

Parashat Shelach Lecha, 5783, 2023:

The Greatness of Jewish Women

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Dedicated to the sacred memories of my mother, Miriam Tovah bat Aharon HaKohane, father-in-law, Levi ben Yitzhak, sister, Shulamit bat Menachem, sister-in-law, Ruchama Rivka Sondra bat Yechiel, Chana bat Shmuel, Yehonatan Binyamin ben Mordechai Meir Halevi, Tikvah bat Rivka Perel, Gittel Malka bat Moshe, Alexander Leib ben Benyamin Yosef, the *Kedoshim* of Har Nof, Pittsburgh, and Jersey City, the *refuah shlaimah* of Mordechai HaLevi ben Miriam Tovah, and the health and safety of our brothers and sisters in Israel and around the world.

At the beginning of our *parasha*, Hashem tells Moshe: “Send out for yourself men (*shelach lecha anashim*) who will scout the Land of Canaan, which I am giving to the children of Israel. You shall send one man each for his father’s tribe; each one shall be a chieftain in their midst.” (*Sefer Bamidbar* 13:2, this and the following Tanach and Rashi translations, *The Judaica Press Complete Tanach*, with my emendations) Rashi (1040-1105), basing himself on *Talmud Bavli* 34b, notes that Hashem had no interest in sending these men to *Eretz Yisrael*. Instead, he merely allowed Moshe to do so: ***shelach lecha***: “According to your own understanding. I am not commanding you, but if you wish, you may send. Since the Jews had come [to Moshe] and said, ‘Let us send men ahead of us,’ as it says, ‘All of you approached me...’” (*Sefer Devarim* 1:22)

The concluding word in the phrase, “*shelach lecha anashim*,” also needs to be carefully analyzed. After all, who else, other than the *anashim* could Moshe have sent? The answer is deceptively simple: Moshe could have sent *nashim* (women). The origin of this idea is found in the *Kli Yakar*, the celebrated 16th century Torah commentary of Rabbi Shlomo Ephraim of Luntchitz (1550-1619):

Another explanation as to why the Torah specifies “*anashim*”: Our Sages of blessed memory [*Midrash Yalkut Shimoni, Parashat Pinchas*] noted that the men despised the Land and declared: “Let us appoint a leader and return to Egypt.” (*Sefer Bamidbar* 14:4). [In contrast,] the women loved the Land and said: “Give us a permanent portion.” (27:4) Therefore, the Holy One Blessed Be He said: “According to My opinion, since I see what the future will bring, it is far better to send women that love the land for they will not speak about it in a disparaging and negative manner. But you, [Moshe], believe that these men are in fact fine and upstanding individuals (*kesharim*), and you believe that the Land is beloved to them—Go ahead and send men!” This is why when the Torah writes: “Send for yourself men,” [Rashi] interprets it as “According to your own understanding,” **as for Me however, it would have been far better to send women...** (Translation and emphasis my own)

This amazing statement of Rav Luntchitz speaks volumes about the unique character of Jewish women. Remember, it was the Jewish women who refused to give up hope amid the misery and backbreaking labor of Egypt and encouraged their husbands, in *kedushah* and *taharah* (purity), to bring another generation of Jews into the world. Moreover, it was the Jewish women who steadfastly refused to participate in the *Egel HaZahav* (the incident of the Golden Calf). Little wonder, then, that it could have been the Jewish women who would have set the stage for our grand entrance into *Eretz Yisrael*, with Moshe as *Mashiach*, if they had only been given the opportunity!

Shabbat Shalom

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*** My audio *shiurim* on the topics of *Tefilah* and *Tanach* may be found at: <http://tinyurl.com/8hsdpvd>

*** I have posted 164 of Rabbi Soloveitchik’s English language audio *shiurim* (MP3 format) spanning the years 1958-1984. Please click on the highlighted link: [The Rav](#)