



The Marcos and Adina Katz YUTORAH IN PRINT

Shelach 5781

On Showing Your True Colors

Rabbi Dr. Norman Lamm z"l (Originally delivered June 24, 1967)

This morning's portion concludes with the famous passage concerning the commandment to wear fringes, tzitzit, on our garments. The Torah demands that one of the four threads, which are to be doubled over into eight, should be colored tekhelet, a heavenly blue. The law requires that this dye be prepared from the blood of a special mollusk or snail called the hilazon. Today we no longer know exactly the identity of this hilazon; even in the days of the Mishnah it was scarce. Therefore, the overwhelming majority of Jews today do not wear any tekhelet in their tzitzit, although some few groups maintain that they can definitely identify this mollusk and therefore do wear one thread of tekhelet in their fringes.

Now, far beyond the emblematic or symbolic value of the tzitzit, this commandment is full of deep religious meaning and mystical significance. But in addition to this, permit me to commend your attention to a sensitive ethical-moral point regarding the tekhelet proposed by the Talmud (B.M. 61b). The Sages quote God as saying, *ani hu she'atid li-para mi-mi she-toleh kala ilan beviddo v'omer tekhelet hu*, "I will punish one who affixes a thread of blue dyed with kala ilan and announces that it really is tekhelet." Now, the tekhelet, coming from the rare mollusk hilazon, is expensive and scarce; kala ilan is a common and cheap vegetable dye, called indigo. One who dyes his fringes with kala ilan and proclaims it to be tekhelet is therefore palming off the artificial as genuine. The statement in the Talmud is, therefore, a protest against hypocrisy and deception.

How often we witness -- or, indeed, are ourselves the victims of -- such sham piety and duplicity. We all too often have personal experiences with people who pretend to be righteous and decent, but are really quite ignoble and selfish. And we wonder: why should such people get away with it? The Talmud, therefore, promises us that God, in

His good time, will exact justice of such people. He, as the embodiment of emet, truth, will not abide for long such dissimulation by unprincipled people.

Two instances of recent events come to mind, in both of which we Jews collectively were the victims of this prevarication of people posing in kala ilan as if it were tekhelet, in indigo substituted for true blue.

The first of these is the official proposal of the Vatican this week that Jerusalem be internationalized. The Vatican is, of course, deeply troubled by the safety of the shrines in the Holy Land. Indeed, how touching, how moving! So profound is its concern that it desires all of Jerusalem to be put under international control. For twenty years no Jews were permitted to visit the Wailing Wall, whereas members of other faiths were permitted access to their shrines. During all this time, the Pope was silent. He acted like a true reincarnation of one of his predecessors who will go down in history as the Pope of Silence. The man who considers himself the symbol and leader of all religions of the world did not utter a single word of protest as long as an Arab flag was flying over Jerusalem, but the minute the Israeli flag was hoisted over the Holy City, he has become exercised. He apparently was untroubled by the slaughter of human beings; he is moved by concern for holy places -- provided it is the Israelis who are in control.

No, this is not the tekhelet of righteous concern; this is kala ilan -- his true colors are showing! Let all those amongst us who were the proponents of theological dialogue with the Vatican, all those who considered those who were reluctant to engage in these dialogues as discourteous and uncivilized in not accepting an invitation to talk -- let them ponder what has happened this week. Talk, unfortunately, is cheap. Actions speak far louder. The Vatican is the one who proposed "fraternal dialogue" as part of its new doctrinal structure. Look what has come of

it: it is the ersatz-blue of kala ilan, not the authenticity of tekhelet.

The second item that comes to attention is the important speech of the French Ambassador to the United Nations a day or two ago. Now, I do not refer to the major contents of his speech. As a compassionate people, we must be profoundly sympathetic with an ambassador who must attempt to make seem logical, moderate, and ethical a position taken by his chief of state which is not only illogical but almost absurd, totally immoderate despite its protestations of “objectivity,” and not only not ethical but treacherous because it represents a unilateral abrogation of a solemn treaty with the State of Israel. What I say, therefore, I intend as a footnote to an important address.

In the course of his speech, the Ambassador averred, in attempting to demonstrate France’s objectivity and neutrality, that France has never been guilty of racialism against the Jews. What a jejune and empty remark that is! Forgetting the famous Dreyfus case, his statement is particularly unfelicitous considering that this very day, June 24, 1322, exactly 645 years ago -- after the Jews were accused of poisoning the wells, after massacres and slaughter of Jews in many cities in France, and after the French government levied an enormous fine on all Franco-Jewish communities--on this very day in 1322 another head of France by the name of Charles, King Charles IV, expelled all the Jews from France! For 37 years thereafter, no Jews were to be found in this country.

No, not every country, especially in Europe, can boast of no anti-Semitism tainting its questionable past. It would be much better for France never to use its own lily-white record as proof of its “objectivity” towards Israel... The Ambassador’s tzitzit are showing; and though he would like them to appear blue, they are kala ilan, not tekhelet.

However, there is no need to berate a human failing that is all too common. I know you will agree with me in condemning hypocrisy, and that I am therefore preaching to the converted. Permit me, rather, to commend to your attention what was said on this Talmudic passage by the late and sainted thinker and scholar, R. Abraham Chen, (“*Be’malkhut Ha-yahadut*,” Vol. II, p.161): the reverse is true as well! God is also displeased with toleh tekhelet be’vigdo v’omer kala ilan hu, one who possesses the genuine tekhelet and yet proclaims that it is merely the artificial kala ilan. God not only will punish the hypocrite who passes off the artificial as genuine, but He also dislikes the coward who disguises the authentic as the inauthentic.

In other words, there is a strong, neurotic tendency for some people to have the courage only of other people’s opinions -- but not their own! They are afflicted with a moral weakness: they are ashamed of their elementary decency, they are apprehensive lest they have too good a reputation; they are fearful lest their virtue prove anti-social.

Does that sound strange? Yes -- but it is a fact nonetheless. There are, apparently, those who wear tekhelet, but proclaim that it is only kala ilan.

Have you ever seen a man enter a restaurant in the company of colleagues or business associates, be handed the menu, and with nervous eyes darting in all directions clear his throat and apologetically whisper that he is a vegetarian? Of course, the real reason is that he is kosher... But why attribute it to kala ilan when it is really tekhelet!

Or, a man is invited to participate in a Friday night engagement, and he declines by explaining that Friday nights he reserves as “family night.” Family night? How about Shabbat? Why not call tekhelet by its own name instead of announcing it as kala ilan?

There are some parents who send their children to Day Schools and who explain to their neighbors that they do so because they prefer “smaller classes.” But why not say outright that the only way to survive meaningfully is through providing a Torah education for your child? Why call it kala ilan when in fact it is tekhelet?

There are even some people who believe their own propaganda when they proclaim that they support Israel, “because it is the only democracy in the Near East.” How foolish! And if Syria were a democracy? -- And if Nasser were elected by parliamentary procedure, as was Hitler? And if Israel were not an American-style democracy in all essentials? -- Would we then be unconcerned with the fate of Israel? Is our loyalty only political and nothing more? Does not the love of Israel and our solidarity with the people and the state transcend the political considerations? Let us call tekhelet by its right name!

It sometimes happens that a Jew comes to me after I have “caught” him in an act of mitzvah, and he will apologetically assert, “Rabbi, don’t get me wrong: I am not really religious!” What kala ilan! I just do not believe it. After witnessing the fantastic religious spirit that overcame our people when we liberated the Wailing Wall, I firmly believe that every Jew possesses the spark of Godliness, the nitzotz of Jewishness. I know of no non-religious Jews. I know only of Jews who have fulfilled their religious

potential to a greater extent, and those who have not yet done so. Jews wear tekhelet! I cannot bring myself, in all honesty, to declare it kala ilan.

There is one Biblical personality who symbolizes this attempt to disguise tekhelet as kala ilan, and that is Judah. You recall that he played a special role in the unfortunate episode of the maltreatment of their brother Joseph. The brothers had planned to kill Joseph, But Judah, who was a natural leader, saved Joseph's life by telling the brothers, *mah betza ki naharog et achinu*, "what profit will it bring us if we kill him?" Let us better sell him into slavery.

Now, the Rabbis were quite harsh on Judah for this statement. They declared (Sanh. 6b) that kol ha-mevarekh et Yehudah harei zeh mena'etz, whoever praises Judah is considered a blasphemer, and they applied to such person the verse from the Psalms, *botzeia, berekh nietz ha-Shem*, he who blesses the profit-taker (one who is involved in betza) has blasphemed the Lord.

But why, indeed, were they so harsh on Judah? Did he not, after all, save Joseph's life?

The answer, I suggest, is that Judah did not really believe what he said -- that they ought to save Joseph only because it will bring them betza, profit. In fact, immediately after his statement of mah betza, he says to them: *Ve'yadenu al tehi bo*, let us not injure him, *ki ahinu besarenu hu*-- because he is our brother, our own flesh and blood. In other words, Judah was posturing. Out loud, as his ostensible reason for not killing Joseph, he said mah betza--it will bring us no profit if we kill him; but sotto voce, whispering quietly his real reason, he said that Joseph must not be harmed, *ki ahinu besarenu hu*, because one does not destroy his own brother, his own flesh and blood! Judah thus was a man of

tekhelet -- but he posed as nothing more than a penurious person of kala ilan! His reasons were noble, but he expressed them in the sinister language of the market place. No wonder that the verse ends with the words *va-yishme'u ehav*, "and his brothers heard." But of course they heard; he was after all addressing them! (It is because of this that the Targum and Rashi are constrained to explain this phrase in a different manner.) What the Torah means is that they heard Judah's real reason. They listened with an inner ear. They were not impressed with the betza argument, but understood the real, underlying motivation of Judah: the ethical reason that one does not harm his own brother.

That is why our tradition considers him a blasphemer; for indeed it is a blasphemy and a desecration of the Divine Image to disown your own innate nobility, to deny your inner genuineness. We must, by all means, show our true colors!

As we make our way to vacation or travel this summer, and no doubt come into contact with many new people, let us take along with ourselves this lesson of tekhelet and kala ilan. Never, never, Heaven forbid, may we dissemble, and declare as tekhelet what is but a cheap imitation. Neither is it incumbent upon us to flaunt our tekhelet in the eyes of others, to draw unnecessary attention to our Jewishness. But, we must also not submit to the moral cowardice of disguising our tekhelet as kala ilan.

We have heard much about resisting the yetzer ha-ra; let us not strive so mightily to resist the yetzer tov.

Let us show our true Jewish colors -- and be proud of them.

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The Hills are Alive

Rabbi Joshua (The Hoffer) Hoffman z"l

Parshas Shelach begins with the episode of the spies. Rashi, in the beginning of the parsha, asks why this episode is mentioned in the Torah directly after the episode of Miriam and Aharon speaking disparagingly of Moshe, which appears at the end of the previous parsha, Beha'aloscha. He answers that Miriam was punished with tzora'as for speaking that way, and the spies saw it, and still did not learn a lesson. Instead, they went ahead and scouted the land with the intention of producing an evil report, and, in the end, did just that. This comment of Rashi is difficult to understand. What analogy is there between speaking

disparagingly about Moshe, and speaking disparagingly of the Holy Land? After all, Moshe was a human being, who can be hurt by evil talk, while Eretz Yisroel, no matter how holy it is, is still merely a body of land - sticks and stones - that cannot feel and cannot be hurt by the comments of others. What, then, were the spies supposed to derive from the entire incident of Miriam and Aharon speaking ill of Moshe, that should have deterred them from speaking ill of the land?

Rabbi Zalman Sorotzkin, in his commentary Oznayim LeTorah, offers two answers to this commonly asked

question. Each of these answers, as we will see, is insufficient in itself, but, when taken together, I believe that they provide us with an important insight into the nature of the sin of the spies. First, says Rabbi Sorotzkin - as did the Netziv before him, in his Ha'amek Davar to parshas Beha'aloscha - Moshe, in his humility, did not react to the comments of Miriam and Aharon about him. In a sense, then, he was acting as an inanimate piece of land. Still, even though Moshe did not react to the remarks made about him, Miriam - as we read in the Torah explicitly - and Aharon - as the midrash points out - were both punished for expressing these remarks. So, too, the spies should have learned from this incident that they should not speak against the Holy Land, even though it consisted of inanimate sticks and stones that could not react to any talk against them. This answer, of course, fails to take into consideration the fact that Moshe, despite his silence, was still, in the final analysis, a human being with feelings, and, thus, the analogy to the Holy Land is still not fully understood.

The second answer offered by Rabbi Sorotzkin is that, actually, the Holy Land is not merely sticks and stones, but has a certain 'ruach chayim,' or life force, of its own, and is analogous to a human being, to some degree. Rabbi Sorotzkin marshals evidence to this assertion from a number of Biblical and midrashic sources. For example, the Torah tells us that the land must be allowed to rest every seventh year, just as humans must rest every seventh day. If this shemittah year is not observed properly, then the people will be exiled, and the land will be 'appeased' for those shemittos (Vayikra 26:34). Moreover, if the people do not observe the laws of the Torah in general, and thereby pollute the land, the land will vomit them out (Vayikra 18:25). These sources, however, only show that there is an organic connection between the observance of the laws of the Torah and the performance of the land for them. They do not prove that the land actually has a 'personality,' such that one should not speak disparagingly about it. However, I once heard a remarkable insight into a certain comment in Rashi, which is itself based on a midrash, which does provide proof to this notion.

In parshas Chukas, commenting on the verse, "And the outpouring of the valleys (ve- eshed ha-necholim) when it veered to dwell at Ar, and leaned against the border of Moav" (Bamidbar 21:15). Rashi cites the Midrash Tanchuma, which says that the blood of the Amorites

had been spilled at that location. They had been hiding in the caves, waiting to kill the Israelites when they arrived. However, when that moment arrived, the two sets of mountains, that were close to each other, converged, and the projections in one mountain entered into the caves of the other, thus killing the Amorites who were hiding in them. The resulting blood flowed into the valley, and the Israelites were not aware of the miracle until the well of Miriam descended into the valley and brought it up for them to see. Rav Yochanan Zweig, Rosh Yeshiva of the Talmudic University of Florida in Miami Beach, noted the way that Rashi describes the miracle of the killing of the Amorites. Once Israel came to pass through the valley, Rashi says, the mountain of the Land of Israel trembled like a slave woman who goes out to greet her mistress and came close to the mountain of Moav. At that time, the projections entered into the caves and killed the Amorites. The image of the moving mountain of Eretz Yisroel, explained Rav Yochanan, reflects the nature of Eretz Yisroel in general - a land that has life to it, and responds to the needs of the Jewish people, when they are loyal to it and to the Torah.

Following Rabbi Zweig's observation, we can understand the comment of Rabbi Sorotzkin in explaining the sin of the spies, who did not refrain from speaking against the land even after they saw the consequences of the disparaging remarks about Moshe that were made by Miriam and Aharon. The land, like Moshe, actually did have a certain personality to it, that reflected the soul of the Jewish people. This analogy is in turn better understood when we reflect on the nature of Moshe, as the most humble of all men. Moshe's humility did not consist in a lack of self-awareness, or self-value, but in a lack of self-interest. He was completely subservient to the task assigned to him by God, which was to serve as His agent in teaching the Torah to the nation, and leading them into the Holy Land, which is the optimum location for the fulfillment of all the Torah's laws. Perhaps, then, the lesson that the spies should have learned from the incident of Miriam and Aharon was that if they were punished for speaking against Moshe, a human being who totally subordinated himself to the task of leading his nation into the Holy Land, then certainly they should not speak against the land itself, which was the object of Moshe's mission.

The Ladder of Growth

Rabbi Assaf Bednarsh (Transcribed and adapted from the YUTorah shiur given at the Gruss Kollel in Yerushalayim on June 23, 2016)

At the end of the Parsha, we have a mitzvah of Tzitzis. And the Torah says about its techeiles color: *u-reisem oso, u-z'chartem es kol mitzvos Hashem*. You see the techeiles, and you remember all the mitzvos of Hashem. How does this techeiles-blue color remind you of the mitzvos? Rashi quotes a ma'amar Chazal that the blue of the techeiles reminds you of the sea, and the sea reminds you of the sky, and that reminds you of the Kisei ha-Kavod. And we know what color the Kisei ha-Kavod is because Moshe Rabbeinu saw it—it was *ke-ma'ase livnas ha-safir*. What color is a sapphire? It's blue. Rubies are red, and sapphires are blue. What color is techeiles? It's also blue. So, it makes sense that techeiles is like Kisei ha-Kavod because they are both blue! The obvious question becomes, why not skip the middleman? Why do we need to go through the yam, and rakia, and Kisei ha-Kavod? Just say that techeiles reminds you of the Kisei ha-Kavod of Hashem and be done with it!

I haven't seen any answers to this, but I think that you could find Mussar here. When you look at techeiles, you are supposed to see the highest heights of ruchnious—the idealistic levels of spirituality—the Kisei ha-Kavod. The problem is that sometimes it's hard. Sometimes, when you examine your actions, you say to yourself, "I'm very far from the Kisei ha-Kavod. I am not on the highest level of ruchnious." It is very easy for someone to give up. This is the biggest problem with the yeshiva bachurim. They teach you that the Torah is the highest, most idealistic way to live that is possible for a human being. And it is so easy to honestly examine yourself and say, "I am so far from that! I am not close to the Kisei ha-Kavod. That's not a realistic

goal." That is why people give up sometimes. Therefore, Chazal say: No! How are you supposed to look at your Tzitzis? Don't look straight to the Kisei ha-Kavod! The techeiles that I am wearing here is domeh le-yam. Ok. The yam is expansive and beyond my usual experience. But, yes. I can relate to the sea. The yam is domeh le-rakia. The yam is large and expansive while being earthly and quite accessible. And that is similar to something else that is also great and expansive, yet higher—the rakia. Yea, I can see that too. The rakia is domeh le-Kisei ha-Kavod. The rakia is also relatable—you could go there in an airplane. It's something very high, rarefied, seemingly endless, and awe-inspiring. In that way, it is reminiscent of something purely spiritual—the Kisei ha-Kavod. We have arrived.

You don't have to look at the entire journey as one step. Chazal are telling us to just look for the next step we could take. And then find the next step, and then the next. And realize that even if you don't see yourself only one step away from the Kisei ha-Kavod, you could get there by taking one step at a time. You are always one step away from something that is accessible, and that is one step from something else, and that is only one step from the next thing—and so on and on, until you get to the Kisei ha-Kavod. Maybe Chazal are telling us here a very, very deep Mussar. We are always supposed to keep our eye on the goal—on the highest. But it doesn't mean that it's only worthwhile if we see an immediate path to go from here to there. You have to realize that you can take one step at a time until you get to the Kisei ha-Kavod, as long as you know the direction you are taking and that you are going in that direction one step at a time.

12 Failed; 2 Succeeded

Rabbi Mordechai Torczyner

As a survivor of one failed espionage mission, Yehoshua likely thought carefully before sending a reconnaissance team into the city of Yericho, as recorded in our haftorah. (Yehoshua 2) How did Yehoshua shape his mission, and what can we learn for ourselves?

Commentators identify a range of differences between

the missions. In particular, Rabbi Meir Leibush picked up on the fact that Moshe sent twelve spies while Yehoshua sent two, as well as the fact that Tanach uses different Hebrew words to describe the missions of the two groups. He explained, "If the nation sends spies to see whether the land is good or not... then they send a leader from each tribe. They do not depend on lesser men, and no tribe

depends on another tribe's emissary. Each sends one upon whom they will depend, for he will check to see whether the land is suited for his tribe and its business, whether farming or shepherding or trade or shipping." (Malbim to Yehoshua 2:1) In other words, a central feature of Moshe's mission was that each tribe sent its own spy, not trusting the report of a member of a different tribe. Why was trusting so difficult for us?

A major reason we don't trust is experience; from time to time, others disappoint us. Rabbi Moshe Zvi Veksler, Rosh Yeshiva of Yeshivot Bnei Akiva in Bnei Brak, adds that people who are not personally trustworthy have difficulty placing faith in others:

"When one acts with righteousness and trustworthiness, not trying to take advantage and not doing things to fool the other, then he also does not suspect others of acting with trickery or being afflicted with a lack of righteousness."

But Judaism itself deserves some of the blame; our religion discourages faith in human beings. Consider the verse, "Cursed is the person who trusts in man," as opposed to trusting G-d. (Yirmiyahu 17:5) Or talmudic advice like, "Many should be those who seek your welfare; reveal your secret to one in one thousand." (Yevamot 63b) Or rabbinic teachings like those of Rabbeinu Bahya in 11th century Spain, "The factors which enable trust from one who trusts people are seven... And when we investigate these seven factors, they are not found at all in human beings." (Chovot haLevavot, Sha'ar haBitachon 2)

The problem with all of this distrust, and particularly that which is rooted in Judaism, is that Judaism simultaneously requires us to trust. We are charged to assume the best of others (Avot 1:6), and one who

suspects people inappropriately is punished and owes them a blessing. (Berachot 31b, Shabbat 97a) We must trust prophets (Devarim 18:19) and sages (ibid. 17:11), and a judge is obligated to trust litigants by default. (Minchat Chinuch 81) All of which leaves us in a dilemma – to trust, or not to trust?

One answer may be to develop a trusting personality, even if we are not to trust in specific situations. As the Talmud teaches, Hashem calls the Jews "believers, descendants of believers." (Shabbat ibid.) It is one thing to believe; it is another to be a believer. While placing trust in human beings may lead to letdown, and may even be theologically disastrous if it comes at the expense of trust in G-d, we must nonetheless learn to trust by default. It is in our own best interest.

A person who is afraid to trust looks for negatives in others, to justify cynicism. A person who is afraid to trust will justify personal impropriety because "everyone is doing it." A person who is afraid to trust others may also lack the ability to trust herself. And a person who does not trust others may also have trouble trusting G-d. [See Maharal, Netivot Olam, Netiv ha'Emunah 1.] We are labelled "believers" because our ancestors at the Sea placed their trust in G-d and in Moshe; this is a trait we need to cultivate in ourselves.

As we saw from the Malbim, Moshe sent twelve spies because he saw that the tribes did not trust each other. Yehoshua, though, sent only two; perhaps he felt that his generation could trust each other. His decision was vindicated when the two spies came back with a positive report and were trusted by the nation, and so that generation entered the Land with confidence.

Seeing Life Steady and Whole

Rabbi Moshe Taragin

We would think that Torah is so vast that no one individual mitzvah can symbolize all the 613 "components". Surprisingly, the Torah designates one mitzvah as an icon for the entire system of commandments. The mitzvah of tzitzit activates our imagination and attunes us to entire system of mitzvot. Somehow, a glance at the tzitzit, evokes the entire range of mitzvot. The mitzvah of tzitzit is the only commandment described as a "memory-trigger" for all other commandments.

Most are familiar with Rashi's well-known explanation for this "trigger mechanism". The gematria or numerical equivalent of the word tzitzit (600) combined with the number of strings and knots of the tzitzit (13) computes to a grand total of 613. This "tzitzit calculus" assures that a quick glimpse upon tzitzit stokes a fuller awareness of all the 613 mitzvot of the Torah.

The gemara in Menachot suggests a very different "trigger mechanism" for tzitzit. The blue dye of the tzitzit strings sparks our imagination and enables sustained

mitzvah adherence. The blue tchelet dye is very similar to color of the ocean, the sky and the earth's atmosphere. Browsing these strings and appreciating their color, draws our hearts upward toward Heaven and toward the presence of G-d. The color lures our imagination heavenly toward a more profound awareness of G-d and greater mitzvah adherence. Tzitzit serve as a gateway to Heaven.

However, the blue tchelet doesn't merely fasten us to Heaven. In the process, we ponder the vastness of the ocean, the expanse of the sky and the mystique of the upper atmosphere. All these elements emit a blueish hue. The blue strings of tzitzit bridge our imagination to the vastness of our world, and meditating upon this immensity braces our religious commitment. The immensity of our universe provides "proportion" to our own lives and this proportion steadies our overall religious experience. The ocean and the sky are larger than "human experience" and when we ponder them, we see our own lives from a different and broader perspective. For example, when we return home on an airplane flight, we look down, from 10,000 feet up, upon the buildings, roads and cars which form our daily reality. Seeing our lives from a different vantage point forces us to reimagine ourselves and our experiences. Proportion in life provides perspective; perspective anchors healthy and balanced religious life.

Every religious letdown is a product of the contraction of our imagination and the ensuing loss of perspective. If we only understood the unfortunate consequences of our flawed decisions, we would certainly choose more wisely. Instead, we shrink into the "here and now" and think only about the "moment" and our immediate needs, rather than larger and broader consequences. Every sin is a tragic "barter" of eternity for current and fleeting needs. It is a ludicrous trade, a folly caused by loss of perspective. Sin and failure are products of small-mindedness; sadly, sin makes us even smaller. Restoring proportion between our small lives and the larger reality within which we live, between a shrunken present and a vast eternity, can avert this sad exchange. Tzitzit is a "proportion restorer" – drawing our imagination to G-d- but also to the scale of the ocean and the breadth of the sky. If our imaginations soar, we are less likely to fall victim to the narrowness of sin.

The Mussar movement was founded by Rabbi Yisrael Salanter in the early 19th century. Aware of a rapidly changing modern world, he stressed the importance

of developing moral character. No longer could it be assumed that pious behavior would evolve naturally from persistent Torah study; piety must be independently cultivated. One of the pupils of Rebbi Yisrael, Rav Simcha Zeisel Broide, established a yeshiva upon the cornerstones of the mussar teachings. Annually, in his Yeshiva, as Yom Kippur approached, a group of mussar devotees would voluntarily adopt joint practices to generate a heightened religious tone. In 1880 the talmidim dedicated themselves toward daily "pondering of eternity". Contemplating eternity would generate religious discipline. They understood the value of proportion.

It is ironic that as our world rapidly expands, in many ways, it becomes smaller, more narrower and with less self-perspective. Perspective demands seeing ourselves "in light" of something different and something larger than our current experiences. Our world has itself become too large and it is becoming more challenging to cast our experiences and ideas within anything larger than our already too-large reality. The more we have the more difficult it becomes to imagine what we don't have. Ironically, the world around us is large but perspective about that world has shriveled. As our experiences become more complete and our reality more cohesive, it is more difficult to stream our own "space" through the perspective of something different or beyond our world. The universe has expanded but we have diminished.

Healthy proportion in life doesn't only deter the tragedy of sin. When we face adversity or hardship, proportion helps us avoid panic or excess anxiety. The spies of parshat Shelach can be excused for their honest reporting- as depressing as their intel may have been. However, their gloomy panic and their cowardly dread wrecked Jewish history. Proportion provides a larger view, it allows emotional equanimity, and it prevents the overreaction which panic incites.

Additionally, proportion counterbalances unhealthy social pressures. Social trends exert a heavy influence upon our decisions and behavior. Trends come and go but sometimes they feel fixed and unchangeable, and we sheepishly succumb to them. Proportion helps us contextualize these seemingly powerful forces: not every society behaved this way or thought this way. Social conventions shouldn't define us, and we should assemble our lives based upon eternal or absolute values and not upon fashions or fads. Without proportion, society is becoming extremely vulnerable to trendiness and social

conformity.

Furthermore, proportion encourages intellectual honesty. Our passion convinces us that our views and perspectives are superior. We become so attached to those views that we can't imagine different perspectives. We often speak foolishly about the "logic" of the "righteousness" of our personal approaches while deriding other perspectives. Proportion reminds us of our true size and of the unknowability of the larger parts of our

A Year For A Day

Mrs. Michal Horowitz

In this week's parsha, Parshas Shelach, we learn of the tragic, infamous sin of the Meraglim, the spies, and the subsequent mourning of the nation, as en masse, they rejected the Land of Israel.

Before their planned journey into the Holy Land, Moshe sent twelve scouts to spy out the land, one scout per tribe. They were commanded to walk her length and width, and bring back a report to Moshe and the nation. Were the cities fortified or open, weak or strong? What were the people like? What were the fruits of the land? Was the land fertile or lean?

And Moshe sent the scouts and they walked the land for forty days, gathering information to bring back to the nation. Upon their return, they told of a land inhabited by giants; where their arch enemy, Amalek, dwells in the south; where the cities were strong and fortified and the fruits were enormous. They told of a land and its people that were stronger than G-d, keviyachol!, and that they could surely never conquer or inhabit. They reported that they were as insignificant and small as grasshoppers in the eyes of the people of the Land, and so they were in their own eyes!

With their slanderous reports, they turned the hearts of the people against G-d and His Land. וַתִּשָּׂא כָּל הָעֵדָה וַיִּתְּנוּ אֶת קוֹלָם וַיִּבְכוּ הָעָם בְּלַיְלָה הַהוּא *and the entire assembly lifted up, and gave forth their voice, and the nation cried on that night* (Bamidbar 14:1). Chazal famously teach (Sotah 35a, Taanis 29a) אמר הקב"ה הן בכו בכיה של חנם ואני אקבע *In response to their crying for naught over the good, good Land, G-d said: You cried for no reason, I will establish for you a crying for generations.*

From that first Tisha b'Av, down to our day and time, R"L, we are still crying and mourning for the travails of

world and of course of G-d Himself. Standing in front of that abyss we tend to speak more humbly and with less overconfidence.

My Rebbe, Rav Aharon Lichtenstein zt"l quoted Matthew Arnold, the 19th century British author who spoke of seeing life "steady and seeing life whole". We are at our religious and personal best when we "see life whole". The blue strings of our tzizit assure that we "see it whole".

galus, which originally emanated from their rejection of Eretz Yisrael.

What was to be the punishment of that generation? בְּמִסְפַּר הַיָּמִים אֲשֶׁר תִּרְתָּם אֶת הָאָרֶץ אַרְבָּעִים יוֹם לְשָׁנָה יוֹם לְשָׁנָה יוֹם לְשָׁנָה - *Like the number of the days that you spied out the Land, forty days, a day for a year, a day for a year, shall you bear your iniquities - forty years - and you shall comprehend straying from Me* (Bamidbar 14:34).

HaRav Asher Weiss, shlita, writes, "Bnei Yisrael were forced to wander in the Wilderness for forty years, as punishment for the forty days in which their emissaries spied out the Land. This implies that there were forty days of sin, for which Bnei Yisrael were correspondingly punished.

"However, one might wonder: The spies did not actually sin for forty days. They did indeed journey through the Land for forty days, as they were commanded. Their sin was only one day, when they delivered their malicious report, which discouraged Bnei Yisrael from entering the Promised Land. Why then were they punished for forty years?

"It seems from here that the spies were not punished for the conclusion of their report, which indeed was delivered in only one day. They were punished for their negative outlook, with which they evaluated Eretz Yisrael for forty days.

"The Gemara (Brachos 55b) tells us that when a person dreams, he is shown the thoughts of his heart. The same is true while we are awake. We are shown the world around us, refracted through the prism of our hearts. If a person's heart is pure, he sees the goodness inherent in those around him. If his heart is tainted with pride and jealousy,

he sees only his own virtues and the faults of all others.

“Our Sages (Medrash Bamidbar Rabbah) tells us that the spies ‘searched for the faults of Eretz Yisrael, which Hashem called ‘a good Land.’ They were not punished for reporting faults. They were punished for looking for faults... From here we learn that what man sees is solely a reflection of his heart” (Rav Asher Weiss on the Parashah, Artscroll, p.139-140).

The spies were punished for each day that they walked the land, for their trip was undertaken with a negative outlook, a poisonous attitude, and an ayin ra’ah (bad eye). The lashon harah that they subsequently spoke was merely the product of that negativity.

What a powerful lesson we can derive from here about the importance of seeing the good in the Land of Israel, in our nation, and in the ways of the RS”O.

“When Rav Yaakov Edelstein zt”l (1924-2017, Chief Rabbi of Ramat Ha’Sharon, brother of, ybl’ct, HaRav HaGaon Rav Gershon Edelstein shlita) delivered eulogies for deceased residents of Ramat Ha’Sharon, he always found something unique to say about each one. One Ramat Ha’Sharon relates: ‘The praises he said and the

honor he showed to the deceased was a real lesson. Even if the person wasn’t exactly from his community, the Rav’s eulogy was totally heartfelt. He would say meaningfully, ‘He loved his home, he loved his land, and he loved his wife. I remember that one time a Jew who never came to beit kneset, except on Yom Kippur and for Yizkor, passed away. Rav Edelstein eulogized him with the words, ‘He always mentioned his parents when he came to Shul...’

“These eulogies taught me how you can find something positive, unique and even holy about every person. Hearing Rav Edelstein give a eulogy made an impression, and everything he said was absolutely true!” (Reaching for Heaven, Artscroll, p.101).

We must learn from the Spies and their report that the key to life, contentment, simcha and hakaras ha’tov (recognition of the good) lies in how we choose to view the world around us. One who lives with an ayin tova will always see the good. And one who does not, R”L, will bring ruination upon himself and those around him. B’ezrat Hashem, may we always be of the former, and not the latter.

What’s in a Name?

Rabbi Ephraim Z. Buchwald

In this week’s Torah portion, parashat Shelach, the Torah recounts the fateful saga of the twelve tribal representatives, who were sent to scout the land of Canaan, and the evil reports of 10 of the 12 returning scouts. The evil report was the proverbial “straw that broke the camel’s back,” that resulted in G-d’s decree that none of the adult males of that generation would enter into the land of Israel, with the exception of Caleb and Joshua, who spoke well of the land.

In Numbers 13: 1-3, the Torah asserts that each of the tribal representatives were men of great stature, כָּל נָשִׂיא בְהֵמָה, each was a distinguished person, and adds, כָּל־אִנְשֵׁי־הַמָּדָה, each one, a leader of the Jewish people. The Torah then proceeds to list the names of the 12 scouts, as well as their father’s names and their tribal affiliation. Moses charges the scouts with their mission, and they set out to explore the land of Canaan.

Why is it important that the names of these tribal leaders be recorded? Is it perhaps to secure a place of shame for the scouts in Jewish history for all eternity? In

several other instances the commentators note that had the people been aware that for thousands of years the Jewish people would read the Bible’s record of their deeds, they would have surely behaved more nobly.

Jewish tradition is very keen on names. Tradition often declares that names contain the secret of an individual’s personality, and consequently each name is carefully studied and analyzed.

At first blush, the names of the scouts do not seem very unique. Numbers 13:4-15 records the scouts’ names:

Of the tribe of Reuben, Shammua the son of Zaccur. Of the tribe of Simeon, Shaphat the son of Hori. Of the tribe of Judah, Caleb the son of Jephunneh. Of the tribe of Issachar, Igal the son of Joseph. Of the tribe of Ephraim, Hoshea the son of Nun. Of the tribe of Benjamin, Palti the son of Raphu. Of the tribe of Zebulun, Gaddiel the son of Sodi. Of the tribe of Joseph, of the tribe of Manasseh, Gadi the son of Susi. Of the tribe of Dan, Ammiel the son of Gemalli. Of the tribe of Asher, Sethur the son of Michael. Of the tribe of Naphtali, Nahbi the son of Vophsi. Of the tribe of Gad, Geuel the son of Machi.

Regarding these scouts, the Torah, in Numbers 13:16, concludes: אֵלֶּה שְׁמוֹת הָאֲנָשִׁים אֲשֶׁר שָׁלַח מֹשֶׁה לְתוֹר אֶת הָאֲרָץ, *these are the names of the men that Moses sent to scout the land.*

It's interesting to note that the Torah does not say that these are the "men" whom Moses sent to scout the land, but rather these are the "names of the men" that Moses sent. Apparently, the emphasis on "names" is intended to be revealing.

These names are indeed revealing when compared to the names of the 12 tribal leaders (נְשִׂיָּאִים –literally "princes") who were cited in the first chapter of the Book of Numbers, who helped Moses and Aaron count the people of Israel.

In Numbers 1:5-15, the list reads:

Of Reuben, Elizur the son of Shedeur. Of Simeon, Shelumiel the son of Zurishaddai. Of Judah, Nachshon the son of Amminadab. Of Issacher, Nethanel the son of Zuar. Of Zebulun, Eliab the son of Helon. Of the children of Joseph, of Ephraim, Elishama the son of Ammihud. Of Manasseh, Gamaliel the son of Pedahzur. Of Benjamin, Abidan the son of Gideon. Of Dan, Ahiezer the son of Ammishaddai. Of Asher, Pagiel the son of Ochran. Of Gad, Eliasaph the son of Deuel. Of Naphtali, Ahira the son of Enan."

Numbers 1:16 then concludes: These were the ones summoned by the assembly, the leaders of their father's tribes, they are the heads of Israel's thousands. In the very next verse, the Torah asserts that Moses and Aaron took these men "who had been designated by names"–once again placing an unusual emphasis on names.

While at first glance, there doesn't seem to be much difference between these two sets of names, when studied carefully we do indeed find significant differences. The names of the princes in Numbers 1 are far more complex, they contain many more syllables, there are few short names, and no nicknames. The princes seem to have substantial names, for substantial people.

When the names of the tribal princes are examined closely, we find 15 references to G-d in the names of individual princes and their fathers, and all the names have profound religious meanings: Nethanel: G-d has given, Eliab: G-d is my father, Elizur: G-d is my rock, Shedeur: G-d is my light, Shelumiel: G-d is my peace, Zurishaddai: G-d is my rock, Eliasaph: May G-d give me more, Deuel: Know G-d, Elishama: G-d has heard, Gamaliel: I also have a G-d, Pedahzur: G-d has redeemed, Ammishaddai: G-d is my nation, Pagiel: I have encountered G-d.

The names of the scouts, on the other hand, are very

short. Among the names of the scouts and their fathers, there are only 4 names that contain any reference to G-d: Gaddiel: G-d is my good fortune, Geuel: G-d shall redeem, Ammiel: My nation is the nation of G-d, Michael: Who is like G-d?

There are also quite a few names that refer to animals: Kaleb, dog; Susi, horse, Gemali, camel; Gadi, goat.

Furthermore, upon closer inspection, we find that there are 8 scouts' names that have "eclipsed" G-d's name. These are names that normally include the name G-d, but G-d has been cut off and cut out. Shamua is normally Shemuel: G-d has heard, Zachur is normally Zechariah: G-d has remembered, Shafat is normally Shafatia: G-d has judged, Machi is normally Michael: who is like G-d? Gadi is normally Gadiel: G-d is my good fortune, Palti is normally Paltiel: G-d is my refuge, Raphu is normally Raphael: G-d is my healer, Gamli is normally Gamliel: I also have a G-d.

Indeed, it's not only the absence of G-d's names among the names of the scouts, but also the specific intention to exclude and remove G-d. Perhaps this implies that the scouts were an entirely different generation, a generation of new leaders with different values. These were not the old נְשִׂיָּאִים , princes, of old, who were beaten in Egypt, rather than beat their brothers. This was rather the modern, "New Age," generation, of so-called "enlightened" or "woke" leaders, who believed that the people of Israel no longer needed to focus so much on G-d. They felt that their "macho" generation could handle everything themselves. These were Jews who, even if they may have been given religious names at birth, preferred nicknames, which excluded any references to G-d.

Is it any wonder then that these "New Age" leaders were intimidated by what they saw in the land of Israel–the large-sized people and the giant fruits? After all, these were people who had only "pygmy" faith, and consequently were in their own eyes as קַרְגָּיִם , as grasshoppers.

Perhaps, we now understand why Jewish tradition places so much emphasis on names. Names are revealing. Often, they reveal the past, and, at times, predict the future. How sad that our nation was fated to wander through the wilderness for 39 years, because their leaders at that time–the scouts, lacked commitment and faith.

We dare not make that mistake again. Our people must become, and remain, a people of commitment and of faith, so that we may march into the future with pride, joy and a secure knowledge of G-d.

Deeply Felt Emunah and Never Forgetting the Small Things

Rabbi Dr. David Shabtai

At the outset, the spies don't seem to have said anything that really should have elicited the reaction that it did. After returning from their 40 day sojourn in the Land of Israel, the spies come back to Bnei Yisrael and report on what they saw. They bring back fruit from the Land, demonstrating its agricultural variety and describe the Land as flowing with milk and honey. On a more cautious note, they point out that the nations that live there are strong, that the cities are fortified, and they saw the children of the giants. But even this last point, while certainly not effusive with praise about the Land, is simply just an observation. They didn't offer a value judgment or draw any conclusions. And yet, it's at this point that Calev rises up to silence everybody and emphatically declare: *עלה נעלה וירשנו אותה כי יכול נוכל לה* — we will certainly enter and inherit the Land because we can certainly succeed!

It's only after Calev's emphatic declaration that the spies respond that we cannot succeed. Only then *ויציאו דיבת הארץ* — did they spread falsehoods about the Land. Clearly, Calev picked up on something earlier that prompted him to intervene even before they started making up lies.

Rashi already picks up on some ambiguity in the spies' language. When they respond to Calev, they explain that Bnei Yisrael will not successfully conquer the Land *כי חזק הוא ממנו* — *the enemy is stronger than us*. Quoting the Gemara in Sotah, Rashi points out that the word *ממנו* can also be read as [stronger than] Him — a reference to Hashem. What they were effectively arguing was that Hashem wasn't capable of granting the Land of Israel to the Jewish people.

This was more than 'simply' lying about the Land or the Jews' ability to conquer it; it was outright blasphemy. This is what Calev sensed was brewing just under the surface in the spies' opening report and what he needed to stamp out.

Calev spent enough time with the other spies to realize that this is how they looked at the world and was able to pick up this nuance in how they spoke.

This same idea is borne out in their continued description of the Land. In trying to further terrify the people, the spies report that the Land is *ארץ אכלת יושביה היא* — a Land that devours its inhabitants. Clearly not meant to be taken literally, Rashi explains that the spies told Bnei Yisrael that everywhere they went in the Land, they saw tons and tons of funerals. People were dying all over the place. This was a Land of death and devastation and not someplace Bnei Yisrael should want to live.

Rashi explains that in fact, Hashem specifically orchestrated these very events. The local inhabitants were so preoccupied with all of the funerals that they didn't notice the spies travelling throughout the Land. It wasn't an indication of rampant famine or epidemic, but rather a demonstration of Hashem's careful guiding of history to protect Bnei Yisrael. Instead of looking at events happening around them through faith tinted glasses, the spies saw only the negative.

The spies did not or chose not to see Hashem's Hand in the world. They failed to recognize all that He had done to protect them even while they were spying on the Land. When they failed to or stopped noticing Hashem's Hand in their daily lives, they came to deny His ability to control history and allow them to conquer the Land of Israel.

Faith involves many high level and philosophical concepts, many of which have been debated and discussed for generations. The Torah is trying to remind us that the very first steps we can take toward strengthening our faith is by actively looking for and finding Hashem's Hand in our daily lives.

Helping Our Children Believe in Themselves

Rabbi Yossi Goldin

The sin of the spies is the central event of this week's parsha. Yet, many aspects of this sin remain shrouded in mystery. What, exactly, is the nature of the sin? What did the spies do wrong? Didn't they simply do what Moshe told them to do—"Give a report on what you see?" And if the report of the Spies was, in fact,

truly a dramatic sin, how could these great leaders of the Jewish Nation, sin so significantly? Finally- and perhaps more importantly- why was Am Yisrael given such a harsh punishment for believing the Spies? Wasn't it reasonable for them to believe the majority report of those who were sent? This generation had gone through the Exodus, Matan

Torah, and much more, all in anticipation of reaching Eretz Yisrael. Was it really fair for entry into the land to now be taken away from them, in punishment?

I would like to share a novel explanation to this entire story that is suggested by my father, Rabbi Shmuel Goldin, in his book *Unlocking the Torah Text*- one that provides a new perspective on this tragic event. He notes that if you look closely at the description given by the spies when they offer their report to the nation, there is one phrase that seems a bit strange. As they describe the land of Eretz Canaan and its inhabitants, they conclude by proclaiming “and we were in our eyes like grasshoppers, and so we were in their eyes”. These words are quite strange- if the spies are meant to be relaying their impressions of the lands and those who live within it, why add the words “and we were in our eyes like grasshoppers”- why is that relevant?

My father suggests that in fact, these few words form the basis for truly understanding the failure of the spies, and the ensuing fallout. The failure of the spies, and later the entire nation, was not that they didn't believe in Hashem or in His ability to take them into Eretz Yisrael, but rather that they didn't believe in themselves. They didn't believe themselves capable of fighting against and conquering the nations in Eretz Canaan. Perhaps we can even suggest that this is a result of the slave mentality that many commentators note remained a part of the identity of the generation that left Egypt. Despite having been given their physical freedom, this generation continued to see themselves as inferior and weak- they were never truly able to remove the slave mindset that had been ingrained in them for years.

Based on this explanation, we can now answer the various questions we raised above. This sin of the Spies was not necessarily a deliberate attempt to rebel against Hashem and prevent entry into the land. Rather, through the spies' report, and Am Yisrael's reaction, underlying feelings of inadequacy and hopelessness that coursed within the people were now brought to the fore. Faced with the realization of what entry into Eretz Yisrael would entail, the nation was forced to face its inner demons- and, unfortunately, the results were tragic.

With this, we can also better understand G-d's response to the spies and Am Yisrael's reaction. G-d's declaration that this generation will not enter Eretz Yisrael was less a punishment, and more a statement of reality. If this generation did not believe in their ability to fight and conquer the land; and in their capacity to create and develop a country for themselves; then they were destined

to die in the desert. Only their children, who were not enslaved in Egypt and therefore did not suffer from a slave mentality- would have what it takes to successfully enter and conquer the land. It is almost as if G-d says to Moshe- if the issue had been that they didn't believe in Me, that would have been something we could have worked on and overcome. But if the issue is that they don't believe in themselves, then there is nothing I can do.

We have spoken in the past about the importance of raising our kids with healthy self-esteem, particularly in today's world where issues of low self-esteem, anxiety, and depression among children are rampant. But this point cannot be stressed enough. . While we must certainly strive to raise our kids with a love of Hashem and His Torah and Mitzvot, we must ensure that to lay the foundation whereby each child loves himself and believes in his abilities. From a very young age, we must prioritize building our children up, and helping them understand their own self-worth. Perhaps the best way to convey this message to them is to tell them, and show them, how much we believe in them and who they can become. If we are able to demonstrate this belief to them in a real way, hopefully that belief will penetrate deeply within them and produce in them a strong sense of self.

Famously, in *Tehillim*, Dovid HaMelech strives “lehangid baboker chasdecha, ve'emunascha baleilot”, “to talk about Your kindness in the morning, and Your faith/belief at night”. The standard understanding is that by “belief at night” refers to our ability to have faith in G-d even during times of darkness. However, Rav Shlomo Carlebach suggested that “Your faith” doesn't refer to our belief in Hashem, but rather to Hashem's belief in us. Even in moments of hardship or challenge, G-d wants us to realize that He believes in us, in who we are and who we can be.

At the precipice of entering Eretz Yisrael, the land of their destiny, the spies and the Jewish nation reveal to themselves, and to G-d, their lack of belief in themselves and their capabilities. Faced with this reality, G-d declares that such a generation will not be able to enter Eretz Yisrael. The nation's failure to believe in themselves is a “game changer” that must doom this generation to die in the desert. As we raise our children in this complex and challenging world, we must relay to our children from a young age how much we believe in them, and how much G-d believes in them. If we are successful in this effort, we will hopefully ensure that they will, throughout their lives, believe in themselves.