



Parshas Shlach

For the week ending 23 Sivan 5757
27 & 28 June 1997

Overview

At the insistence of the *Bnei Yisrael*, and with Hashem's permission, Moshe sends twelve scouts, one from each tribe, to investigate Canaan. Anticipating trouble, Moshe changes Hoshea's name to Yehoshua, expressing a prayer that Hashem should not let him fail in his mission. They return 40 days later, carrying unusually large fruit. When ten of the twelve scouts state that the people in Canaan are as formidable as the fruit, the men are discouraged. Calev and Yehoshua, the only two scouts still in favor of the invasion, try to bolster the spirit of the people. The nation, however, decides that the Land is not worth the potentially fatal risks, and instead they demand a return to Egypt! Hashem is 'angered' by this attitude, but is eventually 'placated' by Moshe's fervent prayers. However, He declares that the nation must remain in the desert for 40 years until the men who wept at the false report of the scouts pass away. A remorseful group, regretting their previous mistake, rashly begins an invasion of the Land based on Hashem's original command. Moshe warns them not to proceed, but they fail to heed this warning, and are massacred. Hashem instructs Moshe concerning the offerings that will be made when the *Bnei Yisrael* will finally enter the Land of Israel. The people are commanded to remove *challah*, a donation for the *kohanim*, from their dough. The laws for an offering after an inadvertent sin, for an individual person or a group, are explained. However, should someone blaspheme against Hashem and be unrepentant, he will be cut off spiritually from his people. One man is found gathering wood on public property in violation of the laws of Shabbos, and is put to death. The laws of *tzitzis* are taught, and twice a day we recite this section of the Parsha because it reminds us of our Exodus.

Insights

HELP! THE PARANOIDS ARE AFTER ME!

"We were like grasshoppers in our eyes, and so were we in their eyes." (13:33)

Scene: A psychiatrist's office.

Psychiatrist to man lying on his couch: "Well, the trouble is that you're paranoid. Ask anyone!"

When a person suffers from low self-esteem, he projects his insecurity, his self-view, onto the view of others: *"We were like grasshoppers in our eyes, and so we seemed in their eyes."*

Conversely, in warfare, sometimes the battle can be lost or won before a single shot is fired. For if morale is low — if the army sees itself as grasshoppers — then there is just a small step to the enemy perceiving them as grasshoppers as well.

THE BEST PROTECTION

"Moshe called the name of Hoshea, son of Nun, 'Yehoshua'." (13:16)

Of all twelve spies that Moshe sent to scout out the land of Israel, only Yehoshua and Calev did not fall prey to a conspiracy to slander the Land of Israel.

Before Yehoshua (who was then called Hoshea) left to scout the land, Moshe added the letter *yud* to the beginning of Hoshea's name so that it would begin with one of Hashem's Names. He did this to protect Yehoshua against the evil of the spies.

Why didn't Moshe also change *Calev's* name to protect him?

Calev was married to Miriam. Miriam was Moshe's sister. She was a prophetess in her own right. It was through her merit that the Children of Israel had water in the desert.

The best protection a man can have is a righteous wife. If he has that, both his good name and his good sense will need no further protection.

FRINGE BENEFITS

"Speak to the Children of Israel and say to them; and they will make for themselves fringes on the corners of their garments..." (15:38)

The world is like a *tallis* (prayer shawl). The world has four compass points. The *tallis* has four sides. We talk colloquially of the four 'corners' of the world. The *tallis* has four corners.

The *tzitzis* — the fringes that hang from the *tallis* — are strings. They look like unfinished parts of the *tallis* itself. They teach us that the world is incomplete as it stands. They teach us that man's job is to perfect the world through his actions.

The *tzitzis* have five knots, which correspond to the five Books of the Torah. Because the world reaches its fruition only with the giving and the observance of the Torah. The five knots also correspond to the five senses. All of which can be dedicated to the service of the Creator. The five words of the verse of the *Shema* are paralleled in the five knots of the *tzitzis*.

Continued on next page

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Parshas Shlach — 23 Sivan 5757, 27 & 28 June 1997

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Continued from previous page

Tzitzis have eight strings. Eight is the number of transcendence. Their are seven days in the week; seven notes in the diatonic scale. Eight is that which links this world to that which is above this world.

The eight strings of the *tzitzis* relate to *bris mila* (circumcision), which takes place on the eighth day after the birth of a boy. This represents the ability of the Jew to elevate the physical to the metaphysical.

There are 613 commandments in the Torah. If you take the *gematria* (numerical equivalent) of the word *tzitzis* — 600 — and add it to the five knots and the eight strings, the result is 613.

Through the mitzva of *tzitzis* we can 'attach' ourselves to something that goes far beyond the physical world.

THE SECRET WEAPON

"Send for yourselves men to spy out the land of Canaan" (13:2)

After the Six Day War, the American military was intrigued to discover the secret ingredient which allowed Israeli pilots to knock-out an unheard-of ninety percent of the Egyptian airplanes.

The investigation examined every aspect of the pilots' lives — even the most personal and secret. Any conceivable difference was investigated: Did they have pets? How many times did they shower each week?

After the results were collated, the Americans published their report: There was absolutely no identifiable pattern to differentiate between Israeli pilots and American... with one exception, said the report jokingly: The Israeli pilots all had *bris mila*!

But the joke was really on the American military — they had indeed discovered the Israeli 'secret weapon' without realizing it. The Midrash tells us that *Avraham Avinu* stands at the gate of *Gehennom* and prevents anyone who has a *bris mila* from entering.

The purpose of sending the spies into *Eretz Yisrael* was that future generations shouldn't say that the dwellers of *Eretz Yisrael* were weaklings and that the Land of Israel was conquered by purely natural means. That's why the Torah says "*Send for yourself men to spy out the land of Canaan,*" and you'll see that its inhabitants are extremely powerful. And if, in spite of this, you are able to conquer the land, you will realize that "*That I am giving it to the Bnei Yisrael.*"

The Jewish People have but 'One Friend' in a world of seventy wolves. But He is the only Friend we need. When we triumph, it's not because of F-16s, superior morale, motivation, or fortified breakfast cereal; it is because Hashem wills it.

Haftorah: Yehoshua 2:1-24

STREETS OF GOLD

Can you imagine what it must be like to look for a new job almost every single week of the year? It's bad enough trying to find and hold down one job, but to have to start again every Monday morning, pounding the tarmac to find yet another way to put bread on the table!

But that's exactly what Jews did in America at the turn of the century. To escape the pogroms of Czarist Russia, Jews fled to America, having heard stories of a *goldeneh medina*, a land where the streets were paved with gold. In a sense that may have been true, but to mine that gold meant working on Shabbos. And that was unthinkable. So, these Jews would get hired on Monday, work until Friday afternoon, not turn up on Shabbos and get fired again on Monday. This happened week after week. It was through this tremendous self-sacrifice that Torah was established in America.

What kept those spiritual heroes, and thus their descendants, connected to Torah Judaism was that they never for one moment thought of breaking Shabbos. It never entered their minds for a second. You *had* to keep Shabbos! That was as self-evident as saying you had to breathe!

There is an interesting puzzle in this week's *Parsha*: Why was it that the Spies that Moshe sent came back with a negative report, while those which Yehoshua sent in this week's Haftorah came back positive and enthusiastic?

The difference was their attitudes to the mission in the first place: The spies that Moshe sent went with the attitude of *whether* to enter the land, whereas those of Yehoshua had had no question as to whether to enter the land. That was Hashem's will. Not to enter the land was unthinkable. *It never entered their minds for a second.* The only question was *how* to enter the land.

When a person starts of with the mind-set that is exclusively positive, his focus will be locked on achieving his objective, because the thought of not doing never enters his mind.

Sources:

Help! The Paranoids Are After Me! - Mayana Shel Torah
The Best Protection - Rabbi Yaakov Kaminetzky, heard from Rabbi Hertzl Schechter
Fringe Benefits - Rabbi Aryeh Kaplan
The Secret Weapon - Tzvi Yisrael, Rabbi Mordechai Arnon
Streets Of Gold - Rabbi Abraham Twerski

Fatherly Advice - tidbits from the Ethics of the Fathers traditionally studied on Summer Sabbaths

Excessive conversation with a woman, even one's own wife, can be harmful.

(Avos 1:5)

If a man comes home and pours out his heart to his wife about his unpleasant experience with others, she sometimes encourages him to make a fight out of it, as we find in the case of Korach who was encouraged by his wife to rebel against Moshe. There is another danger as well of revealing to a wife the embarrassment and insult one has suffered from others. This may arouse in her the suspicion that there is a basis for their behavior and she may lose her respect for her husband.

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