

# Toras Aish

## Thoughts From Across the Torah Spectrum

**CHIEF RABBI LORD JONATHAN SACKS**

### Covenant & Conversation

Our sedra ends with one of the great commands of Judaism -- tsitsit, the fringes we wear on the corner of our garments as a perennial reminder of our identity as Jews and our obligation to keep the Torah's commands: "G-d spoke to Moses, telling him to speak to the Israelites and instruct them to make for themselves fringes on the corners of their garments for all generations. Let them attach a cord of blue to the fringe at each corner. That shall be your fringe: look at it and recall all the commandments of the Lord and observe them, so that you do not stray after your heart and eyes which in the past have led you to immorality. You will thus remember and keep all my commandments and be holy to your G-d."

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 Nahum 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 tsitsit 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] tsitsit, it is not fitting for a pious individual to exempt himself from this command" (Laws of Tsitsit, 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?

He gave this answer: there are two kinds of clothing. There are the clothes we wear to project an image. A king, a judge, 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. They hide 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 tsitsit 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 G-d has made of us. We feel the need to come before G-d as something more than just ourselves. We wrap ourselves in the robe, the tallit, the great symbol of the Jewish people at prayer. We conceal 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 G-d: 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 G-d to judge us, not for what we are, but for what we wish to be.

The deeper symbolism of tsitsit, however, is that it represents the commandments as a whole ("look at it and recall all the commandments of the Lord") -- and these becomes part of what and who we are only when we accept them without coercion, of our own free

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will. That is why the command of *tsitsit* 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 chose to do so. We obligate ourselves. That is why opting to wear *tsitsit* 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 G-d 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 *tsitsit* as undergarment, 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 G-d's word and call to us. Over this we say the blessing, "who has commanded us concerning the precept of *tsitsit*" because what matters is not the mask but the reality, not what we wish to seem but what we really are.

In this striking way *tsitsit* 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 a command.

But there is also our inner life as people of faith. There are things we can say to G-d 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 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 dimensions of the life of faith -- the outer persona and the inner person, the image we present to the world and the face we show only to G-d. © 2013 Chief Rabbi Lord J. Sacks and torah.org

**RABBI SHLOMO RISKIN**

## Shabbat Shalom

“**T**here we saw the giants who were the children of giants; we were in our own eyes as grasshoppers, and so were we in their eyes.”

(Numbers 13:33)

The most difficult incident in the desert was the refusal of the Israelites to conquer the Land of Israel. Had they left Egypt and made their way directly to the Promised Land, the redemption would have happened immediately. Hence, while the sin of the Golden Calf was forgiven by G-d as a result of Moses' entreaties, the reverberations of the sin of the scouts continues throughout the generations. The day they refused to conquer Israel was the ninth day of Av, a true doomsday of Jewish history, on which we commemorate the destruction of both Temples, the expulsion of Jews during the Spanish Inquisition and the Nuremberg decrees that signaled the beginning of the Holocaust.

What is the connection between the sin of the scouts and the commandment of the ritual fringes that concludes the portion of *Shlach*? What comment does it make on the backsliding of the People of Israel vis-a-vis the Land of Israel? The *Sfat Emet* (Yehuda Aryeh Leib Alter, 1847-1905) explains the sins of the scouts in profound psychological terms. He asks how renowned men, princes of their tribes who had just experienced the miracles of the Exodus from Egypt, could lose their faith in G-d to such an extent that they refused to attempt the conquest of Israel. His response is that their sin was not a lack of faith in G-d; their sin was a lack of faith in themselves.

The scouts made a reconnaissance tour of the land and were struck by the strength of the peoples who lived there and the fortifications they had built. "There we saw the giants who were the children of giants; we were in our own eyes as grasshoppers, and so were we in their eyes." (Numbers 13:33)

The scouts seem to have been dumbstruck by the power of the indigenous peoples and by their own impotence. With that sentence of self-deprecation - and with its inherent message that if we see ourselves as being small and powerless that is exactly how our enemies will see us - the 13th chapter of the Book of Numbers concludes. Chapter 14 begins, "And the entire congregation lifted up their voices, gave forth a cry and the nation wept on that night." Our rabbis teach that this was the night of the ninth of Av. (Ta'anit 29a). Their sin was that they didn't believe in themselves.

I can readily understand why this was the case. After all, the Israelites had just concluded a period of 210 years of enslavement in Egypt. James Baldwin, the well-known champion of rights for blacks in South Africa and America, put it very well when he said: "I can forgive the whites for subjugating the blacks. I can

never forgive the whites for making the blacks believe that they were worthy of being subjugated."

This is the well-known syndrome of the battered wife who remains with her husband because she has come to believe that she deserves to be beaten. The Israelites had been persecuted for so long and dehumanized to such an extent that they had lost the image of G-d within themselves, that they no longer felt the empowerment of free human beings.

This is the most profound message of the ritual fringes and specifically of the t'chelet. The ritual fringes, the white threads entwined with the royal blue thread, are reminiscent of the blue-white of the sea, of the blue-white of the heavens and of the presence of G-d, whose dwelling place is in the heavens above. The first message of the ritual fringes, therefore, is to remind us - whenever we look at our garment (and in Talmudic times they wore four-cornered outer garments which were always punctuated with the ritual fringes) - of G-d and His commandments, which must follow us wherever we go just as our outer garment follows us wherever we go.

But there is a second idea. The High Priest in the Sanctuary wore a tzitz (turban) made of t'chelet with words upon it reading "Holy unto the Lord." T'chelet was the highest symbol of the high priest and t'chelet was the color that emanated from the expensive dye taken from the rare hilazon fish; it was worn by royalty and by the aristocracy.

Every Israelite male was commanded to wear t'chelet because he was indeed a miniature high priest (the word "tzitzit" is derived from "tzitz"), imbued and emboldened with the command to be a member of a sacred nation and a kingdom of priests/teachers to all of humanity. We dare not forget the high calling with which G-d charged us to bring blessing and redemption to the entire world. We dare not lose faith in ourselves, because if we do the world will not be redeemed.

This is the final message of the portion of Shlach, bidding us to understand that only through our kingship and sovereignty over Israel will we be able to see to it that "Torah will come forth from Zion and the word of G-d from Jerusalem to the entire world." © 2013 *Ohr Torah Institutions & Rabbi S. Riskin*

#### **RABBI BEREL WEIN**

### **Wein Online**

**T**his week's parsha raises the age-old issue of human behavior - altruism over personal interest and gain. While we all pay lip service to the concept and ideal of altruism when dealing with public affairs and the general good, we all remain human beings and the Talmud long ago posited that "a human being is first and foremost closest and prejudiced to one's own self and interests."

The conflict between the general good of many and the private benefit to the few or even to one

individual is the stuff of politics, government, power and influence. It is the basic motif in all human existence and history. Our sense of rectitude and conscience is constantly buffeted by self-interest and personal factors and reckonings. We are born as selfish grasping individuals and the challenges in life that follow all revolve about our ability to recognize and modify this basic human instinct.

One may say that all of the commandments and laws of the Torah come to enable us to counter this instinct that is part of us from the moment of our birth. This is what the rabbis meant when they taught us that the "evil instinct" - the innate selfishness and purely self-interested nature of humans - is with us from our first breath on this earth. The struggle to include others - family, community, fellow Jews and human beings generally - into our worldview is the story of our lives and existence.

The Torah attributes to Avraham victory in this struggle and it is he, above all others, who is seen as our father and role model, the founder of G-d's people.

One of the explanations offered by the commentators to the negative behavior and damning report regarding the Land of Israel is that the spies - who were the leaders of their tribes - were aware that when the Jews entered the Land of Israel, new leaders were to be chosen and they, the Jews, were in jeopardy of losing their titles and positions of power and influence. This awareness preyed upon their minds and prejudiced their view of the Land of Israel.

Their perceived personal gain and position overwhelmed the general good of the people they were supposed to serve. This has always been a plague of communal leadership, when hubris and self-service dominate the sight of the leadership so that one is unable to distinguish between public good and one's private interests.

Even worse, many times the private interest of the leader is disguised as being the public good. Dictators have always stated that "I am the state!" The great prophet Shmuel is characterized in the same category as Moshe and Aharon because of his selflessness in leading the Jewish people. The tragedy of the spies, and of the Jewish people of that generation generally, is this inability to rise over personal interests and view the general picture of Jewish destiny and accomplishment.

Like many a leader blinded by one's own agenda of ideas and events, the spies soon descended into falsehoods and slander to make their case. The tragedy in cases such as this is that the people often follow this flawed leadership, bringing calamity upon one and all. We should always be wary of the true motives of those who profess to lead us for the alleged public good. © 2013 *Rabbi Berel Wein - Jewish historian, author and international lecturer offers a complete selection of CDs, audio tapes, video tapes, DVDs, and books on*

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## MACHON ZOMET

# Shabbat B'Shabbato

by Rabbi Mordechai Greenberg

Rosh Yeshiva, Kerem B'Yavne

It is written in the Sifri, "Rabbi Yishmael says, Why is it written, 'Do not follow your hearts' [Bamidbar 15:39]? Since it is written, 'Be happy, youth, with your childhood and follow the dictates of your heart' [Kohellet 11:9], I might think that I can choose the righteous path or whatever I want, and we are therefore taught, 'Do not follow your hearts.'" But this is not at all clear. Why would we have thought that a person is allowed to choose whatever path he wants, even including sin?

In several places in his commentary on the Torah, the Natziv notes that a person should constantly check himself to determine the realm in which he can fulfill his obligation to serve G-d. Many people turn in directions that are not suited for them, and the result is that they become restless, embittered, and frustrated.

"And now, Yisrael, what does G-d want from you, except to fear G-d... to love Him... to observe His mitzvot..." [Devarim 10:12-13]. The way Moshe words his question implies that his demand is a small matter, but we might well ask what else is left to demand after fear, love, and observing all of the mitzvot. The Natziv sees the nation of Yisrael as divided into four groups: Torah scholars, leaders, men of the community, and women. From each group the Holy One, Blessed be He, demands what is most appropriate. From Torah scholars He demands love, from the leaders He demands a fear of G-d, from the simple men He demands observance of the mitzvot, and from the women He demands good deeds. That is why the separate elements in Moshe's question are not separated by the word "and" -- each one is relevant for a specific role in life. "Each one has his or her own covenant, what G-d demands from one He does not demand from anybody else. In fact, it is almost as if each deed is prohibited to the other groups."

And this idea can help us to explain the Midrash quoted above from the Sifri. "Follow the dictates of your heart" does not include permission to commit a sin but rather that a person should choose the realm that is most appropriate for him or her in the Torah. "The process of constantly serving G-d within the framework of Torah is not the same for all people. One might labor over the Torah all day long, another might do physical labor or kind deeds, but everything is in the name of heaven. In Torah study itself the paths are not all the same, and neither are the ways to perform mitzvot."

In the Talmud we are told that scholars would ask each other, "With what did your father take the most care?" And he would receive an answer, such as, Shabbat or tzitzit. Each one had a special area which he felt was close to him in terms of his soul and his talents.

But this must always remain within the bounds of Torah. And this is what the Sifri asks, is there an option of choosing any path that I want? The answer is "Do not turn away." The word "latur" means to explore and search for novel paths, and we might have thought that we can search for new ways to serve G-d, even outside the limits of Torah. The answer is "Do not turn away" -- not to look for new paths and new mitzvot but remain strictly within the Torah and the 613 mitzvot.

Within the framework of the Torah and the mitzvot a person should find the area which will allow him or her to achieve fulfillment. The realm of the Torah is broad enough to provide spiritual satisfaction, and there is no need to go beyond the bounds.

## Shall the Women Make themselves Tzitzit?

by Yogli Roichman, Midreshet Alumah, Ariel

This week's Torah portion ends with the mitzva of tzitzit. According to the Midrash, this is a general mitzva. "And you shall see... and you shall do" [Bamidbar 15:39]. The Torah tells us that anybody who observes the mitzva of tzitzit is considered as if he has observed all of the mitzvot." (See Menachot 43b).

Why is this so? "And you shall not turn to follow your hearts and your eyes" [Bamidbar 15:39]. Tzitzit guard over a person to prevent him from being enticed to follow the evil inclination. The blue color of techelet reminds one of his obligations to heaven and to all of the 613 mitzvot. Rashi brings a different mystic hint that links tzitzit to the mitzvot. The numerical value of tzitzit is 600. Add to this eight strings and five knots, and this brings you to a value of 613, the number of mitzvot.

At first glance, we might assume that if this mitzva is so vital, women should also be obligated to observe it. This is one opinion that is raised in the Talmud (Menachot 43a). "Speak to Bnei Yisrael, and say to them" -- this would seem to include women too. They seem to be included in the wording of the verse! However, Rabbi Shimon releases women from the obligation, "since a positive mitzva that is time-related is relevant for men and not for women." A similar discussion takes place with respect to the mitzva of wearing tefillin, which is also time-related. As is well known, the accepted halacha releases women from both mitzvot.

Even though women are not obligated to wear tzitzit, some of them want to perform the mitzva. What is the halacha in this matter?

The RAMA comments on the ruling in the Shulchan Aruch which releases women from the mitzva of tzitzit: "In any case, if they want to wrap themselves in a talit and recite the blessing, they are allowed to do so, just as is the case for the other mitzvot which are time related." [Orach Chaim 17:2].

There is in fact testimony during our history about some women who did put on tefillin. For example, "Michal Bat Kushi (that is, the daughter of King Shaul) put on tefillin, and the sages did not stop her" [Eiruvin

96a]. The Talmud brings two reasons why the wise men allow women to wear tefillin. Perhaps those who allow it feel that the mitzva of tefillin is also relevant at night such that the mitzva is not time related (but this has not been accepted as the halacha!), or that even though women are not obligated they are allowed to observe the mitzva.

It is said that Rashi's daughters wore tefillin. In recent generations we have heard legends about the "Virgin of Ludmir" who behaved as a Chassidic Rebbe and wore a talit and tefillin. Her disciples would make pilgrimages to her to receive her blessings and to study lessons in Chassidism.

In spite of various testimony, the rabbis refrained from approving such practices. After the RAMA writes that in principle a woman can wear tzitzit, he adds that doing so gives the appearance of arrogance, "and a woman should therefore not wear tzitzit."

Why does a woman who wears tzitzit appear arrogant, any more than one who listens to the shofar blast or sits in a succah? The RAMA explains that this is a special case, since there is no general obligation of tzitzit for a person who does not have a garment with four corners. In order for the obligation to take effect, the person must purposely buy or make a garment that is appropriate for the mitzva. A woman who obtains such a garment is giving out a message that she is at a higher level than others, and this is the source of the arrogance.

In spite of these reservations, many rabbis agree with the following ruling: "Women who want to wear a talit are permitted to do so in private. According to the custom of Ashkenaz they should recite a blessing, and according to the custom of Sefard they should not recite a blessing" [Rabbi Eliezer Melamed, Peninei Halacha].

Thus, we have seen above that the answer to our question is not unequivocal. On one hand there were some very righteous women who observed the mitzva and were not scolded by the rabbis, while on the other hand many sages did not look at this custom favorably.

When is this type of action a worthy one, and when is it forbidden? Rabbi Moshe Feinstein, one of the giants of Torah rulings in our generation, writes, "Every woman is allowed to observe mitzvot that the Torah did not obligate her to perform, and they are rewarded for observing the mitzva." But he immediately adds the following reservation: "But this is clearly so only when she has a desire to observe the mitzva even though she was not commanded to do so. But if this is not her intent, but she does so in order to criticize G-d and His Torah, it is not the action of a mitzva but rather a forbidden act." [Igrot Moshe, Orach Chaim 4:49].

Thus, if wearing tefillin and putting on a talit are actions taken as a statement against existing tradition

and not for pure motives, the act is transformed from a mitzva into a sin.

The very same action can be a mitzva or a sin, depending on the intention and how pure the desire is! © 2013 Rabbi A. Bazak and Machon Zomet. Translated by Moshe Goldberg

### RABBI AVI WEISS

## Shabbat Forshpeis

In this week's portion, Moshe sends forth spies to search out the land of Israel. This is the first step leading to the conquest of the land.

Maimonides points out that the holiness of that conquest continued for as long as we remain sovereign in the land. Once Israel was destroyed by the Babylonians, the holiness ceased. (Yad, Hilkhot Beit ha-Bekhirah 6:16) Interestingly, Maimonides states that when we re-entered the land with the permission of King Cyrus of Persia seventy years later, the holiness became eternal, continuing even after Israel was destroyed by the Romans. Why was the first holiness finite and the second eternal?

Maimonides suggests that the distinction lies in the methodology of taking the land. Conquering the land through military means lasts for as long as we are the conquerors. Once we are conquered, the holiness comes to an end. Peacefully settling the land as we did in the time of King Cyrus, is more powerful and has the capacity to continue on, even after destruction.

Rav Soloveitchik offers another distinction. In Joshua's conquest, Jerusalem was the last city to be liberated. In the time of Cyrus, it was the first. The holiness of Jerusalem comes from G-d. Being the final area to be liberated in the period of Joshua, Jerusalem had little impact on the rest of the land. In the time of Cyrus, Jerusalem impacts powerfully on the rest of the land for it was the first city to be conquered. Indeed, just as the holiness of Jerusalem comes from G-d and is, therefore, eternal, similarly the holiness of all of the land of Israel lasts forever when impacted by Jerusalem.

One final suggestion: Perhaps the difference lies in understanding the contrast between an event which occurs for the first time, and an event which is repeated. The first time something happens, the happening is as powerful as when it occurred. But once something is lost and still despite that loss, is restarted, the power of beginning again is so unusual that it is everlasting. It shows that one's involvement is not the function of the enthusiasm of a "first" decision. It is rather a thoughtful constant, ongoing involvement. In Jerusalem's case, it is eternal.

Some think that the most beautiful, the most lasting of experiences, of relationships, is the first. Yet often that is not the case. The real test of one's fortitude is what happens after one has failed. If even then, one can restart. That second start is considered so noble that it has the power to be even stronger than the first and often has the strength to last forever. © 2013

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### **RABBI DOV KRAMER**

## **Taking a Closer Look**

**T**he second to last thing described in this week's Parasha is the "m'koshaiish," the individual who did a prohibited activity on Shabbos. Rashi, based on the Sifre, says that this incident was a disgrace for the nation, as they only kept the first Shabbos, the second being desecrated by the "m'koshaiish." Since the laws of Shabbos were first given at Marah three days after crossing through the split sea (see Rashi on Sh'mos 15:25), were explained further when the mun (manna) first started to fall (16:22-30), and were included in the proclamations made at the public revelation at Mt. Sinai (20:8-11), it seems rather obvious that the "first" Shabbos occurred in the first year after the exodus from Egypt. Therefore, the "m'koshaiish" incident, if it happened on the second Shabbos, must have been in that first year as well.

However, if this occurred in the first year, why is it first mentioned now, when the narrative has taken us well into the second year? Rashi himself tells us that the "m'koshaiish" happened at the same time as the "m'kalel," the individual who cursed G-d (Vayikra 24:12). Since Rashi explained (24:10) that the blaspheming occurred after things that happened in the second year (seeing that fresh bread was made only once per week in the Mishkan, which wasn't completed until Nisan in the second year, and being told that he couldn't dwell with the tribe of Dun, with the tribal encampments being set up in the second month of the second year), it would seem just as obvious that the "m'koshaiish" must have happened in the second year!

Add to this that Rashi (Vayikra 24:12, also in the Sifre) says that the only confusion surrounding the "m'koshaiish" was what type of capital punishment he deserved, as they knew that he deserved the death penalty because they were told "those who desecrate [Shabbos] shall be put to death" (Sh'mos 31:14). But this information came after the commandment to build the Mishkan (see Rashi on 31:13), which was after the third set of 40 days/nights that Moshe spent on Mt. Sinai, i.e. months after the commandment to keep Shabbos was given! How could they know that the "m'koshaiish" had to die if his desecration happened on the second Shabbos, months before they were told that not keeping Shabbos is a capital offense?

Rabbeinu Shimshon, in his commentary on Toras Kohanim (14:4, see also Y'riyos Sh'lomo and Maskil L'Dovid), quotes a slightly different version of the Sifre, where instead of saying that the Children of Israel only kept the first Shabbos, the wording is that they only kept it the first year, but not the second. If that was the Sifre's intent, then it is telling us that the "m'koshaiish"

incident did in fact happen in the second year, not the first. However, when Rashi paraphrases the Sifre, he frames it as "first Shabbos/second Shabbos," not "first year/second year," so even if this approach works in the Sifre, it cannot be applied to Rashi. In his commentary on the Sifre, Rabbi Dovid Pardo admits that the approach he put forth in Maskil L'Dovid (his commentary on Rashi) was a stretch (he didn't change the wording of the Sifre, only the intent), and instead suggests that "first Shabbos/second Shabbos" is not meant to be taken literally, but refers to kabbalistic concepts that are euphemisms for the first year/second year. However, since Rashi doesn't use kabbalistic euphemisms to explain the plain meaning of verses in the Torah, it is highly unlikely that this was his intent.

Netziv, in his commentary on the Sifre, makes a very strong case that it was only the very first Shabbos that was kept; every Shabbos after that was not. In Yechezkel (20:12-14), it is quite clear that chilul Shabbos (desecration of the Sabbath) was rampant, which is why the Sifre says Moshe had to appoint watchmen to enforce Sabbath observance. Most of the time, when the watchmen were around, the chilul Shabbos stopped. The "m'koshaiish" was the exception, as he continued even after he was warned that he would be put to death. The Sifre is saying that it was a disgrace that after the first Shabbos, starting with the second one, the laws of Shabbos were violated. The Sifre isn't saying that the "m'koshaiish" incident occurred on that second Shabbos, but that chilul Shabbos did; this particular incident happened in the second year. Here again though, the way Rashi paraphrases the Sifre ("and on the second this one came and desecrated it") precludes Netziv's approach from being his intent.

Gur Aryeh and L'vush (on Vayikra 24:10) both suggest that even though the "m'koshaiish" incident happened in the first year, he was kept in jail until the second year. Each gives a different reason why G-d wanted to hold off on punishing the "m'koshaiish" until the second year, but the bottom line is that if he was still in jail when the "m'kalel" was incarcerated, they would have both been imprisoned at the same time. However, Rashi's wording indicates that both incidents occurred at about the same time, not just that they were imprisoned at the same time.

There is another, related, issue discussed by the commentators at length. The Talmud (Shabbos 118b) says that even the very first Shabbos was desecrated, "as it says, 'and it was on the seventh day that some of the nation went out to gather (the mun)'" (Sh'mos 16:27). How could Rashi say that they kept the first Shabbos, when the Talmud clearly says that they didn't! Addressing this issue may lead to a possible explanation as to how Rashi could say that the "m'koshaiish" desecrated the second Shabbos if the "m'kalel" happened in the second year.

Tosfos (Shabbos 87b) asks how the Talmud could claim it was the first Shabbos that they

desecrated, since there were two of them between Marah (where they were first commanded about Shabbos) and when they were first given the manna, making it the third Shabbos that was desecrated. Although Tosfos gives no answer, based on how Ramban explains Rashi (Sh'mos 15:25), that the laws given at Marah were to be studied, but not (yet) observed, we can understand why the Talmud considers the Shabbos of the manna -- which they were commanded to observe -- the "first" Shabbos, as it was the first Shabbos that they were actually required to keep. So far, we have two "first" Shabbosos; when they were first taught about it, and when they were first required to observe it. There were other "firsts" as well.

The public revelation at Mt. Sinai, when G-d descended upon the mountain and communicated with us directly, gave new meaning (and status) even to those commandments that had been given earlier (i.e. the Noachide Laws, *gid ha-nasheh*, etc.). In effect, despite having desecrated the "first Shabbos" after it was originally commanded, the giving of the Torah on Mt. Sinai gave them a fresh start, and the first Shabbos afterwards (in Sivan of 2448) was also considered the "first" Shabbos. Similarly, after the "golden calf," the Mishkan represented the covenant being re-established (see Rashi on Sh'mos 38:21). Abarbanel says that the Mishkan was an attempt to recreate the Mt. Sinai experience, including (or especially) G-d's presence dwelling among us. Shabbos itself was given new meaning, as the categories of prohibited activities were defined as the activities necessary to build the Mishkan. After the details of the Mishkan were laid out, the very first thing G-d told Moshe to tell the nation was to keep Shabbos (Shemos 31:12-17), to reiterate its importance. Just as Mt. Sinai created a fresh beginning, so too did the Mishkan give the nation a new start. And the first Shabbos after the Mishkan was built could therefore also be considered the "first" Shabbos.

Since the Mishkan was built on Nisan 1, 2449, almost a year after the exodus from Egypt, the second Shabbos would have also been in Nisan 2449. This could have been the Shabbos that the "m'koshahish" incident happened, and since it was after the "m'kalel" saw that the "showbread" was baked fresh only once a week, both incidents could very well have been at the same time. If the tribal encampments, which occurred a month later, were what brought the "m'kalel" to blasphemy, it's possible that the "m'koshahish" was kept in prison for a few weeks, and was still there when the blaspheming occurred. The reasons given by Gur Aryeh and L'vush to leave the "m'koshahish" in prison apply here as well, and are more palatable if the wait was a matter of weeks rather than close to a year. Targum Yonasan offers additional reasons why Moshe purposely waited a bit before executing the "m'koshahish," reasons that necessitate only a short wait, and are somewhat undermined if it was a long wait.

If the "m'koshahish" desecrated the second Shabbos after the Mishkan was built, it would still be a disgrace for the nation, would have occurred during the same time period as the "m'kalel," and was well after it was known that the punishment for desecrating the Sabbath was death. © 2013 Rabbi D. Kramer

**RABBI AVI WEISS**

## Shabbat Forshpeis

In this week's portion, Moshe sends forth spies to search out the land of Israel. This is the first step leading to the conquest of the land.

Maimonides points out that the holiness of that conquest continued for as long as we remain sovereign in the land. Once Israel was destroyed by the Babylonians, the holiness ceased. (Yad, *Hilkhot Beit ha-Bekhirah* 6:16)

Interestingly, Maimonides states that when we re-entered the land with the permission of King Cyrus of Persia seventy years later, the holiness became eternal, continuing even after Israel was destroyed by the Romans. Why was the first holiness finite and the second eternal?

Maimonides suggests that the distinction lies in the methodology of taking the land. Conquering the land through military means lasts for as long as we are the conquerors. Once we are conquered, the holiness comes to an end. Peacefully settling the land as we did in the time of King Cyrus, is more powerful and has the capacity to continue on, even after destruction.

Rav Soloveitchik offers another distinction. In Joshua's conquest, Jerusalem was the last city to be liberated. In the time of Cyrus, it was the first. The holiness of Jerusalem comes from G-d. Being the final area to be liberated in the period of Joshua, Jerusalem had little impact on the rest of the land. In the time of Cyrus, Jerusalem impacts powerfully on the rest of the land for it was the first city to be conquered. Indeed, just as the holiness of Jerusalem comes from G-d and is, therefore, eternal, similarly the holiness of all of the land of Israel lasts forever when impacted by Jerusalem.

One final suggestion: Perhaps the difference lies in understanding the contrast between an event which occurs for the first time, and an event which is repeated. The first time something happens, the happening is as powerful as when it occurred. But once something is lost and still despite that loss, is restarted, the power of beginning again is so unusual that it is everlasting. It shows that one's involvement is not the function of the enthusiasm of a "first" decision. It is rather a thoughtful constant, ongoing involvement. In Jerusalem's case, it is eternal.

Some think that the most beautiful, the most lasting of experiences, of relationships, is the first. Yet often that is not the case. The real test of one's fortitude is what happens after one has failed. If even then, one can restart. That second start is considered so noble

that it has the power to be even stronger than the first and often has the strength to last forever. © 2013 Hebrew Institute of Riverdale & CJC-AMCHA. Rabbi Avi Weiss is Founder and Dean of Yeshivat Chovevei Torah, the Open Orthodox Rabbinical School, and Senior Rabbi of the Hebrew Institute of Riverdale.

### RABBI DOVID SIEGEL

## Haftorah

**T**his week's haftorah displays the power of perfect faith and its miraculous results. The haftorah begins with Yehoshua sending two special individuals on a secret mission to investigate the land of Israel. The Jewish people were camped directly facing the Promised Land and Yehoshua sought to determine the most strategic point of entry. This mission was extremely dangerous because the land's inhabitants natives were well aware of the pending Jewish invasion of their land.

Yehoshua instructed the spies to survey all of Eretz Yisroel but devote special focus on Yericho. They crossed the Jordan and went directly to Rachav's inn, the first one inside the city's walls. The king discovered them immediately and sent messengers to order Rachav to release the intruders. Out of the goodness of her heart, Rachav engaged herself in an unbelievable act of heroism. She swiftly hid the spies and then persuaded the king's messengers that the spies fled the city. Once the messengers were out of sight she informed the spies that everyone was awestricken by the Jewish nation and its Hashem. She then proclaimed her personal recognition of Hashem as master of the universe and her firm belief that He would easily defeat all in His way.

Chazal reflect upon this most unusual welcome and sharply contrast it with the disheartening experience of this week's parsha. Therein we read about ten men of distinction who were sent on a similar mission to survey Eretz Yisroel. Yet, their results were devastating and the spies ultimately convinced the nation to reject Eretz Yisroel. Chazal reveal the fundamental difference between the two groups. The spies in Yehoshua's times were totally devoted to their mission. They were prepared to overcome every obstacle in their way and therefore met unbelievable success. Conversely, the spies in Moshe's times were not fully committed to their mission. This apparently tainted their vision and created their distorted impression of the land and its inhabitants. (see Yalkut Shimoni 8)

In truth, Eretz Yisroel presented extraordinary challenges to the Jewish people. Its inhabitants were far from friendly to its intruders and nothing short of an open miracle could secure the nation's safety. Moshe Rabbeinu's spies displayed grave concern over this. They observed the giant's towering stature and took note of their constant preoccupation in eulogies and funerals. The spies sadly succumbed to their well-

grounded fears and forfeited their privilege of entering the land. Yehoshua's spies possessed perfect faith and total commitment to their mission. This inner strength dissuaded them from the influence of their frightening experiences and assisted them in their perfect fulfillment of their mission

This stark contrast serves as a profound lesson in total faith and trust in Hashem. From a practical standpoint, Yehoshua's spies stood no chance and faced guaranteed death. The Jewish nation was camped within earshot of Eretz Yisroel and this secret mission was bound to be discovered. Although, the spies disguised themselves as traveling salesmen it is hard to fathom that such pious men could truly pass as Canaanites. All they had going for themselves was steadfast faith and trust in Hashem. They bravely entered the "lion's den" and lodged in Rachav's inn. Rachav was fondly known throughout the land and enjoyed warm personal association with all the authorities. The results were no different than one would predict and the spies were discovered the moment they entered her inn.

However, with perfect faith in Hashem the events that followed were far from predictable. Chazal reveal a most startling display of Divine Providence and inform us that Rachav had recently embraced the Jewish religion. (see Yalkut Shimoni 9) Hashem had actually directed the spies to the only Jewish soul in the entire land of Canaan. Their faith proved rewarding and instead of delivering the spies to the king, Rachav extended herself in every way to her recently discovered Jewish brethren. She encouraged them with profound statements of faith and was ultimately a catalyst to deliver the Promised Land into Jewish hands. Hashem favorably rewarded her for her heroism and she subsequently merited to marry Yehoshua himself. Her new life was very fruitful and she became the mother of many Jewish prophets and priests. In retrospect, the spies' perfect faith resulted in securing the deliverance of the land into their Jewish brethren's hands. Instead of immediate death the spies returned with total confidence that Eretz Yisroel would soon be theirs.

These are some of the unbelievable results of perfect faith. Let it be the will of Hashem that we continue our strides in faith and commitment serving as a special merit for us to return to our Homeland in peace and harmony. © 2013 Rabbi D. Siegel and Project Genesis, Inc.

