



# BEIT MIDRASH ZICHRON DOV TORONTO TORAH

שְׁלַח-לךְ SHLACH

Vol. 17 Num. 24 (#681) · 27 Sivan 5786 / June 12, 2026

Candle lighting: 8:41 pm  Havdallah: 9:50pm (50 minutes after שקיעה)

If you would like to sponsor an issue of  
Toronto Torah, please contact Esther Rutledge at:  
[info@torontotorah.com](mailto:info@torontotorah.com)

Please join us this Shabbat at our Shabbaton at  
Shaarei Shomayim!  
**Details in flyer on the back page**



**פרשה** RABBI YEHUDA MANN, ROSH BEIT MIDRASH

## The Blessing of the Land of Israel

I recently came across a fascinating fact. The American Declaration of Independence refers to the Divine no fewer than four times, invoking “Nature’s G-d,” a “Creator,” and “Divine Providence.” Surprisingly, Israel’s Declaration of Independence is far less explicit.

When Israel’s founding document was being drafted, a heated debate erupted over whether G-d’s name should be mentioned. The compromise was the phrase Tzur Yisrael—the “Rock of Israel.” Some understood it as a reference to the strength and resilience of the Jewish people, while others saw it as a direct reference to Hashem Himself.

One of the signatories, however, was not satisfied with ambiguity. Before signing his name, Rabbi Yehuda Leib Maimon (Fischman) quietly added four letters: בְּעֶזְרֵה—“With the help of G-d.” In this simple yet profound gesture, Hashem’s name found its place in Israel’s Declaration of Independence.

Rabbi Maimon’s connection to Eretz Yisrael was not merely ideological—it was deeply personal. When he made aliyah in 1908, he grappled with a remarkable halachic question: Should a Jew recite a blessing upon fulfilling the mitzvah of settling the Land of Israel for the first time?

After all, we recite blessings before performing mitzvot. Why not before fulfilling one of the greatest mitzvot of all?

In his writings, Rabbi Maimon suggested several reasons why no such blessing is recited. One particularly powerful explanation stands out.

Generally, we do not recite a blessing over mitzvot that human reason itself would obligate. Honoring parents, caring for the needy, and comforting mourners are mitzvot, but they are also basic expressions of decency, gratitude, and humanity.

Perhaps, Rabbi Maimon suggests, settling Eretz Yisrael belongs in the same category.

Think of the devotion people feel toward their countries. Nathan Hale famously declared, “I only regret that I have but one life to lose for my country.” If human beings naturally feel such loyalty and love for the lands of their birth, how much more should we feel toward Eretz Yisrael—the land promised to Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov; the home of the Beit HaMikdash; the setting of our prophets and kings; and the place where Jewish life and Torah reach their fullest expression.

Do we really need a commandment to teach us to love our homeland?

This idea may shed light on a famous question regarding this week’s parashah, Shelach. Why did Moshe send spies to scout the Land? If Hashem had already promised victory, what purpose did reconnaissance serve?

No spies were sent before leaving Egypt or before battling Amalek.

Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik offers a beautiful answer. The Gemara teaches that before marriage, a person should see his future spouse so that genuine love and appreciation can develop. Moshe wanted the Jewish people to experience something similar.

The spies were not sent primarily to gather military intelligence. They were sent to witness the beauty, promise, and potential of the Land. They were meant to return inspired, helping the nation fall in love with Eretz Yisrael before entering it.

Love cannot simply be commanded; it must be cultivated.

That is the essence of our relationship with Eretz Yisrael. It is not merely a place to live, nor only a mitzvah to fulfill. It is our home. Like any meaningful relationship, it requires commitment, investment, sacrifice, and love. The deeper our attachment, the stronger our connection becomes.

May we merit to strengthen our bond with Eretz Yisrael, to appreciate its holiness, beauty, and unique role in our destiny, and to see the day when the Jewish people dwell there in peace, prosperity, and unity—in the land that has always been our true home



## הַתּוֹרָה כְּפִסְתּוֹ וְאַתָּה מְגַלָּה אוֹתוֹ?

In Parashat Shelach the Torah tells us a short and difficult story:

“וַיְהִי בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּמִדְבָּר, וַיִּמְצְאוּ אִישׁ מִקְשֵׁשׁ עֲצִים בְּיוֹם הַשַּׁבָּת.”

A man from Israel desecrates Shabbat in the desert. He is brought before Moshe and Aharon, and in the end, he is punished with death. The Gemara in Masechet Shabbat asks what exactly was the melachah he did. There are different opinions: he carried in the public domain, detached, or gathered. But it is clear that the sin was a public desecration of Shabbat.

On the other hand, Tosafot in Bava Batra bring a Midrash that presents the act in a more complex way: “אמר במדרש דלשם שמים נתכוין... עמד וחילל” שבת כדי שיהרג ויראו אחרים.

According to the Midrash, after the sin of the spies there was a dangerous thought: if we were punished not to enter the Land, perhaps the Torah no longer obligates us. The mekoshesh wanted to show, through the punishment he would receive,

that even after the sin and the decree, the Jewish people are still obligated in Torah and mitzvot.

The Netziv, in Ha'amek Davar, adds that the verse says “ויראו” “they found,” and not “ויראו,” “they saw,” because Moshe appointed guards. Why was that necessary?

“וטעם שהעמיד הוא משום שהיה הדור פרוץ בחילול שבת... שחללו שבת מאד במדבר.”

There was a public problem of Shabbat desecration. The question is whether the mekoshesh was part of the problem, or whether he was actually trying to correct it.

One detail stands out: the Torah does not tell us who he was. He remains only “a man.” Who was he?

The Gemara says in the name of Rabbi Akiva: “מקושש זה צלפחד.”

The mekoshesh was Tzelofchad.

But Rabbi Yehuda ben Beteira responds:

“אעקיבא, בין כך ובין כך אתה עתיד ליתן את הדין. אם כדברך, התורה כיסתו ואתה מגלה אותו. ואם לאו, אתה מוציא לעז על אותו צדיק.”

Akiva, if you are correct, the Torah covered him and you are revealing him. And if you are not correct, you are spreading a negative report about that righteous man.

This is a very important question in our own time. In the world of journalism, news, social media, WhatsApp groups, and instant publications.

The Torah covered his name, perhaps to teach us that it is possible to speak about the sin, about the danger, and about the public problem, without turning the person himself into a headline.

But on the other hand, there are cases where if things are not publicized, people will be harmed. Sometimes the public needs to know in order to be careful. Sometimes there is a need to expose corruption, danger, abuse of power, or behavior that harms others. In such cases, silence is not modesty, but negligence.



## When Redemption Comes Through Imperfect Hands

Based on Kima Kima by Rav Chaim Drukman

Can Hashem bring national salvation through a leader whose personal life and religious conduct are deeply flawed? If a moment looks like part of the unfolding of Geulah, should we expect the people who carry it to be tzaddikim, or does Tanach itself prepare us for a more complicated reality?

One of the clearest examples is Yeravam ben Yoash, the king of Israel also known as Yeravam II. Sefer Melachim describes him in harsh terms: “ויעש” “הרע בעיני ד, לא סר מכל חטאות ירבעם בן נבט אשר החטיא את ישראל” “He did what was evil in the eyes of Hashem; he did not depart from all the sins of Yeravam ben Nevat, who caused Israel to sin” (Melachim II 14:24). The Pasuk gives no attempt to soften his spiritual failure. Yeravam ben Yoash continued the corrupt religious path of the Northern Kingdom.

Yet the very next Pasuk describes one of the greatest national restorations in the history of Malchut Yisrael: “הוא השיב את גבול ישראל מלבוא חמת עד ים” “He restored the border of Israel from Levo Chamat until the Sea of the Aravah” (Melachim II 14:25). The same king who is condemned for his sins is also the king through whom Israel's borders are restored. The Navi places these two facts side by side, because both are true.

The Pasuk then explains why Hashem brought this salvation: “כי ראה ד את עני ישראל מרה מאד... ויושיעם ביד ירבעם בן יואש” “For Hashem saw the affliction of Israel, that it was very bitter... and He saved them through Yeravam ben Yoash” (Melachim II 14:26-27). Radak explains that this salvation did not come because the people had done teshuvah, but because Hashem saw their suffering and had mercy on them. The measure at work was not national worthiness. It was rachamim.

This is already a major principle. Hashem's compassion for Klal Yisrael is not limited to the moments when we deserve it. Sometimes the pain of the nation itself becomes the reason for salvation, even when the spiritual condition of the people remains broken. That does not make the sins acceptable, and it does

not turn flawed leaders into tzaddikim. It means that the Ribbono Shel Olam is not trapped inside the calculations that we would have made.

Chazal go further. Tanna Devei Eliyahu teaches that what was not given into the hands of Yehoshua bin Nun or David HaMelech was given into the hands of Yeravam ben Yoash. He restored territory that even the greatest leaders of Israel had not restored. Chazal ask the obvious question: what merit did Yeravam have? Was he not an idol worshipper? Their answer is precise. He did not accept lashon hara about Amos HaNavi.

Amaziah, the priest of Beit El, accused Amos of conspiring against the king. Yeravam could have treated Amos as a rebel and silenced him. Instead, he refused to accept the accusation. According to Chazal, that act gave him the merit through which Hashem restored the borders of Israel by his hand.

This is not a simple story about a righteous king. It is a story about a flawed king, a suffering nation, and a hidden cheshbon of Shamayim. A person may be guilty of serious sins and still have one merit that Heaven weighs with enormous significance. A generation may be spiritually weak and still be the object of Hashem's rachamim. A national restoration may come through hands that we would not have chosen.

That does not allow us to confuse darkness with light. Yeravam remains Yeravam. His sins remain sins. Yet Tanach teaches us that Geulah does not always arrive dressed in the form we expected. Sometimes Hashem advances His promise to Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov through people whose flaws are obvious, because the covenant with Klal Yisrael is deeper than the worthiness of any one generation.

The question is not whether everything looks complete. It does not. The question is whether we have the humility to recognize that Hashem can begin to restore His people even through imperfect hands.



## Donating to Restore Yeshivot and Synagogues Destroyed During the Holocaust

**Question:** I recently returned from a powerful trip to Poland. On one of our first days, we were taken to what appeared to be an ordinary apartment building. To my shock, I learned that it had once been a synagogue. In the attic, people now hang their laundry, and on the eastern wall the words “How awesome is this place” are still visible. It was heartbreaking to see a former house of prayer used in such a degrading way.

This made me wonder: Is there a halachic obligation to invest money and effort into reclaiming and restoring synagogues and yeshivot that were destroyed or repurposed during the Holocaust?

**Answer:** This is a profound and important question. Across Eastern Europe, many once-famous centers of Torah and prayer have been transformed into secular buildings. The historic Mir Yeshiva building in Belarus has served as a post office and the famed Volozhin Yeshiva was once used as a sausage factory.

Does Jewish law require us to reclaim such places in order to preserve their sanctity?

The *Shulchan Aruch* (Orach Chaim 151:1) rules that a synagogue and study hall must always be treated with respect. One may not engage there in frivolous conversation, eating, drinking, or other inappropriate activities. The *Piskei Teshuvot* cites strong passages from the Zohar emphasizing the importance of honoring a synagogue, even suggesting that disrespect toward it contributes to the prolongation of exile.

Furthermore, the *Shulchan Aruch* (151:10) teaches that the obligation to honor a synagogue remains even after it has fallen into ruin: “Just as they are treated with respect when inhabited, so too must they be treated with respect when desolate.”

At first glance, this would seem to mean that converting a synagogue into a laundry area or a sausage factory is a serious desecration, and that we should do everything possible to prevent such misuse.

However, later authorities offer important qualifications.

The Tashbetz, based on earlier opinions of the Baal HaMaor and Ramban, explains that the sanctity of a synagogue remains

only when it fell into ruin naturally. If hostile forces seized and desecrated it, its original sanctity may no longer remain.

Additionally, some Rishonim compare an abandoned synagogue that can never realistically be rebuilt to ritual objects such as a sukkah, lulav, or tzitzit after their mitzvah has been fulfilled. Once their purpose is permanently over, their sanctity ceases.

Based on these principles, many contemporary authorities conclude that synagogues and yeshivot throughout Europe that were destroyed and desecrated during the Holocaust, and for which no Jewish community remains to rebuild or use them, no longer create a halachic obligation to redeem or restore them.

In Summary: While Jewish law normally requires us to honor a synagogue both in its glory and in its ruin, many halachic authorities rule that buildings destroyed and desecrated by enemies, with no remaining Jewish community to restore them, are an exception. Therefore, despite the pain we feel when witnessing their current condition, there is generally no halachic obligation to invest resources in reclaiming them today.



## Tourists, Not Spies

This week we read Parashat Shelach, which recounts one of the most painful episodes in the history of the Jewish people: the sin of the spies. Yet from the plain meaning of the verses, it appears that Hashem never commanded Moshe to send “spies” at all. Instead, He says: “Send for yourself men, and let them tour the Land of Canaan” - שְׁלַח לְךָ אֲנָשִׁים - (במדבר יג, ב') וְיִתְּרוּ אֶת אֶרֶץ כְּנָעַן”

The Torah deliberately uses the word veyaturu - “to tour” or “to explore” - rather than “to spy.” A tourist comes to appreciate, discover, and experience a place. A spy comes to search for weaknesses, dangers, and vulnerabilities. It seems that Hashem's intention was for the representatives of the tribes to travel through the Promised Land, witness its beauty and abundance, and return with excitement and confidence before the nation's entry into the Land.

The nature of their journey supports this understanding. The Torah tells us that they traveled throughout the country for forty days, from the southern regions to the far north. Covering such a distance in that period would have required moving openly along established routes, much like merchants or travelers. Furthermore, twelve spies would make little sense as a covert operation. A group that large would immediately attract attention. But twelve tribal leaders traveling openly as an official delegation is entirely understandable.

This is where the root of the sin emerges. Hashem sent them as explorers; they chose to act as spies. They were asked to gather information, but they returned with interpretations. Their mission was to report what they saw, yet instead they reached conclusions and declared: “We cannot go up against the people, for they are stronger than we are” - “לא נוכל לעלות אל העם כי חזק הוא ממנו” (במדבר יג, א') - “לא”.

This itself was the sin. They transformed a mission of appreciation into a mission of doubt.

Standing in contrast were Yehoshua bin Nun and Kalev ben Yefuneh. They saw the same fortified cities, the same giants, and the same challenges. Yet they understood that the crucial question was not merely what they saw, but how they chose to see it. Therefore they proclaimed: “The Land is exceedingly good” - טוֹבָה הָאֶרֶץ מְאֹד מְאֹד” - (במדבר יד, ז')

The lesson remains relevant today. One can look at the Land of Israel through the eyes of a spy, focusing only on difficulties and dangers. Or one can look through the eyes of Yehoshua and Kalev, with faith and confidence in Hashem's promise. When viewed through that lens, even amidst challenges, the eternal truth of the Land becomes clear: “The Land is exceedingly good.”



1. How many Meraglim did Moshe send?
2. How many people did it take to carry the grapes?
3. What happened to those who attempted to go up to the land on their own?
4. Which tribe was not represented among the spies?
5. What samples from the land did the spies bring back with them?

Answers:

1. Moshe sent 12 Meraglim.
2. Eight people.
3. They were killed by the Amalekites and Caananites.
4. Shevet Levi were the only tribe not sent as spies.
5. The spies brought back grapes, pomegranate, and fig.

בס"ד





Beit Midrash Zichron Dov  
and Shaarei Shomayim

# Shabbaton

## PARASHAT SHELACH

A Shabbat of Learning, Connection & Inspiration

### JUNE 12-13

|                     |                                                                                                                                      |                                                                                       |
|---------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| EREV<br>SHABBAT     | <b>Mr. Jonathan Parker</b><br><i>Principal, BAS</i>                                                                                  |  |
| MORNING<br>DRASHAS  | <b>MAIN MINYAN &amp; 9:30 MINYAN</b><br><b>Rabbi Ami Yunger</b><br><i>COO, Mizrachi Canada</i>                                       |  |
| MORNING<br>DRASHAS  | <b>HASHKAMA MINYAN &amp;<br/>DOWNSTAIRS MINYAN</b><br><b>Rabbi Ezer Diena</b><br><i>Maggid Shiur</i>                                 |  |
| PRE-MINCHA<br>SHIUR | <b>The Power of Community:<br/>A Personal Story Through the Lens of<br/>Parashat Shelach</b><br><b>Aviya Ezra</b><br><i>Shlichah</i> |  |
| SEUDA<br>SHLISHIT   | <b>Rabbi Ori Ezra</b><br><i>Shaliach</i>                                                                                             |  |

## YOUR BEIT MIDRASH

**Rosh Beit Midrash**  
 Rabbi Yehuda Mann  
[ymann@torontotorah.com](mailto:ymann@torontotorah.com)

**Maggidei Shiur** Rabbi Ezer Diena · Rabbi Ori Ezra · Mrs. Aviya Ezra · Rabbi Josh Gutenberg ·  
 Rabbi Shaanan Scherer · Rabbi Chaim Singer · Mrs. Rifka Sonenberg ·  
 Rabbi Shmaya Hendel · Rabbi Aviad Pituchay-Chotam ·  
 Rabbi Jeff Turtel · Rabbi Ami Yunger