



Marsha Stern Talmudical Academy

ישמן קולבו

”יגבר כاري לעמוד בبوك לעבודת בוראו”



Parshas Shelach

פרשת שלח



Outlook and Objectivity

Ephraim Meiri (18)

The *Torah* tells us that the *meraglim* which Moshe sent to scout out the land of *Eretz Yisrael* returned from their mission to report on the nature of the land and its inhabitants (*Bamidbar* 13:23). Rashi (*ibid.*) picks up on the unusual language used to describe their return: “*vayeilchu vayavo’u*,” literally “and they went and they came,” and notes that this language is used to teach us that the scouts’ initial departure (represented by “*vayeilchu*”) was done as part of an “*eitzah ra’ah*”, a bad plan,” just as their return (“*vayavo’u*”) was part of a bad plan. What “*eitzah ra’ah*” did the spies begin with?

The “bad plan” referred to could be some nefarious plot on the part of the ten scouts which was in existence from the outset of their journey, but it is also possible that this phrase simply refers to the people’s idea to send scouts at all, an idea which demonstrated a lack of faith in *Hashem* (as explained by Rashi on *Devarim* 1:23). Moshe recounts (*Devarim* 1:22) “All of you [*Bnei Yisrael*] approached me and said, ‘Let us send men ahead of us...’”. In truth, Moshe wasn’t really interested in sending the spies, but he feared that the people would be scared should he refuse their request, so he acquiesced. It was really the people who chose to send the spies out of a fear of the land, despite *Hashem*’s promise that they would be protected. This is why sending the scouts was considered an “*eitzah ra’ah*”.

However, a question still remains; what is the relevance of the fact that this was a bad plan from the outset? Our *possuk* is dealing with the aftermath of their report; who cares that it was rotten from the start?

The *possuk* tells us that the spies didn’t just report to Moshe and Aharon, but rather to the entire nation. We can contrast this, along with several aspects of this story, with how Yehoshua sends his

spies in *Sefer Yehoshua* (2:1). He sends them of his own initiative and quietly, so that when they come back they only bring their report to him, and he can then talk to the people himself. It is important to have the leader be told first, because the leader can see the information and process it correctly. However, in our *parsha*, it was the people who asked for the expedition, so the scouts reported directly to the people. This did not turn out well, as the spies, despite their greatness, misinterpreted information. When they saw burials in the land, they saw an “*eretz ocheles yoshevha*” (*Bamidbar* 13:32), a land which swallows up its inhabitants, instead of seeing *Hashem*’s kindness in causing these funerals to prevent them from being seen by the residents of the land. Had they left the interpretation of their intelligence mission to Moshe, he would have been able to see the *Yad Hashem* protecting the scouts from being discovered, and the people would not have been left in fear of the land *Hashem* had promised them.

With the phrase “*vayeilchu vayavo’u*”, we are taught the importance of going to people with a greater *Torah* perspective for guidance. In the *zechus* of fighting our natural urge for independence and instead recognizing that our *Rabbeim* are the source of the true *ratzon Hashem*, we should merit to fulfil *Hashem*’s will in every part of our lives.

“Jew Strings”

Shimi Kaufman (21)

As Jews living in the modern world, almost all of us have heard the phrase “Jew Strings” at least once in our lives. Even if we’ve never personally seen it, everyone has heard stories of people on the street asking what the long, white tassels attached to our clothes are for. These instances can be amusing, but stop and think for a moment; if you were asked, right now, why you wear your Jew Strings,

what would you say?

Parshas Shelach is full of examples of sins. Of course, the majority of the *parsha* is taken up by the sin of the *meraglim*, whose *lashon hara* was the root cause for all future exiles (*Arachin* 15b). However, near the back half of the *sedrah*, a few other sins are recounted. In particular, the *parsha* tells us the punishment for worshipping idols, as well as the story of how the first *mechalel Shabbos* was put to death. At the very end of the *parsha*, Hashem tells Moshe about the *mitzvah* of *tzitzis*. Rashi (16:41) comments that the placement of this section is meant to teach us that the *mitzvah* of *tzitzis* can serve as a remedy for these sins of *Shabbos* desecration and idol worship. What relevance does this *mitzvah* have to these sins?

Rav Shamshon Raphael Hirsch, in his commentary on the *Chumash*, points out a unique aspect to the *mitzvah* of *tzitzis*. The language used by Hashem in assigning this *mitzvah* is extremely specific. The *possuk* states: "daber el Bnei Yisroel... vi-asu lahem tzitzis" -- speak to *Bnei Yisroel*, and they will make for themselves *tzitzis*. Nowhere does the *Torah* state that we must wear *tzitzis*; Hashem merely informed us of the *mitzvah*, and we were then instructed to "make it for ourselves". This is codified by the *Shulchan Aruch* (*Orach*

Chaim 24:1), who rules that a person who is not already wearing a four-cornered garment is not obligated in the *mitzvah* of *tzitzis*. Yet, we find that almost every Jewish child is trained from a young age to wear their *tzitzis* all day. Why is this *mitzvah* so central to our national identity if it is not even strictly a requirement?

Rashi (16:39) cites the *Medrash Tanchuma*, which writes that the word *tzitzis* has a numerical value of 600. This, plus the eight strings and five knots on each corner, equals out to 613, the number of *mitzvos* in the *Torah* (*Makkos* 23b). This is the first step to answering our question. Something about the *mitzvah* of *tzitzis* is so essential, so deeply rooted in our faith that Chazal saw in it the entirety of the *Torah*. Based on what we have said thus far, this would appear a bit strange. Considering that by the strict letter of the law one is not even required to wear *tzitzis*, why would this optional *mitzvah* be so essential to our *Torah* observance?

The *possuk* itself states two benefits of the *mitzvah* of *tzitzis*. The first is "vilo sasuru acharei levavchem viacharei eineichem", that you will not stray after your hearts or eyes, and the second is "lima'an tizkiru va'asisem es kol mitzvosai", in order that you will remember and fulfill all My *mitzvos*. It is evident that the main purpose of *tzitzis* is

A Short Vort

Akiva Kra ('21)

In this week's *parsha*, the spies are sent by Moshe to scout *Canaan* (*Bamidbar* 13:1-14:25). The spies were sent in spite of the fact that Hashem had promised the Jewish nation that they would get the land safely. The spies went, scouted the land, and brought back almost only (10 out of 12) negative reports. This was a tragic error: Trying to be wiser than Hashem.

We are told that, "There can be no wisdom, no counsel, and no understanding that is against the word of G-d" (*Mishlei* 21:30). In today's world, many believe that we can develop and control every particle in the air and maximize the use of every resource to its fullest. While one would be silly to shrug off today's technological advances, we must always remember that human wisdom isn't supreme. While it is true that there are geniuses who live amongst us, one can't think that humans know what's truly right and wrong.

Believing this will lead one to make mistakes. For example, Adam and Chava were misled to think that they could acquire wisdom equal to that of Hashem. Because of this, they ate from the *Eitz Hadas* (*Bereishis* 3:4-3:6). The one law that they were given, not to eat from the tree of knowledge, was violated because they thought that they could have knowledge and understanding equal to Hashem.

In *Toras Hamaggid Mezeritz*, a sefer that combines the works of other *seforim* and was first published in 1900, there is a quote from the Mezeritzer (Rabbi Dov Ber of Mezeritch) about who a true believer in Hashem is that directly connects to this. He says, "Who is a true believer in G-d? The man who believes...that only G-d is to be feared and trusted". While we can make high accuracy predictions and great scientific advances, we must always trust that what Hashem has said is true and will continue to be.

If one feels that we can start double checking things Hashem has promised to us, we must realize the mistake we are making. When we try to be wiser than Hashem, we can't possibly succeed. May we always be able to have full faith in Hashem.

to serve as a reminder of our obligation to *Hashem* and his *Torah*. This explanation seems to fit well into the words of the *possuk*: *Hashem* tells us that our *tzitzis* will prevent us from straying “off the *derekh*”, and will remind us of our obligations to *Hashem*. However, if this is the case, what is meant by the warning not to stray “after your heart?” Would it not have been sufficient to simply say “do not stray after your eyes” when you see some forbidden desire?

The *Sefer Hachinuch* (16:1) lays down the general principle that “*acharei hapeulos nimshachim halevavos*” - the heart is pulled after the actions. A person’s actions can directly influence their emotional state. The Jewish ideal is one of *na’aseh vinishma*, where the Divine rituals can inspire feelings of Godliness in us ex post facto. In essence, our decisions are meant to dictate the yearnings of our heart, and not vice-versa. The *possuk* therefore warns us, “*lo sasuru acharei levavchem!* Don’t let yourself be dragged along by your heart’s whims and desires!” And in the same *parsha*, the *Torah* tells us how to combat this: the *mitzvah* of *tzitzis*.

The *Gemara* (*Menachos* 54a) tells a story of a man who was saved from committing a horrendous sexual sin due to the fact that, when he took off his shirt, his *tzitzis* smacked him in the face. This is the main purpose of *tzitzis*, to pull our hearts away from things which are antithetical to the life of a *ben Torah* by reminding us about what is truly important. But again, if *tzitzis* are so essential, why are they voluntary?

We can suggest that the voluntary nature of this *mitzvah* is precisely what makes it so effective. Our *tzitzis* are representative of our individual desire to serve *Hashem*, outside of what is directly demanded of us with *Har Sinai* hanging above our heads. They are representative of a pride in being a member of *Am Yisroel*, of being an *eved Hashem*. Our *tzitzis* are more than eerie reminders of the specter of God’s ever-discerning gaze; they are the reigns by which we, of our own volition, grab our hearts and pull them onto the proper path. They are the *peulah*, the first action which we take in order to direct our hearts on the proper path. *Tzitzis* are a representation of every spark of inspiration, every moment of bliss in serving *Hashem*, condensed into four strings which we can call upon any time. *Tzitzis* remind us that, in our darkest times, true *simcha* comes through proper *avodas Hashem*.

The story is told of Rav Yitzchak Cohen *shlit”a*, one of the RIETS *Roshei Yeshiva*, who was once asked to speak at a *kiruv Shabbaton* for loosely-

affiliated boys. Rav Cohen agreed, on condition that he would be able to speak to the boys alone. The head of the program agreed, and after a forty-five minute speech, almost every boy was begging the staff to buy them *tzitzis*. When asked what he told the boys to make them so enthusiastic, Rav Cohen responded, in typical fashion, “I spoke about *tzitzis*! It’s a very important *mitzvah*!”

I would like to suggest that this is the essence of the *mitzvah* of *tzitzis*. That excitement, that drive to grow in our *avodas Hashem*, is exactly what we are meant to feel whenever we see the strings hanging down from our waists. *Tzitzis* inspire us by reminding us of our spiritual heights, by reminding us of what it means to be a Jew. We voluntarily “don” the 613 *mitzvos* to show that we observe them willingly, with pride and happiness. This is why *tzitzis* are the remedy to the sins of *avodah zarah* and *chillul Shabbos*. The *Gemara* (*Sanhedrin* 74a) tells us that these two sins are reflective of someone who has completely rejected the fundamentals of the Jewish tradition. Such a person wants nothing to do with *Yiddishkeit*; they spit in the face of God by denying the tenants at the core of His *Torah*. *Tzitzis* are the solution to this. They remind a person of the spiritual heights attainable in the pursuit of *Torah* and *yira’as shamayim*. *Tzitzis* inspire us by inspiring pride in our Judaism.

Some people who know me may know that I have longer-than-average *tzitzis* strings. The truth is, this was an accident; I bought strings for my *begadim* that were a few sizes too large, and never bothered to change them. But over time, I’ve come to realize that there is something remarkable about having one’s *tzitzis* overtly recognizable. There is some *halachic* dispute as to whether or not one should wear their *tzitzis* strings hanging out. Most authorities agree that one should, but there are some dissenting views. The *Aruch Hashulchan* (*Hilchos Tzitzis* 8:17), in commenting on this *machlokes*, makes a stirring statement. He writes “*af shemidina ein zeh me’akev, lamah neivosh bimitzvas Hashem?*” - even if this is not required by strict *halacha*, why are you ashamed of a mitzvah from Hashem? If the whole point of the *mitzvah* of *tzitzis* is to inspire pride and joy in our *avodas Hashem*, then how dare we hide them? Why are we embarrassed to leave our *tzitzis* out?

“Jew Strings” is actually a rather accurate name for our *tzitzis*. These strings show us what it means to take pride in our *Yiddishkeit*. These strings pull us out of the darkest points in our *avodas Hashem*. These strings recall for us every successful *tefillah*, every *seder*, every *kumzitz*,

every time that we've felt especially connected to our Creator. These strings remind us what it is to be Jewish.

Confidence and Humility

Shneur Agronin (21)

In the beginning of *Parshas Shelach*, *Hashem* allows Moshe, at the behest of the *Bnei Yisrael*, to send spies into *Eretz Yisrael* to evaluate the land and its inhabitants. After listing the names of the men chosen to spy, the *Torah* describes how Moshe called Hoshea, his student and eventual successor spying for the tribe of *Ephraim*, "Yehoshua" before sending him and the rest of the spies off (*Bamidbar* 13:16). *Rashi* explains that Moshe changed Hoshea's name to one which calls upon Hashem's salvation, as Moshe derived "Yehoshua" from "May *Hashem* be your savior," in order to summon *Hashem* to guard Yehoshua from the slanderous testimony the spies would later give. Interestingly, *Targum Yonasan* adds that Moshe changed Yehoshua's name due to "his observance of his [Yehoshua's] great humility." Why did *Targum Yonasan* add this perplexing detail into his Aramaic translation, and what can we learn from it?

One need not search far to understand the high regard which Judaism holds for the attribute of humility. Listed as one of the forty-eight character traits necessary to properly understand the *Torah* (*Avos* 6:5) and as a standard by which *Hashem* conducts Himself (*Megillah* 31a), humility undoubtedly signifies the highest levels of spiritual growth attainable. Yet, even should one grasp hold of this sterling quality, they must protect themselves from the potential dangers of being "too humble." An "overly" humble person risks falling prey to the inability to defend their beliefs and moral standards in the face of others' objections. One infamous example of an "overly" humble figure yielding inappropriately to their lowly view of themselves is when Shaul *Hamelech* spared the king of the Amalekites against *Hashem*'s direct command. Shmuel *Hanavi* reprimanded Shaul for this, stating that his exalted status as the anointed king of *Hashem* meant that he should have asserted his own power and killed the Amalekite king despite the latter's pleas. Shaul's humility was misplaced here, since he should have asserted himself and summoned up the courage to do the correct thing.

In our case, *Targum Yonasan* informs us of the reason for Moshe's appropriately-timed prayer to *Hashem* concerning Yehoshua. Rabbi

Dr. Avraham J. Twerski writes (*Twerski on Chumash*) that Moshe feared, in recognizing his student's unparalleled humility, that Yehoshua might find himself unable to repudiate the other spies' claims about the land, and to assert his own valid report. Thus, Moshe gave Hoshea the name of Yehoshua, asking *Hashem* to save Yehoshua from his own humility, and to remind him that, sometimes, it is necessary to stand up for what he knows to be right. The same holds true for all of us today. We, as Jews, have faced considerable opposition to our beliefs, traditions, and laws that we hold at the center of our collective existence. Over the centuries, our enemies ranging from the Ancient Greeks to the Spaniards of the 15th century have repeatedly tried to suppress Jewish expression in the form of *Torah* observance. Yet, congruous with the directive to act humbly, we have fought valiantly against our oppressors' efforts by continuing to hold fast to our national identity as the *Am Hashem*. As we continue to encounter resistance to the Jewish way of life, we must continue to both develop our individual attributes of humility, while recognizing that we stand straight and tall in confidently living our lives according to the *Torah*.

Why did Moshe Allow the Meraglim

Yisroel Hochman (21)

This week's *Parsha* begins with *Hashem* telling Moshe that he could send out the spies to scope out *Eretz Yisroel*. It is a common opinion in the commentaries that *Hashem* did not really want the spies to be sent out, but rather that *Hashem* allowed the people to send out spies on their insistence in order to assuage their fears. The question is, why did Moshe pass relate the permission given to send out spies if he knew that *Hashem* did not really want them to be sent?

The *Ohr Hachaim Hakadosh* asks a similar question in regards to the language the very first *possuk* of this week's *Parsha* uses. He comments that the use of the word "*leimor*" (saying) implies that *Hashem* was giving a commandment for the people. This is peculiar, as we know the command was intended specifically for Moshe, to allow him to send out the spies. The *Ohr Hachaim* suggests that the *possuk* used the word *leimor* to imply to the people that Moshe was not speaking on his own but rather only because he had *Hashem*'s permission. This shows that while *Hashem* allowed the expedition of the spies, he nev-

er commanded it. This strengthens our question: If *Hashem* never wanted the spies to be sent, why wouldn't Moshe just disallow the whole mission despite *Hashem*'s acquiescence?

One might be tempted to suggest that the reason Moshe sent out the spies was because *Hashem*'s use of the words "send for yourself" was really a command, leaving Moshe with no real choice in the matter. Rav Shamshon Raphael Hirsch makes it clear that while this may appear like a command, *Hashem* is really telling Moshe that he must be the one who decides who goes on the expedition, in order to ensure that the results of the expedition are positive. Rav Hirsch, therefore, suggests that the reason Moshe went along with the will of the people was that he thought that he could stack the expedition with those he trusted, in order to ensure that the

group's findings would be presented in a positive light, boosting the people's faith in their conquest.

Another possible explanation that is suggested is that Moshe told the people that *Hashem* allowed the expedition in order to get them to come to the realization that *Hashem* did not want the spies to go themselves. By saying that *Hashem* merely "allowed" the entire affair, Moshe hoped that the people would realize their mistake. Another explanation of the word "allow" could be that Moshe hoped to show confidence in the land by allowing the spies to go in. Moshe then hoped that the people would realize they had nothing to fear. However, the people lacked faith and wanted to hear about the land from their own peers. Moshe was then pushed by them into actually sending the expedition.

5 Minute Lomdus

Shimi Kaufman (21)

Q. The Rambam, in his *Sefer Hamitzvos*, counts the donning of the *tefillin shel yad* and the *tefillin shel rosh* as two separate *mitzvos*. However, regarding the requirement to put on *tzitzis* with both white and *techeiles* strings, the Rambam counts the two as one *mitzvah*. At first glance, it would appear that the difference between the two cases is that the two types of *tefillin* are placed as two separate actions, while the white and *techeiles* strings are put on at the same time. However, by *krias shema*, the Rambam writes that *krias shema* in the morning and *krias shema* in the evening are one *mitzvah*, even though they are two separate actions! With this in mind, why are *tefillin shel yad* and *shel rosh* counted as two separate *mitzvos*, but the white and *techeiles* strings of *tzitzis* are only counted as one?

A. While the white and *techeiles* strings of *tzitzis* may be different, they are still part of one *cheftza* (object) of *tzitzis*. This is also true by *krias shema*, where the "cheftza" of the specific passages read is the same; it merely needs to be read at different points throughout the day. Therefore, because both of these *mitzvos* are tied to a single object, they are counted as one *mitzvah*. However, the two types of *tefillin* are two separate objects! It therefore emerges that the Rambam holds that the deciding factor for determining whether something is one *mitzvah* or two is if they are done with the same object, or two separate objects.

-Source: *Mishmeres Chaim Chelek I, "Tzitzis"* 1

Parsha Summary

As the Jewish people prepare to enter *Eretz Yisroel*, they begin to get nervous, and demand that Moshe send a group of spies ahead to scout out the land to prepare for the invasion. Moshe agrees, and sends the *Nesi'im* of the different tribes, as well as Kalev Ben Yefunah and Hoshea Ben Nun. Moshe adds a letter of *Hashem*'s name onto the beginning of Hoshea's name in order to serve as protection. "Hoshea" therefore became "Yehoshua", the primary *talmid* of Moshe *Rabbeinu*. The spies return with a negative and jarring report about the land and its dangerous nature, causing the people to panic and wail. The spies brought back the massive fruits of the land in order to prove to the Jews that the residents of the land were giants who would easily crush them. Only Kalev and Yehoshua attempt to calm the people by telling them that *Hashem* would be with them. *Hashem* is angered that the people got upset over the spies' slander, but Moshe manages to appeal to Him on the people's behalf. However, *Hashem* punishes the nation by killing the spies and condemning them to wander for 40 years in the desert, in which time every male from 20 to 60 would perish. *Hashem* then tells Moshe the *halachos* of *challah* and of the communal *olah* offering. The *Torah* then records a story about a man who violated *Shabbos* by picking up sticks in a *reshus harabim*, and was therefore the first person ever to be put to death for violating the *Shabbos*. The *parsha* ends with the commandment to wear strings of *tzitzis* with *techeiles* on any four-cornered garment.

Gedolim Glimpse : Rav Moshe Avigdor Ameil

Meir Morell (22)

Rabbi Moshe Avigdor Ameil (1883–1946) was born in Lithuania. He went to learn under his father in Telshe from a young age. He then moved on to learn in Vilna under Rabbi Chaim Soloveitchik and Rabbi Chaim Ozer Grodzinsky. He received *semicha* when he was eighteen, and moved on to be the Rabbi of Swieciany, where he founded a large *yeshiva*. In 1913, he became Rabbi of Grajewo, located on the border between Russia and Germany.

He became one of the first Rabbis to publicly join the Mizrachi movement, applying his speaking and writing abilities to the cause of Religious Zionism and questions of national interest. In 1920, he was elected as one of the delegates to represent Mizrachi of Poland at the Mizrachi World Convention in Amsterdam. There he made such an impression upon the Jewish community that he was given the post of Rabbi of Antwerp, one of the largest and richest Jewish communities of the time. He set up a system of lower *yeshivos* for girls and boys by creating the Jewish Day School, as well as religious institutes of higher learning.

Realizing that he must actively work to fulfill his Zionist ideas, Rabbi Ameil made *aliyah* in 1936 in order to serve as Chief Rabbi of Tel Aviv. This area had the largest concentration of Jewish population in the *yishuv*, and presented a great deal of challenges for Rabbi Ameil. Particularly difficult was the constant need to en-gender good relations between the religious and non-religious segments of the community. During his tenure, he set up a *yeshiva* high school which taught religious subjects in the morning and secular in the afternoon. This *yeshiva*, named Yeshivas Hayishuv Hachadash, was used as the pattern for the Bnei Akiva *yeshivot* which were subsequently established. After his death the *yeshiva* was renamed Yeshivas HaRav Ameil.

He also continued his work on behalf of Mizrachi in *Eretz Yisrael*, as well as running many *Torah* institutions in the country. He was a renowned author who produced many works in the areas of *halacha*, *aggada*, *machshava*, and Religious Zionism. His main work was *Hamidos Lacheiker Hahalacha*, about the way *lomdos* works. He died in Tel Aviv in 1946.

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