (katnus), then begins greatness (gadlus).</p>	<p>וַיְהִי כִּלְבֹב (סס יג, ל). הַסְמֵךְ רַבְתִּי כְּשֶׁהִדְבַר בָּא לְבַחֲיַיִת קְטַנּוֹת בְּיוֹמֵר, אִזּוּ מִתְחִיל גְּדֻלָּה.</p>
<p>And he (the author) said that this corresponds to the idea of "shedding a form and putting on a form."</p>	<p>וְאָמַר הוּא ז"ל, שְׁנֵה עוֹלָה בְּסִגְנוֹן אֶחָד עִם מְאָמֵר פּוֹשֵׁט צוּרָה וְלוֹבֵשׁ צוּרָה</p>
<p>And with this can be understood the Gemara (Berachos 4b–5a): R. Yoḥanan said, why is there no letter Nun in Ashrei? Because it contains the downfall of the enemies of Israel, as it is written (Amos 5:2), "She has fallen, she shall rise no more, the virgin of Israel."</p>	<p>וּבִזְהָ יוֹבֵן הַגְּמָרָא (בְּרַכּוֹת ד, ג): אָמַר ר' יוֹחָנָן מִפְּנֵי מָה לֹא נֶאֱמַר נו"ן בְּאַשְׁרֵי? מִפְּנֵי שֶׁיֵּשׁ בָּהּ מִפְּלִתוֹן שֶׁל שׁוֹנְאֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל, דְּכַתִּיב (עֲמוֹס ה, ב) נִפְלָה לֹא תוֹסִיף קוּם בְּתוֹלֵת יִשְׂרָאֵל</p>
<p>In the West (i.e., Eretz Yisrael) they interpreted it thus: “She fell, she shall no longer fall again; arise, O virgin of Israel.”</p>	<p>בְּמַעֲרַבָא מְתַרְצִי לָהּ הַכִּי: נִפְלָה וְלֹא תוֹסִיף לְנַפּוֹל עוֹד, קוּם בְּתוֹלֵת יִשְׂרָאֵל</p>
<p>And this is difficult, because the word “to fall” (linpol) was added, which is not in the verse.</p>	<p>וְקִשָּׁה בְּעִנְיָן זֶה, שֶׁהוֹסִיף תִּבַּת "לְנַפּוֹל" שֶׁלֹּא נֶאֱמָרָה בַּפְּסוּק</p>
<p>But it is clarified that this is merely a perush (interpretation) of the verse: When she has fallen to such a low fall that it is impossible to fall further—then, since the smallness is so extremely small, “Arise, O virgin of Israel.”</p>	<p>מְבוֹאָר, דְּאִין זֶה רַק פִּירוּשׁ הַפְּסוּק, כְּאֲשֶׁר נִפְלָה בְּנִפְיָלָה גְּמוּכָה עַד שֶׁאֵי אֶפְשָׁר שִׁיפֵל עוֹד, אִזּוּ כִּיּוֹן שֶׁהַקְּטַנּוּת קָטָן כֵּן כָּף – קוּם בְּתוֹלֵת יִשְׂרָאֵל</p>
<p>For example: one who falls from a table onto a bench can still fall further. But if he has already fallen to the ground, it is no longer possible to fall further.</p>	<p>לְמִשְׁלַל, הַנּוֹפֵל מִהַשְּׁלֶחָן עַל הַסֶּפֶסֶל, אֶפְשָׁר לוֹ שִׁיפֵל עוֹד, מִהַשְּׁאִיּוֹנֵן כְּשֶׁנוֹפֵל עַל הָאָרֶץ, אֵי אֶפְשָׁר לְפֵל עוֹד</p>
<p>Therefore, concerning the spies—when Moshe Rabbeinu, peace be upon him, saw that they caused weeping for generations, and that the extreme smallness of Tishah b’ Av was awakened—he said: “And now, let the strength of G-d be great...” (Num. 14:17).</p>	<p>לְכֹן בְּמִרְגָּלִים, כְּשֶׁרָאָה מֹשֶׁה רַבֵּינוּ ע"ה מָה שֶׁגָּרְמוּ בְּכִיָּה לְדוֹרוֹת, וְנִתְעוֹרֵר קְטַנּוּת נְמוּךְ מְאֹד שֶׁל תְּשׁוּעָה בְּאָב, וְלָכֵף אָמַר וְעַתָּה יִגְדַּל נָא כַחַ ה' וְגו' (בְּמִדְבָר י"ד, י"ז)</p>

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<p>“And now”—specifically now—since such smallness was awakened, therefore a very great greatness (<i>gadlus</i>) must follow, and understand this.</p>	<p>ועתה – דוקא, פינון שנתעורר בך קטנות, לכה יגדל הי"ד רבתי, שצריך להיות גדולה מאד כנ"ל, והכו.</p>
<p>And so too, when Kalev saw the great fall that they had caused, he needed to arouse the Samekh, because the Samekh stands for this purpose.</p>	<p>וכן כשראה כלב הנפילה הגדולה שגרמו, הנה צריך לעורר הסמך, כי הסמך עומדת לכה.</p>
<p>For the Holy One, blessed be He, did not wish to create the world with it [Samekh], for it is “support for the fallen” (Zohar III, 73a).</p>	<p>שלא רצה השם יתברך לברוא בזה העולם, כי היא (סמיכה לנופלים פדאיתא בזהר (מ"ג ג, ו</p>
<p>And this is the concept of a <i>nes</i> (miracle): for a miracle cannot happen unless there is first a distress, which is a fall—represented by the Nun—and immediately when there is a fall, the Samekh comes and becomes a <i>nes</i> (נס).</p>	<p>וזה [ענין] נס, כי נס אי אפשר להיות אלא אם כן יש בתחלה צרה, שהיא בחינת נפילה [בנו"ן], ומיד שיש נפילה בא הסמך ונעשה נס.</p>
<p>Therefore: “And Kalev silenced...” (Num. 13:30), with an enlarged Samekh.</p>	<p>ולכה ויהם כלב (שם יג, ל) הסמך רבתי</p>

[NOTE Summary:

Reb Pinchas of Koretz interprets the Torah's use of the enlarged letter **Samekh** in the phrase “ויהם כלב” (Kalev silenced them) to reflect a deep spiritual principle: that true greatness (*gadlus*) often begins only after reaching the lowest point of smallness (*katnus*). This follows the pattern of “פושט צורה ולובש צורה” — shedding one form to adopt another — which represents transformation through descent.

He draws from the Talmud's omission of the letter **Nun** in Psalm 145 (Ashrei), which the Sages explain is due to its association with *nefilah* (fall). Yet in Eretz Yisrael, they reinterpret the fall as reaching such depth that one cannot fall further—therefore only *rising* can follow. This becomes a hopeful reframe: when collapse is total, it becomes the very condition for renewal.

Moshe's prayer “ויעתה יגדל נא פה ה'” is thus not despairing, but deliberate: now that we've reached such a nadir, now is the time for the greatest *aliyah*. The Samekh, traditionally associated with support for the fallen (as the Zohar says, God refused to create the world with it because it “supports the fallen”), appears here in its enlarged form—hinting at a miracle (*nes*) born out of *nefilah*.

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Practical Takeaway

Every deep personal failure or spiritual fall can carry within it the seed of the greatest elevation. Instead of fearing moments of descent or smallness, one can learn from Reb Pinchas to look for the hidden Samekh—Divine support waiting to reveal a miracle. When you’ve hit “spiritual rock bottom,” you are actually at the threshold of transformation. The key is not to despair but to realize that this is the moment when you can begin to rise.

So the next time you feel you've fallen too far, recall: *A miracle cannot begin until there is a fall. The Samekh comes only when the Nun has fallen.*

Chassidic Story

Reb Pinchas of Koretz once encountered a man who had utterly despaired of doing *teshuvah*. “Rebbe,” the man cried, “I have fallen so many times, there’s nothing left. I’m too far gone.”

Reb Pinchas looked at him gently and said, “Have you ever seen a person fall through the floor?”

The man looked confused. “No, Rebbe, once you hit the ground, that’s it.”

“Exactly,” said Reb Pinchas. “You’ve hit the ground. You can’t fall any further. That means now—*only now*—you are ready to rise.”

He then quoted the verse: “נִפְלְאָה לֹא תוֹסִיף קוּם בְּתוּלַת יִשְׂרָאֵל” — interpreted in the west as, “She has fallen so far, she will not fall again—now, arise!”

This was the teaching he lived by: *No fall is final, unless you believe it is. But if you wait for the Samekh, you will find the nes.*

Source: *She'arim b'Tefillah* and *Imrei Pinchas HaShalem*, teachings compiled from Reb Pinchas of Koretz.

END NOTE]

Siman #315

And we also saw in it men of stature (Num. 13:32). That is, the “middos” refer to the Divine attributes of the Sefiros.

וְגַם רָאִינוּ בְּתוֹכָהּ אַנְשֵׁי מְדוּת (י"ג, ל"ב). ר"ל
הַמְדוּת שֶׁל הַסְּפִירוֹת.

For Moshe said: “Is there a tree in it?” (Num. 13:20), and they said, “Yes—from Chesed, etc.”

כִּי מַלְשָׁה אָמַר: הֲיֵשׁ בָּהּ עֵץ (י"ג, כ), וְאָמְרוּ דַּיֵּשׁ מִחֶסֶד
וְגו'.

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[NOTE Summary

In his commentary on the verse “וגם ראינו בתוכה אנשי מידות” (“And we saw in it men of stature”), Reb Pinchas of Koretz explains that these were not merely human giants but representations of *middos*, the attributes of the Sefiros. These “men of stature” symbolize powerful spiritual forces embedded in the very structure of Eretz Yisrael.

Moshe’s question—“Is there a tree in it?”—is also reinterpreted mystically. The “tree” alludes to the Tree of the Sefiros, the Divine channels of energy. The spies respond that indeed, such energies are present—from Chesed and onward. But rather than being inspired, they were intimidated by the overwhelming spiritual intensity.

This approach reframes the spies' failure: it wasn't simply fear of military defeat, but fear of spiritual confrontation with a land that embodies immense Divine forces.

Practical Takeaway

When faced with great spiritual opportunities—moments that challenge and elevate us—it’s easy to react with avoidance or fear, interpreting intensity as threat. Reb Pinchas reminds us that sometimes what we see as “giants” are actually spiritual forces urging us forward.

Rather than retreat from spiritual challenges because they feel “too big,” recognize that their magnitude may be a sign of their truth and importance. The question is not “Are there giants?” but “Are we ready to rise to meet the *middos* that dwell in this place?”

Chassidic Story

Once, a young man approached Reb Pinchas of Koretz, overwhelmed by the depth of Kabbalistic learning he had just begun. “Rebbe,” he said, “the more I study, the more I realize how unworthy I am. The teachings are too lofty for someone like me.”

Reb Pinchas smiled and asked him, “And when the spies came back and said there are giants in the land—what should they have done?”

“They should have trusted,” the student answered.

“Exactly,” said the Rebbe. “Those giants were only frightening because the spies looked at themselves as grasshoppers. But Eretz Yisrael was full of *middos*, not monsters. When holiness feels too big, it’s not because it doesn’t fit—it’s because you’re meant to grow into it.” **END NOTE]**

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[FOOT NOTE: Compare *Meor Einayim* (Parshas Lech Lecha): And therefore it is said (Numbers 13:32), “And all the people that we saw in it are men of measure (אנשי מדות),” the intention being that the *middos* (Divine attributes) were fallen, and as if—even metaphorically—He could not extract His vessels from there. For it is known that the *middos* are called “vessels,” and the fallen *middos* are called the “shattering of the vessels,” as is known.

And they [the spies] lied and slandered—as if even the Master of the house could not elevate the fallen *middos* from there. And they denied the very matter upon which all of our Divine service depends. Therefore, their punishment was very great.

And thus Kalev ben Yefuneh said, “We shall surely ascend and inherit it,” meaning that *we too* will ascend and elevate all the *middos* that are constricted within it—through the help of our Creator, for His sovereignty governs all, even over the *kelipos* (forces of concealment), to direct them however He wills. And see further there in that parshah. **END NOTE]**

Siman #316

And the entire assembly lifted up their voice (Num. 14:1). He said:

וַתִּשָּׂא כָּל הָעֵדָה אֶת קוֹלָם (י"ד, א). אָמַר

Heaven forbid that this should be taken simply—that the generation of the wilderness, who were a “generation of knowledge,” would not believe in the Holy One, blessed be He, just because there were mighty men there.

חַס וְשָׁלוֹם שִׁיחָא זֶה פְּשוּט, דּוֹר הַמְדַבֵּר שֶׁהִיָּה דּוֹר, דַּעָה, שְׁלֵא יֵאָמְרוּ בְּהַקְבָּ"ה מִמִּשְׁהִיּו שָׁם גְּבוּרִים

For behold, they saw so many signs and wonders.

וַהֲרִי רָאוּ כַּמָּה אוֹתוֹת וּמוֹפְתִים

And he said the following: that Moshe said to them (Num. 13:20), “Is there a tree in it or not?”—this means: is there a Torah scholar who protects them (see *Kakhol Neslalah* 15:6).

וְאָמַר כֹּד: שִׁמְשָׁה אָמַר לָהֶם (י"ג, כ) הֲיֵשׁ בָּהּ עֵץ אִם אֵין – הֲיֵנוּ תַלְמִיד חֲכָם הַמְגִן עֲלֵיהֶם (עֵין כָּכָל נִסְלָל (ט"ו, ו

And they said: “Men of stature...” (Num. 13:32), for the Patriarchs are the *merkavah* (Divine chariot) (see *Koheles Rabbah* 6:6)—meaning, they are the chariot to the attributes: Chesed, Gevurah, Tiferes.

וְהֵם אָמְרוּ: אֲנָשֵׁי מְדוּת וְגו' (י"ג, ל"ב), כִּי הָאֲבוֹת הֵם הַמְרַבֵּה (כ"ל פ"ג, ו) – פִּירוּשׁ, הֵן מְרַבֵּה לְמְדוּת חֶסֶד גְּבוּרָה תִפְאָרֶת

And this is what they meant when they said “men of middos,” and also the *Nefilim*, the children of Anak, who are from the [realm of] Shevirah (the shattering), and because of this they were afraid.

וְזֶהוּ שֶׁאָמְרוּ: אֲנָשֵׁי מְדוּת, וְגַם הַנְּפִילִים בְּנֵי עֲנָק שֶׁהֵם מִן הַשְּׁבִירָה, וּמִפְּנֵי זֶה הָיוּ יִרְאִים

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[NOTE Summary:

Reb Pinchas of Koretz explains that the generation of the wilderness, called a *dor de'ah* (a generation of deep knowledge), could not have lacked faith in God merely because the inhabitants of the Land were physically strong. After all, they had witnessed endless miracles.

Instead, their fear lay in something far deeper: when Moshe asked, “Is there a tree in it?”—he was really asking whether there was a *talmid chacham*, a spiritual leader who could protect and elevate. Their reply, “There are men of stature,” was a reference to the spiritual *middos*—the emotional Divine qualities of Chesed, Gevurah, and Tiferes, which the Patriarchs embodied as a *merkavah* (chariot).

Moreover, the mention of the *Nefilim*, sons of Anak, hints to even deeper dangers: these forces came from the “shattering of the vessels” (*sheviras ha-keilim*)—chaotic spiritual energies that had fallen into the realm of evil. The spies were not simply afraid of giants; they were overwhelmed by the task of elevating such fallen holiness.

Thus, their sin wasn’t cowardice—it was a tragic spiritual miscalculation, failing to believe that with God’s help, even those holy sparks could be redeemed. **END NOTE]**

Siman #317

And Moshe and Aharon fell on their faces (Num. 14:5).

וַיִּפְּלוּ מֹשֶׁה וְאַהֲרֹן עַל פְּנֵיהֶם (י"ד, ה)

The falling was in order to bring down a great light, and [thereby] the *kelipos* (husks/impurities) would fall.

הַנְּפִילָה הַיְתָה לְהוֹרִיד אֹר גָּדוֹל וְיִפְּלוּ הַקְּלִיפּוֹת.

[NOTE Summary:

Reb Pinchas of Koretz explains that when Moshe and Aharon fell on their faces, it was not a reaction of fear or submission, but a deliberate mystical act. Their “fall” was meant to draw down a great heavenly light. In doing so, they would cause the *kelipos*—forces of concealment and opposition—to fall away. This is part of a broader Chassidic theme: that physical gestures of humility can catalyze powerful spiritual effects. The “falling” of the tzaddik is a descent for the sake of elevation—not of himself, but of the entire people and spiritual landscape.

Practical Takeaway

In moments of deep challenge—whether personal, communal, or spiritual—true leaders do not react with panic, but with inner descent: humility, surrender, and a turning inward toward the Divine. Like Moshe and Aharon, we too can sometimes “fall on our faces” in prayer or submission—not in weakness, but in order to bring down light that overwhelms darkness. **The next time you face overwhelming opposition, consider: perhaps the path forward is not to fight harder, but to humble yourself, create space for the Divine, and let the light do the lifting.**

END NOTE]

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Siman #318	
But against Hashem do not rebel, for they are our bread; their protection has departed from them... (Num. 14:9).	אך בה' אל תמרדו ואתם אל תיראו את עם הארץ כי (לקחנו הם סר צלם מעליהם וגוי' (י"ד, ט' ט').
He said: What is the meaning of “their protection has departed”? It is known how Rashi explains it.	אמר: מה זה שאמר להם “סר צלם”? ונדע פירוש רש"י.
But it can be explained further. Once it happened (see <i>Yalkut</i> on Sukkah of Kelan) that someone went to the water during the solstice season, and he saw his reflection in the water with his mouth sealed and his eyes closed.	ויש לפרשו עוד, דפעם ארע (עיין ילקוט לספני קלון) שקהל אקד בשעת התקופה אל המים וראה בבוֹאָה שְׁלוֹ בַמַּיִם – פִּי סָתוּם וְעֵינָיו סָתוּמִין.
He asked about this, and they told him that he would not live until the next solstice.	וישאל על זה, ואמרו לו שלא יחיה עד התקופה השנייה.
And they [the spies] were there during the season of the summer solstice (<i>Tekufas Tammuz</i>), and all would go to the water to see their reflections. But they saw nothing.	והם היו שם בשעת תקופת תמוז, והיו הולכים בלם אל המים לראות בבוֹאָה שְׁלֵהֶם – ולא ראו.
Therefore it was said: “Their protection has departed from them,” for the rest of the spies also went [to the water] but saw nothing.	ולכן אמרו: “סר צלם מעליהם,” דשאר המרגלים גם-כן הלכו – אכל לא ראו.
And Hashem is with us; do not fear them—for our reflection here has an open mouth and our eyes are also open.	וה' אתנו – אל תיראם, שהבבוֹאָה שְׁלֵנוּ פה פתוח וְהַעֵינִים גַּם-כֵּן פְּתוּחוֹת.
<p>[NOTE Summary</p> <p>Reb Pinchas of Koretz offers a deeper interpretation of the verse, “סר צילם מעליהם”—“their protection has departed from them.” While Rashi provides a well-known explanation, Reb Pinchas draws from a folk account found in <i>Yalkut</i> tradition: during the summer solstice, people would gaze into water to see their own reflections. It was believed that if one's mouth and eyes appeared sealed in the water's reflection, it signified impending death.</p> <p>According to this teaching, the spies visited the land during <i>Tekufas Tammuz</i>, the solstice season. They went to the water but saw no reflection—no living signs. Thus, Calev and Yehoshua said, “סר צילם מעליהם”—their image is gone, their life-force has departed.</p> <p>By contrast, the faithful ones still saw their own reflections with open eyes and mouths—symbols of spiritual vitality, speech, and perception. This wasn't merely superstition; it reflected their inner state. God was still with them—and thus they feared no one.</p>	

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Practical Takeaway

When facing spiritual battles or fearful unknowns, don't only ask what lies ahead—ask what is reflected within. Are your "eyes" open? Is your "mouth" connected to truth and prayer? These are signs that your soul-force remains vibrant.

Don't be fooled by external appearances of strength in others (*the giants in the land*); what truly matters is whether the Divine image—the *tzelem Elokim*—is alive and visible within *you*. If your spiritual reflection is clear, then truly: "God is with us; do not fear them."

Chassidic Story

Once, a disciple of Reb Pinchas of Koretz came to him in great fear. "Rebbe," he cried, "my opponents are mighty. I feel powerless before them. They are loud, influential, and many."

Reb Pinchas said nothing at first. Then he walked with the man to a still pond and asked him to look in. "What do you see?"

"My face, Rebbe."

"And your eyes?"

"Open."

"And your mouth?"

"Also open."

Reb Pinchas nodded. "So long as you can see your own image clearly, you are alive with purpose. As long as your eyes see and your mouth speaks truth, no one can overshadow your soul. Their reflection is gone. Yours remains."

He then whispered, "סר צילם מעליהם, וה' אתנו—אל תיראום."

Source: Teaching based on *Meor Einayim*, attributed to oral traditions and *Yalkut* folklore. **END NOTE]**

Siman #319

And Egypt will hear... (Num. 14:13).

(וְשָׁמְעוּ מִצְרַיִם וְגו' (י"ד, י"ג)

And Rashi explains: "Against us He could, but against the thirty-one kings..." etc.

וּפִירֵשׁ רַש"י: כִּנְגַדְנוּ יְכוּל, אֲבָל נֶגְד ל"א מְלָכִים וְגו'.

And this is very astonishing—how is it possible to say such foolishness? For everyone saw the wonders of Hashem in Egypt, beyond the laws of nature.

וְהִיא תִמָּה גְדוּלָה מְאֹד, אִיךָ אֶפְשֶׁר לוֹמַר שְׁטוּת כְּזוֹה, שְׁהָרִי כָלֵם רְאוּ נִפְלְאוֹת ה' בְּמִצְרַיִם חוּץ לְדֶרֶךְ הַטְּבַע.

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And he, may his memory be for a blessing, answered: their error was as follows.	וְתִירֵץ הוּא ז"ל, שְׁטָעוֹת שְׁלֵהֶם הִיְתָה כֹּה
Behold, in Egypt there were many holy sparks deeply embedded. Therefore, Israel descended there to extract them—	וְהִנֵּה, בְּמִצְרַיִם הָיוּ טְבוּעוֹת נִיּוּצוֹת קְדוּשׁוֹת הַרְבֵּה מְאֹד. עַל כֵּן יָרְדוּ יִשְׂרָאֵל לְבָרְרָם
—as is written in the <i>Or HaChaim</i> on the verse (Gen. 46:3) “For I will make you a great nation there,” meaning for the sake of that great nation, whose sparks were to be clarified, etc.	כְּמוֹ שֶׁכָּתוּב בְּאוֹר הַחַיִּים עַל פְּסוּק (בְּרֵאשִׁית מ"ו, ג'): כִּי לְגוֹי גָּדוֹל אֲשִׁימְךָ שָׁם – לְצַרְךָ גּוֹי גָּדוֹל שֶׁיִּתְבָּרְרוּ וְגו'.
And therefore the new Pharaoh said: “Behold, the people of the children of Israel are more numerous and mighty than us” (Ex. 1:9)—specifically “than us.”	וְלָכֵן אָמַר מֶלֶךְ הַחַדָּשׁ: הִנֵּה עַם בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל רַב וְעָצוּם מִמֶּנּוּ (שְׁמוֹת א, ט) – דְּנֻקָּא: מִמֶּנּוּ
For through us they are numerous and mighty, because they are extracting the sparks from us. Therefore he said: “Let us deal shrewdly with them, lest they increase.”	שֶׁעַל יְדִינּוּ הוּא רַב וְעָצוּם, שֶׁמְבָרְרִין הַנִּיּוּצוֹת מֵאַתָּנּוּ. עַל כֵּן נִתְחַכְמָה לוֹ כֵּן יִרְבֶּה
And Hashem, for so was His will, said: “So shall they increase,” etc., until they extracted all the holy sparks—	וְהָשֵׁם יִתְבָּרַךְ, כִּי כֵן רְצוֹנוֹ, אָמַר: כֵּן יִרְבֶּה וְגו' – עַד שֶׁיִּבְרְרוּ כָּל נִיּוּצוֹת הַקְּדוּשָׁה
—until they made [Egypt] like a pond with no fish (see Berachos 9a).	(עַד שֶׁעָשׂוּהָ כְּמִצְוֵלָה שְׂאִין בָּהּ דָּגִים (בְּרַכּוֹת ט, ע"א
Therefore it is forbidden to live in Egypt, etc., as explained in the writings of the Arizal (see <i>Likutei Shas</i> of the Arizal on parshas Va'eschanan).	וְלָכֵן אָסוּר לְגוֹר בְּמִצְרַיִם וְגו', כְּדֹאֵיתָא בְּכַתוּבֵי (הַאֲרִיז"ל (לְקוּטֵי ש"ס לְסִלְיִז"ל עַל פ' וְאַתְחַנֵּן
Therefore, Egypt would say specifically regarding <i>us</i> it was so—for we were among them and drew the sparks from them—	וְלָכֵן יֹאמְרוּ מִצְרַיִם דְּנֻקָּא: כִּנְגַדְנוּ הִנֵּה כֵּן, שֶׁהָיוּ בִּינּוּתֵינוּ וְשָׂאֵבוּ מֵאַתָּנּוּ הַנִּיּוּצוֹת
—but not so with the thirty-one kings, whose land had not yet been entered, and who remain strong through the life-force of their contained sparks.	מֵהַשְּׂאִינֵי-כֵּן ל"א מְלָכִים שֶׁלֹּא נִכְנסוּ עַדְיוֹ לְאַרְצָם, וְהֵם חַזְקִים עַל יְדֵי חַיּוֹת הַנִּיּוּצוֹת שֶׁבָּהֶם
But in truth this is not correct—for <i>before</i> the giving of the Torah, Israel needed to descend to Egypt to extract the holy sparks in their place.	אָבֵל בְּאֵמֶת זֶה אֵינּוּ כֵּן. כִּי דְנֻקָּא קִדְמָה מִתּוֹרָה, הָיוּ יִשְׂרָאֵל מְבַרְרִים לְרַדְתָּ לְמִצְרַיִם לְבָרְרָם הַנִּיּוּצוֹת הַקְּדוּשִׁים שָׁם – בְּמִקוֹמָם דְּנֻקָּא
But <i>after</i> the giving of the Torah, through the power of Torah and mitzvos, one can draw the sparks even from afar (Zohar III 283a).	מֵהַשְּׂאִינֵי-כֵּן אַחֲרֵי מִתּוֹרָה – עַל יְדֵי כַח הַתּוֹרָה וְהַמִּצְוֹת, יְכוּלִין לְשֹׂאֵב הַנִּיּוּצוֹת מִרְחוֹק (זֹהַר ח"ג (קפ"ג, א
Especially since this very idea is written in the Torah (Deut. 20:16): “You shall utterly destroy them; do not let a soul remain alive”—	וּבִפְרָט שֶׁזֶה גּוֹפִיָּה כְּתוּב בַּתּוֹרָה (דְּבָרִים כ, ט"ז): הַחֲרֵם תַּחְרִימֵם – לֹא תִחַיֶּה כָּל נֶפֶשׁ

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—and through this they drew from them the holy sparks and the life-force within them.

על ידי זה שאבו מהן הניצוצות הקדושים והחיות
אשבהם.

[NOTE: Summary

Reb Pinchas of Koretz begins with a difficulty on Rashi's comment regarding the verse "ושמעו מצרים" ("And Egypt will hear," Num. 14:13). Rashi suggests the nations might say: "He was capable against Egypt, but not against the 31 kings of Canaan." Reb Pinchas finds this idea astonishing—how could anyone doubt Hashem's power after witnessing the supernatural plagues in Egypt?

He answers by introducing a foundational Chassidic-Kabbalistic concept: Egypt was full of holy sparks (*nitzotzos kedushah*) that needed to be elevated. That's why Israel descended into Egypt—to extract these sparks, as taught by the Or HaChaim on "for I will make you a great nation there." Pharaoh even sensed this, saying "they are more numerous and mightier than we"—*from us* they are drawing strength.

Through Divine providence, Israel multiplied and refined the Egyptian sparks until Egypt was "like a pond with no fish" (Berachos 9a)—utterly emptied of spiritual substance. This is why it became forbidden to live in Egypt again, according to the Arizal.

Now, Egypt's imagined "claim" is reinterpreted: "Against us He succeeded," they say, "because the Jews were among us and drew the sparks. But the 31 kings still retain their sparks—making them formidable." Yet this reasoning is flawed. Before the giving of the Torah, sparks had to be elevated *in place*, hence the exile. But after Sinai, Torah and mitzvos empower Israel to draw sparks *even from afar*, without needing to dwell among impurity.

In fact, this is precisely the reason the Torah commands, "You shall utterly destroy them... do not let a soul remain alive" (Deut. 20:16)—because even through destruction, the embedded holy sparks and life-forces can be spiritually reclaimed.

Practical Takeaway

This teaching revolutionizes how we view spiritual challenge and purpose. Every place we enter, every encounter—even with darkness—may contain sparks of holiness waiting to be lifted. Sometimes, we must enter difficult environments; other times, we uplift from a distance, using the power of Torah and mitzvah.

Don't underestimate your spiritual impact just because you're not "in the middle" of something. After Sinai, the soul armed with Torah can reach across boundaries and rescue sparks of light even from afar. Your prayer, your learning, your integrity—they refine worlds unseen.

And when you face resistance, remember: its power often lies only in the sparks still trapped within it. Your mission isn't just to fight evil, but to liberate holiness.

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Chassidic Story

A young student once asked Reb Pinchas of Koretz why the Jewish people needed to endure exile in such dark and distant lands. Couldn't Hashem bring redemption directly?

Reb Pinchas led him to a broken shard of pottery lying in the dirt. "Pick it up," he said. The boy hesitated. "It's filthy."

"But beneath that dirt," the Rebbe said, "is a glint of gold. The gold of Eden fell here. And we were sent not to avoid the dirt—but to find what's buried in it."

He paused and then added, "Before Sinai, we had to touch the dirt to find the gold. But now—through Torah—we can polish from above. Yet the mission remains: to gather the scattered pieces of light."

Source: Based on the teachings of Reb Pinchas of Koretz, integrating *Meor Einayim, Or HaChaim* (Gen. 46:3), *Berachos* 9a, and *Likutei Shas* of the Arizal. **END NOTE]**

Siman #320

And now, may the power of my Lord be great, as You have spoken, saying (Num. 14:17).

וְעַתָּה יִגְדַל נָא כְּחַ אֲדֹנָי כְּאֲשֶׁר דִּבַּרְתָּ לֵאמֹר (י"ד),
י"ז).

In the manner that Rashi explained (on verse 18): "Slow to anger"—both for the righteous and the wicked, etc.

עַל דָּרָךְ שְׁפִירֵשׁ רַשָּׁי (פְּסוּק י"ח): אַרְךָ אַפַּיִם
לְצַדִּיקִים וְלְרָשָׁעִים וְגו'.

And this is the meaning of "as You have spoken, saying"—just as You said concerning the righteous and the wicked.

וְזֶהוּ: כְּאֲשֶׁר דִּבַּרְתָּ לֵאמֹר – כְּמוֹ שְׁאָמַרְתָּ לְצַדִּיקִים
וְלְרָשָׁעִים.

[NOTE Summary

Moshe's words, "וְעַתָּה יִגְדַל נָא כְּחַ אֲדֹנָי" ("Now may the power of my Lord be great") are not just a request for strength or intervention. According to Rashi—and echoed by Reb Pinchas—Moshe is invoking a specific *middah*, a Divine attribute: *erech apayim* (slow to anger).

And what does Moshe mean by "as You have spoken, saying"? He is referring to God's earlier promise—to *be patient not only with the righteous, but also with the wicked*. Moshe is holding Hashem to His own word: "You said You are slow to anger with *everyone*—even those who fail. So now, let that power be revealed."

This plea is not based on merit, but on covenant. Not on Israel's goodness, but on God's own declared nature.

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Practical Takeaway	
When praying or seeking Divine compassion, don't be afraid to appeal to God's <i>own words</i> . Reb Pinchas reminds us that the deepest prayers come not just from our hearts—but from holding onto what God has already promised.	
You don't need to be perfect to be worthy of Divine patience. Hashem declared He is patient with both righteous and wicked. That's not a loophole—it's a lifeline. And when you or others falter, this is your cry: "Let Your patience shine—not because we deserve, but because You said You would."	
In life, we can also mirror this trait: when people disappoint us, we too can recall <i>our own promises</i> —to be kind, to be forgiving—and let <i>that</i> be what defines our response. END NOTE]	
Siman #321	
And now, may the power of my Lord be great... (Num. 14:17).	וְעַתָּה יִגְדַל נָא כַח אֲדֹנָי וְגו' (י"ד, י"ז)
For the order is: when the intellect is like a torrent of water—because of the abundance of water, it rises upward, etc.	כִּי הַסֹּדֵר פְּשֵׁהמוֹחִין מְרוֹצֵת הַמַּיִם, מִחֻמַּת גּוֹדֵל הַמַּיִם – הֵם הוֹלְכִים לְמַעְלָה וְגו'.
Therefore Moshe said: on the contrary— <i>now</i> , when there has been a complete withdrawal of the intellect (<i>histalkus hamoichin</i>)—now may it become great.	לְכַף אָמַר מֹשֶׁה: אֲדַרְבָּא – עַתָּה, שְׁהִיְתָה הַסִּתְלָקוּת הַמוֹחִין לְגַמְרֵי – עַתָּה יִגְדַל נָא.
And this is the explanation of the statement: "The son of David does not come except in a generation that is entirely meritorious or entirely guilty" (Sanhedrin 98a)—	וְזֶהוּ הַפִּירוּשׁ: אֵין בֶּן דָּוִד בָּא אֲלָא בְּדוֹר שְׂכָלוֹ זָכָאי אוֹ – (תִּיב סַנְהֶדְרִין צ"ח, א
—for if they are guilty, then "may the power of Hashem be great."	כִּי אִם תִּיבִים – יִגְדַל נָא כַח ה'.
And regarding this one may offer a homiletical explanation: why do we say "Hashiveinu" (Return us) <i>twice</i> (see Lamentations 5:21)?	וְעַל זֶה יֵשׁ לוֹמַר הַלְצָה: לָמָּה אוֹמְרִים ב' פְּעָמִים ("הַשִּׁיבֵנו" קִינּוֹת מְגַלַּת אֵיכָה
Because we are arguing: even if You have rejected us greatly—"Return us, Hashem..." etc.	כִּי אֲנַחְנוּ טוֹעֲנִים מְכֹל מְקוֹם: כִּי אִם מְאַסְתָּנוּ עַד מְאֹד – הַשִּׁיבֵנו וְגו'.
And this is also why it says "Nachamu, nachamu" (Comfort, comfort)—twice.	וְזֶהוּ: "נַחֲמוּ נַחֲמוּ" – ב' פְּעָמִים
And this is the secret of <i>nefilas apayim</i> (falling on one's face in prayer)—see <i>Perach Shoshanah</i> , Gate of Nefilas Apayim, chapter 3.	וְזֶהוּ הַסֹּד שֶׁל נְפִילַת אַפַּיִם (עֵינֵי פֶרֶ"שׁ שֶׁעַר נְפִילַת אַפַּיִם פֶּרְק ג')
<i>[Alternate version]</i>	בְּנוֹסַח אַחֵר
And now, may the power of my Lord be great... (Num. 14:17)—a large Yud.	וְעַתָּה יִגְדַל נָא וְגו' (י"ד, י"ז) – יו"ד רַבָּתִי

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For at first it is in constriction—and afterward it becomes a large Yud.	כּי בַתְחִלָּה הוּא בְצִמְצוּם, וְאַחַר כֵּן נַעֲשֶׂה יו"ד רַבָּתִי
For sin results from the withdrawal of the intellect.	כּי הַחֲטָא הוּא מִחֻמַּת הַסְתַּלְקוּת הַמוֹחִין
And when one recites <i>viduy</i> (confession), it is like a torrent of water—caused by pressure, like when something is blocked up tightly:	וּכְשֶׁאוֹמְרִים הַדּוּוֹי, הוּא כְמוֹ מְרוּצַת הַמַּיִם, מִחֻמַּת – שְׁמִסְתָּמִין אוֹתָם הַיִּטֵּב
—like a “גרעבלע קפד אין דער נאך רייסט אף” (Yid.): a clogged channel that bursts open under pressure.	כְּמוֹ הַגְּרַעבֶּלֶע קֶפֶד אֵין דֵּער נֶאָךְ רֵיִיסט אָף
Therefore, when one says <i>viduy</i> , he draws down the intellect upon himself.	וְלִכְךָ, כְּשֶׁאוֹמֵר הַדּוּוֹי – הוּא מְמַשִּׁיף עָלָיו הַמוֹחִין
So too, whenever a person thinks forbidden thoughts, it is due to withdrawal of intellect. And he says: “I have sinned, I have transgressed, I have rebelled.”	וְכֵן תְּמִיד: כְּשֶׁאֵדָם חוֹשֵׁב חֵס וְשְׁלוֹם מִהַשְׁבוּת זָרוֹת – הוּא מִחֻמַּת הַסְתַּלְקוּת הַמוֹחִין. וְאוֹמֵר: חֲטָאתִי עֲוִיתִי כְּשֶׁעָתִי
And this is [the meaning of]: “And now may the power [of my Lord] be great...”	וְזֶהוּ: וְעַתָּה יִגְדַּל נָא כֹחַ וּגּוֹ'
And this is what it means (Sanhedrin 98a): “In a generation that is entirely guilty, the Messiah will come.”	וְזֶהוּ (סְנֵהֲדָרִין צ"ח, א): דוֹר שְׁפֵלוֹ חַיֵּב – בָּא מְשִׁיחַ
<p>[NOTE Summary</p> <p>Reb Pinchas of Koretz explains that Moshe’s plea “וְעַתָּה יִגְדַּל נָא כֹחַ ה'” (“Now may the power of Hashem be great”) comes at the moment of total spiritual collapse—when the intellect (<i>moychin</i>) has entirely withdrawn. Paradoxically, this descent creates the opening for the greatest spiritual revelation. Just as when water is pressurized and forced through a narrow channel it bursts upward, so too, when the mind is constricted, the plea for mercy and confession can cause an outburst of Divine light.</p> <p>This is the meaning of the Talmudic statement: <i>Mashiach will come in a generation that is entirely meritorious—or entirely guilty</i>. When the world is entirely guilty, that signals a total concealment of intellect and Divine awareness. Precisely then, the deepest light can break through.</p> <p>Similarly, the act of <i>viduy</i> (confession) is likened to the moment when a clogged pipe bursts—through sincere confession, one draws the intellect back down upon himself. Even stray thoughts are the result of intellectual withdrawal, which can be reversed through honest words of return</p>	

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Practical Takeaway

Don't wait to feel holy or inspired before returning to Hashem. Precisely when you feel furthest—confused, ashamed, spiritually blocked—is the moment you are most ready to awaken Divine compassion.

If your mind feels dark and your heart dry, say “הטאתי, עווייתי, פשעתי” with honesty. That’s not spiritual failure—it’s the release valve. In your smallest state, you can trigger the greatest light.

The plea “וַעֲתָה יִגְדַּל נָא” isn't just Moshe's—it's yours, at the moment when everything else seems to have failed.

END NOTE]

Siman #322

And now, may the power of my Lord be great (Num. 14:17).

.(וַעֲתָה יִגְדַּל נָא כַח אֲדֹנָי (י"ד, י"ז)

A large Yud. For in the place of smallness, there is hidden greatness.

.י"ד רבתי. כי במקום קטנות – שם יש גדלה בהעלם

As in the verse: “It is a time of trouble for Yaakov, and from it he shall be saved” (Jer. 30:7), and “From the blow itself comes the healing.”

על דרך: עת צרה היא ליַעקב וממנה יושע (ירמיה ל, ז), וממכה עצמה מתקן רטיה

As we see in the Three Weeks—we enter into smallness: from Rosh Chodesh, even greater smallness, until we don't eat even poultry.

נראה: בגי' השבועות באים לקטנות, ומראש חודש יש קטנות יותר, עד שאין אוכלים אפילו בשר עוף

On the eve of Tishah B'Av, even greater smallness: we do not eat, and at the concluding meal we sit on the ground and eat dust, “and he grinds his teeth on gravel” (Lam. 3:16).

ובערב תשעה באב – קטנות יותר, עד שאין אוכלין וגו', ובסעודה המפסקת יושבין על הארץ ואוכלין עפר (-) ויגרס בחצץ שניו (איכה ג, ט"ז

And on Tishah B'Av itself—very great smallness: we sit on the ground and weep, and we go to the graves until we feel entirely insignificant (see Shulchan Aruch O.C. 559:10).

ובתשעה באב עצמו – קטנות גדולה מאד, ויושבין על הארץ ובוכין, והולכין על הקברות עד שאין אנהנו (חשובין למאומה (שו"ע או"ח תקנ"ט, י'

And from within this smallness comes greatness—that Mashiach is born on Tishah B'Av (see Eichah Rabbah 1:51).

ומתוך הקטנות הנה – יש גדלה, שנולד משיח בתשעה באב (איכה רבה א, נ"א

And therefore, with the spies—through whom Tishah B'Av was established (Sanhedrin 104b)—Moshe said: “May the power [of Hashem] be great,” with a specifically enlarged Yud.

ולכה, במרגלים – שעל ידיהם נעשה תשעה באב (סנהדרין ק"ד, ב') – אמר משה: יגדל נא, והי"ד רבתי דוקא

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[NOTE Summary:

Reb Pinchas of Koretz teaches that the phrase “וַעֲתָהּ יִגְדַּל נֹא פָּחַ ה'” contains a hidden Yud *rabbasi*—a large Yud—hinting that where there is the greatest *katnus* (smallness), hidden *gadlus* (greatness) lies. Just as a deep wound contains the potential for healing, so too, in the lowest moments, the greatest light is born.

He draws a parallel between this verse and the spiritual pattern of the Three Weeks leading up to Tishah B'Av. Each stage reflects deeper descent: from limiting pleasure, to abstaining from meat and wine, to mourning with ash and silence on the ground. On Tishah B'Av itself, the descent is complete—grief, brokenness, a sense of being nothing.

Yet, precisely from this ultimate *katnus*, greatness is born: Mashiach himself, the symbol of redemption and light, is said to be born on Tishah B'Av. Therefore, Moshe's request for Divine greatness comes not despite the fall of the generation—but *because* of it. The Yud, the smallest letter, is enlarged, revealing hidden Divine strength in the place of collapse.

Practical Takeaway

The greatest spiritual breakthroughs come from the lowest emotional places. When you feel distant, diminished, or broken—don't assume you've failed. That smallness may be the very moment when redemption begins.

Even when your “meal” is dust and gravel, when your prayers feel dry, when you sit in silence—weeping or numb—something vast is being prepared in the hidden spaces. In life's Tishah B'Avs, whisper with Moshe: וַעֲתָהּ יִגְדַּל נֹא.

It is not in your strength that greatness is born—it's in your surrender. The large Yud is already there, waiting to emerge. **END NOTE]**

Siman #323

In this wilderness they shall be consumed, and there they shall die (Num. 14:35).

(בַּמִּדְבָּר הַזֶּה יִתְמוּ וְשָׂם יָמָתוֹ (י"ד, ל"ה).

The Rav of Shpitovka said in the name of the Rav, may his memory be for a blessing: “Bamidbar” (in the wilderness) is a term for *dibbur* (speech).

אָמַר הָרַב מְדַשְׁפֵּיטוֹוּקָא קפ"ז בְּשֵׁם הָרַב ז"ל:
"בַּמִּדְבָּר" הוּא לְשׁוֹן דְּבִיר

“Yitamu” (they shall be consumed) is from the root “tam” (complete, pure), for one can acquire his world through speech.

יִתְמוּ מִלְשׁוֹן "תָּם", שְׂיִכּוֹל לְקַנּוֹת עוֹלָמוֹ בְּדַבּוּר.

And conversely: “and there they shall die”—through evil speech.

וְכֵן בְּהִפּוּךְ: "וְשָׂם יָמָתוֹ" עַל-יְדֵי דְבִירִים רָעִים

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Not only through <i>lashon hara</i> (slander) and the like, but even idle words—one transgresses both a positive and negative commandment,	לא מבעי לשון הרע וכיוצא בזה, אלא אפלו דברים בטלים ששית בהן – עובר בעשה ולא תעשה
as it says in the Midrash (Yalkut Shimoni): “All things are wearisome; no man can utter them” (Koheles 1:8).	בדאיתא במדרש (ילקוט שמעוני): "כל הדברים יגעים (לא יוכל איש לדבר" (קהלת א, ח
And the words “יתמו” (they shall be consumed) and “ימתו” (they shall die) are equal—	ותבות "יתמו" ו"ימתו" שוין
for with just a small vowel change, it can become the opposite.	כי בתנועה קטנה אחת – יכול להיות להפך
Alternate version:	גסוקא אחר
“In this wilderness they shall be consumed, and there they shall die” (Num. 14:35).	(במדבר הנה יתמו ושמ ימתו (י"ד, ל"ה
In <i>dibbur</i> (speech)—“yitamu” is from the root “tam,” meaning wholesome and upright. Yet death lies there as well.	בדבור – "יתמו" לשון "תם" וישר. שמ – מיתה גמ"כ
For one whose wisdom exceeds his deeds, a wind comes and uproots him (see Avos 3:17).	כי חכמתו מרובה ממעשיו – באה רוח ועוקרתו (אבות ג, י"ז)
For Hashem is the root of all roots, and man is a tree of the field, and speech is like branches—	כי הקדוש ברוך הוא שרש כל השרשים, ואדם עץ השדה, והדבורים – הם ענפים
and the wind that comes forth from the wings of the lungs—that is the <i>ruach memalela</i> (the speaking spirit), etc.	והרוח היוצאת מכנפי הריאה – ודא רוח ממללא וגו'

[NOTE Summary:

Reb Pinchas of Koretz offers a layered, mystical interpretation of the verse “במדבר הנה יתמו ושמ ימתו” (“In this wilderness they shall be consumed, and there they shall die”). He notes that “במדבר” (wilderness) also means *dibbur*—speech. Thus, the verse alludes to how human speech itself can bring either spiritual completion or destruction.

The word “יתמו” is linked to *tam*—wholesomeness or innocence—implying that through refined speech, one can reach spiritual completeness and even “acquire his world.” But the very next words—“שמ ימתו” (“there they shall die”)—warn that speech can also lead to spiritual ruin, especially when used for harmful or idle purposes.

Even words that seem harmless—*divrei beteilim* (idle chatter)—carry weight. The Midrash teaches that one who engages in excessive speech violates both positive and negative commandments. The similarity between “יתמו” and “ימתו” (differing only by a small vowel sound) underscores how quickly and subtly speech can flip from holy to harmful.

An alternate version expands this idea by comparing humans to trees: Hashem is the root, the person is the trunk, and speech is the branches. The *ruach memalela*—the soul’s breath expressed in speech—can build or uproot depending on its alignment with action. If a person’s words exceed his deeds, the wind itself may topple

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him, as the Mishnah says: “If one’s wisdom exceeds his deeds, a wind will uproot him.”

Practical Takeaway

Speech is never neutral. Every word shapes your inner world and spiritual future. Just as a small vowel can turn “completion” into “destruction,” a small careless word can do real damage—and a sincere, honest word can build eternity.

Use your breath—your *ruach memalela*—to connect, to pray, to learn, to heal. Even silence can be powerful when it protects you from empty speech. Don’t underestimate the spiritual weight of your conversations, jokes, or stray comments.

The next time you feel your words slipping into distraction, sarcasm, or complaint, remember: in the “midbar” of speech, you can either be *tam*—wholesome—or, God forbid, descend into *mitah*—spiritual numbness. Choose your words like you’re planting branches on your Tree of Life. **END NOTE]**

Siman #324

In this wilderness they shall be consumed (Num. 14:35).	.(בַּמִּדְבָּר הַזֶּה יִתְמוּ (י"ד, ל"ה)
“Yitamu” (they shall be consumed) is an expression of “tam” and <i>temimus</i> (wholeness and innocence).	לְשׁוֹן "תָּם" וְתַמִּימוּת
And it also contains the letters of “yamusu” (they shall die),	,"יָיִשׁ גַּם כֵּן אוֹתֵיזוֹת "יָמוּתוּ"
for life and death are in the power of the tongue (Prov. 18:21).	.(כִּי הַחַיִּים וְהַמָּוֶת בְּיַד הַלְּשׁוֹן (מִשְׁלֵי י"ח, כ"א
And “bamidbar” (in the wilderness) is an expression of <i>dibbur</i> (speech),	,"וּבַמִּדְבָּר" לְשׁוֹן דְּבִוּר
for if one learns Torah <i>lishmah</i> (for its own sake), it is for him an elixir of life,	,"כִּי אִם לומֵד תּוֹרָה לְשִׁמָּה – הִיא לוֹ סֵם חַיִּים
and if he learns not <i>lishmah</i> , it is for him an elixir of death (Yoma 72b)—this very Torah.	וְאִם שָׁלָא לְשִׁמָּה – הִיא לוֹ סֵם מָוֶת (יוֹמָא ע"ב, ב'), הַתּוֹרָה הַזֹּאת עֲצֻמָּה
And as our Sages said (Zevachim 23a): two who ate their Pesach offering—	וּכְמוֹ שְׁאַמְרוּ חַז"ל (זְבָחִים כ"ג, א'): שְׁנַיִם שְׁאַכְלוּ – פְּסַחֵיהֶן
one for the sake of the mitzvah of eating the Pesach—he fulfilled his obligation;	,"אֶחָד לִשְׁם אֲכִילַת פֶּסַח – יִצָּא
and one for the sake of gross eating—he did not fulfill [his obligation] and is liable to kareis.	וְאֶחָד לִשְׁם אֲכִילָה גְּסָה – לֹא יִצָּא וְחַיֵּב כָּרֵת
And “Pesacheihen” (their Pesach) is “peh sach”—an expression of speech.	,"וּפְסַחֵיהֶן" הוּא "פֶּה סַח" – לְשׁוֹן דְּבִוּר

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“Two who ate” is an expression of union (<i>zivug</i>), as in “the bread that he eats” (Gen. 39:6).	שְׁנַיִם שָׁאֲכְלוּ – לְשׁוֹן זְוִיג, עַל דְּרָךְ "הִלָּחֵם אֲשֶׁר" (הוּא אוֹכֵל) (בְּרֵאשִׁית ל"ט, ו')
“She has eaten and wiped her mouth” (Prov. 30:20), for there are unions through the mouth.	(אֲכָלָה וּמָחַתָּה פִּיהָ" (מִשְׁלִי ל, כ"י), כִּי יֵשׁ זְוִיגִים בְּפִהָ.
And when one learns <i>lishmah</i> , he returns the letters face-to-face and brings forth birth, and he can create new Torah insights (<i>chiddushim</i>).	וּשְׁלֹמֵד לְשִׁמָּה – מַחְזִיר הָאוֹתִיּוֹת פָּנִים בְּפָנִים וְנַעֲשֶׂה הוֹלָדָה, וַיִּוָּכַל לְחַדֵּשׁ חֲדוּשִׁים.
Therefore Rabbi Meir said (Avos 6:1), “One who learns Torah <i>lishmah</i> becomes like a gushing spring,”	לְכֵן אָמַר רַבֵּי מֵאִיר (אָבוֹת ו, א'): הַלּוֹמֵד תּוֹרָה לְשִׁמָּה – נַעֲשֶׂה כְּמַעְיָן הַמִּתְגַּבֵּר
for Above, when one returns the letters face-to-face, it creates unions... without end.	כִּי לְמַעְלָה – אִם מַחְזִיר פָּנִים בְּפָנִים – נַעֲשִׂים יַחֲוּדִים וְגו' עַד אֵין קֵץ.
And this is <i>lishmah</i> —for the sake of the letters themselves, that one may return them face-to-face.	וְזֶהוּ לְשִׁמָּה – לְשֵׁם הָאוֹתִיּוֹת עֲצָמוֹ, שְׂיֻוֹכַל לְהַחְזִיר אוֹתָן פָּנִים בְּפָנִים.
And this is the one who ate for the sake of “gross eating”—an expression of arrogance, thinking himself able to learn. Therefore he did not fulfill and it became for him an elixir of death—also the letters of “yitamu.”	וְזֶהוּ שָׁאֲכַל לְשֵׁם אֲכִילָה גָסָה – לְשׁוֹן גָּסוֹת הָרוּחַ שְׂרוּאָה שְׂיֻוֹכַל לְלַמֵּד – לְכֵן לֹא יֵצֵא, וְנַעֲשִׂית לוֹ סֵם "הַמָּוֹת – גַּם־כֵּן אוֹתִיּוֹת "יִתְמוּ
But one who learns <i>lishmah</i> , he merits many things— for in one moment are born myriads upon myriads of souls and angels Above.	אָבַל הַלּוֹמֵד לְשִׁמָּה – זֹכֵה לְדַבְרֵים הַרְבֵּה, כִּי בְּרֵגַע אֶחָד נוֹלָדִים אֲלֵפֵי אֲלֵפֵים רַבּוֹת נִשְׁמוֹת וּמַלְאָכִים לְמַעְלָה.
And because he asks questions and answers them, he returns the letters face-to-face and brings forth birth.	וּמִפְּנֵי שְׂמִקְוֶשָׁה קוּשִׁיוֹת וּמַתְרַצֵּם – הוּא מַחְזִיר הָאוֹתִיּוֹת פָּנִים בְּפָנִים, וְנַעֲשִׂית הוֹלָדָה.
And likewise in prayer—when one prays with <i>kavanah</i> (intention), he returns the letters face-to-face, and all is made in a single moment: pregnancy, nursing, and intellect,	וְכֵן בַּתְּפִלָּה – כְּשִׂמְתַּפְּלֵל בְּכַוָּנָה הוּא מַחְזִיר הָאוֹתִיּוֹת פָּנִים בְּפָנִים, וְנַעֲשֶׂה הַכֹּל בְּרֵגַע אֶחָד – עֵבוֹר וְיִנְיָקָה וּמוֹחִין.
for it ascends above time—like a dream in which a person experiences months in a moment.	כִּי בָּא לְמַעְלָה מִן הַזְּמַן, כְּמוֹ חֵלוֹם שֶׁחֵלֵם לוֹ מָה לְשַׁנְעֶשֶׂה בְּרֵבַע שָׁנָה, וּבְאֻמָּת הוּא בְּרֵגַע.
So too with Torah and prayer—it can all happen in a single moment.	וְכֵן תּוֹרָה וּתְפִלָּה – יְכוּל לְהִיּוֹת הַכֹּל בְּרֵגַע אֶחָד.
Therefore, we go to greet one’s teacher on the festival (Rosh Hashanah 16b),	וְלָכֵן הוֹלְכִין לְהַקְבִּיל פָּנֵי רַבּוֹ בְּרֵגֶל (רוֹשׁ הַשָּׁנָה ט"ז, ב')
for on Yom Tov one reaches a state of “face,” and when he comes to his teacher, it becomes face-to-face, etc.	כִּי בְיוֹם טוֹב – בָּא לְכָלֵל פָּנִים, וּכְשָׁבָא אֶצֶל רַבּוֹ – נַעֲשֶׂה פָּנִים בְּפָנִים וְגו'.

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And this is why Rabbi Chanina ben Dosa said: “If my prayer flows fluently from my mouth, I know it will be answered” (Berachos 34b).	וְלִזְנֵה הֵינָה רַבִּי חֲנִינְיָא בְּוֹסָא אוֹמֵר: אִם שְׁגוּרָה תִּפְלְתִי (בְּרַכּוֹת ל"ד, ב' – יוֹדַע אֲנִי שֶׁהוּא יִתְרַפָּא (בְּרַכּוֹת ל"ד, ב').
“Shegura” (fluent) is like “goren agulah” (a circular threshing floor), as in the Sanhedrin sat in a semicircle (Sanhedrin 36b).	שְׁגוּרָה" לְשׁוֹן "גוֹרֵן עֲגוּלָה" – עַל דְּרָף: סְנֵהֲדָרִין הֵיוּ" (יֹשְׁבֵיין בְּחֻצֵי גוֹרֵן עֲגוּלָה (סְנֵהֲדָרִין ל"ו, ב').
If he returned the letters face-to-face and surrounded the sick with the words of prayer, he knew the person would live.	אִם הֵינָה מַחְזִיר הָאוֹתִיּוֹת פְּנִים בְּפָנִים וְהֵינָה מִמְשִׁיף עַל הַחוּלָה מִקִּיפִין מִן הַדְּבוּרִים שֶׁל הַתְּפִלָּה – הֵינָה יוֹדַע שֶׁיִּחְיֶה.
And this is what they said (Eiruvין 54a): “This world is like a wedding feast,”	וְזֶה וְשֶׁאֲמָרוּ (עִרוּבֵין נ"ד, א'): "הָאֵי עֲלֵמָא כְּבֵי הַלּוּלָא", "דְּמִי
for in offerings and <i>pesukei dezimrah</i> there is music, and then <i>Shema</i> is unification,	כִּי בְּקִרְבָּנוֹת וּפְסוּקֵי דְזִמְרָא – הוּא כְּלֵי זִמְרָא, וְאַחַר כֵּן קָרִיאַת שְׁמַע – הוּא הַיְחוּד
and then one links redemption to prayer.	וְאַחַר כֵּן סוֹמֵךְ גְּאוּלָּה לְתַפְלָה
For when praying in a group of ten, it causes unification, etc.,	כִּי כְּשֶׁמִּתְפַּלְלִין בְּעֶשְׂרָה – נַעֲשֶׂה יְחוּד וְגו'
for redemption is the <i>yesod</i> (foundation), and prayer is <i>malchus</i> , etc.	כִּי גְּאוּלָּה הִיא יְסוּד, וְתַפְלָה – מְלְכוּת וְגו'
(And the rest I forgot.)	(וְהַשְּׂאָר שְׁכַחְתִּי).
One can also explain that “shegura” means “sent”—if the prayer is <i>sent</i> through me.	עוֹד יֵשׁ לְפָרֵשׁ "שְׁגוּרָה" – לְשׁוֹן שְׁלִיחוּת, אִם הַתְּפִלָּה הִיא שְׁלִיחָה בְּיָדִי.
For “Whoever slays this snake, they give him the king’s daughter”—this is prayer (Tikkunei Zohar 29b).	כִּי "מֵאֵן דְּקִטִּיל לְהָאֵי חוּנְיָא – יִתְבִּין לִיה בְּרַתָּא דְּמִלְכָּא" (–) וְדָא צְלוּתָא (תְּקוּנַי זֹהַר כ"ט, ב')
For a person cannot take prayer for himself unless they give him the king’s daughter.	כִּי אִין אָדָם יְכוֹל לְקַחְהָ לְעַצְמוֹ – אֵלָּא אִם יִתְבִּין לִיה בְּרַתָּא דְּמִלְכָּא
And this is “I pleaded with Hashem at that time, saying” (Deut. 3:23)—	(וְזֶהוּ "וְאֶתְחַנֵּן אֵל ה' בְּעֵת הַהִיא לֵאמֹר" (דְּבָרִים ג, כ"ג) –
at the time when I am able to speak, that is when I plead.	בְּעֵת שֶׁאֲנִי יְכוֹל לומר – אֲז אֲנִי מִתְחַנֵּן
And this is “You began...” (Deut. 3:24), and the matter is understood.	וְזֶהוּ "אַתָּה הִחַלְתָּ" (דְּבָרִים ג, כ"ד), וְדָל

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[NOTE: Summary

The verse “במדבר הזה יתמו” (“In this wilderness they shall be consumed”) is reinterpreted by Reb Pinchas as a meditation on speech. The word *bamidbar* hints at *dibbur* (speech), and *yitamu* is related to both *tam* (wholesomeness) and *yamusu* (they shall die). From this, he explains that life and death truly reside in the power of the tongue.

If one uses speech to learn Torah *lishmah*, that Torah becomes an elixir of life. If one learns out of arrogance or self-serving motives, that same Torah becomes poison. Similarly, the Pesach offering—*peh sach*, the “mouth that speaks”—depends entirely on intention. Two people may perform the same action, but one births holiness and the other brings spiritual death.

Learning *lishmah* is likened to a divine union: returning letters *panim el panim* (face-to-face), which causes spiritual “births” of souls and angels above. The same applies to prayer. When one prays with *kavanah*, one aligns the letters face-to-face, generating spiritual gestation, nourishment, and intellect in a timeless realm—just as in dreams, where months pass in moments.

This is why Rabbi Chanina ben Dosa said that if his prayer was “*shgura*” (fluent), he knew it would be accepted. This fluency reflects inner alignment—like the semicircle of the Sanhedrin—where speech becomes a vessel that surrounds the sick with healing light.

Finally, he concludes that no one can “take” prayer unless it is *given*—one must be worthy of the King’s daughter. Hence, Moshe prays only *when he is permitted to speak*: “ואתחנן אל ה' בעת ההיא לאמר”—“at that time,” when speech is available and worthy, “I beseech.”

Practical Takeaway

Your speech is not a small thing—it is the very engine of spiritual creation or destruction. Every time you open your mouth to learn, pray, or speak, you are either building eternal light or wasting the breath of life.

Learn Torah *lishmah*—not to impress, prove, or possess—but for the sake of the holy letters themselves. Pray with *kavanah*, not rushing, but seeking alignment between what you say and who you are.

Even when words feel dry or routine, know this: one moment of true speech—one word spoken face-to-face with its source—can create worlds, heal souls, and summon angels.

Chassidic Story

Reb Pinchas of Koretz once observed a student praying quickly and fluently. The student beamed afterward, saying, “Rebbe, I had no mistakes today. Every word flowed!”

Reb Pinchas responded gently, “But did the *words* see *you*?”

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The student looked puzzled.

“Words are living things,” Reb Pinchas continued. “They only take flight when their speaker is facing them. A word spoken without presence is like a child born without breath. But a word said *panim el panim*—face to face—is like the kiss of life.”

He paused, then added, “The Torah says, *bamidbar hazeh yitamu*—in the desert of words, you can be consumed. But also: you can become *tam*, whole. Choose wisely which you speak.”

Source: Teachings of Reb Pinchas of Koretz, adapted from oral tradition and Midrashic motifs cited in the discourse. **END NOTE]**

Siman #325	
In the name of the Rav, of blessed memory: Those princes who did not speak <i>lashon hara</i> (evil speech) became kings over their tribes.	בְּשֵׁם הָרַב ז"ל, אוֹתָם נְשִׂיאִים שָׁלָא דְבָרוּ לְשׁוֹן הָרַע – יֵצְאוּ מִשְׁבֹּטֵיהֶם מְלָכִים.
From Kalev, that is from Yehudah, came the kings of the House of David.	מִקְלֵב, דִּהְיִינוּ יְהוּדָה – יֵצְאוּ מְלָכֵי בֵּית דָּוִד.
And from the tribe of Ephraim came the kings of the Ten Tribes—Yerovam, etc.	וּמִשְׁבֹּט אֶפְרַיִם – מְלָכֵי עֲשָׂרַת הַשְּׁבֹטִים: יִרְבְּעָם וְגו'.
And he said, it seems to me this is how the Rav of blessed memory concluded:	וְאָמַר, כְּמִדְּמָה לִי שֶׁכָּדוּ סִיּוֹם הָרַב ז"ל.
Only because Yehoshua did not exert himself personally, but rather Moshe prayed on his behalf—	רַק מִפְּנֵי שֶׁיְהוֹשֻׁעַ לֹא טָרַח בְּעֵצְמוֹ, רַק מִשָּׂה הִתְפַּלֵּל – בְּעֵדוֹ
therefore his tribe did not produce a lasting kingship.	לְכֹן לֹא יֵצְאוּ מִשְׁבֹּטוֹ מְלָכוֹת קֹנְמֵת לְעוֹלָם.
But Kalev, who exerted himself, from his tribe came the kings of the House of David—a kingdom that endures forever.	וְקֵלֵב שֶׁטָּרַח בְּעֵצְמוֹ – יֵצְאוּ מִשְׁבֹּטוֹ מְלָכֵי בֵּית דָּוִד, מְלָכוֹת הַעוֹמְדוֹת לְעַד.
And he, of blessed memory, said a rationale: for speech is the aspect of <i>malchus</i> —the mouth (see Tikkunei Zohar 10b).	וְאָמַר הוּא ז"ל סְבָרָא: כִּי דְבוּר – הוּא בְּחִינַת מְלָכוֹת: (פָּה) (תִּיקוּנֵי זֹהַר י', ב')
Therefore, since they guarded their speech, they merited kingship.	לְכֹן, מִפְּנֵי שֶׁשָּׁמְרוּ דְבוּרָם – זָכוּ לְמְלָכוֹת.

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[NOTE: Summary

Reb Pinchas of Koretz teaches that the tribal princes who refrained from speaking *lashon hara* during the episode of the spies were later rewarded with royal descendants. From Kalev of the tribe of Yehudah came the eternal dynasty of King David. From the tribe of Ephraim, represented by Yehoshua, came the kings of the Northern Kingdom, such as Yeravam.

However, there is a striking distinction: Yehoshua's royal line did not endure, while Kalev's did. Why? The answer lies in effort and speech. Yehoshua was protected from sin by Moshe's prayer, not through his own active resistance. In contrast, Kalev exerted himself personally to speak up against the spies. That personal exertion, specifically in *speech*, became the root of eternal kingship.

Speech, explains Reb Pinchas, is the very essence of *malchus* (kingship). Just as the mouth gives expression to hidden thoughts, kingship is the expression of hidden Divine will in the world. Those who guard and sanctify their speech are worthy of channeling kingship. Thus, because Kalev used his words with holiness and courage, he merited to found the dynasty that will ultimately lead to Mashiach.

Practical Takeaway

Words shape royalty—not just in others, but in yourself. When you speak with restraint, truth, and courage—especially in moments of pressure—you align yourself with the Divine trait of *malchus*. It is not the cleverest, strongest, or most protected who earn enduring influence, but those who speak with responsibility and integrity.

Don't wait for someone to pray on your behalf—take initiative. When facing moral tests, speak up like Kalev. Guard your tongue like royalty. Every word may be planting the seed of a future that endures forever. **END**

NOTE]

Siman #326

Two Messiahs will come from the tribes that did not have spies among them.	תריין משיחין יצאו מן השבטים שלא היה בהם מרגלים.
Mashiach ben David, from Yehudah, came from Kalev ben Yefuneh.	.משיח בן דוד מיהודה – היה מכלב בן יפנה
And Mashiach ben Yosef, from Ephraim, [came] from Yehoshua bin Nun.	.ומשיח בן יוסף מאפרים – [היה] מיהושע בן נון
Therefore, the miracle of Purim came through Mordechai the Jew, who came from Yehudah, as our Sages said (Megillah 12b),	ולכך היה גם פורים על ידי מרדכי היהודי – דאיתי (מיהודה, כמו שאמרו חז"ל (מגילה י"ב, ב')
and [that miracle] will not be nullified.	.ולא יהיו בטליו
And the miracle of Chanukah came through the Hasmoneans, who were priests from the tribe of Levi—	וגם חגכה היה על ידי החשמונאים שהיו כהנים משבט לוי

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who also did not have any spies from among them.	.שגם כן לא היו מהם מרגלים
And [that miracle] also will not be nullified.	.ולא יבטלו

[NOTE: Summary
 Reb Pinchas of Koretz reveals a hidden connection between the story of the spies and the ultimate redemption. Only three tribes did not participate in the sin of the spies: Yehudah (via Kalev), Ephraim (via Yehoshua), and Levi. From these tribes, says Reb Pinchas, come the two Messiahs: **Mashiach ben David** from Kalev/Yehudah and **Mashiach ben Yosef** from Yehoshua/Ephraim. Levi, too, merits eternal influence through the Chashmonaim (Hasmoneans).

Because of their purity in speech and deed during the episode of the spies, these tribes became vessels for miracles that will never be nullified. The miracle of **Purim**, led by Mordechai the Yehudi (from Yehudah), and the miracle of **Chanukah**, led by the Chashmonaim (from Levi), both trace their spiritual endurance to the unwavering loyalty of these tribes.

The implication is profound: national redemption and enduring miracles do not emerge from tribal power or status, but from faithfulness and restraint in critical moments—particularly in resisting slander and fear, as the spies failed to do.

Practical Takeaway

Enduring light is born not from dramatic power, but from quiet loyalty in dark times. When others spoke negatively, Kalev, Yehoshua, and Levi stood firm—and from them came not just survival, but redemption.

If you want your actions to matter forever, be among those who speak truth when it's risky and stay silent when speech would betray faith. Every time you refrain from cynicism or stand against communal despair, you echo their strength—and you plant seeds of eternal light.

Purim and Chanukah were not random miracles; they were planted in the desert, by those who kept faith when others faltered. **END NOTE]**

Siman #327

The princes who went to be spies—	— הנשיאים שהלכו להיות מרגלים
their names are not arranged according to the order of the flags,	אינם לא כסדר הדגלים
nor according to the order of their genealogies.	.ולא כסדר תולדותם
And this is like what is written in Parshat Devarim (Deuteronomy 1:22),	: (והוא על דרך שכתוב בפרשת דברים א, כ"ב
“And all of you approached me...”	", "ותקרבוני אלי בלכם"
Rashi explains: in confusion.	.פירש רש"י: בערבוביא
And here too it is written in this way.	.וכאן גם כן כתוב כך

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[NOTE: Summary

Reb Pinchas of Koretz notes a subtle but significant detail: when the names of the twelve spies are listed, they do not follow the expected order—neither the formation of the tribal banners (*degolim*) nor the chronological order of birth.

This mirrors the verse in Devarim (1:22): “*And all of you approached me...*”, which Rashi explains to mean “in confusion” (*b’arvuyya*). In both cases, disorder in sequence hints at a deeper spiritual disarray.

The irregular listing of the spies is not a random inconsistency. It reflects the breakdown of hierarchy, unity, and purpose—a chaotic approach to a sacred mission. When people act out of fear, personal agenda, or division, the natural Divine order is disturbed.

Practical Takeaway

Watch for the signs of *disorder in intention*. When things begin with confusion, ego, or competition—rather than clarity, purpose, and humility—it’s often a warning sign.

The sin of the spies began long before their slander; it began in how they were chosen and how they approached the mission—with inner confusion.

Before you embark on any important task, ask: is my inner “order” aligned? Are my motives clear? Am I stepping forward with clarity or noise?

Even the greatest can fail when confusion leads the way. **END NOTE]**

Siman #328

"The eyes of the congregation" (Numbers 15:24).	.)עיני העדה (במדבר ט"ו, כ"ד
In the name of the Rav, of blessed memory:	– בָּשֵׁם הָרַב ז"ל
"The eyes of the congregation" refers to those who have eyes to see the hidden light,	עיני העדה" – היינו אותם שיש להם עינים לראות" בְּאוֹר הַגִּנּוּז
from one end of the world to the other.	מִסוּף הָעוֹלָם וְעַד סוּפוֹ
Therefore, the righteous were able to do great things and create new customs,	לְכַד – יָכְלוּ הַצַּדִּיקִים לַעֲשׂוֹת עֲנִינִים גְּדוֹלִים וּמִנְהָגִים חֲדָשִׁים
because they saw what was pleasing before Hashem.	כִּי רָאוּ מַה שֶּׁהוּא לְרִצּוֹן לְפָנֵי הַשֵּׁי"ת
But we, who do not have [such] eyes,	– אֲבָל אֲנַחְנוּ – שְׂאִין לָנוּ עֵינִים
it is forbidden for us to create anything new—	אֲסוּר לָנוּ לַחֲדוֹשׁ שׁוּם דָּבָר וּמִנְהָג
only to follow the path of the Shulchan Aruch	רַק לִילֹךְ בְּדַרְךְ הַשְּׁלַחַן עֲרוּךְ
and in the footsteps of the holy early tzaddikim.	וּבַעֲקֵבֵי הַצַּדִּיקִים הַקְּדוּמִיִּם

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[NOTE: Summary

Reb Pinchas of Koretz, commenting on the phrase "עיני העדה" (“the eyes of the congregation”), teaches that this refers to the great tzaddikim—those rare individuals whose spiritual sight allows them to see the hidden Divine light from one end of the world to the other. Because of their elevated vision, such tzaddikim were able to establish new practices or customs that were truly pleasing to Hashem.

However, he warns: we who lack this spiritual sight must not innovate. Without the clarity that comes from Divine vision, we risk stepping outside of God’s will. Our role is not to create but to follow—the path of halacha in the Shulchan Aruch, and the traditions established by the early, saintly tzaddikim.

This is a call for humility: spiritual leadership must be based on spiritual vision. Where that vision is absent, obedience and faithfulness are our only secure guide.

Practical Takeaway

In an age of opinions and spiritual creativity, this teaching reminds us: not every innovation is sacred. Unless one sees with holy eyes, one must tread carefully. If you are not a tzaddik who sees from one end of the world to the other—then follow those who did.

Don’t build new altars. Build upon the solid ground already laid by the great sages before us. Walking in the footsteps of the righteous, with humility and care, is itself a path of greatness. **END NOTE]**

Siman #329

<p>In the haftarah: “And Joshua sent two men as spies secretly... and they came to the house of a harlot woman and lay there. And it was told to the king of Jericho, saying: Behold, men have come here from the children of Israel...” (Joshua 2:1–2).</p>	<p>בהפטרה: וישלח יהושע וגו' שנים אנשים מרגלים תרש וגו' ויבאו בית אשה זונה וישכבו שמה. ויאמר למלך יריחו לאמר הנה אנשים באו הנה מבני (ישׂראל וגו' (יהושע ב, א–ב</p>
<p>From the mouth of Rabbi Nosson Ne'eman of our community [Bershad],</p>	<p>[מפי רבי נתן נטעו נאמן דקהלתנו [ברשד</p>
<p>who heard from the Rav, Rabbi Shlomo of Heisin,</p>	<p>ששמע מפי הרב רבי שלמה [מהיסין] ז"ל</p>
<p>who told it to Rabbi Yaakov Shimon z”l, son of the Rav z”l—</p>	<p>— שאמר לרב רבי יעקב שמעון ז"ל בן הרב ז"ל</p>
<p>that the difficulty is: how did they know, already that night, that spies had come?</p>	<p>?דקשה: איך ידעו תיכף בלילה שכאו לרגל</p>
<p>After all, they came quietly, like potters, as Rashi writes.</p>	<p>.הלא באו בשקט כמו קדרין, כמו שכתוב ברש"י</p>
<p>And he answered: It is written (Joshua 5:1),</p>	<p>:[ותירץ: דאיתא (יהושע ה, א</p>
<p>“No spirit remained in any man...”—and Rashi explains:</p>	<p>:[ולא קמה עוד רוח באיש... ופירש רש"י</p>
<p>even to lie with a woman. See there.</p>	<p>.אפלו לשכב עם אשה. עין שם</p>

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This shows that the desire was completely nullified from them.	נִמְצָא – שֶׁבִטֵּל מֵהֶם הַתַּאֲוָה לְגַמְרֵי
Therefore, when it was heard that some men had come to the house of the harlot,	– וְכִיִּוֵּן שֶׁשָּׁמְעוּ שֶׁבָּאוּ אַנְשִׁים לְבֵית הַזֹּזְנָה
they said in their hearts: Who could still have any desire at all?	?אֵמְרוּ בְלִבָּם: מִי הוּא זֶה שֶׁיֵּשׁ לוֹ עוֹד תַּאֲוָה בְּכֻלָּל
It must be they are from the Children of Israel,	,עַל כְּרַחֲמֵי – הֵם מִבְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל
and they have come as spies. Understand this well.	וְלָרְגֹל בָּאוּ. וְדו"ק
And Rabbi Yaakov Shimon z"l told him that he also heard this teaching	וְאָמַר לוֹ הֵרֵב רַבִּי יַעֲקֹב שֶׁמְעוֹן ז"ל – שֶׁגַּם הוּא
from his father, the Rav z"l.	שָׁמַע דְּבַר זֶה מֵאָבִיו הֵרֵב ז"ל

[NOTE: Summary

The verse describes how Joshua sent two men to spy on Jericho, and they entered the house of Rahav, a known harlot. The king of Jericho is informed *that very night* that Israelite spies have come. A puzzling question arises: how did the people of Jericho know so quickly who they were, especially since the spies came secretly “like potters,” as Rashi explains?

Reb Shlomo of Heisin (as transmitted by Reb Yaakov Shimon and his father) offers a striking interpretation. The Talmud (Sotah 36b) says that after hearing of Israel’s miracles, the fear of them was so overwhelming that “no spirit remained in any man”—even their natural desires were extinguished.

So when it became known that two men had entered the house of a harlot—despite the paralyzing fear that gripped the land—people instinctively knew: these are not Canaanites. No one from among us could act so boldly. These men must be from Israel, and they must be spies.

The act of going to Rahav’s house—understood on the surface as something compromising—is actually what preserved their cover, while paradoxically revealing their identity through their very difference. Their *presence* was too holy, too unnatural, too fearless not to be noticed.

Practical Takeaway

Sometimes holiness reveals itself not through what is said or done, but through what others intuitively sense. The presence of true sanctity disturbs spiritual apathy. Even in silence, a tzaddik’s presence shifts the atmosphere.

Likewise, fear can be so dominant in a society that anyone who moves with courage stands out instantly. But courage born from emunah (faith) has a particular signature: it makes no noise, but it shakes the world.

Ask yourself: Do your movements reflect sacred fearlessness or social conformity? Do you live in such a way that your spiritual difference is felt, even when unspoken?

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When you walk with Hashem, you may be hidden from the eye—but never from the soul.

Chassidic Story

Reb Pinchas of Koretz once hosted a mysterious visitor on a stormy night. The man was quiet, unassuming, barely speaking a word. After he left, the Rebbe's students asked, "Who was he?"

Reb Pinchas smiled and said, "Did you not feel the change in the room? The air became clearer, the darkness thinner. He was one of those who doesn't need to speak to be heard."

Then he added, "Like the spies of Yehoshua—when holiness walks quietly, even the walls recognize it."

Source: Oral tradition from Reb Shlomo of Heisin via Reb Yaakov Shimon, as recorded in the teachings of Reb Pinchas of Koretz. **END NOTE]**