

ב"ה **Torah Tidbits**

ISSUE 1663

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כ"א סיון תשפ"ו - JUNE 6TH 2026

SHELACH - שלח

AVOT 3

*Torah Tidbits celebrates
its 34th Anniversary
with this issue!*

Thank you to all of our
exceptional readers and supporters!
Chazak Ve'ematz!

**Self-Perception and the
Sin of the Spies** Page 32
Rabbi Shalom Rosner



**Towards Meaningful Tefilla:
Introduction** Page 72
Rebbetzin Zemira Ozarowski



היש-בה עץ במדבר י"ג:כ'

YERUSHALAYIM SHABBAT SHELACH ZMANIM

CANDLES 7:06 PM • EARLY 6:13 PM • HAVDALA 8:25 PM • RABBEINU TAM 8:59 PM



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A NOTE FROM TORAH TIDBITS

In May of 1992, thirty-four years ago, the first edition of Torah Tidbits was published and disseminated to a handful of people. Phil Chernofsky, who served as the educational director of the OU Israel Center, was the founding editor. He grew the one page Torah Tidbits (hence the name) over the next two and a half decades into a weekly publication that reached thousands each and every Shabbat.

OU Israel proudly produces Torah Tidbits each week, bringing inspiration, Torah wisdom, and chizuk to tens of thousands of people across the entire country and is read by thousands of readers online across the world!

As we celebrate this special anniversary of Torah Tidbits we pray to Hashem that we continue to be blessed to provide our very special and precious readership with a publication which connects us to one another and enhances each Shabbat in a joyful and most meaningful way!

Shabbat Shalom and be'sorot tovot.

Aaron Goldscheider, Editor of Torah Tidbits



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COVER PHOTO Photographed by Moishie Strickoff

My Name is Moishie Strickoff. I'm an up and coming photographer currently residing in RBS. My family and I made aliyah 6 years ago from NY and I love taking pictures of all the beauty Hashem made in Eretz Yisroel!!! This photo was taken near Beitar.

CANDLE LIGHTING AND HAVDALA TIMES



OTHER Z'MANIM



JERUSALEM

Ranges 11 days Wednesday - Shabbat
June 3 -13 | 18-28 Sivan

Earliest Tallit and Tefillin	4:35-4:33
Sunrise	5:34-5:33
Sof Zman Kriat Shema	9:05-9:06
Magen Avraham	8:22
Sof Zman Tefila	10:16-10:17
(According to the Gra and Baal HaTanaya)	
Chatzot (Halachic Noon)	12:37-12:39
Mincha Gedola (Earliest Mincha)	1:12-1:14
Plag Mincha	6:12-6:16
Sunset (Including Elevation)	7:45-7:50



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	SHELACH			KORACH		
	Candles	Early	Havdala	Candles	Early	Havdala
Yerushalayim/Maale Adumim	7:06	6:13	8:25	7:09	6:16	8:28
Aza Area (Netivot, Sderot et al)	7:23	6:15	8:26	7:26	6:18	8:30
Beit Shemesh/RBS	7:25	6:14	8:26	7:28	6:17	8:29
Gush Etzion	7:21	6:14	8:25	7:25	6:16	8:28
Raanana/Tel Mond/Herzliya/K.Saba	7:24	6:16	8:27	7:27	6:18	8:31
Modiin/Chashmonaim	7:22	6:15	8:26	7:26	6:17	8:29
Netanya	7:24	6:16	8:28	7:27	6:19	8:31
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Rehovot	7:23	6:15	8:27	7:26	6:18	8:30
Petach Tikva	7:06	6:15	8:27	7:09	6:18	8:30
Ginot Shomron	7:23	6:15	8:26	7:26	6:18	8:30
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Gush Shiloh	7:22	6:14	8:25	7:25	6:16	8:29
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Golan	7:22	6:14	8:26	7:25	6:17	8:29
Nahariya/Maalot	7:14	6:16	8:29	7:17	6:19	8:33
Afula	7:23	6:15	8:27	7:26	6:18	8:31

Rabbeinu Tam (Jerusalem): Shelach - 8:59 PM • Korach - 9:03 PM

All Times According to MyZmanim (20 mins before Sunset in most Cities; 40 mins in Yerushalayim and Petach Tikva; 30 mins in Tzfat, Nahariya, Maalot and Haifa)

Daf Yomi: Chulin 37



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DEAR TORAH TIDBITS FAMILY

RABBI AVI BERMAN
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, OU ISRAEL
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In raising our children, my wife and I have always tried to make a point of looking them in the eye and engaging with them to understand how their day really went. So often, our children expect us to read their minds, to know what is in their hearts even when they do not express a single word about it. It becomes harder still once they are away from home, whether in yeshiva, the army, or ulpana. Still, we try to speak with them every single day to find out what is going on and to make sure they had a good day. Ultimately, understanding what is happening in someone else's heart and mind is almost impossible unless they are able to open up, share, and tell us what is really going on.

Over the last two and a half years, I have found that this challenge of connection does not exist only between parents and children going through hard times. We are privileged to meet many such families through our programs for teens at risk and our programs for English speakers across Israel. This challenge exists just as much between the Jewish communities on the two sides of the Atlantic. It is almost impossible to explain to Jews living

in America what Jews in Israel are living through. What it means to have a child in the army. What it means to have a son over enemy lines. Or several children serving at once. What it feels like to stand at the funerals of your closest friends' children, or beside the beds of wounded soldiers. What it means to schlep your children and grandchildren down the stairs to a public bomb shelter or, if you are fortunate, to the mamad inside your own home, two and three times in the middle of the night. Very often, we are not communicating that message at all simply because we ourselves are still living it and have a hard time putting it into words.

I feel fortunate that through my work at OU Israel, I have the ability to meet our brothers and sisters on the other side of the Atlantic. Fewer of them are able to visit Israel these days because of the shortage of flights and the exorbitant cost of those still operating. But when I travel and sit with our brothers and sisters in New York, New Jersey, Florida, Los Angeles, Vancouver, and Toronto, I try my best to convey what life in Israel is actually like. So much of what they hear on the news feels distant from what is happening here. I tell them it is like being handed the smallest sliver of cake and believing that the sliver is the entire cake. Is it part of the cake? Of course it is. But you are missing the enormous rest of it: the incredible miracles we are witnessing, triumphs alongside challenges, the extraordinary days the Jewish people are living through, and the clear hand of HaKadosh Baruch Hu bringing us toward

**In Loving Memory of
Rabbi Dov/Barry Sidelsky ז"ל
on his first yahrzeit**

**Sadly missed by
his wife Naomi and daughters
Michal Avior, Ariella Sidelsky Alcalay,
Lea Plotkin and their families**

the *geula sheleima* very soon. We are, in many ways, writing the next megilla of HaKadosh Baruch Hu. I know for certain that the stories that have come out of the last few years will be repeated by future generations.

And the truth is that our brothers and sisters overseas do try to feel what we are living through, each in their own way, and they are doing whatever they can to help. There is no denying that the numbers tell a hard story and that donations have dropped, the number of missions have dropped, in some cases dramatically. Yet they continue to send their support and stand with us through these unique days.

This past weekend, I once again had the privilege of marching in the Israel Day Parade up Fifth Avenue in Manhattan alongside so many Jews and non-Jews who had come from all over North America. Knesset Speaker Amir Ohana, who led a large delegation of Knesset members from both the coalition and the opposition, shared a beautiful thought with our OU Executive Vice President, Rabbi Dr. Josh Joseph. He explained that for as long as anyone could remember, the sitting mayor of New York had always walked in the Israel Day Parade and that the moment he realized this would not be the case this year, he decided he simply had to be there himself. He brought as many members of Knesset and ministers as he could so that we would all be marching together. There was something deeply moving about Israeli and American public leaders walking shoulder to shoulder. Moshe Lion, the mayor of Yerushalayim, came as well, together with a number of ministers.

Because so many people were in New York for the parade, the whole weekend filled up with gatherings and conferences. There was a Thursday night event with the mayor of



Yerushalayim centered on real estate projects across the city, the Arutz Sheva conference at Young Israel of Kew Gardens on Friday, where I had the zechut to speak, the Friday night dinner with Israelis at Park East Synagogue,

and the B'Sheva conference on Sunday that drew people from across the Jewish world. It was, in the best sense, a long weekend in Israel everywhere you turned, all in the most positive way. A tremendous yasher koach to everyone who made it happen.

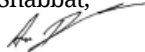
But when I stood at the parade and asked myself what the single most important thing happening there was, the answer was simple. It was the next generation. It was watching young people who spend their days seeing Israel attacked across social media come out, look around, and realize, "Look how many people support Israel. Look how many people feel what I feel." Jews of every kind, and non-Jews too, marched together with enormous pride, giant Israeli flags and floats, from Holocaust survivors to the JSU students from our Jewish Student Union clubs across the North American public school system. Many of them were standing up publicly, some for the first time, to say that they are proud to support

Israel, proud to support our IDF soldiers, and proud to support the good and true values that Israel tries to bring to this world.

Seeing that next generation with fire in their eyes, dancing in the streets, proud and happy to be Jewish, is something I will carry with me. B'ezrat Hashem, we should continue to watch our next generation grow up with the truth, drawing inspiration from Israel and standing up for Israel.

I daven that just as we try to listen to our children's hearts, the Jewish people, both in Israel and in the Diaspora, take the time to truly hear one another and understand what each side is feeling & experiencing. And B'ezrat Hashem, *k'ish echad b'lev echad*, may we be zocheh to see the *binyan beit hamikdash* very soon.

Wishing you all an uplifting and inspiring Shabbat,



Rabbi Avi Berman

Executive Director, OU Israel

aberman@ouisrael.org

**In loving memory of
our parents, grandparents
and great-grandparents**

Elaine Zimmerman a"h
עלקה ג'אנה
בת חיים שלום הכהן ע"ה
נפטרה ט"ז סיון תשע"ג
On her 13th yahrzeit

Dr Charles Cohen z"l
ישעיה יצחק
בן מנדל אריה הלוי ז"ל
נפטר י"ד סיון תשע"ו
On his 10th yahrzeit

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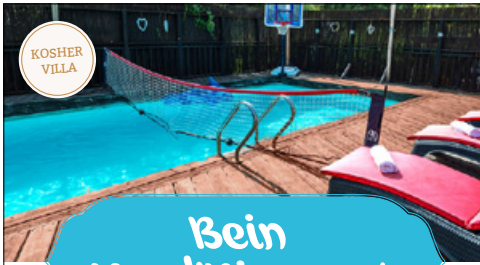
Business and Professionals Network Launch

Earlier this month, OU Israel launched the Business and Professionals Network, a new initiative bringing together Anglo business people in Israel for Torah learning and networking opportunities. The launch event at the Acosta TLV brought together over 60 business professionals, with plans to expand into additional industries and fields.

The evening featured a dialogue between Jeremy Lustman, OU Israel Board Member and Managing Partner at DLA Piper in Tel Aviv, and Michael Eisenberg, founder of Aleph venture capital firm, discussing Israel's economy, the role of olim, and Torah values of unity and compassion.

The event brought together veteran industry leaders and younger professionals seeking professional connections and spiritual growth, highlighting the growing Anglo Orthodox professional community in Israel.

Each week, we share one OU Israel initiative empowering lives and communities in our homeland, supporting English-speaking *Olim* in their *klita* and supporting Israel's most vulnerable teens to rebuild trust, confidence, and a future.



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ALIYA-BY-ALIYA SEDRA SUMMARY

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PARSHAT SHELACH



1ST ALIYA (BAMIDBAR 13:1-20)

Moshe is instructed to send leaders, 1 per tribe, to tour the Land. Their names are listed. They are to travel from the Negev to the mountainous area. To see the land, the people, the cities and the fertility; assess them and bring back produce.

Rashi says that Moshe was given the discretion to send spies. He was not ordered to do so. It was his choice. Given the bad outcome, in retrospect it seems like a bad error in judgement. Why then did he send them? What was he thinking?

Sending the spies is the first tangible step in the march to the Land. Entering the Land is going to be messy business. It means conquering through war. Some will want to do that. Some will not.

And knowing he is facing this contentious issue Moshe must have been spooked by the multiple conflicts at the end of last week's Parsha. The people are a cantankerous lot. Complaining. Dissatisfied. Moshe must have been a bit skittish after all those complaints. If they complain about meat and about my leadership, who knows what kind of rebellion could come from the challenges of entering the Land. The opinions for and against will be fierce; we could have a civil war.

Moshe must have wondered: how can I get the people on board and avoid conflict? What strategy could avoid civil war?

I know. Enlist the support of the 12 leaders

of the tribes. If the leaders are on board, the people will feel more willing to shoulder the challenges of entering the Land. Sounds like a good idea.



2ND ALIYA (13:21-14:7)

So travel they did; entering from the south, traveling north to Hebron, where descendants of the giants lived. They gathered grapes, pomegranates and figs, returning after 40 days, reporting to Moshe, Aharon and the people, showing them the fruits. They said: it is a Land of milk and honey. The people are strong, cities heavily fortified, and we saw giants. Many nations dwell there, including Amalek. Calev interrupted: Let's go and take this Land, we can do it. The others answered: no, we can't. They slandered the Land, offering that we are grasshoppers in the eyes of the people of the Land. The people challenged Moshe and Aharon: better that we had died in Egypt or here in the desert rather than die trying to take the Land. Moshe and Aharon are despondent, Calev and Yehoshua rip their clothes. Yehoshua said: the Land is very, very good.

The spy's mission backfires. Instead of getting buy-in from the leaders, the leaders are scared. They are worried, unconvinced that the war will be successful. The leaders are scared and the people not far behind.

There are many themes running through this story. We could look at the story and try to analyze the motives of the people, what they were thinking, why they lacked faith; all important themes.

But we can also look at the story as a

paradigm. What is the story teaching us about the dynamic of Jewish history? Or of the interaction of leaders and followers. Or of the interplay of G-d and man in the entry to the Land.

One paradigm we could extract is in Moshe's decision making. And in this there is a powerful and enduring lesson. Moshe made a terrible error in judgement in sending the spies. But that is in hindsight. In real time, following a series of little rebellions from the people, he was faced with a quandary as to how to prevent a big rebellion, a civil war. Moshe felt embattled. The people complained 3 times in last week's parsha; one complaint wasn't even spelled out, then followed by dissatisfaction with the manna and wanting meat, and that followed by his very own brother and sister criticizing him.

If lack of meat makes them question Moshe's leadership, how much more so the upcoming war. Moshe desperately sought a remedy for what he saw was an impending rebellion. His decision seemed wise at the time, designed to prevent this civil war; sending spies. And it turned tragic.

The lesson to us could well be, and I say this in our current national turmoil, not meaning to take any sides: decisions that leaders have to make are, well, they are tough to get right. Moshe did what he thought was best and it turned out bad – and that is Moshe, the greatest leader we ever had. If he erred, we can be sure that leaders over the years, lesser people than Moshe, will inevitably use their best judgement and sometimes just get it wrong. It doesn't mean they are bad people. Just that they are wrong.

If Moshe can err in judgement, and we know his good intentions, then any leader can err, and will err, regardless of their good

intentions.



3RD ALIYA (14:8-25)

Yehoshua said: if G-d wants, He will bring us there. But do not rebel against Him. The people wanted to stone him. G-d said to Moshe: how long will these people annoy me, after all the miracles I have done? I will wipe them out and make you a great nation. Moshe countered: You can't do that. It will appear as if You lack the power to bring them into the Land. Gird Yourself, God, and be merciful. G-d said: I forgive them as you have said. But. These people, witnesses to all the miracles who now balk; they will not enter the Land, save Calev.

This story of the spies is one of the 2 national failures of the Torah, right beside the golden calf. In fact, G-d's response here is almost identical to His response there: let Me wipe them out and make you Moshe the new nation. And Moshe's response here too is identical to there. If you wipe them out, people will assume You are good at taking the people out of Egypt. But You can't bring the people to the Land. Your power is limited.

Moshe pleads: G-d relents. And that is a powerful lesson, the same lesson as the Golden Calf. They are both stories of failure, to be sure. But more crucially, they are both stories of forgiveness. G-d wanted to destroy the Jewish people. But He didn't. He didn't at the golden calf. And He doesn't here.

Of course, we only know of that near destruction of the people and Moshe's pleading to save them because we were given a glimpse beyond the veil, privy to the exchange between G-d and Moshe. The people on the street never know this. All they know is that they are punished with 40 years in the desert, never to see the Land.

And that is the power of this story. *This*

story **is** the peek behind the veil. G-d wants to destroy us. Moshe pleads. We are saved.

It is the story of what *could have been*. But wasn't. Does 40 years in the desert seem harsh? Well, not when juxtaposed to the alternative: destruction of the entire people. We see 40 years as bad. No, no, no. 40 years is generosity. Forgiveness. Mercy. Love.

We are at such a disadvantage when viewing the tragedies of Jewish history. Because we only see what actually happens; we never see what *could* have happened. What we see may look terrible. But what *could* have been might be so much worse.

We must be oh so careful when thinking we can surmise the Divine way. This story teaches us: we never know what *could* have been, what *may* have been. It could have been the destruction of our people. But it wasn't; it was only a 40-year delay.

The 40 years in the desert looks like a tragedy. But it is actually Divine love; He did not destroy us. Only delayed us.



4TH ALIYA (14:26-15:7)

G-d told Moshe and Aharon to tell the people: As you have said, so will it be. You will not enter the Land. You all will die in the desert. Your children will enter the Land. The number of days you toured will be the number of years in the desert, 40 years. The people mourned. They attempted to rectify their error by arising early to now journey, but Moshe warned them that G-d is not with them. They suffered defeat. Moshe instructed: when you settle in the Land and bring offerings, bring flour, oil and wine with the offerings. This will be pleasing to G-d.

While the people are told that they will all die in the desert, they are also told they will enter the Land. Well, not them, but their children.

That is the crucial element of this story: the commitment of G-d to His people is unchanged. His plan merely delayed. This is the story of love of G-d for His people. While the timetable has been altered, the commitment He has made to bring us to the Land is in full force.



5TH ALIYA (15:8-16)

A bull offering's flour, oil and wine amounts are higher than for sheep. Everyone brings these similar libations: one law for all.

This very short aliya is a continuation of the previous aliya in which the flour, oil and wine amounts are given for offerings of sheep or rams. The previous aliya did not want to end with the tragedy of the story of the spies. Instead, it ended with the phrase "a pleasing aroma to G-d".

In fact, this description of the libations is encouragement. You *will* make it to the Land. And you *will* bring offerings there. You will bring flour, oil and wine that accompany the offerings.

Those things are the finest of the produce of the Land. On the heels of the sentence of 40 years in the desert is the promise that you will harvest wheat, olives and grapes in your Land. You may be suffering now due to this terrible sin of the spies. But good times await you. And I, G-d says, want you to approach Me with your full noble station of life: your fine flour, finest olive oil and the joy of wine.



6TH ALIYA (15:17-26)

Upon entering the Land, the mitzvah of taking challah from bread dough begins. If an error is made and the entire people accidentally sin as a result, a sin offering of a bull is brought. Atonement is granted as the people sinned accidentally.

The post spy encouragement continues. You

will enter the Land. And you will have bread, not manna. In the midst of a crisis, it is hard to imagine the smoke clearing. But it does. And it will. You personally will not make it to the Land; but the Jewish people will.



7TH ALIYA (15:27-41)

A chatat offering atones for an accidental sin. However, the soul is cut off for one who blasphemes G-d. A person was found chopping wood on Shabbat. He was sequestered, as Moshe and Aharon did not know what to do with him. They were told he was to be put to death. Place tzitzit on the corners of your garment as a reminder to do all the mitzvot and be holy to Me.

The lessons of leadership continue. Moshe and Aharon do not know what to do with the person found chopping wood on Shabbat. And they have no problem admitting that they don't know.

A leader as great as Moshe does not have all the answers all the time. No shame in admitting that.

HAFTORAH: YEHOSHUA 2:1-24

The Torah portion discusses the twelve spies that were sent by Moshe to explore the Holy Land. We fast forward in our haftorah to the story of the spies that Yehoshua sent to scout the city of Yericho, prior to the Jewish people's invasion of the Land.

The two spies arrive in Yericho and lodged at an inn operated by a woman named Rachav. When their presence is made known, she hides her guests and protects them from the king. She actually hid them on her rooftop.

The two spies assure her that they will protect her and her family when the Israelites enter and conquer the Land. She is to place a scarlet thread in the window as a sign that her

home is a place of safe haven.

The haftorah then dramatically describes Rachav providing a way for the men to safely escape. The men are able to grab onto a rope and lower themselves from her window. The spies are successful in exiting the city and return to Yehoshua with their report. ■



STATS

37th of the 54 sedras; 4th of 10 in Bamidbar. Written on 198 lines, ranks 25th. 10 Parshiyot; 7 open, 3 closed. 119 pesukim, ranks 21, 6th/Bamidbar. 1540 words, ranks 27, 5th/Bamidbar. 5820 letters, ranks 27, 4th/Bamidbar. Shelach has shorter than average pesukim, which explains the drop in rank for words and letters, yet the rise in rank within Bamidbar indicates that there are sedras with even shorter pesukim.



MITZVOT

3 mitzvot - 2 positives - Challah & Tzitzit, and 1 prohibition, not to follow the temptations of your heart and eyes. As we point out often, the distribution of mitzvot in the Torah is very uneven. With only 3 mitzvot, there are 25 sedras with fewer mitzvot than Shelach and 26 with more. 3 is the median number of mitzvot per sedra in the Torah. T'ruma and Chukat also have 3 mitzvot each.



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ומה הארץ השמנה היא אם רזה היש בה עץ אם אין (יג:כ)

“And what the land is, whether it is fat or lean, whether there are trees therein or not” (13:20)

Why did Moshe advise the spies to seek out if there are trees or not? Rashi quoting Talmud Baba Batra 15a, explains that Moshe was instructing the spies to look for a righteous person among the inhabitants of Canaan who would protect them by his merits. Perhaps as it states in Devarim 20:19, “For a man is like the tree of the field”, just as a tree provides shade and shelter from the elements, so too a worthy man provides salvation and protection to others by his actions and prayers.

Rabbi David Cohen (Rav, Kehillat Gevul Yaavetz, N.Y.- Sefer Otzar Hatefillah) offers a deeper insight. Moshe specifically asked the spies to seek out such individuals in the fields and orchards and not to search out such a person in the houses of worship or centers of study. If such an individual was truly worthy, his influence would be felt far beyond the study halls and even outside his immediate environment.

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“Caleb at the Crossroads”

Imagine standing at a crossroads. We have all been there. We have all experienced moments in our life’s journey when we had to make a crucial choice and decide whether to proceed along one road or along another. (Except for Yogi Berra, of course, who famously said, “When you come to a fork in the road, take it.”)

We have all also experienced moments much further along in our journey, often many years later, when we reflected back upon our decision and wondered what would have been if we had pursued the alternative road.

Now imagine standing at a crossroads together with a close friend. Both of you face an identical choice, either this road or that. One of you chooses one road, and the other decides differently and selects the other road.

Each would have an intriguing tale to tell if, after many years, they had to meet and have the opportunity to compare the results of their different decisions.

Throughout my adult life, I have been

fascinated by the experiences of survivors of the Holocaust. Whenever I have been fortunate enough to have the time to engage in conversation with one of them, I listened eagerly to their stories. When they permit, and they do not always, I ask them questions not just about their experiences, but about their choices and decisions.

I especially remember the discussions I had with one of them—let us call him Mr. Silver. He often would tell me about the hellish years he spent fleeing and fighting the Nazis in the forests of Poland. He had a companion then—let us call him Simon. Mr. Silver and Simon were boyhood friends who together witnessed the murder of their parents, and who together managed to escape and join the partisans. Eventually, they were both caught and incarcerated in prisons and concentration camps.

In his story, Mr. Silver compared his attitude throughout those horrific times with the attitude of his friend Simon. “You know me,” he would say, “and you know how I’ve always seen the bright side of things, the hopefulness of every situation, however dire.” Indeed, I assured him that I could vouch for his consistent optimism.

“As much as I was an idealist,” he would continue, “so was Simon a hard-core realist. He saw things as they were and dealt with them accordingly. He had no illusions whatsoever of hope.”

Many years after my conversation with Mr. Silver, I finally met Simon and, together with him, was able to compare the life he led

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subsequent to the Holocaust, and subsequent to his crossroad decisions, with the life of Mr. Silver. Simon, after the war, chose not to marry and chose to live in a rather remote American community with little contact with other Jews. Mr. Silver married, raised a large family with numerous grandchildren, and was very much involved with Jewish causes, and eventually chose to live out his final years in the state of Israel.

Two individuals at the same crossroads, making different decisions, with starkly different life outcomes.

This week's Torah portion, *Shelach*, gives us the opportunity to witness individuals at the crossroads. Individuals who make radically different decisions and whose lives thereby played out very differently.

Let us focus, for example, on the personalities of Nachbi ben Vofsi, prince of the tribe of Naphtali, and of Caleb ben Yefuneh, prince of the tribe of Judah. Up until the dramatic moment described in this week's *parsha* they led almost identical lives. They both experienced the Exodus from Egypt, the miraculous splitting of the Red Sea, the revelation at Mount Sinai, and opportunities for leadership of their respective tribes.

They were both assigned to spy out the land of Canaan, and they both crisscrossed the Promised Land and returned to give their reports. But then we read (*Numbers* 13:30-31), "Caleb...said, 'Let us by all means go up, as we shall gain possession of the land, and we shall surely overcome.' But the men who had gone up with him (one of whom was Nachbi) said, 'We cannot attack that people, for they are stronger than we.'"

Two individuals, at this very same crossroads in their lives; one full of hope and trust and confidence, and the other frightened,


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albeit very realistic.

How differently their lives played out from this point forward. Nachbi perished in ignominy in the desert while Caleb remained a prince, enhanced his reputation, and was granted his reward, the city of Hebron.

We all face crossroads in our lives; some of great significance, and some seemingly trivial. Our choices can be Nachbi-like—practical and safe, but ultimately cowardly. Or they can be informed by hope, trust, and confidence, and ultimately be brave and heroic.

The choice is ours, and so are the consequences for the rest of our lives. ■

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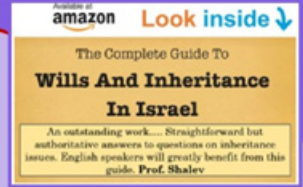
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Beyond the Fringe

Our Torah portion ends with one of the great commands of Judaism – *tzitzit*, the fringes worn on the corners of our garments as a perennial reminder of our identity as Jews and our obligation to keep the Torah's commands:

The Lord said to Moses: “Speak to the Israelites; tell them to make fringes on the corners of their garments throughout all the generations. To the fringe, on each corner, they should attach a blue cord. And this shall be your fringe: seeing it, you shall remember all the Lord’s commands and keep them. You will not then go astray, following the lusts of your heart or of your eyes. This is to remind you to keep all My commands, to remain holy to your God.” (Num. 15:37-40)

So central is this command, that it became the third paragraph of the Shema, the supreme declaration of Jewish faith. I once heard the following commentary from my teacher, Rabbi Dr Nachum Rabinovitch.

He began by pointing out some of the strange features of the command. On the one hand, the Sages said that the command

of *tzitzit* is equal to all the other commands together, as it is said: “Look at it and recall *all the commandments of the Lord* and observe them.” It is thus of fundamental significance.

On the other hand, it is not absolutely obligatory. It is possible to avoid the command of fringes altogether by never wearing a garment of four or more corners. Maimonides rules: “Even though one is not obligated to acquire a [four-cornered] robe and wrap oneself in it in order to [fulfil the command of] *tzitzit*, it is not fitting for a pious individual to exempt himself from this command” (Laws of *Tzitzit*, 3:11). It is important and praiseworthy but not categorical. It is conditional: *if* you have such a garment, *then* you must put fringes on it. Why so? Surely it should be obligatory, in the way that *tefillin* (phylacteries) are.

There is another unusual phenomenon. In the course of time, the custom has evolved to fulfil the command in two quite different ways: the first, in the form of a *tallit* (robe, shawl) which is worn *over* our other clothes, specifically while we pray; the second in the form of an *undergarment*, worn *beneath* our outer clothing throughout the day.

Not only do we keep the one command in two different ways. We also make different blessings over the two forms. Over the *tallit*, we say, “who has sanctified us with His

commandments, and commanded us to *wrap ourselves* in a fringed garment.” Over the undergarment, we say, “who has sanctified us with His commandments, and commanded us *concerning the precept* of the fringed garment.” Why is one command split into two in this way?

Rabbi Rabinovitch gave this answer: there are two kinds of clothing. There are the clothes we wear to project an image. A king, a judge, and a soldier all wear clothing that conceals the individual and instead proclaims a role, an office, a rank. As such, clothes, especially uniforms, can be misleading. A king dressed as a beggar will not (or would not, before television) be recognised as royalty. A beggar dressed as a king may find himself honoured. A policeman dressed as a policeman carries with him a certain authority, an aura of power, even though he may feel nervous and insecure. Clothes disguise. They are like a mask, hiding the person beneath. Such are the clothes we wear in public when we want to create a certain impression.

But there are other clothes we wear when we are alone that may convey more powerfully than anything else the kind of person we really are: the artist in his studio, the writer at his desk, the gardener tending the roses. They do not dress to create an impression. To the contrary: they dress as they do because of what they are, not because of what they wish to seem.

The two kinds of *tzitzit* represent these different forms of dress. When we engage in prayer, we sense in our heart how unworthy we may be of the high demands God has made of us. We feel the need to come before God as something more than just ourselves. We cover ourselves in the robe, the *tallit*, the great symbol of the Jewish people at prayer. We conceal



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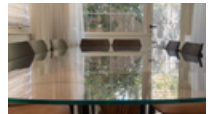
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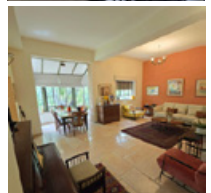
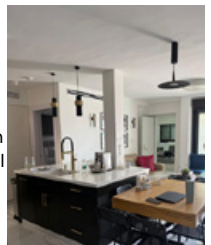
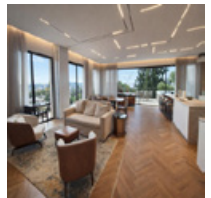
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our individuality – in the language of the blessing over the *tallit*, we “*wrap ourselves* in a fringed garment.” It is as if we were saying to God: I may only be a beggar, but I am wearing a royal robe, the robe of your people Israel who prayed to You throughout the centuries, to whom You showed a special love and took as Your own. The *tallit* hides the person we are and represents the person we would like to be, because in prayer we ask God to judge us not for what we are, but for what we wish to be.

The deeper symbolism of *tzitzit*, however, is that it represents the commandments as a whole (“look at it and recall all the commandments of the Lord”) – and these become part of what and who we are only when we accept them without coercion, of our own free will. That is why the command of *tzitzit* is not categorical. We do not *have* to keep it. We are not obligated to buy a four-cornered garment.

When we do so, it is because we *choose* to do so. We obligate ourselves. That is why opting to wear *tzitzit* symbolises the free acceptance of all the duties of Jewish life.

This is the most inward, intimate, intensely personal aspect of faith, whereby in our innermost soul we dedicate ourselves to God and His commands. There is nothing public about this. It is not for outer show. It is *who we are* when we are alone, not trying to impress anyone, not wishing to seem what we are not. This is the command of *tzitzit* as undergarments, beneath, not on top of, our clothing. Over this we make a different blessing. We do not talk about “*wrapping ourselves* in a fringed garment” – because this form of fringes is not for outward show. We are not trying to hide ourselves beneath a uniform. Instead, we are expressing our innermost commitment to God’s word and call to us. Over this we say the blessing, “who has commanded us concerning the *precept* of *tzitzit*” because what matters is not the mask but the reality, not how we wish to appear, but what we really are.

In this striking way *tzitzit* represent the dual nature of Judaism. On the one hand it is a way of life that is public, communal, shared with others across the world and through the ages. We keep Shabbat, celebrate the festivals, observe the dietary laws and the laws of family purity in a way that has hardly varied for many centuries. That is the public face of Judaism – the *tallit* we wear, the cloak woven out of the 613 threads, each one a command from God.

But there is also our inner life as people of faith. There are things we can say to God that we can say to no-one else. He knows our thoughts, hopes, fears, better than we know them ourselves. We speak to Him in the

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privacy of the soul, and He listens. That internal conversation – the opening of our heart to Him who brought us into existence in love – is not for public show. Like the fringed undergarment, it stays hidden. But it is no less real an aspect of Jewish spirituality. The two types of fringed garment represent the two dime. ■

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The Lesson of Yericho

The well-known story related to us in our haftarah of Yehoshua's spies and the events that took place in Yericho even before its conquest, parallel the key story found in our parasha. Over the years, we have mentioned the differences between the two stories, primarily, that the sin of Moshe's spies caused the nation to remain in the desert for thirty-nine more years, while Yehoshua's successful "undercover" mission, paved the entry of B'nai Yisra'el into Eretz Yisrael. Yet, it is true that, just as the spies in the desert impacted the very history of Israel, so too, the account related by Joshua's spies cannot be regarded as an isolated incident, but as the first link of a chain of events. It is, in reality, a prelude to the conquest of Yericho, the resulting defeat at Ai and a lesson for the nation and their ensuing battles.

In discussing the conquest of Jericho, I find

myself reluctant to call the event a "battle" - because it was anything **except** that! The text makes it clear that the Israelites did everything **BUT** fight. Upon Hashem's command, the army surrounded the city and, for seven days (led by the Aron and seven Kohanim blasting their shofarot), proceeded to march around the city. On the seventh day, they followed this same procedure seven times and, after the last circuit, the city's walls collapsed, killing the enemy, thereby allowing the troops to enter the city.

That was it! The army paraded around the city and sounded the shofarot -but they never even raised a sword throughout that time. For that reason, Hashem told the people that they were prohibited from taking any of the booty because the victory - and its spoils - belonged to G-d-and to Him alone. That was precisely the lesson that Hashem wanted the people to learn. But they didn't. The subsequent p'rakim tell us how Achan ben Karmi **DID** take from the spoils- resulting in the defeat of Yehoshua's army in the next battle, a war against the city of Ai.

Rabbi Menachem Liebttag addresses the question as to why ALL of Israel was punished when but one man sinned and took from the spoils. Why does the text TWICE declare that "the people of Israel trespassed" when only one person did? Rabbi Liebttag's response is both illuminating and satisfying. He explains that, although the sin was committed by one, the collective attitude, shared by many, was that **they**, as victors, had earned the right to

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take from the spoils; in other words, that the victory was **not** of G-d's doing alone. And to prove that such an attitude was shared by many, Rabbi Liebttag points to what the officers advised Yehoshua before the next battle.

In preparation for the conquest of Ai, Yehoshua's agents reported that the city was small and relatively weak and, therefore, did not require to "exhaust the entire army." Rather, they suggested sending only 2-3,000 troops to battle which would suffice to conquer the city...and Yehoshua accepted that suggestion. Now, Israel had yet to win even one battle! She did not even fight against the residents of Jericho, yet they felt that they were powerful enough not to send the whole army??? They could do it alone??? Like Achan, they had not learned the lesson of Yericho. And, like Achan, they too were punished.

We are blessed to hear the words of the prophets on each Shabbat and Yom Tov. How important it is for us, therefore, to spend time understanding the haftarah from its source and, by doing so, learning more of the messages that the prophets leave for us! Their words were not directed to one generation alone, for **the words of our nevi'im speak to us today!** ■

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Self- Perception and the Sin of the Spies

Rabbi Menachem Mendel of Kotzk, known as the Kotzker Rebbe, was one of the greatest Hasidic masters of the 19th century, famed for his sharp and uncompromising insights. He offers a striking perspective on a *pasuk* in this week’s *parasha*.

When the spies return from Eretz Yisrael, they describe what they saw:

וַיֹּאמְרוּ רְאִינוּ אֶת-הַגְּבִילִים... וְנָהִי בְעֵינֵינוּ כַּחַגְבִּים וְכִן הָיִינוּ בְעֵינֵיהֶם

“We saw there the giants... We were like grasshoppers in our own eyes, and so we were in their eyes.” (Bamidbar 13:33)

The spies depict the inhabitants as giants and themselves as insignificant grasshoppers. But the final phrase is puzzling: “*and so we were in their eyes.*” How could they possibly know how they were perceived?

Rashi explains that they overheard the locals speaking and comparing them to

insects in the vineyards. But the Kotzker Rebbe offers a deeper explanation. This very statement, he suggests, is part of their sin. A person who lives with integrity and clarity does not become preoccupied with how others perceive him. Such a person is anchored, internally secure, guided by truth rather than by the shifting opinions of others. The spies, however, revealed something deeper: “*We were like grasshoppers in our own eyes.*” Their failure began not with the giants outside, but with the smallness within. Once they saw themselves as small, they assumed and perhaps even ensured, that others would see them that way as well.

The Kotzker sharpens the point even further: how a person sees himself is how he will be seen. Inner insecurity projects outward. Confidence rooted in truth commands respect. The spies’ fear was not only a fear of the inhabitants of the land, it was a lack of belief in themselves, and therefore a lack of faith in Hashem. Had they truly believed that Hashem was with them, they would not have felt like grasshoppers at all.

STANDING ON HOLY GROUND

A similar idea emerges from another teaching associated with the Kotzker. When Hashem appears to Moshe at the burning bush, He tells him:

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“Remove your shoes from your feet, for the place upon which you stand is holy ground.” (Shemot 3:5).

The Kotzker challenges us to reconsider this moment. Was that place inherently holy, or did it become holy because of what transpired there? His answer is transformative. *Kedusha* is not a function of geography but rather it is a function of consciousness and conduct.

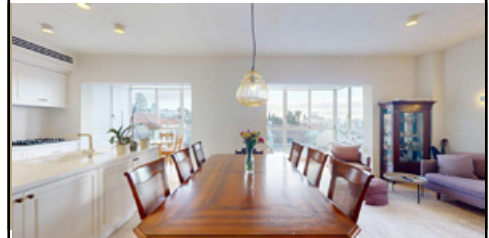
The message is not only that Moshe stood on holy ground, but that wherever a person stands can become holy ground, if he lives with awareness, integrity, and an unequivocal belief that he stands before God.

The spies failed not only because they feared giants, but because they forgot where they were standing. They stood in the presence of Hashem’s promise, on the threshold of destiny and yet saw themselves as grass-hoppers. Moshe, by contrast, stood before a simple bush in the desert and was told that he stood on holy ground. The difference is not the place. The difference is the person.

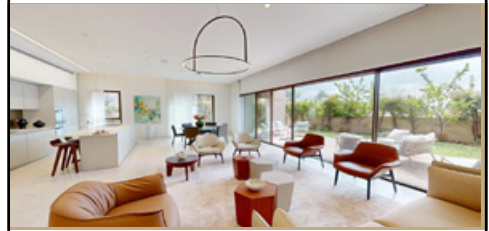
An individual who sees himself as small will shrink even in the greatest moments. But a person who carries within him faith, dignity, and purpose, transforms even the most ordinary place into holy ground. Perhaps that is the enduring message of the Kotzker: Do not ask how others see you. Ask how you see yourself. Ask whether you are living in a way that reveals the presence of Hashem in your life. When a person stands with truth and purpose and follows the path of the Torah - he is never standing on ordinary ground. ■



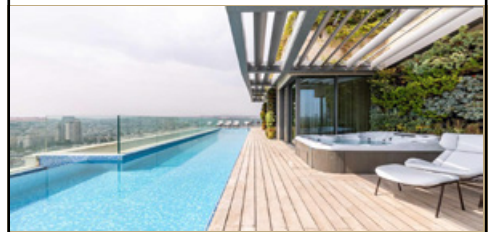
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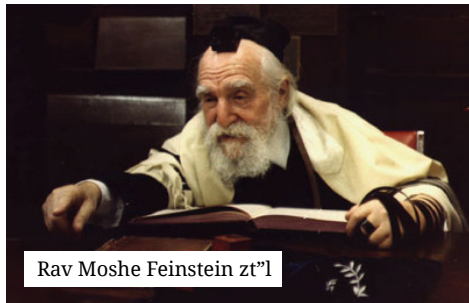


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Momentary Momentum

It was a moment of high tension; the spies had riled up the people against Moshe Rabbeinu, and bedlam was in the air. At this moment, Kalev steps forward and silences the people. He calms them down, allows them to see all the wonderful things that Moshe Rabbeinu has done, and shifts their vision. Yet in the end, his words fall on deaf ears, and the *Meraglim* convince the people that it is impossible to conquer the land. The Torah praises Kalev for his words, and he is given a great reward. The question is obvious; Kalev was not successful in his endeavor to convince the people — why is



Rav Moshe Feinstein zt"l

he given such a great reward?

Rav Moshe Feinstein zt"l, in *Darash Moshe*, teaches us an important principle. There is a halachic obligation to do whatever is necessary to save a person's life, even if one must desecrate Shabbos in order to do so. This is true even if the person's life will only be extended for a short time. Likewise, one is obligated to try and influence

others to do *teshuvah*, even if the effect of those efforts will be brief. It is clear that Kalev did, in fact, impact the people for a short time, since the *Meraglim* had to redouble their efforts thereafter to convince

the people that indeed, it was impossible for them to enter the land. Thus, for even a momentary element of *teshuvah* that Kalev engendered, he is greatly rewarded.

Rashi teaches us that Kalev's ploy was asking the people, "is this all that ben Amram did for us?" This got the attention of the people. Then, Kalev mentioned all the wonderful things that Moshe Rabbeinu did for them. Rav Chayim Zaitchick zt"l, in *Ohr Chadash*, notes that these words did, indeed, impact the people. The nation at this moment was in a state of high emotion, riled up against Moshe Rabbeinu. Kalev's words allowed them to calm down, even for a brief time, and their rebellious state was slightly subdued. Therefore, when they

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were punished, the full wrath of Hashem was not measured against them to the same extent.

It is well known that Rav Yisrael Salanter *zt'l* taught that one who sins with a sigh and a feeling of regret is not punished the same way as one who sins with the fullness of their being. The story is told of a merchant who ordered all of the *sefarim* of the Chafetz Chayim *zt'l*, except the *sefer* on the laws of *Loshon Hara*. He explained that since he is a merchant, and interacts with people all day, there is no way he can observe these laws. The Chafetz Chayim told this man that he had raised this issue with Rav Salanter before publishing the *sefer*. Rav Salanter responded that it was worth publishing the *sefer* if even one Jew, while still speaking *Loshon Hara*, would feel an angst when doing so. This feeling of remorse will dramatically change the nature of the sin.

Two important lessons from one small act. Our responsibility is to try to save another, even for a brief period, from their 'spiritual demise.' One is considered successful if one is able to bring down the intensity of the level of the sin. ■

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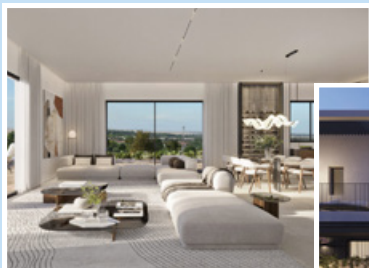
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SIMCHAT SHMUEL

BY RABBI SAM SHOR
DIRECTOR, TORAH INITIATIVES,
OU ISRAEL

Parshat Shelach concludes with the familiar *pesukim* of the third passages of *Kriat Shema*, and the *mitzva* of *tzitzit*.

The *pasuk* tells us:

Ur'Item Oto, Uzchartem et kol mitzvotai-You shall see the *tzitzit* and be reminded of all my *mitzvot*.

Chazal in the *Sifri*, taught: "***Kol Hamekayem mitzvat tzitzit, k'ilu kayeim kol hatorah kula-***" All who fulfill the *mitzva* of *tzitzit*, it is considered as if they fulfilled the entire *Torah*."

How are we to understand this powerful statement from the *Sifri*? What is the true significance of the *mitzva* of *Tzitzit*, that our *Chazal* would consider it as being equal to or representative of the entire *Torah*?

The ***Shelah HaKadosh zy'a***, points to a verse in *Yeshaya 26* - *כי טל אורת סִלְךָ - your dew, is like the dew of light...*

Talecha- is referring to *talit shelcha*- your *talit*! Your *talit* upon which you have attached *tzitzit*, is a source of light. The word *orot*(Lights) is equal in *gematria* to 613,

corresponding to the *taryag mitzvot*.

The ***Netivot Slonim, the Slonimer Rebbe zy'a***, offers a beautiful insight regarding this very question. The *Rebbe* suggests that the various knots of the *tzitzit* represent the eternal connection between *Hashem* and the Jewish



Rabbi Sholom Noach Berezovsky zt"l

people. More so, the *Talit* and its *tzitzit* represent both sides of that eternal bond and commitment. The *Tzitzit*, serve not only as a vehicle to demonstrate our love and fidelity to *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* and the *Torah HaKedosh*, but also by wrapping ourselves in the *Tzitzit*, we are symbolically being enveloped by *Hashem's* proverbial

embrace, to experience *Hashem's* love and commitment to each and every member of *Klal Yisrael*.

The *mitzvah* of *Tzitzit*, explains the *Rebbe*, therefore indeed is equal to or representative of the entire *Torah*, because it serves to remind us that indeed within every single *mitzvah*, lies this inherent dual opportunity- to both demonstrate our love and fidelity to *HaKadosh Baruch Hu*, and simultaneously to experience *Hashem's* loving embrace and commitment to each and every one of us.

The *Rebbe* explains in this beautiful teaching, that even if we view this and every *mitzvah* as an opportunity to cling to God, to demonstrate our love and fidelity to the Master of the Universe, **that love and fidelity pales in comparison to the enduring love that Hashem feels for the Jewish People.**

The *Rebbe's* keen insight regarding this

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mitzvah of *tzitzit* really provides us with a new understanding of how we relate to each of the *mitzvot*. (Indeed, those of us who were fortunate to learn together with us on *Shavuot* night, might recall that we addressed the importance of viewing every *mitzvah*, exactly as the *Slonimer Rebbe* outlines for us so clearly in this beautiful short teaching...)

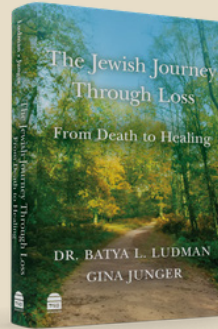
Mitzvot are not solely an opportunity to cling to *Hashem*, to demonstrate our commitment and trust in the *Ribono Shel Olam*, but also to simultaneously experience *Hashem's* divine embrace, to realize that *Hashem* bestows his unending love upon all of *Klal Yisrael*.

May each of us be blessed to be able to see every *mitzvah* as a vehicle to demonstrate our love and fidelity to the *Ribono Shel Olam* and the *Torah HaKedosha*, and to simultaneously feel and experience *Hashem's* divine embrace. ■

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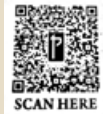
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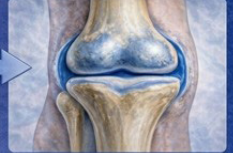
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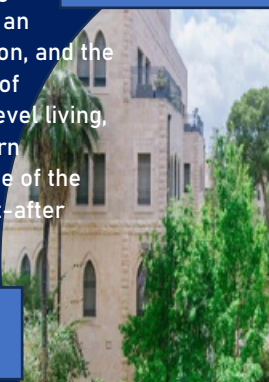


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K'vod Shamayim

Rav Chanan Porat zt'l was a unique *ish esh-kolot* or 'renaissance man', a *talmid chacham* and poet, paratrooper and educator, in love with the Nation, Torah and Land of Israel. A founder of Gush Emunim, he was also a pioneer, builder and eventually a Member of Knesset. Rav Chanan was often sought out for his comments on current events. He spoke with passion and wit, and was never shy about sharing his opinions.

Rav Chanan's daughter Tirtza described how one afternoon, he was sitting with a *sefer* open in front of him, pen in hand writing his weekly Torah column, and fielding non-stop calls on two different phone lines. At one point, the producer of a popular prime-time Israeli television show called to ask Rav Chanan if he would appear on the program.

In the midst of the hustle and bustle, Rav Chanan paused for a moment, furrowed his brow in contemplation and calmly asked the producer, "Do you think that my participation will give *nachat ruach* to *HaKadosh Baruch Hu*, pleasure to the Holy One? Will it be *marbeh k'vod Shamayim*, increasing the Divine honor?"

Taken aback, the television producer was unable to answer definitively, and offered a hesitant 'I'm not sure...'

"Well, if that is the case, then I will have to pass. Thank you."

Our Parsha leads us on a saga of tragic, painful events coming on the heels of generations of suffering and exile.

According to Ramban, although the end of the story is disastrous, the Meraglim had holy intentions. Bnei Yisrael had been escorted and sustained by the Well of Miriam, led by a pillar of fire and surrounded by clouds of glory. Their sojourn in the desert was one of constant miracles and revealed Divine providence. Why, they considered, should they enter the Land of Israel only to be forced to engage its inhabitants in battle, build cities and deal with the complex material needs of a worldly society? Why should they enter a situation in which they had to put aside spiritual pursuits enough to work the land and cultivate fields, when they were enjoying the life of *Deveikus* and being nourished by *Manna* that fell from Heaven?

The Meraglim intended to keep us in the ideal spiritual environment of the *Midbar*, nestled in a womb-like experience where we wouldn't be busied with 'lowly' worldly affairs that could interfere with our connection to Hashem. What they failed to take into account was actually the most important factor: *ratzon Hashem*, the Divine will and desire. In following the report and influence of the Spies, we engaged in an embarrassing rebellion against Hashem's will.

When we are so certain in our belief of the righteousness of our cause, we can become filled with *kavod atzmi*, self-importance. This is a subtle act of theft; *kavod* belongs to Hashem. When taking *kavod* for ourselves,

Hashem's *kavod* is diminished in the world, so-to-speak.

After Moshe's plea for forgiveness, Hashem says, "*Salachti k'dvarecha*, I have forgiven them in accordance with your word. However, as surely as I live, *v'yemalei k'vod Hashem es kol ha-aretz*, and the glory of G-d fills all of the earth... all the people *haro'im es k'vodi*, who while seeing My glory, and the signs that I performed in Egypt and in the desert, have tested me these ten times and not listened to My voice... they will not see the Land that I swore to their fathers." (14:20-23)

In meting out the repercussions of the Nation's lack of faith and following the Meraglim, HaKadosh Baruch Hu reminds us that His glory and presence, His *kavod*, fills the earth. There is no place devoid of Hashem. The *ratzon Hashem* is that we should reveal this omnipresent glory throughout "all the earth" by creating a *dira b'tachtonim*, a dwelling for Hashem in the 'lower', physical world. Our mundane, physical day-to-day acts are themselves a revelation of Hashem on earth.

While holy and well-intended, the mistake of the Meraglim teaches us how clear we must be regarding our higher purpose: to bring *Nachas Ruach* to Hashem and be *mar-beh k'vod Shamayim*. May we have the courage to "pass" on any offer that is not aligned with Hashem's desire to dwell here, in our

world and within ourselves. ■

.....
Excerpt from Baderech: Along the Path of the Torah, forthcoming (Mosaica Press, Elul 5786)

Rav Judah Mischel is executive director of Camp HASC, the Hebrew Academy for Special Children. He is the founder of Tzama Nafshi and the author of the "Baderech" series. Rav Judah lives in Ramat Beit Shemesh with his wife Ora and their family.



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This Week's Inspiration

**SUNDAY
JUNE 7**

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9:20 AM

Understanding Tefila

Rabbi Yossi Goldin

11:25 AM

P'shat in the Parsha

Rabbi Shmuel Goldin

10:10 AM

Rambam: Letters & Introductions

Rabbi Yitzchak Breitowitz

12:20 PM

Unlocking the Messages of Chazal

Rabbi Shai Finkelstein

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JUNE 10**

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@ Bet Knesset HaNassi,
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9:15AM

Holy Poetry

Rabbi Dr. Aaron Adler

10:20AM

Contemporary Issues
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Rabbi Anthony Manning

11:25 AM

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JUNE 11**

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10:30AM

Parshat Hashavua
Rabbi Baruch Taub

11:25 AM

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Rabbi Neil Winkler

12:20 P.M

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BASYA TEITELBAUM
Words of Introduction



LEAH HERZOG
To Be in the Midbar:
Finding Hashem in
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RAV YOSEF ZVI RIMON
Finding Strength in the
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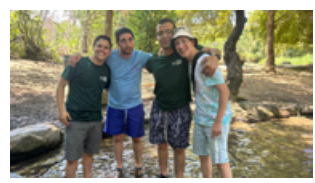
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When Is Dairy Bread Prohibited?

Our Sages decreed that one may not bake dairy bread, meaning bread containing milk, butter, or other dairy ingredients mixed into the dough. Since the finished product of dairy bread is generally indistinguishable from pareve bread, and bread serves as a staple component of most meals, there is a concern that dairy bread may inadvertently be eaten together with meat. To prevent such confusion, *Chazal* prohibited the production and consumption of dairy bread.

However, the *Gemara* provides two exceptions to this decree. First, if the bread is made in a distinctive shape, it serves as a clear reminder that the bread is dairy and will not be mistakenly consumed with meat. Second, if only a small quantity is produced — an

amount expected to be consumed within a single meal or a single day — the concern of confusion is significantly reduced. The *Shulchan Aruch* (YD 97:1) and later authorities (see *Aruch Hashulchan* 97:3-6) codify both exceptions as acceptable. In this article, we will examine the parameters and timing of these allowances.

KNEADING THE DOUGH

The *Gemara* (*Pesachim* 36:a) explicitly uses the term “kneading,” stating that one may not knead dough with milk or other dairy ingredients. A simple reading suggests that the prohibition begins at the moment the dairy ingredient is mixed into the dough.

The *Yad Yehuda* (97:3), however, explains that this is not necessarily the case. The mere act of mixing milk into dough does not automatically render the dough prohibited, since one may still utilize either of the two recognized exceptions after the dough has been prepared. For example, one may subsequently shape the dough into distinctive forms or divide it into smaller portions that qualify under the allowance for limited quantities.

Later authorities discuss an additional scenario: May one intentionally add a small amount of milk to dough when the milk will be halachically nullified, constituting less than one-sixtieth of the mixture?

All authorities agree that if this occurred inadvertently, the dough and resulting bread may be consumed even with meat. Since the milk is halachically nullified, no violation of *Basar Bechalav* has occurred. This is evident from the ruling of the *Rema* in a related

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area of kashrut (see YD 99:6). Furthermore, such bread would not be classified as “dairy bread” for purposes of the rabbinic decree.

The question, however, is whether one may intentionally add a small amount of milk for this purpose. The later authorities are divided. The *Minchat Yaakov* (60:1) and the *Gilyon Maharsha* (YD 97:1) prohibit doing so, arguing that intentionally nullifying an ingredient is itself prohibited under established halachic principles.

The *Chavat Da'at* (97:2) and Responsa *Mahari”t* (YD 2:18) disagree. They argue that the prohibition against intentionally nullifying an ingredient applies only to substances that are independently prohibited, such as non-kosher food. Dairy products themselves are entirely permissible; therefore, adding a minute amount of milk to dough, where it will be nullified, is allowed even if one intends to consume the bread with meat.

Since there are many aspects of this specific *Shail”a* one should consult with their Rav.

CAN BREAD BE SALVAGED AFTER BAKING?

If dairy bread was baked without utilizing one of the permitted exceptions, can anything be done afterward to permit its consumption?

Several later authorities discuss whether the bread may be divided into smaller portions after baking. Some cite a tradition from an ancestor of Rabbi Yonatan Eybeschutz (*Kereti U’Pleiti* 97:1) who permitted such a solution, even if the division occurred after baking.

The *Chavat Da'at* (97:3) and many later

authorities disagree. In their view, once the bread has been baked in a prohibited manner, no subsequent modification can remove the prohibition. The bread remains prohibited regardless of later alterations.

LABELS AND PACKAGING AS A REMINDER

This dispute has important practical implications for modern commercial bakeries that produce dairy bread and indicate its status on the packaging.

In Responsa *Even Yisrael* (9:24) rules that a dairy label on the packaging is sufficient to permit the bread, even according to the stringent position of the *Chavat Da'at*. He explains that the *Gemara’s* prohibition applies to the act of kneading. Just as it is permissible to knead dough with the intention of forming it into small rolls or a distinctive shape, so too it is permissible to knead dough with the intention of placing a clear dairy label on the packaging or on the bread itself. According to this approach, the stringent authorities only prohibit cases where the dough was kneaded without any intention to make a special shape or small amount and only afterward, once the bread had already become prohibited, was an attempt made to rectify the situation.


Rabbi Moshe Feinstein (*Mesoret Moshe* 3:193) is quoted as rejecting this ruling, maintaining that a label does not satisfy the requirements of the rabbinic decree. A strong proof for this position may be found in the rulings of earlier authorities, who require that the identifying reminder (*heker*) be part of the bread itself. The *Chamudei*

Daniel (2:18) writes that the reminder must remain on the loaf, since if the identifying feature were removed or partially consumed, confusion could still result. Since packaging is merely an external wrapper and not part of the bread itself, it cannot be considered a valid *heker*.

OU Kosher follows this majority position and does not permit bakeries to produce standard loaves of dairy bread based solely on labels or signs placed on store shelves. Consumers in Israel should be aware, however, that several bakeries rely on the more lenient opinion and consider labeling sufficient to satisfy the requirements of the decree. ■

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The Voices of Faith

It is difficult to stand against a crowd. It is even more difficult when that crowd is led by respected and influential figures. Yehoshua faced both challenges. He rejected the slanderous report of ten distinguished nesi'im or tribal leaders and refused to be swept along by the panic they created. Where did he draw that inner strength from?

ROLE MODELS

The Torah records a private encounter between Yehoshua and his mentor, Moshe Rabbeinu, just before the mission began. Yehoshua was Moshe's trusted and loyal talmid. He had led the Jewish army in battle against Amalek. He had waited patiently at the foot of Har Sinai while our nation descended into the frenzy of the egel hazahav. He had zealously defended Moshe's honor, urging action against Eldad and Meidad when they prophesied in a manner that appeared to challenge Moshe's authority.

On the eve of the mission to Israel, Moshe renamed his talmid Yehoshua, changing his name from Hoshea. The new name was meant to empower him. Moshe believed in his talmid and in his ability to stand for truth in the face of falsehood and slander.

According to Chazal, the name change was not merely a vote of confidence; it was also a tefillah. Moshe sensed that this mission was

perilous and could end in disaster. He prayed, "Kah yoshiacha mei'atzat meraglim," asking that Hashem protect Yehoshua from the counsel of the spies. By embedding that prayer within Yehoshua's name, Moshe hoped to give him the strength to withstand the conspiracy and remain faithful to the truth. Moshe was doing more than offering a prayer. He was reinforcing a relationship that had shaped Yehoshua's character and faith.

Religious virtues are often learned more effectively through people than through abstract ideas. Most of us can distinguish right from wrong in the tranquility of our own thoughts. Yet in the heat of the moment, when emotions surge and pressures mount, that clarity can become clouded, and we succumb to lesser instincts.

My rebbe, Rav Aharon Lichtenstein, once remarked that when facing a moral challenge or a test of character, we should not begin by asking what the correct choice is. Instead, we should identify a moral role model whose integrity and moral judgment we deeply admire and ask ourselves how that person would respond in these circumstances. Moral wisdom is often learned more powerfully through personal example than through abstract principles.

The same is true of faith. We can study faith as an abstract idea, but our deepest source of faith is often the people we encounter who embody it in real time. In a landmark essay entitled "*The Source of Faith Is Faith Itself*," Rav Aharon Lichtenstein described the impact of the role models who shaped his religious

life:

“What I received from all my mentors, at home or in yeshiva, was the key to confronting life, particularly modern life, in all its complexity: the recognition that it was not so necessary to have all the answers as to learn to live with the questions. Regardless of what issues—moral, theological, textual or historical—vexed me, I was confident that they had been raised by masters far sharper and wiser than myself; and if they had remained impregnably steadfast in their commitment, so should and could I.”

Faith is not sustained solely by arguments and ideas. It is strengthened by witnessing people of conviction confront uncertainty, wrestle with difficult questions, and remain steadfast in their commitment. In moments of crisis, we do not draw strength only from ideas we believe. We draw strength from people who maintained belief, and believed in us.

MASORAH AND JEWISH HISTORY

What about the second hero of the meraglim debacle? What about Calev, who also opposed the conspiracy and refused to allow the propaganda campaign to distort his judgment? He emerges from the story as something of an unknown figure. Although Chazal suggest that he married Miriam, the Torah itself records no special relationship between him and Moshe Rabbeinu. How did he find the faith to withstand this campaign of slander and fear? Where did he draw his inner strength from?

The Gemara in Sotah provides the answer. As the spies made their way through the Land of Israel, the Torah describes their journey southward: “Vaya’alu baNegev.” The continuation of the verse then records a solitary detour to Chevron—“Vayavou ad Chevron.” All the spies traveled through the south, but



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only one visited Chevron. Chazal explain that Calev separated from the group and journeyed to the graves of the Avot in Me’arat Hamachpeilah.

Our forefathers sacrificed so much for the future of the Jewish people and for the Land of Israel. Now, all that they had invested seemed to be in jeopardy. Standing at their graves, Calev prayed for the strength to defend their legacy and remain loyal to their mission. Though he lacked the personal mentorship that Yehoshua enjoyed, he found inspiration in a different source. If Yehoshua drew courage from his rebbe, Calev drew it from the sweep of Jewish history. The past gave Calev the courage to defend the future. Standing among the graves of the Avot, he remembered that he was part of a story far larger than himself. Sometimes the strength to face an uncertain future comes from remembering the generations who entrusted that future to us.

THE BALANCE

These two portraits of Yehoshua and Calev present very different sources of strength and faith. We draw inspiration from the extraordinary people we encounter in our own lives. At the same time, we draw strength from the past, from towering figures whom we never met but whose lives left an indelible imprint upon Jewish history.

It is important to balance these two sources of inspiration. We need living role models who can help us navigate contemporary questions and modern challenges. It is risky to speculate about what figures who lived hundreds of years ago would have said about issues they never confronted in a world so different from their own. It is easy to become a ventriloquist for voices that are no longer here to speak for themselves. Too often, sweeping claims are made about what the Rambam would have thought about a particular issue, when in truth there is little way of knowing. Faith is transmitted through a mesorah, but every generation requires people who can apply that mesorah to new realities.

However, there is also a danger that we become too locked into the present and lose sight of the broader sweep of the past. Contemporary trends and hashkafic currents can appear so powerful and all-consuming that they seem to define the only legitimate path of avodat Hashem. At times, it is healthy to step back and remember that previous generations cultivated different models of religious life, some of which may resonate with us more deeply than contemporary approaches.

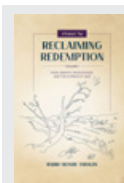
A healthy religious life requires perspective. We must distinguish between enduring values that have guided Jews across the generations and assumptions that arise from a particular moment in history. A broader awareness of the rich diversity of avodat Hashem throughout our mesorah helps us avoid mistaking current fashions for timeless truths.

MODERN ISRAEL

Life in modern Israel makes this calibration even more crucial, but also more challenging. We often feel that we have entered an entirely new chapter of Jewish history. Many of the questions we face have not confronted the

Jewish people for nearly two thousand years. More broadly, modernity has reshaped our world so dramatically that it often feels disconnected from anything that came before. It is easy to become absorbed in the contemporary moment, with its unprecedented challenges and its remarkable opportunities. Yet it is essential that we continue to view ourselves as the heirs to a tradition and a story that stretches back more than 3,300 years.

Equally challenging is our ability to relate to the two thousand years of Jewish life in exile. With our return to Israel, the biblical era of Jewish sovereignty has assumed greater resonance and immediacy. We live with a connection to the world of Tanach that Jews in exile could scarcely have imagined. Yet for many Israelis, the long centuries of galut can feel less relevant. At times, those two millennia are viewed as an interruption of Jewish history rather than as an integral part of it. We must resist that temptation. A healthy historical consciousness traces an unbroken line through every stage of our past, identifying deeply with each chapter of the Jewish story. Yet historical consciousness alone is not enough. We must also remain attentive to the challenges of the present and to the people who help us confront them.■



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The View from the Other Side

The Haftarah of Parshat Shelach appears to revisit a familiar story. Once again, spies are sent into the Land of Israel. Once again, they return with a report. Yet this mission is fundamentally different from the one described in the parshah. The spies of Moshe's generation stood at the threshold of the Land and saw obstacles. Nearly forty years later, Yehoshua's generation stands at that same threshold and discovers that the greatest challenge was never the land itself, but how it was perceived.

This is what makes the spies' report so surprising. They return with no discussion of military strategy, troop strength, or the fortifications of Yericho. Instead, they bring back a message from Rachav: וַיִּמַּס לְבָבָנוּ, *Our hearts have melted*. And when they report to Yehoshua, they echo her words: וְגַם נִמְלְגוּ כָּל יִשְׂרָאֵל הָאָרֶץ מִפְּנֵינוּ, *All the inhabitants of the land have melted before us*.

The Abarbanel explains that this was the most valuable intelligence of all. A city may be fortified, but if the spirit of its inhabitants has already collapsed, the battle is largely won. What Yehoshua needed was not information about the walls of Yericho. He needed information about the hearts of its people.

Rachav reveals that the inhabitants of the

Land had been living with the memory of Kriat Yam Suf for forty years: *For we have heard how Hashem dried up the waters of the Sea of Reeds before you...* The Radak notes that the fear of Israel had spread throughout the land because of the miracles Hashem performed on behalf of His people. The nations had not forgotten. They had been watching, listening, and trembling. The irony is striking. The generation that witnessed Kriat Yam Suf struggled to believe they could enter the Land. Rachav, who had only heard about it, had no doubt.

Modern psychology describes a phenomenon known as *threat perception*—our tendency to overestimate the difficulty of a challenge while underestimating our ability to meet it. The spies in Parshat Shlach fell victim to precisely this error. Confronted by the inhabitants of the Land, they concluded: וַנְהִי בְעֵינֵינוּ כְּחַגְּלָיִם, *We were like grasshoppers in our own eyes*. Notice the language. Before they worried about how others viewed them, they first diminished themselves. Their perception became their reality.

Rachav's testimony exposes how mistaken that perception was. The Canaanites did not see the Jewish people as grasshoppers. They saw them as the nation whose G-d split the sea, defeated mighty kings, and was guiding them toward their destiny. Perhaps this is why the haftarah accompanies Parshat Shelach. The greatest obstacles are not always the ones standing before us. Sometimes they are the assumptions we carry within us. ■

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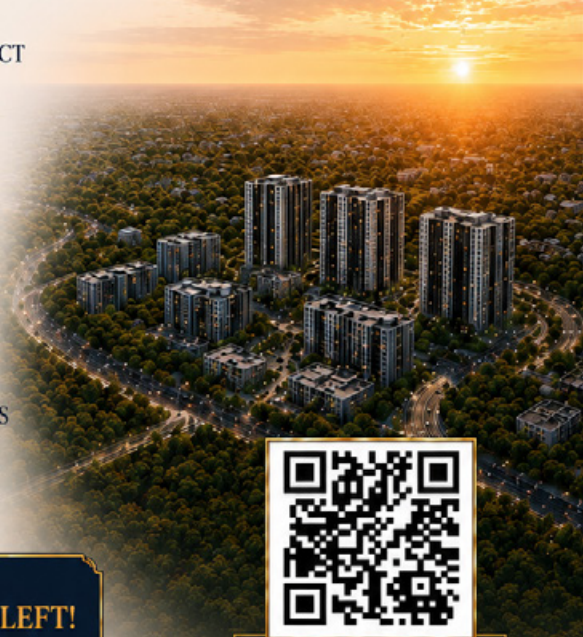
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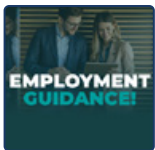
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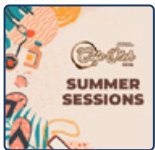


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Towards Meaningful Tefilla: Introduction

Over the past six years, I've had the privilege of writing for Torah Tidbits. I began with a column on Tefilla, continued with another series on the topic of Shabbos, and most recently completed a column on Chinuch. I gained tremendously from each of them, and Baruch Hashem, the feedback was always warm and encouraging. Yet there was something uniquely powerful about the response to the Tefilla column.

Writing the column affected me personally in a profound way. It pushed me to pay closer attention to my own Tefilla, to slow down and focus, even if only for a few moments each day. More than that, it opened my eyes

to the beauty of Tefilla itself: the depth of the words, the careful structure, and the incredible intentionality behind every section of davening.

And I discovered that these feelings were shared by many others as well. Wherever I went, people told me how much the articles were helping them in their own Tefilla. Some shared that they collected the cut-out boxes from the column and kept them as bookmarks in their siddurim, reminders of ideas they wanted to think about while they davened. I never expected the reaction to a Tefilla column to be so overwhelming. And as I continued on to write about other topics, I often found myself wondering - Why were people so particularly drawn to Tefilla?

That question resurfaced recently at a meeting of OU staff focused on Tefilla initiatives. One director shared that when participants were surveyed about which topic they most wanted to learn, the overwhelming response was Tefilla, more than Halacha, Machshava, Tanach, or any other area of Torah. Why would that be?



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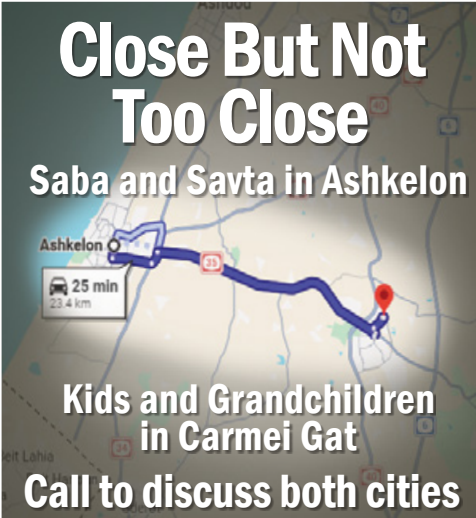
After thinking about it, I realized something profound. We are a generation searching for a deeper connection with Hashem. Of course, learning about Shabbos or Chinuch is important. Growth in every area of Avodat Hashem is important. But what our generation is seeking more than anything else is a real relationship with HaKadosh Baruch Hu.

Maybe in previous generations it was enough to come to shul, be part of a minyan, and say the words. But our generation longs for more than that. We are not satisfied with externalities alone, we have an existential need to get to the inner meaning, the פנימיות. We want to understand the words we are saying, to feel them, and to experience a real connection to Hashem through our Tefilla.

And yet, at the exact same time, we are also a generation of unprecedented distraction. In the age of technology, it has become harder than ever to actually focus when we daven. And so we are left with tension: we crave closeness to Hashem, yet our minds constantly pull us elsewhere.

Perhaps that is why people are so drawn to learning about Tefilla. Because understanding the structure, meaning, and depth behind the words gives us a way back in. Even if we can only focus on one phrase, one bracha, or one idea during davening, that itself becomes a real point of connection.

And so, after much thought, I've come to the conclusion that while the other topics were valuable, it makes the most sense to return to Tefilla in this column. Even though we already went through all of the sections of davening several years ago, it behooves us to do it again. Tefilla is not the kind of Avodah that remains in place on its own. When we actively work on it, it grows and impacts us.



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But the moment we stop paying attention, our concentration weakens and our Tefilla begins to slip. The level of one's Tefilla cannot remain stagnant without constant effort. If we stop working on it, we lose it.

Therefore, going back and beginning again is key. In some articles, we will review ideas from previous years and that itself is important, because meaningful growth always requires review. But I also hope to explore new meforshim, fresh perspectives, and deeper insights, so that our Tefilla never becomes static, but continues to develop and grow together with us over the years.

יְהִי רְצוֹן אֱמֹרֵי פִי וְהִגִּיזוֹן לִבִּי לְפָנֶיךָ — May Hashem grant us the siyata d'Shmaya to discover new depth and insight in Tefilla together, and may our learning inspire us to strengthen our Tefilla and grow in our Avodat Hashem. ■



RABBI AARON GOLDSCHIEDER

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Avot 3:18 - Rav Kook on Pirkei Avot: Rebbe Akiva's Boundless Optimism

He [Rebbe Akiva] used to say: Beloved is man who was created in the Image of God...Beloved are Yisrael who are called the children of the Omnipresent...Beloved are Yisrael who were given a desirable instrument (i.e. the Torah)...” (Avot 3:18)

Rabbi Chaim Volozhin points out a striking contrast between the opening mishnah in chapter three and Rebbe Akiva's teaching in this Mishnah, which comes toward the close of the chapter.

Avot 3:1 painted a bleak picture of man's past, present, and future. Man is to be aware that his life begins with a putrid drop (of semen). Man is buried and one's body is placed in the earth alongside the worms and maggots. Man will then be summoned to stand before the King of Heaven and make an accounting of his transgressions. This perspective on life is meant to elicit reverence and fear so that man refrains from sin and lives humbly.

Rebbe Akiva in Mishnah 3:18 counters those points and highlights the positive in each step of the way. Man is born of a putrid drop, but more significantly, man is created in the image of God. Death is certainly a cause for sorrow, but do not be overly troubled, for each Jew, when passing from this world, is reunited with his Father in Heaven.

And lastly, while it is true that man must give a final reckoning before God, we have been gifted the Torah, which has guided us throughout our lifetime and has saved us countless times from succumbing to the evil inclination. With this “desirable instrument,” this treasure of having the Torah, the Jew will be vindicated from harsh judgment in heaven. (Ruach Chaim, 3:18)

Rebbe Akiva presents a perspective that is empowering and uplifting. He sees the positive and instills hope and faith.

Of the many sages of the Talmud, the Jewish people have been magnetically drawn to the personality of Rebbe Akiva and his heroic courage and positivity.

Rav Kook also took special note of the qualities found in Rebbe Akiva's remarkable character and highlighted one particular teaching of Rebbe Akiva that has left a lasting impact. We begin with the backdrop of the Mishnah (Yadayim 3:5 and see Megillah 7a), which discusses the status of the book of *Shir Hashirim* and considers whether or not to include the book in the holy canon. Rebbe Akiva forcefully argued for its holiness and its inclusion among the sacred writings. He famously asserted: “For the whole world is not as worthy as the day on which Shir Hashirim was given to Israel! For all the writings are holy, but *Shir Hashirim* is the holy of

holies.” (Ibid.)

Rabbi Akiva felt the need to strenuously underscore the sanctity of *Shir Hashirim*. Rav Kook wrote a soaring passage emphasizing why Rebbe Akiva was most suited to take this stand:

“A soul that is insensitive to feelings of romance cannot relate to the tender sensibilities expressed in songs of love. Such a person will pervert those poetic yearnings, reducing them to the level of his own base desires. Similarly, one who has never ascended the heights of holy contemplation, one who has never experienced the uplifting surge of love for the Rock of all worlds - such a person will fail to grasp how the sublime yearnings of *Shir Hashirim* truly reflect the highest aspirations of the Jewish people.” (Olat Reiyah, Commentary to Shir Hashirim)

Rav Kook argued that a sensitive soul, who relates to others with a delicate and abiding love and develops a similarly deep and passionate love toward the Almighty, is a person who will embrace the depth and pure elegance found in each verse of *Shir Hashirim*. However, one who lacks this sensitivity, the book will appear impure and perhaps even profane. Rebbe Akiva's lofty and sensitive soul was able to perceive the book's majesty. Rav Kook goes on to elucidate this point:

“But an insightful person will recognize that the body of literature of this holy nation, whose long history is replete with extraordinary displays of self-sacrifice and martyrdom to sanctify God's name, would be incomplete

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without a suitable expression of their boundless love for God. As he was cruelly put to death at the hands of the Romans, Rebbe Akiva told his students, “All my life I have been troubled by this verse, ‘You will love God... with all your soul’ - even if He takes your soul. When will I have the opportunity to fulfill this?” Rebbe Akiva recited the Shema, and his soul departed when he reached the word *echad*, declaring God's unity (Berachot 61b).” (Ibid.)



Rav Kook points to a profound moment during Rebbe Akiva's life when he expressed his genuine and effusive love for God. Even as he was being tortured, he took it as an opportunity to express his boundless faith and attachment to God.

Rav Kook concludes this passage by sharing the reason why Rebbe Akiva was eminently qualified to teach us about the profound sanctity of *Shir Hashirim*:

“Only a soul as great as Rebbe Akiva could testify that *Shir Hashirim* is the Holy of Holies, and that ‘the entire universe is unworthy of the day that *Shir Hashirim* was given to Israel.’ In his life, Rebbe Akiva experienced love in all of its levels: the personal

love for Kalba Savua's daughter, in its natural purity; the idealistic love for his people, including its fight for independence against Roman occupation; and the lofty love for God, in all of its noble beauty. Thus, Rebbe Akiva was eminently qualified to evaluate the true nature of the love so poetically expressed in Shir Hashirim." (Ibid.)

For Rav Kook, Rebbe Akiva's love for his wife and for his nation were bound up with the love that he shared with God.

It is worthwhile noting that not only was the book of *Shir Hashirim* canonized as part of Tanach, but perhaps unlike any other book of Tanach, it has become traditional practice to recite *Shir Hashirim* at key junctures. Its public recitation is on Pesach. Many recite it after the Pesach Seder. Additionally, many observe the custom to recite the book during the late afternoon on the eve of Shabbat.

Rabbi Akiva's abundant faith in God and faith in his people are emblematic of the positive way he opted to view the world. Returning to his teaching in the Mishnah from Avot above (3:18), Rebbe Akiva emphasizes the redeeming qualities in a Jew that must be acknowledged: A Jew contains within him the *tzelem Elokim*, the image of God, and thus every Jew is holy; every Jew is a child of God and therefore, ipso facto, has a loving Father who is merciful and loving; and thirdly, a Jew is immensely fortunate to be the recipient of Torah, which provides every Jew with the wisdom and inspiration needed to lead meaningful and noble lives. ■



Rabbi Goldscheider's most recent OU Press Publication, "Torah United" on the weekly Parsha, can be ordered directly from Rabbi Goldscheider at aaron@ouisrael.org at a special price for Torah Tidbits readers.

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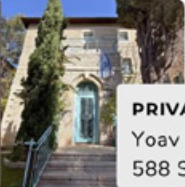
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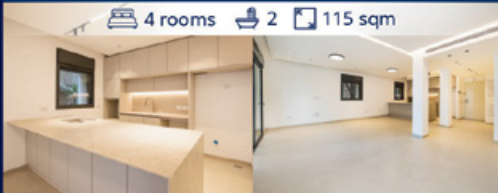
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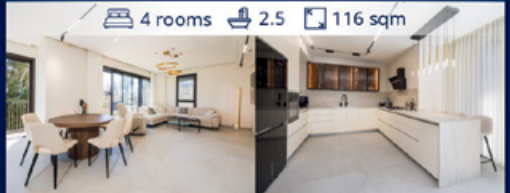
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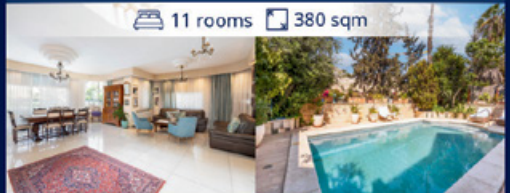
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Teaching Hagbaha to a Son

Question: I can get permission from the *gabbai* to take out a *sefer Torah* to teach my teenage son how to do *hagbaha* properly. Is this permitted?

Answer: We start with the potential problems.

The Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chayim 135:14) disallows taking a *sefer Torah* from its place so that people who cannot come to *shul* can *lain*. The source is a Yerushalmi (Yoma 7:1), which says, before bringing exceptions, that proper respect is that people should be the ones to go to where the Torah is. Within the *shul*, we obviously do not expect people to climb into the *aron kodesh* to read from it, but Dirshu (135:60) cites a *machloket* about whether it can be taken from room to room

in one building.

A related problem that could be more difficult to solve is that it is prohibited to disgrace a holy object (see Shulchan Aruch, OC 154) and certainly a *sefer Torah* (see *ibid.* Yoreh Deah 282) by using it for a mundane purpose. What if the mundane use advances a religious value? The Taz (YD 282:13) forbids using one *sefer* to raise up another one to make it easier to read, as one must not use something holy for a use that is fitting for “wood or stone.” The Magen Avraham (154:14) disagrees and allows one to bring one *sefer* in order to prop up another.

We should now try to determine what we accomplish with *hagbaha* and whether learning/practicing doing it has value. The *gemara* (Megilla 32a) discusses the importance of *gelilla*, which is more like what we call *hagbaha*, as does the Ramban (to Devarim 27:26). While Sephardim do it before *laining* to show the people the holy text to be read (as appears in the original source, Nechemia 8:5), Ashkenazim changed to doing it after *kri'at haTorah*. The change focuses our attention on the element of allowing people to honor our beloved Torah scrolls (see development of this idea in Living the Halachic Process V, D-5).

Is the honor of *sifrei Torah* raised by your teaching/practicing with your son? *Hagbaha* will be done whether or not you teach your son its finer points. The major difference is probably whether he will have the confidence to accept the honor/task when asked, which is about him, not the *sefer Torah*. On the other hand, there may be a time that he will accept

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hagbaha, and the better the job, the better the Torah is honored. Arguably, it also lessens the albeit tiny chance that an untrained boy will drop a *sefer* (people are usually vigilant). If we assume that the lesson increases the honor of *sifrei Torah*, we can eliminate the problem.

Even if we focus on your son, there is a concept of making allowances regarding certain rules in order to educate children. It is permitted for a child to make *berachot* which are objectively *lvatala* to train him in making the *beracha*, and an adult may even feed him the “problematic” wording (Shulchan Aruch, OC 215:3; Mishna Berura 215:14). This applies even for post-bar mitzva men who need education (Igrot Moshe, OC II:56). However, if one views your training as more about “empowering” your son than necessary *mitzva* training, use of a formal *chinuch* allowance becomes questionable (see one application in LTHP VI, A-4).

But this case is probably not “forbidden” per se. Even the Taz (above) was bothered by the prospect of a *sefer* being used for something any object of that size could have been used for. Here, one would be hard pressed to

find a full replacement to learn the special techniques of *hagbaha*.

The only explicit source I found on this question is Chashukei Chemed (Megilla 26b) who quotes Rav Elyashiv as considering such training improper. I see this as a strict ruling, if it is a clear ruling. I suspect he is assuming an audience in which enfranchising a teenager in *shul* is not a recognized need. While my father just discussed strategy with me and did not practice in this way, which is what I did for my sons, if you think such training will be significant for your son, then do it. If you do so, it is preferable to first learn together from the Torah or review halachic qualities (see *ibid.*) and to stress the *sefer Torah*'s beauty and preciousness. ■

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The division of the kingdoms of Israel was a cataclysmic event that continues to reverberate in our contemporary era. The Maggid of Mezeritch, the primary disciple of the Baal Shem Tov, taught that since the division of Malchut Beit David, there is no one who introduces a teaching of Torah or Avodat Hashem without someone offering an opposing view. The origins of *machloket*, of the intellectual argument that characterizes our study of Torah Shebe'al Peh, the Oral Law, lie in the splitting of the Malchut.

Hazal trace the roots of the division of the Malchut to an earlier episode, in which upon David HaMelech's return to Yerushalayim after Avshalom's rebellion was successfully quelled, he encountered Mephiboshet, the son of Yonatan, who had come out to greet him. Previously, upon David's departure from the city, Mephiboshet's servant Tziva had met

David with the report that his master had allied himself with Avshalom, a report which Mephiboshet now assiduously denied. David was in a quandary, for upon hearing Tziva's report he had decreed that all that belonged to Mephiboshet be transferred to Tziva. When he heard Mephiboshet's account of his enduring loyalty to David, David decreed that the property be split between the two. Hazal teach that at that moment, a heavenly voice emerged and stated that Rechav'am and Yerov'am would split the kingdom between them. The gemara continues: Rabbi Yehudah taught in the name of Rav - Had David not accepted the slander of Tziva, the malchut would not have been split, the Jewish people would not have worshipped Avodah Zarah and we would not have been exiled from our land.

The division of the malchut is inextricably linked to the power of speech. The Zohar, in a passage that explains the *sefirot* in correspondence with parts of the body, likens Malchut to the mouth. This idea is explained further through a pasuk in Kohelet: בְּאֵשׁ דָּבַר מֶלֶךְ שְׁלֹטוֹן - The words of the king are authoritative. An effective king rules by the decree of his mouth; thus, his power of speech must be under careful control. Misuse of the power of speech can have disastrous consequences. While this is true for all kings, it is especially

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true of David HaMelech, whose extraordinary power of speech still provides us with daily inspiration in our Avodat Hashem.

The Zohar provides the basis for the teaching of the Maggid mentioned earlier. Since Malchut is associated with the power of speech and argument, there is an inherent relationship between Malchut and Torah Shebe'al Peh. The ability to respectfully communicate and debate ideas is critical to our understanding of the Torah and of one another. The splitting of the Malchut between Rechav'am and Yerov'am was a direct result of an argument in which personal dignity was placed above the integrity of the institution of Malchut. Had Rechav'am listened to the elders, he might have built a relationship with the people he led, establishing connection rather than leading to rupture. So too today, when we debate ideas within the Jewish nation, we must strive to do so respectfully and in unadulterated pursuit of Truth, with a desire to connect with, rather than distance the other.

The Ozherover Rebbe, Rav Moshe Yechiel Halevi Epstein zt"l, teaches that true understanding of Torah is dependent upon rectifying our power of speech. In the bracha preceding Kriyat Shema, Ahavat 'Olam (Nusach Sfarad), we conclude with the following request: וְקִרְבָּתֵנוּ מִלִּפְנֵי לַשִּׁמְךָ הַגָּדוֹל סֵלָה בְּאַמִּתּוֹת

בְּאַהֲבָה לְהוֹדוֹת לְךָ - You have brought us close, **our King**, to Your great Name in absolute truth and with love, that we may give thanks to you... Similarly, at the end of Shmoneh Esrei, we pray that Hashem preserve us from evil speech, followed by a request that He open our hearts to Torah. Malchut, speech and Torah are inherently intertwined.

As we repeatedly encounter the refrain declaring that a state of war existed between the two kingdoms of Israel, let us bear in mind the roots of that conflict, and contemplate how the misuse of our power of speech perpetuates the divisions in our contemporary community. May Hashem grant us success in our attempt to effectively communicate respectfully with others as we await the renewed kingdom of Beit David. ■

Mrs. Leah Feinberg is a master educator who taught at the SKA High School for Girls in Hewlett for twenty-one years, also serving as Tanach Department chairperson and New Teacher Mentor. Leah is currently on the faculty of the OU Israel Center and has taught in all three cycles of the OU Women's Initiative Nach Yomi program

In the **OU Women's Initiative Nach Yomi series**, which just began its fourth cycle, women scholars deliver a daily shiur on the books of Prophets (Neviim) and Writings (Ketuvim) at the pace of a chapter a day. Shiurim are geared toward learners of all levels who would like to participate in the two-year Nach Yomi study cycle. Visit the OU Women's Initiative to register for additional content.



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Should You Touch Up Your Friend's Shidduch Photo?

לעילוי נשמת
מאיר יצחק בן יוסף אליהו הכהן ז"ל

Ora asks:

Hi Aleeza. I have this awesome friend that I'm trying to set up, and men keep rejecting her resume because of the photo. I know this photo isn't the most flattering of her, is it that bad to maybe touch it up a little artificially? I just want to get her to the date stage.

Aleeza answers:

I know the temptation.

Your friend is wonderful. Kind. Smart. Deep. Funny. The kind of person who would make an incredible spouse. And yet every time their shidduch resume goes out, the answer comes back the same way: "No thank you."

Then you look at the picture and think, Honestly? This photo is doing them no favors.

Maybe the lighting is harsh. Maybe they look tired. Maybe the angle is awkward. Maybe you know that in real life they're much more attractive, warm, and magnetic than this one frozen image suggests.

So the question becomes: is it okay to touch up the photo a little to help them get more opportunities?

My answer is no.

And not because I think people need to post the most real version of themselves online. I

absolutely believe people should choose flattering photos. Good lighting matters. A genuine smile matters. Wearing colors that suit you matters. Confidence matters.

But digitally enhancing someone's appearance beyond reality creates a new problem instead of solving the original one.

Because eventually the person has to walk into the date.

And if the reaction becomes, "Wait... this isn't what I expected," then the photo didn't help them find love. It helped them get through a door that immediately becomes uncomfortable for both people.

That's not a foundation you want to build on.

The goal of a shidduch photo is not to create fantasy. The goal is accuracy with warmth. You want someone to look at the picture and think, "I'd love to meet them," and then feel pleasantly surprised in person, not confused.

So what should you do if a friend is getting rejected because of photos?

Get different photos.

Not enhanced ones. Better ones.

Go outside during golden hour. Use natural lighting. Let them wear clothing that makes them feel confident. Capture them laughing instead of posing stiffly against a wall. Ask people who know them well which photos

actually feel like them.

Some people are incredibly photogenic. Others come alive in motion, conversation, energy, and presence. The answer isn't to manufacture beauty that disappears in person. The answer is to communicate who they genuinely are in the most appealing and authentic way possible.

And also, let's be honest, if someone is rejecting based on one imperfect photo alone, that may not be the right match anyway.

Real relationships are not built on filtered perfection. They're built on truth, chemistry, comfort, and connection.

May we all have the courage to present ourselves honestly, the confidence to know our worth goes far beyond a photograph, and the blessing to be loved for who we truly are.

Blessings, Aleeza ■



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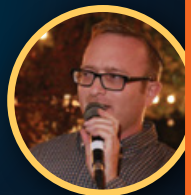




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White and Blue of Tzitzit

The Parasha opens with the *chet hameraglim*, the sin of the spies:

“Send men... and they shall spy out the Land of Canaan... and (addressing those chosen for the task) you shall see the Land for what it is” (13:2, 18).

Two key words: *veyaturu* - and they shall spy out, and *u-re-eetem* – you shall see.

The Parasha closes with the *mitzva* of *tzitzit*:

“You shall see them and remember G-d’s *mitzvot*. You shall not stray after your own hearts and after your own eyes after which you go astray” (15:39).

Same two key words: *ve-lo taturu*, and the identical *u-re-eetem*.

It may be suggested that performing the *mitzva* of *tzitzit* contains a deeper meaning, which does connect us to the *chet meraglim*. That helps us to not make the same mistake as the *meraglim* did in reporting on the Land,

and in not going the way *Am Yisrael* behaved when they heard what the *meraglim* told them.

Let’s first consider the *mitzva* of *tzitzit*. As an approach, the Gemara (Sotah 17a) offers the following insight into the *techeilet* (blue wool) in *Parashat Tzitzit*. Each of the *tzitziot* on the four corners of the garment has four threads, tied and doubled. Three of the threads are *lavan* (white) and one - the longer one - is *techeilet*. *Techeilet*, the Gemara suggests, communicates the sea which, like the sky, spiritually connects with the *kisei hakovod*, G-d’s celestial throne: the higher, the infinite, the beyond human perception, the beyond human understanding, and the unbound by time and space. We can also say that the *lavan*, in contrast to the *techeilet*, suggests clarity, purity, and accessibility.

The Torah tells us *ure-item otam u-zechar-tem et mitzvot hashem*: you shall see them and remember G-d’s *mitzvot*. ‘Them’ includes both the *techeilet* and the *lavan* threads. The *lavan* tells us to access the accessible: study Torah, practice the *mitzvot*, and keep what you learn clear in mind, incorporating it into your behaviour and mental operating system. The *techeilet* reminds us that there exists very much more than we can see, sense, or perceive, which we cannot access as we are only human. The limits of human understanding and human ingenuity

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do not extend to the infinite. This applies even to observable phenomena. For example, the simplest cell in a banana skin. Everything new we find out about cells opens another dozen questions that until then were not even conceived.

Let's now turn to the *chet hameraglim*. Moshe told the men *u-re-eetem et ha'aretz ma hi* – see the land for what it is. Make a brief assessment about the practicalities of conquest. As Rashi explains, if the cities are walled they are likely to be weaker as their defence depends on their city fortifications. If these cities are unwalled and open, the inhabitants are likely to be stronger as they rely and trust on their own strength. But he did not tell them *le-ragel*, to actually spy out the land as sleuths do, although elsewhere, (D'varim 1:24) the Torah reports that's what they did.

It was one thing to see the land and work out the logistics of conquest following Moshe's guidelines. They would then *u-re-eetem*, see and obtain a general impression of the Land of Canaan which was possible in a reasonable time frame. Like the *lavan* of the *tzitzit*, learn what could be learnt by touring. That would be enough; G-d would take care of the rest when the time would come. But it was quite another thing to raise that to the level of espionage which, unbidden, the *meraglim* had done. They did not know Canaanite culture, their way of looking at things. For example, they thought that they were like mere grasshoppers in the eyes of Canaan's giant inhabitants. Yet following Egyptian pursuers dying in the Red Sea only a year previously, they had all been singing out loud "The people heard, they trembled... the inhabitants of Canaan fairly melted" (Shemot 15:14-15).

As the *techeilet* symbolises, there were lots

they didn't understand and couldn't have understood as they didn't grow up among them. The *meraglim* thus looked too hard and got it wrong instead of following Moshe's instructions. Instead of keeping in the region of the *lavan* which was represented by the samples of fruit they brought back, they "strayed after their own hearts and after their own eyes" into what they drew the wrong, panic-inducing conclusions. As the *techeilet* implies, a little supposed knowledge of what you don't understand, but are certain that you do, is dangerous...

It is the *lavan* that symbolizes our ideal day-to-day life. It is the *techeilet* that communicates G-d's Infinity that accommodates our aspirations. It is their combination that prompts us that things are not always as they seem, and that we often have to be patient, to give things time to unfold, instead of immediately dismissing a challenge or rejecting a suggestion. ■

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Let Us Not Be Grasshoppers

Six words in this week's Torah portion, Shelach, reveal a great secret.

Ten of the twelve spies sent to the Land of Israel return to the people in the desert filled with despair. According to them, there is no point in continuing the journey to Israel. As they describe their encounter with the inhabitants of the land, they say:

“We were in our own eyes like grasshoppers, and so we were in their eyes.”

In other words: We saw ourselves as grasshoppers, and therefore that is how we appeared to the people living there as well. We lacked self-confidence. We thought we were small and weak, with no chance of success, and that is how the people we met in the Land perceived us too.

Our self-perception is the foundation. It radiates outward. If we see ourselves as people of worth and meaning, if we go out into the world with optimism, vision, and faith, that is how others will look back at us as well.

This is true with our children. It is true in the workplace, in society, and also on the national level, as a people and as a state.

It is worth asking ourselves: Where, and in what ways, do we see ourselves as grasshoppers? Can we see ourselves differently, and by doing so cause the world to look at us differently too?

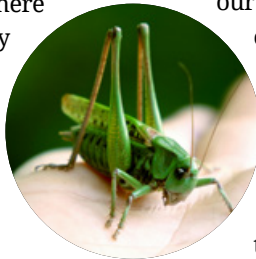
Who Is Telling You the Story?

Our Sages ask us to note that most of the time during our journey through the desert, the problem was not an external enemy but our internal state: our unity, our faith, our motivation. When these are absent, it is impossible to keep moving forward.

Last week, I saw a video featuring the Greek Minister of Health being interviewed on Greek television. In case you didn't see it,

this is what he said: “Really, is there a nation like the Jews? These people took a strip of desert land, smaller than half of our Peloponnese Peninsula, and they have a GDP of 500 billion. If you go there, you see that they produce abundance out of nothing. They are at war with Lebanon, with Iran, with Yemen, with Hamas, with Syria, and they have 3% GDP growth! And when they ask who the happiest people in the world are, they are in the top five. And here, in our Greece, the weather is perfect, everything is beautiful, and whoever you ask how he is responds: ‘Misery, sadness.’ Stop for a moment: he has rockets on his right, rockets on his left, and he says, ‘How happy I am to live in Israel.’ And by us? Here, everything is black. Do you have an explanation?” The minister concludes: “There is no explanation!”

In another incident, Elon Musk, the richest man in the world, was supposed to visit Israel



for the Ministry of Transportation's Innovation Conference. In the end, he traveled with Trump to China, but he still made the effort to join from there by video call for half an hour. This is what he said: "I am a big fan of Israel. I think, objectively, you are number one in the world." Applause was heard in the hall, and he continued: "You achieve incredible results relative to the size of your population. I take my hat off to Israel for its innovation and for everything it does."

There's more: Mathias Döpfner is an important German publisher and the CEO of a media group that owns *Bild* and *Politico*, among other outlets. Just two weeks ago, he said in a speech: "Zionism is racism? No. Anti-Zionism is racism! Zionism is a natural response to thousands of years of persecution, expulsion, and genocide. What seems illogical to me is that Zionism is an idea embraced only by Jews. I am a gentile, and I am a Zionist. Wholeheartedly. With conviction and passion. Israel is our values."

When I told friends about these incidents, they were surprised. They hadn't heard these stories and are under the impression that the world is against us. Who makes them think that way? Who makes us focus only on negativity, on the criticism directed at us, and not on the deep and widespread appreciation that exists as well? Just like in the parashah: who is telling us the story, and who is providing the interpretation of those events? ■

Sivan Rahav-Meir is a media personality and lecturer. Married to Yedidya, the mother of five. Lives in Jerusalem, and formerly served as the World Mizrahi Shlichah to North America. Sivan lectures in Israel and overseas about the media, Judaism, Zionism and new media. She was voted by Globes newspaper as most popular female media personality in Israel and by the Jerusalem Post as one of the 50 most influential Jews in the world.



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HOW MUCH OF OUR LIFE IS SHAPED MORE BY FEAR THAN BY REALITY?

In פרשת שלח, the מרגלים return from ארץ ישראל terrified. They describe giants, fortified cities, and impossible battles. The תורה records their report, but חז"ל teach that the real failure lay not in what they saw — but in how they interpreted it.

After everything ישראל בני had already experienced — קריעת ים סוף, מתן יציאת מצרים, משכן — the מרגלים still concluded that entering the Land was impossible. Instead of interpreting challenges through the lens of השגחה, they reframed everything in terms of fear.

Sometimes we do the same thing. We know there are things we need to face — conversations, responsibilities, personal growth — but instead of admitting fear, we build explanations that make avoidance feel logical. Fear becomes disguised as “realism.”

That is what made כלב different. While the other spies were swept up in panic and public pressure, כלב remained steady and loyal to the truth. The תורה describes that he had (במדבר י"ד:כ"ד) “רוח אחרת עמו”, a different spirit. He refused to be carried away by the fear around him.

The punishment reflected the mistake itself. Hashem says, “יום לשנה יום לשנה”

(במדבר י"ד:ל"ד)— each day of the spies' journey becomes a year in the desert. When a person refuses to move forward, they can remain stuck far longer than they ever intended.

חז"ל teach that when the nation cried that night, Hashem responded, “אתם בכיתם בכיה של חנם ואני אקבע לכם בכיה לדורות” (תענית כ"ט ע"א). Fear that is not confronted does not simply disappear — it shapes future generations.

The מרגלים had everything they needed: Hashem's promise, and open miracles in front of them. Yet they still hesitated.

The question the פרשה leaves us with is simple but uncomfortable: how often do we let fear define our decisions, even when we already have everything we need to move forward?



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HOW A NAME INFLUENCED COURAGE

In this week's parshah, we see that even when faced with death threats, Yehoshua and Calev have the courage to stand up against nearly all of Am Yisrael and stand up for what they believe in. Where and how did they get the courage to stand up against Am Yisrael and speak the truth?

Well, we should first inspect who they are and what shaped them to have such courage

in such a dangerous situation. Yehoshua was Moshe's disciple, and Calev had so much faith in Hashem that he went and prayed in Chevron for the strength to not be influenced by the ten other meraglim. According to Rashi, Moshe also went and prayed for Yehoshua and changed his name from Hoshea to Yehoshua, asking Hashem to save him from the council of the meraglim.

When a name is changed in the Tanakh, it is because of success in a divine struggle. For example, Yaakov was named Yisrael after wrestling with an angel, and Avram became Avraham after he left his home and journeyed to Israel. So too here, when Yehoshua went and tried to calm the angry and fearful horde, standing up in defense of Moshe and Aharon, he proved that his name change was not in vain. It had, in fact, given him the strength to stand up and do what is right. Ultimately, that is what enabled him to stand up to thousands of people in such a dangerous situation, demonstrating the kind of courage that Hashem wants from us. ■

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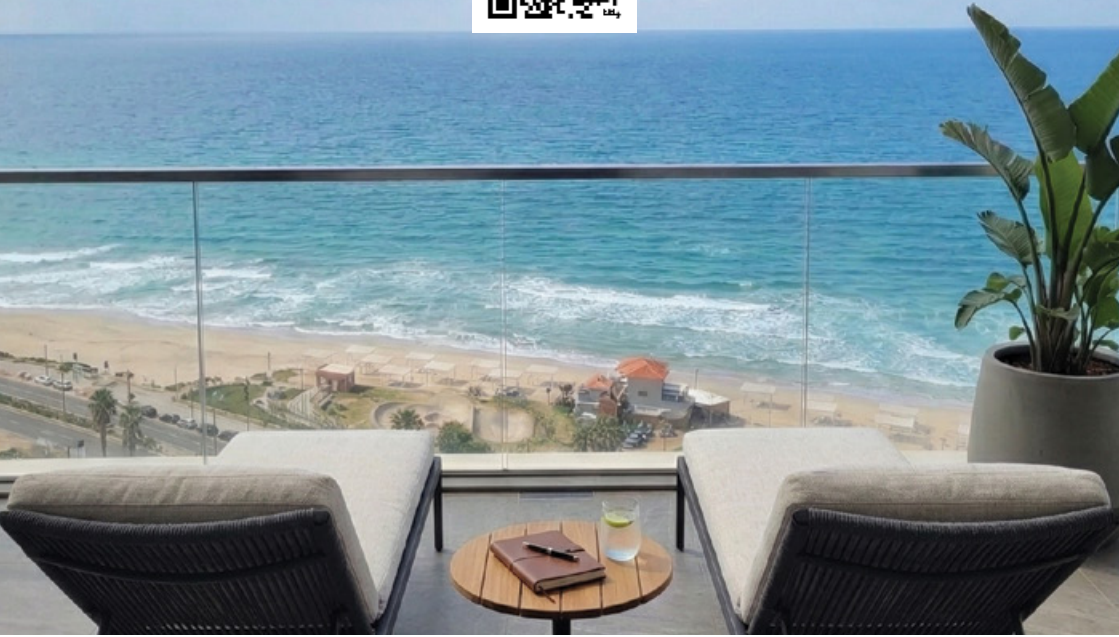
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