

SHABBAT PARSHAT SHLACH · VOL. 10 NO. 35

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PARSHA INSIGHTS

BEYOND THE FRINGE

*“and you will see it and remember all the commandments of G-d...”
(15:39)*

There’s an interesting grammatical anomaly in this week’s Parsha. When describing the mitzva of the *tzitzit* (the fringes that must be attached to a four-cornered garment) the Torah says *“It will be for you a tzitzit and you will see it and remember all the commandments of G-d and perform them...”*

Ostensibly, the Torah should have written, *“you will see them,”* referring to the *tzitzit* strings in the plural. The spiritual masters (*Menachot 43b*) explain that the phrase *“and you will see it,”* can also be read as *“and you will see Him,”* meaning when someone does this mitzva with all the appropriate intention and concentration it has the power to open his eyes to the Divine Presence, the *Shechina* — *“and you will see Him.”*

This idea is expressed in the physical shape of the mitzva itself. The *tzitzit* threads are attached to the edges of a four-cornered garment. The four corners represent the four points of the compass which represent the limits of this world. Attached to the edge of this world is something that can take you beyond the world — the *tzitzit*.

Maybe that’s why the mitzva of *tzitzit* is considered equal to all the other *mitzvot*. The *mitzvot* are given to us to take us beyond this world. The *tzitzit* are a graphic representation of that which stretches out beyond the four corners of this world.

For that same reason, if you add the *gematria* (numerical value) of the word *tzitzit* (600) to the eight strings and the five knots that comprise the *tzitzit*, the total is 613 which equals the total number of the *mitzvot*.

Finally, the word *tzitzit* is connected to *“le hazitz”* which means *“to peek.”* *Tzitzit* allow you a *“peek”* beyond. Beyond the fringe.

PARSHA OVERVIEW

At the insistence of *Bnei Yisrael*, and with G-d’s permission, Moshe sends 12 scouts, one from each tribe, to investigate Canaan. Anticipating trouble, Moshe changes Hoshea’s name to Yehoshua, expressing a prayer that G-d not let him fail in his mission. They return 40 days later, carrying unusually large fruit. When 10 of the 12 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 people’s spirit. The nation, however, decides that the Land is not worth the potentially fatal risks, and instead demands a return to Egypt. Moshe’s fervent prayers save the nation from Heavenly annihilation. However, G-d declares that they must remain in the desert for 40 years until the men who wept at the scouts’ false report pass

away. A remorseful group rashly begins an invasion of the Land based on G-d’s original command. Moshe warns them not to proceed, but they ignore this and are massacred by the Amalekites and Canaanites. G-d instructs Moshe concerning the offerings to be made when *Bnei Yisrael* will finally enter the Land. The people are commanded to remove *challa*, a gift for the *kohanim*, from their dough. The laws for an offering after an inadvertent sin, for an individual or a group, are explained. However, should someone blaspheme against G-d 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 Shabbat and he is executed. The laws of *tzitzit* are taught. We recite the section about the *tzitzit* twice a day to remind ourselves of the Exodus.

A GIFT AND ITS CONDITIONS

Slandering Eretz Yisrael is a serious sin. In the Torah chapter of this week we learn of the serious consequences which our ancestors suffered as a result of giving credence to the slanderous report of the spies whom Moshe sent to scout the land which G-d had promised them, ignoring his assurances that it was the ideal homeland for them.

On the one hand, living in Eretz Yisrael has never been too easy. Our Sages tell us that this land was presented to us as a precious gift but one that is accompanied by suffering. The reason why we have, throughout history, suffered famine, war and even exile, is to save us from falling into the trap of human conceit that we are not dependent on G-d who gave us the land and can abandon His commandments. The secularist slogan of “taking our fate into our own

hands” is what makes it necessary for G-d to challenge us with security and economic situations beyond our own control.

But if we have criticism of neighbors and leaders who fail to appreciate this perspective we have no qualms about the value of the land itself. Two Talmudic Sages, Rabbi Ami and Rabbi Asi, used to take precious time from their Torah study to move to a more comfortable spot to avoid the discomfort of cold in the winter and heat in the summer. They did so in order to avoid complaining even about the weather in Eretz Yisrael.

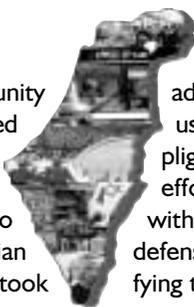
We must always love the land which G-d gave us and pray that the Jews with whom we share it today will also learn to truly understand the meaning of the gift and G-d’s conditions for enjoying Israel forever.

LOVE OF THE LAND - THE PEOPLE

Selections from classical Torah sources which express the special relationship between the People of Israel and Eretz Yisrael

NECHEMIAH – THE GREAT FORTIFIER

When a delegation of Jews from the community of returned exiles in Eretz Yisrael reported to Nechemiah the troubles which these returnees faced from their hostile neighbors he took action on two fronts. First of all, he prayed to G-d for success in using his influence with the Persian king for whom he served as a top aide. Then he took



advantage of this king’s inquiry about the sad look on his usually cheerful face to pour out his heart about the sad plight of his brothers in Eretz Yisrael. G-d blessed his efforts with success and he was able to go to Jerusalem with the king’s backing and fortify the city’s walls as a defense against the enemy and to aid Ezra in spiritually fortifying the community.

THE HUMAN SIDE OF THE STORY

LIFE-SAVING VOLUNTEERS

Another group of Jewish doctors from North America recently completed its tour of duty in Israel. This was the seventh such group of volunteers to arrive in Israel during the past year to help in the nation’s hospitals, especially with victims of terrorism.

These 19 volunteers are part of a unique project in which Jewish doctors from the U.S. and Canada place themselves

on call for Israel, with a commitment to arrive in the country within 24-72 hours if needed. They come here once every two years from anywhere from one to three weeks. Aside from volunteering their services they also learn how to handle situations arising out of terrorist actions and familiarize themselves with the Israeli health system. So far about 200 doctors have participated in this wonderful program.

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HISTORY OF THE BAMA

Offering a sacrifice to Heaven on a *bama* – a private altar – was permissible during certain periods in history. Until the Mishkan was built in the Wilderness and during the first 14 years following the arrival in Eretz Yisrael, when this sanctuary was in Gilgal, the *bama* was legitimate. During the 369 years when a more permanent sanctuary stood in Shiloh the *bama* was outlawed. It regained its legitimacy when that sanctuary was destroyed and relocated to Nov and then Givon for a period of 57 years. Once the Beit Hamikdash was built in Jerusalem the *bama* was outlawed forever.

During the periods of the Mishkan in the Wilderness and its stationing in Shiloh, and during the Beit Hamikdash era, only a *kohen* could perform the service of offering a sacrifice. It was not necessary, our *gemara* states, to have a *kohen* at a time when it was permissible to offer sacrifices on a *bama*. As support for this Rashi cites a *mishna* (*Zevachim 113a*) and a few historical examples of a non-*kohen* offering a sacrifice on a *bama*. One of these is the sacrifice offered in the days of the Prophet Shmuel (*Shmuel I, 11:15 and 13:9*). Others are those offered by Gideon (*Shoftim 6:26*) and Manoach, father of Shimshon (*ibid. 13:19*).

The precedent cited from Shmuel is easily understandable. This was during the period when the Mishkan was in Nov and the *bama* was legitimate. Since Shmuel was not *kohen* this conclusively proves that a non-*kohen* can perform the service on a *bama*. But there is a problem with the proofs from Gideon and Manoach. Both of them lived in the era of the Judges when the Mishkan was in Shiloh and the *bama* was outlawed. The *gemara* (*Zevachim 108b*) explains Manoach's sacrifice as a *hora'at sha'ah* – an extraordinary command from Heaven to temporarily ignore the ban on the *bama*. If this was an extraordinary situation perhaps it also warranted the ignoring of the need for a *kohen* and thus leaves us without a precedent for a non-*kohen* performing the service on a *bama* in an ordinary situation. What is even more problematic is the proof from Gideon. Our Sages (*Temurah 28b*) clearly state that in regard to his sacrifice eight regular requirements for the service were suspended by a direct order from Heaven, one of them the need for a *kohen*.

Readers are invited to offer their explanation of this difficult Rashi.

• *Zevachim 16a*

DRESSING THE PART

“You are described as a kingdom of *kohanim* and a holy nation and you must dress the part!” Thus spoke the Persian King Azagdar as he raised the

belt worn by the Sage Huna bar Natan.

This was a reference to one of the items in the dress code prescribed for *kohanim* by the Prophet Yechezkel. In addition to wearing a linen turban and linen trousers the *kohanim* were instructed to avoid girding themselves in any place that is sweaty (*Yechezkel 44:18*). In practical terms this meant that the belt they wore around their robes had to be placed above the hips and below the level of the elbows.

Even though this was specifically required only of an actual *kohen*, the Persian ruler extended its application to every member of the “kingdom of *kohanim*”.

When Huna related this incident to the Sage Ameimar he was told that this was a fulfillment of the prophecy that “kings shall be your nursemaids” (*Yeshayahu 49:23*). Although the real fulfillment of this prophecy will come only at the end of days when the nations will consider it a privilege to serve the “kingdom of *kohanim*,” a glimpse of this golden hereafter was occasionally provided.

• *Zevachim 19a*

The Weekly Daf

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PARSHA Q&A ?

1. Why is the portion about the spies written immediately after the portion about Miriam's *tzara'at*?
2. To what was Moshe referring when he asked the spies "Are there trees in the land"?
3. Who built Hebron?
4. Which fruits did the *meraglim* bring back?
5. How many people carried the grape cluster?
6. Why did G-d shorten the *meraglim*'s journey?
7. Why did the *meraglim* begin by saying the land is "flowing with milk and honey"?
8. Why did the *meraglim* list Amalek first among the hostile nations they encountered?
9. How did Calev quiet the people?
10. Why did the Land appear to "eat its inhabitants"?
11. Besides the incident of the *meraglim*, what other sin led to the decree of 40 years in the desert?
12. On what day did *Bnei Yisrael* cry due to the *meraglim*'s report? How did this affect future generations?
13. "Don't fear the people of the land...their defense is departed." (14:9) Who was their chief "defender"?
14. Calev and Yehoshua praised Eretz Canaan and tried to assure the people that they could be victorious. How did the people respond?
15. "How long shall I bear this evil congregation?" G-d is referring to the 10 *meraglim* who slandered the Land. What halacha do we learn from this verse?
16. How is the *mitzvah* of *challa* different from other *mitzvot* associated with Eretz Yisrael?
17. What is the minimum amount of *challa* to be given to a *kohen* according to Torah Law? Rabbinic Law?
18. Verse 15:22 refers to what sin? How does the text indicate this?
19. Moshe's doubt regarding the punishment of the *mekoshesh etzim* (wood-gatherer) was different than his doubt regarding the punishment of the blasphemer. How did it differ?
20. How do the *tzitzit* remind us of the 613 commandments?

PARSHA Q&A!

Answers to This Week's Questions!

All references are to the verses and Rashi's commentary unless otherwise stated.

1. 13:2 - To show the evil of the *meraglim* (spies), that they saw Miriam punished for *lashon hara* (negative speech) yet failed to take a lesson from it.
2. 13:20 - Were there any righteous people in the land whose merit would "shade" the Canaanites from attack?
3. 13:22 - Cham.
4. 13:23 - A cluster of grapes, a pomegranate and a fig.
5. 13:23 - Eight.
6. 13:25 - G-d knew the Jews would sin and be punished with a year's wandering for each day of the spies' mission. So He shortened the journey to soften the decree.
7. 13:27 - Any lie which doesn't start with an element of truth won't be believed; therefore, they began their false report with a true statement.
8. 13:29 - To frighten the Jews. The Jewish People were afraid of Amalek, because Amalek had once attacked them.
9. 13:30 - He fooled them by shouting, "Is this all that the son of Amram did to us?" The people quieted themselves to hear what disparaging thing Calev wished to say about the "son of Amram" (Moshe).
10. 13:32 - G-d caused many deaths among the Canaanites so they would be preoccupied with burying their dead and not notice the *meraglim*.
11. 13:33 - The golden calf.
12. 14:1 - The 9th of Av (Tisha B'av). This date therefore became a day of crying for all future generations: Both Temples were destroyed on this date.
13. 14:9 - Iyov.
14. 14:10 - They wanted to stone them.
15. 14:27 - That ten men are considered a congregation.
16. 15:18 - The obligation to observe other *mitzvot* associated with *Eretz Yisrael* began only after the possession and division of the Land. The *mitzvah* of *challa* was obligatory immediately upon entering the Land.
17. 15:20 - No fixed amount is stated by the Torah. Rabbinic Law requires a household to give 1/24 and a baker to give 1/48.
18. 15:22 - Idolatry. "All these commandments" means one transgression which is equal to transgressing all the commandments - i.e., idolatry.
19. 15:34 - Moshe knew that the *mekoshesh etzim* was liable for the death penalty, but not which specific means of death. Regarding the blasphemer, Moshe didn't know if he was liable for the death penalty.
20. 15:39 - The numerical value of the word *tzitzit* is 600. *Tzitzit* have eight threads and five knots. Add these numbers and you get 613.

EXERCISE

From: Mark in Los Angeles, CA

Dear Rabbi,
Does the Torah encourage exercise or consider it a waste of time?

Dear Mark,

It is our purpose in life to come close to G-d through studying Torah and by keeping the commandments. In this way the soul is elevated and merits eternal goodness in the World to Come. However, in order for the soul to exist in the material world, it must be clothed in a body through which the soul may achieve its purpose. For this reason we must supply the body with its essential needs like food, water, sleep, and exercise, without which the body could not exist and the soul could not fulfill its potential.

This is the meaning of the Torah commandment "Be very careful to guard your soul" (*Deuteronomy 4:15*). In fact, our Sages considered this mitzvah so important that they equated it with the commandment to remember the giving of the Torah. On the verse "Guard yourself and greatly guard your soul lest you forget...the day that you stood before Hashem your G-d at [Sinai]" (*Deuteronomy 4:9-10*), the rabbis explained "guard yourself" means preserving one's health.

The Rambam, the great Torah scholar and physician wrote that "maintaining a healthy body is among the ways of serving G-d, since it is impossible for one who is not healthy to understand or know anything of the Creator. Therefore one must distance oneself from things which harm the body, and accustom oneself to the things which strengthen and make one healthy."

On exercise the Rambam says, "As long as a person exercises and exerts himself...sickness does not befall him and

his strength increases.... But one who is idle and does not exercise...even if he eats healthy foods and maintains healthy habits, all his days will be of ailment and his strength will diminish." If this is so regarding the era of the Rambam when even daily life was physically demanding, all the more so in our times when technological progress "spares" us much exertion. Regarding what type and how much exercise one needs, the Torah approach is to rely on the advice of the experts. The Rambam defined exercise as "vigorous or gentle movement, or a combination of the two, which increases one's breathing rate". Interestingly, this is exactly the cardiovascular exercise advised by modern medicine like walking, jogging, dancing, biking, or swimming for 30 minutes at least three times a week.

While exercise is very important, the Torah teaches the following way to preserve our health: "If you listen to the word of Hashem your G-d and do what is just in His eyes, give ear to His commandments and observe all His decrees, then the diseases that I placed upon Egypt, I will not bring upon you, for I am G-d your healer (*Exodus 15:26*). The Zohar teaches that the 248 positive Torah commandments correspond to the 248 "limbs" of the human body while the 365 Torah prohibitions correspond to the 365 "sinews". Keeping the Torah brings the body in healthy balance with the spiritual energy of the Torah. In fact, serving G-d actually brings blessing into our daily food, which also protects our health: "You shall worship Hashem your G-d and He shall bless your bread and your water, and remove illness from your midst" (*Exodus 23:25*).

Sources:

- *Kli Yakar, Deuteronomy 4:9*
- *Rambam, Hilchot De'ot 4:1; 4:14-15*
- *Kitzur Shulchan Aruch 32:14*
- *Rambam, Kontres Hanhagat HaBriut, 1:3*

DID YOU KNOW THAT...

...The newest outreach frontiers of Ohr Somayach in the Southern Hemisphere are its branches in Cape Town, South Africa and Sydney, Australia.

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CELLPHONE MANNERS

Question: My parents gave me a cellular phone for my birthday but my teacher tells me that I have to be careful where I use it. What is the right thing to do?

Answer: The lack of discretion which is sometimes connected to the use of the cellphone is illustrated by a true story with a heavy flavor of graveyard humor.

The funeral was over and the mourners who had participated in the burial ceremony were about to depart. Then, from the freshly covered grave, came the sound of a cellphone ringing. After a brief moment of shock at the thought that the Day of Resurrection had arrived, one of the mourners touched his empty breast pocket and realized that he had left his cellphone on and it had fallen into the grave.

But what would have happened if that same cellphone had started ringing in the middle of the rabbi's eulogy or the mourner's recital of Kaddish? It is situations such as these

which have prompted synagogues, yeshivot and other public places to post prominent warnings to all who enter their premises to turn off their cellphones while inside.

Even in public places that do not restrict use of cellphones, such as buses, trains or anywhere where people are captive audiences to your conversations, the tone and nature of your talk can be very disturbing to these unwilling listeners. It is almost impossible for them to avoid hearing your end of the conversation because of the proximity and some people have no idea how silly one end of a telephone talk sounds, especially since it deals with matters known only to the caller.

A final observation – what happened to the sense of privacy we once all treasured? Does everyone have to know what's doing in your life –or perhaps the cellphone is just a way of showing off?

PUBLIC DOMAIN _____

Re: Change for the Cabbie (Ohrnet Shlach)

In the *Parshat Baha'alotcha* issue your column "What's the Right Thing to Do" (which I very much enjoy reading each week) discussed the problem of a cabbie who didn't have change of a hundred dollar bill which the passenger offered as payment of his fare. That is the story of an American cabbie. Let me tell you a similar story about an Israeli cabbie with a different twist.

In a hurry to get to a family simcha celebration I hailed a cab after my own car refused to start. When I got to the hall

and offered a hundred shekel bill as payment the cabbie complained that he just went on duty and had no change. I was already late for the simcha so I offered to let him keep the change. To my surprise he came up with a counter-offer:

"Tell me how long you expect to be here and I'll come back to take you home. By that time I'll have the right change."

That's a Jewish cabbie for you!

• E.S.
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