

# Shelach: Aliyah Alo Naale

- Nisson Shulman.

Shelach is the portion of love of the land of Israel

Shlach: Aliyah - Alo Na'aleh

This is the Shabbat of aliyah, since the word is used for the first time, and in its proper context: Alo naale veyarashnu ota.

1. Shelach is the portion of love of the land of Israel. To anyone reading the story of the Meraglim even superficially, it is obviously the lesson of those who love Israel and their reward, and those who disparaged the land of Israel and their punishment.

2. Rav Mendel of Kotzk declared, that Moshe's instruction, to see if the land was good or bad, fat or lean, could not mean that Moshe requested a status report of the land's condition. Surely Moshe knew that God promised this land, and knew that it was flowing with milk and honey, as God had promised. And if it was not at present in such a beautiful state, surely Moshe realized the potential of a land promised by God! No, his instructions must be read differently. He meant: Go and see, if the land is good, then bring that report; and even if it is not, report its goodness! If the land is fat and fruitful – well and good. And even if it is not, it will become so, and therefore that is the report you shall bring! Hatova hi, even if in fact raah! Hashemena hi, even if in fact, raza!

3. Rav Yaakov Emden, called Yavetz, was one of the great men of our people. He would today be described as a kanai, zealot personified. As the foe of Rabbi Yonathan Eibeshutz, he was a party to one of the most tragic and well-known controversies in Jewish life. But when we examine zeal of yesterday and compare it with zeal of today, it is very revealing.

4. For instance: In his autobiography he is harder on himself and on his own sins than upon others. Today's "Kanai" is likely to be just the reverse.

5. He had a great sense of history and a critical mind. And he had a great inclination for science. He studied German on his own, getting a servant to trace the letters for him at first, and then became proficient and learned in everything he could learn about the world, the people who inhabit it, science, manners, morals, opinions, in short, all wisdom. He learned to read and understand Dutch and Latin. He studied natural science, including astronomy, biology, medicine, politics, history, literature, philosophy, geography and mathematics.

6. Now of all the pronouncements made by Rabbi Emden, the most interesting for us is his declaration about the word we have in our portion, and the concept it represents, aliyah to Israel. Today aliyah is relatively easy. If there are impediments, they are largely economic, and also family connections. We remember in our own time when it was much harder to go to Israel to live. But however hard for us, it was infinitely harder in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Yet, even in that difficult time, listen to the words of Rabbi Yaakov Emden, Yavetz;

“Do not think to settle permanently outside Israel God forbid... for that was the sin of our fathers which caused them to weep during the night of the Meraglim's return, and for generations after... For they despised the beautiful land. And that was for us the cause of our long, bitter exile, where we were constantly at the mercy of our oppressors. (In our time) we have altogether forgotten about settling in Israel. Not one in a thousand awakens himself to inherit and settle Israel, and perhaps it is closer to one in a country, two in a generation.

No one seeks her love, her peace, her good, no man yearns to see her, since we live in exile as it appears to us in tranquility, as if we have found a substitute Israel, an ersatz Jerusalem. That is why all of our troubles have come upon us....

I have dwelled upon this matter at length, because of the honor of our Holy Land, now so sad and forlorn. "It is for the sake of Zion that I have now come, nor will I be still; until her righteousness shall burst forth like a great light. For Jerusalem I will not be quiet, to rebuild her I will not be still." A voice calls out, "Remove every obstacle before my nation, to hurry them back to the Land without delay,..."

And actually it is a great puzzle. Behold, Jews everywhere seek humrot, seek to perform all commandments according to the strictest interpretation. They are most meticulous in the details of the mitzvot. They expend a great deal of money and effort and time to do the mitzvot in the best possible way. Why then are they so lazy and uncaring about this beloved mitzvah which is the foundation of the whole Torah?

I know leaving home is a great step to take, but the reward is worth the effort. And if a person criticizes me for not practicing what I preach, you must know that I am here in Galut against my will. The roads are impassable due to war, my children are young.... A man or woman who decides they will definitely go, as soon as it becomes possible, however, will be helped by the Lord to carry out his resolve, and will be considered as if he is following out the mitzvah even before he has had the chance to actually begin to do so.”

7. This sage speaks to our time, when we consider the Torah portion from which comes the term, the idea, and the command of aliyah. It is such words that cause us to declare, that if aliyah is in many of our households an event not yet current, we can and indeed must cause it to become a current, a very current event, then the Lord will bless us with all manner of blessing, and through us will Israel be blessed, Ureey betuv Yerushalayim kol yemey hayecha.