

NACH NUGGETS

Sefer Yehoshua Perek 2:12 through Perek 3:13

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Vol. 2

Welcome everyone to our second installment of Nach Nuggets. This week we covered Sefer Yehoshua Perek 2 starting from pasuk 12 and going up to and including Perek 3 Pasuk 13

As we briefly mentioned last week, part of this week's learning is the haftorah for Parshas Shelach. We'll try to delve into the connection between our learning and the parshah that it is connected to.

As this is our first haftorah that we will explore, let's first take a step back and look into the origins and possible reasons for the custom of reading a portion of Navi along with the week's parshah. The origins of this minhag are somewhat vague, but it is brought down in several places. We do know that the minhag goes back to at least the times of the Gemarah. The Gemarah in Megillah daf 29b discusses what haftorah should be read when we read Parshas Shekalim.

ר"ח אדר שחל להיות בשבת קורין בפרשת שקלים ומפטירין ביהודע הכהן בשלמא למ"ד כי תשא היינו דמפטירין ביהודע הכהן דדמי ליה דכתיב (מלכים ב יב, ה) כסף נפשות ערכו

The Gemarah seems to imply that the theme of the Haftorah should be similar to the Parsha being read. In the case of the Gemarah, the fact that כסף נפשות ערכו mentioned in the haftorah is similar to Parshas Ki Sisa that discusses כופר נפשו. The Gemarah emphasizes that the haftorah should be, in some way, similar to the parsha. This is true of all the haftoros from parshas Bereishis through parshas Pinchas. As Tosfos in Megilah daf 31b points out, beginning with the period of the "Three Weeks" prior to Tishah B'av and continuing for seven weeks from after Tishah B'av until Rosh Hashanah, the haftoros, independent of their respective parshos, concentrate instead on the themes of suffering and consolation, reflective of the pre and post Tishah B'av moods.

But what is the origin of the minhag of reading the Haftorah? Why was it enacted?

The most common explanation is the one brought down by the Avudraham. He explains that in 168 BCE, when the Jews were under the rule of King Antiochus (of Chanukah infamy), they were forbidden to read from the Torah. The decree, however, was limited to the Five Books of the Torah, so the chachamim instituted that a section of Neviim be read instead. This explains why the haftorah was usually an idea that was related to the Torah reading that should have been read that week. This custom stuck even after it became safe to read from the Torah again. There are at least two other theories as to the origin of the haftarah found in the writings of the Rishonim. According to Rabbeinu Tam, the reading of the haftarah is attributed to Ezra Hasofer. As is well known, Ezra is responsible for instituting many decrees, including the reading of the Torah on Shabbos afternoons (Minchah) and the reading on Mondays and Thursdays of three

aliyos. Though Rabbeinu Tam does not explain the rationale behind Ezra's decree, it would seem that Ezra wished to emphasize the unity of Torah and Neviim and therefore appended various prophetic texts to the Torah portion.

The Sefer HaPardes says that the reading of the haftarah is based on an old abandoned practice. In earlier times, upon the completion of the weekday morning service, time was set aside for the study of Mikrah (Tanach), Mishnah and Gemara. Portions of the Neviim were also studied. In later times, when people were pressured to devote more time to earning a living, the practice was abandoned. Subsequently, they fulfilled their Torah and Kesuvim "quota" with the recital of Shema and Pesukei deZimra respectively, and the Mishnah and Gemara requirement with the readings of various texts found in the Karbanot section of the siddur, all of which are part of the Shacharis service. But what of Neviim? To satisfy this requirement, the custom of reciting two pesukim from Sefer Yeshaya (59:20-21), that deal with the future redemption, and the Torah covenant, was established. These pesukim eventually became the beginning of the tefilah that we now know as Uva leTzion. However, the original practice of reading a selection from the Neviim on Shabbos and Yom Tov, when people are not rushing to work, was retained.

With all that being said, How does our learning from this week relate to Parshas Shelach? The answer is somewhat obvious in our case. Parshas Shelach contains in it the original (ultimately devastating) story of the meraglim (spies). As we saw in our learning this week, the spies that Yehoshua sent out yielded a far better outcome. Yehoshua, of course, was one of the original spies sent out by Moshe Rabbeinu. Thus he was keenly aware of the consequences of what could happen if this mission was not executed properly. Armed with this knowledge, almost 40 years later he implemented a *similar* plan. But this time he learned from the mistakes of the original spies. There was a different attitude this time. Yehoshua sent spies to ascertain the mood of the people of the land. They did not go to scout out the land. They did not go to report on the size or physical attributes of the land. They went only to see if the timing was right based on the mood of the people. Yehoshua was sending them only for this. The fact that they would enter the land was a foregone conclusion. There was a trust in Hashem that this was happening. It wasn't a matter of "if", it was a matter of "when". To educate themselves, the spies traveled to Rachav. Since people from all over the land went to visit Rachav, she was uniquely qualified to measure up the mood of the people. Once Rachav reported that there was fear in the hearts of the people due to the miracles that Hashem performed for the Bnei Yisroel, the spies were able to report back, with confidence, that the time had come to mount their attack.

The Haftarah ends off with the spies telling Yehoshua:

כִּי־נָתַן ה' בְּיָדֵנוּ אֶת־כָּל־הָאָרֶץ וְגַם־נַמְגְּוּ כָּל־יֹשְׁבֵי הָאָרֶץ מִפְּנֵינוּ

"Hashem has delivered the whole land into our power; in fact, all the inhabitants of the land are quaking before us."

As we explained before, this mission was different than the one of the original spies. The mission of the original spies was:

וּרְאִיתֶם אֶת־הָאָרֶץ מִה־הוּא וְאֶת־הָעָם הַיֹּשֵׁב עָלֶיהָ הֲחֹזֵק הוּא הֲרַפָּה הֲמַעֲט הוּא אִם־רַב וּמִה־הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר־הוּא יֹשֵׁב בָּהּ הֲטוֹבָה הוּא אִם־רָעָה וּמִה־הָעָרִים אֲשֶׁר־הוּא יֹשֵׁב בָּהֶן הֲבָמְחִנִּים אִם בְּמַבְצָרִים

“...see what kind of country it is. Are the people who dwell in it strong or weak, few or many? Is the country in which they dwell good or bad? Are the towns they live in open or fortified?”

Indeed, their report conformed to Moshes instructions:

אָפּס פֿי־עַז הָעַם הַיִּשְׁבֵּב בְּאֶרֶץ וְהָעָרִים בְּצֻרֹת גְּדֹלֹת מְאֹד וְגַם־יְלֵדֵי הָעֵנָק רָאִינוּ שָׁם:

“However, the people who inhabit the country are powerful, and the cities are fortified and very large; moreover, we saw the Anakites there.”

Rav Soloveitchik explains: their sin was in one word that they chose to use in the report. אָפּס, however. Moshe did not ask them for an evaluation of Bnei Yisroel's ability to defeat the inhabitants of the land, nor did he ask for a prognosis about whether the land can be conquered. He asked for a description. The report was not a description. It was a prognosis.

In our learning this week we see the contrast between those spies and these spies. Calev - who, along with Yehoshua, was one of the original spies who tried to squash the report of the original spies - and Pinchas, were seemingly given the same mission as the original spies. However these spies never did explore the city. Almost as soon as they got there they wound up in Rachav's house where they were placed into hiding and became fugitives. What report would they possibly come back with? Rav Soloveitchik continues: No fortified wall, no giant, can counter a person's spirit. The spies were sent to find the vulnerability in the people of the land and to see if the timing was right. They returned with a report of the weakest point of the people.

פֿי־נִתְּן הַבְּיָדֵינוּ אֶת־כָּל־הָאֶרֶץ וְגַם־נִמְגְּוִי כָּל־יֹשְׁבֵי הָאֶרֶץ מִפְּנֵינוּ:

“Hashem has delivered the whole land into our power; in fact, all the inhabitants of the land are quaking before us.”

No wall or fortification, no matter how strong, could overcome the vulnerability that resulted from the low morale of the people. The battle was essentially already lost. Pinchas and Calev did not report on the physical weaknesses of the city. They reported on the defeated spirit in the hearts of the people of the land.

The original spies were so focused on the physical attributes that they didn't even realize that the spirit of the people was defeated. With this information, and with the trust in Hashem that Yehoshua had instilled in the people, Bnei Yisroel were able to confidently - and finally - enter Eretz Yisroel.

Haftoros mentioned in this weeks learning:

- 1) The haftorah for Parshas Shelach. Perek 2:1 - 24. See above for further detail.
- 2) The beginning of the haftorah for the first day of Pesach. Perek 3: 5 - 7