

Toras Aish

Thoughts From Across the Torah Spectrum

RABBI LORD JONATHAN SACKS ZT"l

Covenant & Conversation

Whose idea was it to send the spies? According to this week's sedra, it was God.

"The Lord said to Moses, 'Send some men to explore the land of Canaan, which I am giving to the Israelites. From each ancestral tribe send one of its leaders.' So at the Lord's command Moses sent them out from the Desert of Paran." (Numbers 13:1-3)

According to Moses in Deuteronomy, it was the people: "Then all of you came to me and said, 'Let us send men ahead to spy out the land for us and bring back a report about the route we are to take and the towns we will come to.' The idea seemed good to me; so I selected twelve of you, one man from each tribe." (Deut. 1:22-23)

Rashi reconciles the apparent contradiction. The people came to Moses with their request. Moses asked God what he should do. God gave him permission to send the spies. He did not command it; He merely did not oppose it. "Where a person wants to go, that is where he is led" (Makkot 10b) -- so said the sages. Meaning: God does not stop people from a course of action on which they are intent, even though He knows that it may end in tragedy. Such is the nature of the freedom God has given us. It includes the freedom to make mistakes.

However, Maimonides (Guide for the Perplexed III:32) offers an interpretation that gives a different perspective to the whole episode. He begins by noting the verse (Ex. 13:17) with which the exodus begins: "When Pharaoh let the people go, God did not lead them on the road through the Philistine country, though that was shorter. For God said, 'If they face war, they might change their minds and return to Egypt.' So God led the people around by the desert road toward the Reed Sea."

Maimonides comments: "Here God led the people about, away from the direct route he had originally intended, because He feared that they might encounter hardships too great for their present strength. So He took them by a different route in order to achieve His original object." He then adds the following: "It is a

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well-known fact that traveling in the wilderness without physical comforts such as bathing produces courage, while the opposite produces faint-heartedness. Besides this, another generation rose during the wanderings that had not been accustomed to degradation and slavery."

According to Maimonides, then, it was irrelevant who sent the spies. Nor was the verdict after the episode -- that the people would be condemned to spend 40 years in the wilderness, and that it would only be their children who would enter the land -- a punishment as such. It was an inevitable consequence of human nature.

It takes more than a few days or weeks to turn a population of slaves into a nation capable of handling the responsibilities of freedom. In the case of the Israelites it needed a generation born in liberty, hardened by the experience of the desert, untrammelled by habits of servitude. Freedom takes time, and there are no shortcuts. Often it takes a very long time indeed.

That dimension of time is fundamental to the Jewish view of politics and human progress. That is why, in the Torah, Moses repeatedly tells the adults to educate their children, to tell them the story of the past, to "remember". It is why the covenant itself is extended through time -- handed on from one generation to the next. It is why the story of the Israelites is told at such length in Tanakh: the time-span covered by the Hebrew Bible is a thousand years from the days of Moses to the last of the prophets. It is why God acts in and through history.

Unlike Christianity or Islam there is, in Judaism, no sudden transformation of the human condition, no one moment or single generation in which everything significant is fully disclosed. Why, asks Maimonides (Guide, III: 32), did God not simply give the Israelites in the desert the strength or self-confidence they needed to cross the Jordan and enter the land? His answer: because it would have meant saying goodbye to human freedom, choice and responsibility. Even God Himself, implies Maimonides, has to work with the grain of human nature and its all-too-slow pace of change. Not because God cannot change people: of course He can. He created them; He could re-create them. The reason is that God chooses not to. He practices what the Safed Kabbalists called *tzimtzum*, self-limitation. He wants human beings to construct a society of freedom -- and how could He do that if, in order to bring it about, He had to deprive them of the very freedom He wanted them to create.

There are some things a parent may not do for a child if he or she wants the child to become an adult. There are some things even God must choose not to do for His people if He wants them to grow to moral and political maturity. In one of my books I called this the chronological imagination, as opposed to the Greek logical imagination. Logic lacks the dimension of time. That is why philosophers tend to be either rigidly conservative (Plato did not want poets in his Republic; they threatened to disturb the social order) or profoundly revolutionary (Rousseau, Marx). The current social order is either right or wrong. If it is right, we should not change it. If it is wrong, we should overthrow it. The fact that change takes time, even many generations, is not an idea easy to square with philosophy (even those philosophers, like Hegel and Marx, who factored in time, did so mechanically, speaking about "historical inevitability" rather than the unpredictable exercise of freedom).

One of the odd facts about Western civilisation in recent centuries is that the people who have been most eloquent about tradition -- Edmund Burke, Michael Oakeshott, T.S. Eliot -- have been deeply conservative, defenders of the status quo. Yet there is no reason why a tradition should be conservative. We can hand on to our children not only our past but also our unrealised ideals. We can want them to go beyond us; to travel further on the road to freedom than we were able to do. That, for example, is how the Seder service on Pesach begins: "This year, slaves, next year free; this year here, next year in Israel". A tradition can be evolutionary without being revolutionary.

That is the lesson of the spies. Despite the Divine anger, the people were not condemned to permanent exile. They simply had to face the fact that their children would achieve what they themselves were not ready for.

People still forget this. The wars in Afghanistan and Iraq were undertaken, at least in part, in the name of democracy and freedom. Yet that is the work not of a war, but of education, society-building, and the slow acceptance of responsibility. It takes generations. Sometimes it never happens at all. The people -- like the Israelites, demoralised by the spies' report -- lose heart and want to go back to the predictable past ("Let us choose a leader and go back to Egypt"), not the unseen, hazardous, demanding future. That is why, historically, there have been more tyrannies than democracies.

The politics of liberty demands patience. It needs years of struggle without giving up hope. The late Emmanuel Levinas spoke about "difficult freedom" -- and freedom always is difficult. The story of the spies tells us that the generation who left Egypt were not yet ready for it. That was their tragedy.

But their children would be. That was their consolation. *Covenant and Conversation is kindly supported by the Maurice Wohl Charitable Foundation in*

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RABBI SHLOMO RISKIN

Shabbat Shalom

“**A**nd the Lord spoke to Moses saying ‘send forth for yourself men to explore the land of Canaan...’ (Numbers 13:1-2) The great sin of humanity was Adam’s disregard of God’s command not to eat the fruit of knowledge; the great sin of Israel was the Israelites’ disregard of God’s command to conquer the land of Israel. The result of both rebellious actions was Paradise lost; redemption unrealized.

A proper understanding of the sin of the scouts will serve to illuminate our true mission in the world, and the role played by Torah and the land of Israel in fulfilling that mission.

First, three questions: (1) If indeed the sending out of the spies was to result in such a disaster, why was it initially commanded by God? (2) Rashi links the sin of the scouts to the last incident of last week’s Torah portion when Miriam slandered her brother Moses for sending away his wife Zipporah, for which she was punished by leprosy. What does the sin of the Scouts have to do with the sin of Miriam? (3) How is the commandment of the ritual fringes at the end of our portion connected to the sin of the scouts?

Rav Soloveitchik explained that Miriam was upset with Moses for divorcing Zipporah after the Revelation at Sinai, because she thought he was disobeying God’s command to all of the Israelites to “return to their tents” (Deuteronomy 5:30); that is, to resume their usual sexual relationships. Miriam and Aaron both maintained that this command applied to everyone, including the prophets, because, as they both said, “Was it only to Moses that God communicated? Did he not communicate to us as well?” (Numbers 12:2)

But Miriam and Aaron were wrong. Moses is a qualitatively different prophet than they or any other prophets were or will be. God speaks to Moses “mouth to mouth... in a clear vision, not in riddles: he gazes upon the image of the Lord” (Numbers 12:6-8). And indeed, God Himself tells Moses not to return to his tent with the rest of Israel, but rather to express his unique prophetic status by always being “on call” to receive God’s words: “Let the rest of the Israelites return to their tents and wives) but you (Moses) are to remain standing here with me...” (Deuteronomy 5:30; see Maimonides, Laws of the Foundations of Torah 7:6 and Avishai David, Discourses, Shelah, p.317).

Miriam did not recognize the uniqueness of Moses’ prophecy, and the scouts did not recognize the uniqueness of the Land of Israel. The mission of Israel is to be God’s witnesses (Isaiah 55); and God communicated His word to all of Israel at Sinai and through Israel (eventually) to the entire world.

But God still had an exclusively and uniquely

intimate relationship with Moses. God loves the entire world and He created every human being from His womb (Job 31:15); but nevertheless, He enjoys an exclusive relationship with Israel – His witnesses, the carriers of His Torah.

Similarly, God's command, "you shall love your friend, created – like you – in the Divine Image, as you love yourself," (Leviticus 19:18) still allows for a unique and exclusive relationship between husband and wife. According to the Talmud, this emanates from the very same verse (BT Kiddushin 44a).

This combination of universal love and exclusive intimacy applies as well to the land of Israel. "The earth and its fullness belongs to the Lord" (Psalms 24:1), but there is a unique portion of the earth, the land of Israel, which must express the will of God in its very earth (shmitta), in its produce (tithes, pe'ah), in the teachings of peace and redemption for all humanity which will emanate from the Jerusalem Temple at the end of the days.

God told Moses to "explore" the land, not to spy it out (le'ragel). The Hebrew word used to explore is *latur*. *Tur* means to love, even to lust after, as we learn from the command of the ritual fringes (Num.15:37-41). Just as the Talmud teaches that a man must first see his bride before becoming engaged to her so that he may be certain that he loves her (BT Kidushin 41a), so must Israel the people see and love Israel the land (even through the eyes of their agents, the tribal princes) before conquering it, before becoming engaged and wed to it. The desert generation did not understand God's command.

Our task is to make earth a sanctuary for God's Presence, so humanity will finally accept God's definition of good and evil rather than humanity's subjective and self-serving self-justification. Heaven kissed Earth when God uniquely informed Moses of His will, Heaven kissed Earth when God chose Israel as His agents; Heaven will kiss Earth eternally when Israel lives on its land and builds a sanctuary to encompass all of humanity and God together, "His house a House of Prayer for all nations" (Isaiah 56:7). We must strive for Paradise to be regained, for the great and sacred marriage between God and the world to be consummated. ©2023 *Ohr Torah Institutions & Rabbi S. Riskin*

RABBI BEREL WEIN

Wein Online

The attitude of Jews towards the Land of Israel has always been a litmus type of test of Jewish commitment and even faith throughout the ages. As we see in this week's parsha, from the beginning of our national existence there have always been Jews – leading Jews, well-intentioned Jews, even outwardly pious Jews – who have preferred living somewhere else in the world than living in the Land of Israel.

Even when Hitler came to power, European

Jews, in many cases, refused to consider the option of immigration to the Land of Israel. It is not my place to judge others for their behavior in a very dreadful time, especially since I am blessed with the perfect hindsight that they tragically lacked, but it is a strange fact that throughout Jewish history the naysayers regarding the Land of Israel in Jewish society have always abounded.

Jews in the generation of Moses claimed their preference for the land of Egypt over the Land of Israel. An entire generation of special and gifted Jews was destroyed in the desert of Sinai because of their unwillingness to consider living in the Land of Israel as a viable option for them and their descendants. The challenge of living in the Land of Israel was apparently too great a problem for them to overcome - physically, psychologically and spiritually.

To me this attitude remains one of the supreme mysteries of all of Jewish history. But mystery or not, it certainly is a fact that has governed Jewish life over the ages.

When Moses' own relative refused the offer to go to the Land of Israel, Rashi explains that the two reasons for his behavior had to do with family and making a living. These are very strong reasons that exist today that prevent many Jews from considering immigrating to the Land of Israel. Again, I neither judge nor begrudge anyone in this or any other life changing matter.

However, I feel that the issue of the Land of Israel, independent of any other causes and motives, strikes at a very deep place within our personal and national soul. The fact that the most ultra-assimilated and the most outwardly ultra-pious within the Jewish people are included in our generation's most vociferous of the anti-Land of Israel groups, shows that the problem is both deep and sensitive.

The extremes in Jewish society cannot deal with the Land of Israel as a reality and earnestly hope that the issue will somehow disappear completely. There are millions of Jews who prefer living in exile to living in the Land of Israel. The Jewish people has not absorbed the lessons of the exile, its alienation, assimilation, and its ultimate corruption of Torah values.

Today, many Jews who physically live in the Land of Israel still psychologically and spiritually live in the exile, in a fantasy of the long-destroyed shtetel of Eastern Europe. As foretold to us by our prophets, the ultimate fate of the Jewish people will be determined for us by our attitude to the Land of Israel. Living in the Land of Israel or at least visiting it regularly is currently the centerpiece of Jewish life, its faith and its future. ©2023 *Rabbi Berel Wein - Jewish historian, author and international lecturer offers a complete selection of CDs, audio tapes, video tapes, DVDs, and books on Jewish history at www.rabbiwein.com. For more information on these and other products visit www.rabbiwein.com*

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A Minyan of Ten

Translated by Rabbi Mordechai Weiss

A *minyan*, the presence of ten men, is required for those parts of the prayer service that are deemed *Devarim She-bikdushah* (literally, words of sanctifying). These include *Kaddish*, *Barchu*, *Kedushah*, the repetition of the *Amidah*, and (according to some) the reading of the Torah, the reading of the *Haftarah*, and the priestly blessing. This rule is derived from the verse, “I will be sanctified **among** the children of Israel” (“*Venikdashiti be-toch Bnei Yisrael*”) (*Vayikra* 22:32). How do we know that the number referred to here is specifically ten, neither more nor less?

One way of arriving at ten is through a *gezeirah shavah*. (This is a method of rabbinic exegesis in which a similar word appearing in two different contexts is used to infer that the details of one context apply to the other.) The word “*toch*” (“among”) appears in the verse about sanctifying G-d, and in the story of Korach’s rebellion. Regarding the latter, the Torah states (*Bamidbar* 16:21), “Separate yourselves from **among** (*mi-tokh*) this community (*edah*).” However, there the Torah is referring to a group of 250 people. How is it useful for arriving at the number ten?

This involves a bit more exegesis. The word “*edah*,” which is used in the story of Korach, is also used in reference to the ten spies who spoke badly of the Land of Israel, as we read (*Bamidbar* 14:27), “How much longer will that wicked community (*edah*) keep muttering against Me?” We see that the definition of a community is ten. Thus, the community within which we sanctify G-d’s name must be similar to the spies (not in their sinfulness, of course, but in being free, adult males).

It should be noted that the above is not a combination of one *gezeirah shavah* with another (*toch-toch* and *edah-edah*), which would possibly break a rule of exegesis. Rather, we learn from the case of the spies in Parshat Shelach that the definition of the word “*edah*” is ten everywhere it appears. This includes the verse in Parshat Korach, where the word “*toch*” is associated with ten (through the word “*edah*”). And a *gezeirah shavah* (*toch-toch*) connects that verse with the verse about sanctifying G-d. ©2017 Rabbi M. Weiss and *Encyclopedia Talmudit*

RABBI AVI WEISS

Shabbat Forshpeis

After the Jewish People commit the sin of the golden calf, God declares, “*Va’achalem*” (I will destroy them [the Jewish People]; Exodus 32:10).

Moses intervenes. Challenging God, he asks, “Why, O Lord, would You do this?” (Exodus 32:11).

Responding to Moses’s challenge, God changes His mind. “*Va’yenachem Hashem*” (And the Lord renounced the punishment; Exodus 32:14).

Soon after, God offers the Thirteen Attributes of Divine Mercy: “*Hashem El rachum v’chanun*” – “The Lord! The Lord! a God compassionate and gracious” (Exodus 34:6). Perhaps God is telling Moses, If ever I fail to be true to these characteristics, challenge Me; do everything you can to nullify the decree.

After the spies return with a negative report about Israel and the Jewish People also express their distaste for the mission to enter the land, God declares, “*Akenu*” (I will smite them; Numbers 14:12).

My son, Dr. Dov Weiss, suggests that Moses, as per God’s request, holds God accountable and invokes the thirteen attributes. “*Hashem*,” Moses declares, “*erech apayim v’rav chesed*,” O Lord, but in the thirteen attributes, You said that “You are slow to anger and abounding in kindness” (14:18).

Here, Moses quotes God back to God, making God accountable. He makes this point by insisting, “*Selach na la’avon ha’am hazeh k’godel chasdecha*” (Pardon, I pray, the iniquity of this people according to Your great kindness), and God responds, “*Salachti ki’devarecha*” (I pardon, as you have asked; 14:19, 20). Moses had impacted God – his challenge produced positive results.

It is extraordinary that the intense give-and-take of *selach* and *salachti* between God and Moses becomes central to our liturgy during the Selichot services of the High Holiday season. In fact, these sentences are quoted immediately after the recitation of Kol Nidre on Yom Kippur night. On the very days when we are expected to do better, we respectfully and lovingly turn to God and ask that He, too, improve His ways. ©2023 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 DAVID LEVIN

The Special Fringes

At the end of Parashat Shlach, Hashem commands the B’nei Yisrael about Tzitzit, the fringes that are placed on the corners of a four-cornered garment.

The Ramban brings a Midrash which explains that Moshe spoke to Hashem after the sin of the spies who brought a bad report about the land and after the sin of the man who collected wood on Shabbat, asking Hashem for a sign that would remind the B’nei Yisrael of all of the commandments, especially on Shabbat. Moshe told Hashem that the men already had a reminder every day of the week when they wore their tefillin, but they were missing a sign that would remind them on Shabbat. Hashem then commanded the people on making the tzitzit.

The Torah states, “*Hashem said to Moshe saying, ‘Speak to the Children of Israel and say to them that they shall make themselves tzitzit (fringes) in the corner of their garments, throughout their generations.*”

And they shall place upon the tzitzit of each corner a thread of turquoise wool. It shall constitute tzitzit for you, and you shall see it and you shall remember all the commandments of Hashem and perform them; and you shall not spy after your heart and after your eyes after which you stray. So that you may remember and perform all My commandments and be holy to your Elokim. I am Hashem, your Elokim, Who has taken you out of the land of Egypt to be an Elokim unto you; I am Hashem, your Elokim.”

There is a discussion among the Rabbis as to the meaning of the word tzitzit, which is normally translated as fringes. Rashi explains that the fringe has that Hebrew name “because of the strings which hang from it,” like a “lock of hair.” Alternatively, he derives the word from meitzitz, “peering though the lattices.” This covers both the fringe and the idea of looking at it. HaRav Shamshon Raphael Hirsch derives the word from tzotz, “a movement pressing outwards from inside, hence tzitz, sprouting, blossoming, from the stem and branches of plants.” The term, therefore, involves “issuing forth out of garments.”

Rashi explains how the tzitzit would remind one of the commandments. “For the gematria, the numerical value, of the word tzitzit is six hundred. Add the eight strings of the tzitzit and its five knots, and you have six hundred thirteen, the number of the Torah’s commandments.” The Ramban was unsatisfied with this explanation, as the word tzitzit in the Torah is spelled without the second yud, making its numerical value only five hundred ninety. In addition, the school of Hillel accepted tzitzit made with only three strings, doubled over to make six. Hillel also accepted a minimum of three knots, not five.

The Ramban states that the remembrance of the commandments through looking at the tzitzit cannot be based on the number of strings and knots, nor on the word tzitzit as it appears in the Torah. Instead, he explains that this reminder of the commandments is based on the blue (turquoise) thread alone, “which alludes to the all-inclusive attribute, which is bakol and which is the aim of All. Therefore, He said, ‘that ye may look upon it and remember kol (all), which is the commandments of the Eternal.’” Blue was chosen because it resembles the sea, which resembles the Heavens, which resemble the Throne of Glory. The Kli Yakar posits that looking at the blue of the tzitzit reminds us of the Heaven, which changed its Nature to serve Man willingly at Hashem’s command, and the Sea, which changed its Nature when Hashem set a border of sand at its edges. Looking at the tzitzit, therefore, reminds us that we must change our Nature and accept our limits in service to Hashem. HaRav Zalman Sorotzkin explains that today, when many tzitzit do not have the blue thread because there was a break in the tradition which knew what was the source of the blue dye, one may still remember the commandments by looking at the white

threads alone as they remind one of the white burial garments.

HaRav Sorotzkin explains that remembering the Throne of Glory also is a reminder of Ya’akov, as he was the first of the forefathers who could claim that he performed every commandment, which enabled him to cling to the Throne. We find this in his statement, “I lived (garti) with Lavan.” The word “garti” can be rearranged in Hebrew to form the letters “taryag,” the numerical value of six hundred thirteen, which we have seen is the number of commandments in the Torah.

It is clear from the text that the reason for wearing tzitzit was “u’r’item, you shall view them,” and “u’z’chartem, and you shall remember them,” the commandments of Hashem, “va’asitem otam, and perform them.” This is hinted at from the relationship to the word, meitzitz, peering or intently viewing. Sforno explains that the viewing of the tzitzit is not for counting the commandments but a reminder that we are the servants of Hashem and are thus bound by His commandments.

One of the major advantages to one’s wearing tzitzit is that, by viewing them, they will remind the wearer that “you shall not spy after your heart and after your eyes after which you stray.” HaRav Hirsch explains that the word “taturu, you will spy” is for knowledge, not for protection, but to see “how (something) can be of use and help to us.” The problem with seeking this knowledge is in how one can be tempted away from a proper interpretation of what one finds. The heart can convince one to desire something, the eyes can direct one to follow what his heart desires, and the body will then act upon that desire. The Ramban explains that the Torah cautions Man to avoid being tempted by the heart. He states that the Rabbis interpret “after your own heart” as scepticism, and “after which you stray” as idolatry. Focusing on the tzitzit would assist one to avoid this problem.

HaRav Sorotzkin explains that the usual process for people is to see something and then desire it in one’s heart. Yet the Torah changes the order, placing the heart before the eyes. He explains that this is why Rashi says, “the eye sees and the heart desires.” At first, only one eye sees, and it is easy to turn the heart away from what is seen. But if the heart becomes jealous and desires what the one eye has seen, it now turns both eyes on that which is desired and the body responds by acting on that desire.

Today, most Jews wear tzitzit at least on the corners of the tallit, prayer shawl. Many men also wear an additional tallit katan, a small shawl worn throughout the day. All Jews are bound by the Laws of the Torah, but all are also susceptible to temptation. May the tzitzit that we wear enable us to judge our own actions and control our desires in light of Hashem’s Will. © 2023 Rabbi D. Levin

RABBI JONATHAN GEWIRTZ**Migdal Ohr**

"**A**nd Moshe called Hoshea bin Nun, Yehoshua." (Bamidbar 13:16) Moshe sent spies into the land of Canaan to scout out the land Hashem had promised to the Children of Israel. The men chosen were Tribal leaders, and the Torah lists them by name. At the end, the Torah tells us, "These were the names of the men he sent, and Moshe renamed Hoshea, Yehoshua."

Rashi tells us that Moshe prayed on his student's behalf, that Hashem should protect him from the plan of the spies. By adding the letter yud to call him Yehoshua, it referenced Hashem's name of Ka"h (yud and hei). But if Moshe knew the spies were wicked, why did he go through with the plan of sending them? And if he didn't know, why did he change Yehoshua's name?

To answer this, we look back at other places in the Torah where Yehoshua was mentioned. In Shemos (17:9) for example, it says, "And Moshe said to Yehoshua, choose men for us [to fight Amalek.]" There he was called Yehoshua and it was well before the idea of sending spies came up. We must ask when the name change took place.

A number of commentaries say that from the time Yehoshua became Moshe's student and trusted disciple, his name was already changed. This has precedent elsewhere, as we see Hashem changed Avram's name to Avraham, Yaakov's name to Yisrael, and even Pharaoh changed Yosef's name to Tzafnas Paneach when he earned a trusted place in his service. Thus, when Moshe recognized Yehoshua's greatness as a student, he elevated him by giving him a name with an extra letter of Hashem's name in it.

Additionally, by adding the letter to his name, he went from being named, "salvation," to, "He will save and be saved." It was a blessing and a prayer for him to merit Divine protection, as referenced by Rashi. Moshe saw that Yehoshua was exceedingly humble, and felt he needed the extra letter to help him stand up to the Yetzer Hara and those who would seek to make him capitulate to evil.

When listed among the other spies, he was referred to as Hoshea - a nod, says the Chasam Sofer, to Yehoshua's personal growth, enabling him to stand on his own against the Yetzer Hara. However, when surrounded by evildoers like the meraglim on their journey, the Torah invokes the name Yehoshua again, to indicate the request for Divine assistance in this heightened atmosphere of negativity and danger.

We see the importance and efficacy of davening for others, especially when we see their good and positive traits. We can infer the necessity to pray for ourselves as well, that we be accompanied by Hashem and protected from evil and temptation. We ought not to be too confident in our ability to resist the Yetzer Hara,

as even the greatest people needed help.

Finally, because we find the name Ka"h as aiding Yehoshua, and this name was used in the war against Amalek, we can learn that a key tool in our war with our evil inclination is to take stands for Hashem's honor, and that merit will be a source of protection for us as well.

There is a well-known rule that the greater a person is, the greater his evil inclination is. [If you ever feel your Yetzer Hara is overpowering you, this is a good thing to remember. It means you're more dangerous to him and he needs to fight you.]

A fellow once approached the Vilna Gaon, who spent his days immersed in Torah study and toil, and was known to be a holy individual.

"Ah!" said the fellow. "I wish I had YOUR Yetzer Hara."

The Gaon looked at the man with no irony and said, "Chas V'Shalom! You would never survive." © 2023 Rabbi J. Gewirtz & Migdal Ohr

RABBI AVI SHAFRAN**Cross-Currents**

It might seem peculiar, even morbid, to suggest that looking at tzitzis evokes the specter of death. But, at least for me, it does.

That might be because of photographs I saw in a book many years ago of ancient but fully recognizable hair braids found during the excavation of Masada in the 1950s and 1960s.

Tzitzis are tight braids themselves and, in fact, the word tzitzis itself is used to mean braids of hair, as Rashi points out in our parshah (Bamidbar 15:38), based on the pasuk "He took me bitzitis roshi" -- "by a braid of my hair" (Yechezkel 8:3).

Hair's chemical composition (and, ironically, its tightly coiled protein structure) makes it difficult for enzymes or microbes to break it down. Thus, hair is among remains that can, well, remain, for a long time -- and remind us of the fact that a person once existed on earth but no longer does.

Magnifying the morbidity is the fact that the coils and knots of tzitzis are reminiscent, at least, again, to me, of bones, the other resistant-to-decay parts of a person and another reminder of mortality. And, as it happens, the word for the coils of tzitzis is chulyos, which is the word used as well in messechta Chullin to refer to a spine's vertebrae.

Might tzitzis be a sort of memento mori? Well, they are, after all, intended to spur thought. The Torah tells us not only to place tzitzis but to look at them. And to thus be reminded of "all the mitzvos of Hashem."

The things, that is, that we take with us to the next world, when our physical remains, at least for the time being, are left behind.

As Rabi Levi bar Hama said, if all else fails in the quest to having one's good inclination trump his evil one,

one should "remind himself of the day of death" (Berachos 5a).

Might tzitzis be a spur to such remembering?

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DR. ERICA BROWN

Leadership and Diversity

Diversity in groups creates a higher chance of seeing positive change, according to Forbes Council Panel in the "14 Important Benefits of a More Diverse Leadership Team" (June 24, 2021). Because society is diverse, diverse leadership means "greater depth and breadth of experience and perspective." Diversity increases awareness of different pockets of society, sensitivity to other ways of looking at the same scenario or set of facts, and "pressure-tests assumptions and judgments." This almost always maximizes learning, innovation and honesty. Diverse groups help create more inclusive decisions and outcomes.

"Every team must be made up of people with different roles, strengths, temperaments and perspectives," writes Rabbi Jonathan Sacks in his essay "The Counterpoint of Leadership" (Tetzaveh, Lessons in Leadership). "They must always be open to criticism and they must always be on the alert against groupthink. The glory of Judaism is its insistence that only in heaven is there one commanding Voice. Down here on earth no individual may ever hold a monopoly of leadership."

Diversity in teams has many positive dimensions, but it's not always easy to create or navigate. Jon Katzenbach writes in *The Wisdom of Teams*, that, "Teams do not seek consensus; they seek the best answer." If there is too much consensus, then diversity fails in its value.

This is apparent when reading this week's Torah portion, Shelah. "Send agents to scout the land of Canaan, which I am giving to the Israelite people..." (Num. 13:2), we read as we open the parsha. Whereas God generally told Moses what to do, here He imbued Moses with the authority to select leaders for this reconnaissance mission from each of the twelve tribes: "...send one participant (ish ehad, ish ehad) from each of their ancestral tribes, each one a chief (nasi) among them." The verse stresses both the singularity of each leader within his tribe and the group as a whole who must work together as one.

Rashi explains that "each one was a leader among them." Seforno adds that the individual selected had to be the best leader from his tribe, one who could recognize the significance of the land. For Rashi, it's a leader. For Seforno, it's the leader. Moses needed to think very carefully about the qualities of each person and the composition of the group. Select the wrong people or the right individuals but not a productive combination of them, and the mission would fail. And the mission did fail.

The Torah names each person selected

according to his tribe. These men had a historic role. People long into the future would need to know their names. Each of these leaders carried the important task of evaluating the land according to Moses' specific objectives: "See what kind of country it is" (Num. 13:18), he told them. Are the people who dwell in it strong or weak, few or many? Is the country in which they dwell good or bad? Are the towns they live in open or fortified? Is the soil rich or poor? Is it wooded or not? (Num. 13:18-20).

Moses concluded with one request, "And take pains to bring back some of the fruit of the land." It was the grape harvest season. Seeing is believing. When the people saw the sweet and large fruit, they would be impressed and feel motivated to complete the journey with enthusiasm. The tribal leaders were to figure this out together and present one report.

Nahmanides wonders why Moses sent out the mission in the first place. It was a risk. If the report was negative was Moses going to take the people back to Egypt? Certainly not. Nahmanides explains that the Israelites wanted a group to reconnoiter the land as a standard procedure of military incursions in other foreign armies so that they could prepare themselves properly for war. Joshua did the same.

These leaders answered the questions and started on a high note: "We came to the land you sent us to; it does indeed flow with milk and honey, and this is its fruit" (Num. 13:27). But immediately afterwards, they injected their own pessimism into the report, sharing how many enemies lived in the land and how well fortified they were: "The country that we traversed and scouted is one that devours its settlers. All the people that we saw in it are of great size; we saw the Nephilim there—the Anakites are part of the Nephilim—and we looked like grasshoppers to ourselves, and so we must have looked to them" (Num. 13:32-33). Now, closer than ever to the Promised Land, the people lost all hope: "The whole community broke into loud cries, and the people wept that night" (Num. 14:1).

Here is where diversity does its hardest work. Caleb, one of the scouts from the tribe of Judah – the tribe most associated with leadership – protested. He was not prepared to speak with one voice, the voice of fear. Instead, he spoke with the voice of courage and destiny: "Caleb hushed the people before Moses and said, "Let us by all means go up, and we shall gain possession of it, for we shall surely overcome it" (Num. 13:30). Caleb met fear with mettle and valor. He spoke these words before Moses to assure the people that Moses' intentions were good and his judgment was sound. It must not have been easy to contradict the group, who compared themselves to grasshoppers.

Caleb was no grasshopper. He discouraged insect-like smallness and reminded the people of their own power to change their destiny and rise to the occasion. And he left us with a greater understanding of

diversity's importance. Sometimes it's not consensus that creates greatness, but listening to the still, small minority voice of hope.

What leadership group do you belong to that would benefit from more diversity? ©2023 Dr. E. Brown and the Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks-Herstein Center for Values and Leadership

RABBI DOVID SIEGEL

Haftorah

This 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. ©2014 Rabbi D. Siegel & torah.org

