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Tears of Sadness and of Joy
Rabbi Zvi Sobolofsky

Chazal teach us that after the Beis Hamikdash was destroyed, although the gates of prayer were closed, the gates of tears have remained open. What is the unique power of tears that enables them to penetrate the otherwise sealed gates of heaven? Why must this gate remain open forever, especially at a time when there is no Beis Hamikdash?

The tragedy of the destruction of the Beis Hamikdash began with tears. On that fateful first Tisha B'av described in Parshas Shlach, the Jewish People cried when hearing the report about Eretz Yisrael. Frightened by the words of the spies, the nation cried that night. It was those inappropriate tears that transformed the night of Tisha B'av into a time of crying for future generations. The fear and despair alone which followed the report of the spies would not have resulted in a churban. There was something about the tears that were shed in vain that were directly responsible for the future tragedies that would occur on Tisha B'av.

The Beis Hamikdash is described in Parshas Vayeitzei as the "Gate of Heaven" - the conduit through which all prayers ascend to Heaven. The most intense form of prayer is the one that is accompanied by tears. The highlight of tefillah on Rosh Hashanah is the moment of tekias shofar. The sound of the teruah is the sound of crying. Even the halachos of tekias shofar are an expression of its similarity to tears. There are three kinds of crying: some cries resemble the sound of a shevarim - three longer sounds, whereas others sound like a teruah, nine short ones. Others are a combination of the two, the sound of a shevarim-teruah. On Rosh Hashanah, we beseech Hashem through prayers of words and through another form of prayer, namely the sounds of the shofar. The shofar is a prayer which, just like tears, expresses our innermost feelings which cannot be articulated with words.

When the Jewish People abused the power of tears by crying in an inappropriate manner, the seeds of churban were planted. Churban would result in the closing of the Gates of Heaven to prayer. The gates of tears should have been closed as well. In the absence of the Beis Hamikdash, the rules of justice would dictate that there would no longer be any avenue available to approach Hashem. However, in His mercy Hashem allowed the gates of tears to remain open. The most sincere tefillos that cannot even be articulated through words

remain as the way to beseech Hashem, even during a time of churban. It is through this power of tears that ultimately the Beis Hamikdash will be rebuilt. Yirmiyahu Hanavi describes in Megillas Eicha how Yerushalayim cries in solitude over its fate of destruction. Yet, Yirmiyahu also prophesizes how Rochel's tears pierce the heavens as her children are exiled. It is the collective tears of the Jewish People that combine with the tears of their mother, Rachel, that ultimately bring about the comforting words from Hashem, "Refrain your voice from crying and your eyes from tearing because the Jewish People will return to Eretz Yisroel."

Churban began with the abuse of the unique power of the most intense form of prayer. Redemption will only occur when we sincerely beseech Hashem, invoking our tears and our innermost desires to return to Hashem. May we soon merit the day when the tears of sadness will become tears of joy.

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fw from hamelaket@gmail.com
from: Destiny Foundation/Rabbi Berel Wein <info@jewishdestiny.com> reply-to: info@jewishdestiny.com subject: Weekly Parsha from Rabbi Berel Wein
Rabbi Wein's Weekly Blog SHLACH

Revisiting a story on the spies that Moshe sent to the Land of Israel is always a very discouraging moment. How could everything have gone so wrong and so fast? All of the reasons advanced over the ages by the great commentators to the Torah - personal ambition, fear of the unknown, disregard for tradition, lack of faith in God, etc. - are undoubtedly true and correct. But to a certain extent they all only beg the question. They perhaps answer the why part of the issue but the how to part of the story still remains pretty much a mystery. It is obvious that a climate of fear must have pervaded the entire Jewish nation as they stood at the cusp of entry into the Holy Land. The leaders of Israel who were the spies were, in the main, representative of the people and the tribes that they headed. Jewish tradition teaches us that there is no king without a people. So the general prevailing climate and belief of the people have enormous influence on the views and behavior of those leaders that Moshe sent on this fateful journey. The ready acceptance by the people of the negative report of the ten spies indicates clearly their preconceived notion of the land and its inhabitants. The Jewish people of that generation simply were not willing to embark on the great adventure that is always associated with living and populating the Land of Israel. Moshe had chosen the best people he could find for this mission. But he misread the mood of the people that they represented. Hence this tragedy became an almost unavoidable one. From the beginning of the Jewish story with our father Avraham, the Land of Israel has always posed a great challenge. To Avraham it would be a land of wars, famine and wandering. And yet, it is also to be the ultimate land of promise. The Lord had entered into a binding covenant between him and his descendants, that this land would be their eventual homeland and would represent spiritual and physical redemption for the Jewish people. Our forefather Yitzchak encountered strife, discrimination and famine while living in the land. Nevertheless, he never left Israel and saw in it the eternal home for his later generations. Some of the names that he gave to the locations of the wells of water still speak to us today, thousands of years later.

Our father Yaakov tasted the bitterness of exile when he fled to find refuge in the house of Lavan. He therefore treasured his return to the Land of Israel even though he found it fraught with danger and violence. His dying wish was that he should be transported back to the Land of Israel to be buried in its holy earth.

In this respect, the Jewish people did not quite follow the example of their forefathers but rather adopted a preconceived negative view of the land and its possibilities. This was transmitted directly or indirectly to the leadership of their tribes, resulting in a lost generation. Shabbat shalom Rabbi Berel Wein

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Freedom Needs Patience Britain's Former Chief Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks

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 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.

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Rabbi Dr. Tzvi Hersh Weinreb

OU Torah

The Blue Above the White

Rabbi Dr. Tzvi Hersh Weinreb

It may not sound like much of a story to you, but to me it was meaningful at many levels. I've heard the story three times now, each time from a different person. Each of the three went through a remarkably similar experience and shared their story with me. I'd like to share the story with you, but some background will be necessary.

You must already have guessed that the background will derive from this week's Torah portion, Parshat Shelach (Numbers 13:1-15:41). At the very end of the parsha, we read:

"The Lord said to Moses, as follows: Speak to the people of Israel and instruct them to make for themselves fringes on the corners of their garments throughout all their generations; let them attach a cord of blue to the fringe at each corner. That shall be your fringe; look at it and recall all the commandments of the Lord and observe them, so that you do not follow your heart and eyes... Thus you shall be reminded to observe all My commandments and to be holy to your God..." (Numbers 15:37-40).

The Torah's word for "fringes" is *tzitzit*. This mitzvah is punctiliously kept by observant Jews to this very day, consistent with the verse's insistence that it is a practice mandated for "all their generations." The mitzvah entails affixing strings to four cornered garments, so that the strings hang loose. Jewish men wear these garments, and the stringent view, codified by the Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chaim 8:11), requires that the garment be worn above one's other clothing "so that one will constantly look at the *tzitzit* and thereby remember the commandments."

More lenient views allow the garment to be worn under one's other clothing, but still encourage the practice of letting the strings themselves protrude from one's clothing so that the wearer can see them, reflect upon them, and call to mind the Almighty's commandments. This is the practice of very many observant Jews nowadays.

Now we come to the story told to me by three young men who had identical experiences with these strings while wearing them in their everyday business settings. To my knowledge, these three men do not know each other and indeed dwell and work in communities geographically distant from each other.

Each of them approached me with his story, convinced that I would be especially interested in what had occurred to them. Each of them was approached, and I should emphasize respectfully approached, by a non-Jew, and each of them was asked if there was any significance to the strings protruding from their sweaters or shirts. Each of them replied that the strings had religious significance and that they wore them in keeping with a biblical command.

Each of them was surprised when the non-Jew immediately understood that this practice traced back to the Bible; in his words, to the Old Testament. Two of them even knew the chapter and verse of the passage in the Bible, quoted above. "Of course," they said, "these strings are the 'fringes' which must be attached to your garments."

All three "storytellers" were similarly taken aback by the expertise shown by their non-Jewish acquaintances and by their familiarity with "our" Bible. But none of the three stories ends quite here.

All of the three non-Jews then persisted to ask, "But where are the blue strings? Doesn't the Bible prescribe that a blue cord be attached at each corner? Where are your blue cords?"

The Torah's word for the "blue cord" is tekhelet. In Biblical times, and for centuries thereafter, one of the cords, and according to some opinions two of them, were dyed blue before being attached to the four-cornered garment. The dye was extracted from a sea creature known as the chilazon. Over the course of Jewish history, this practice was discontinued. It became difficult to procure this specific dye, and eventually the precise identity of this sea creature became unknown.

Two of my "storytellers" were able to share the reason for the absence of the blue cord with their non-Jewish questioners. One had to simply admit that he did not know why he did not keep the precise biblical command in his personal practice.

Permit me now to briefly tell you another story; namely, the story of the discovery of the identity of the sea creature, the recovery of the knowledge necessary to extract the dye from that creature, and the renewed ability to observe this mitzvah exactly as prescribed by the Torah, in the portion we read this Shabbat. The story begins in the late 19th century with the efforts of Rabbi Gershon Henoch Leiner to travel to the museums and aquariums of the Mediterranean coast in search of the chilazon. He identified the creature as a subspecies of a squid, and his followers to this day derive the blue dye from this creature and color their tzitzit with it. However, rabbinic authorities of that time disagreed with this rabbi's opinion.

Closer to our time, the late Chief Rabbi of Israel, Rabbi Isaac Herzog, wrote his doctoral thesis on the topic of the identification of this sea creature and brilliantly defended his thesis: The chilazon was not a type of squid, but was rather a type of snail, known scientifically as the murex trunculus.

Even closer to our time, barely two decades ago, a group of Israeli scholars found a source in the ocean near Israel for this snail, and through a fascinating process too long to describe here, began to produce the dye and made tzitzit dyed blue available to the public. Nevertheless, a great number of rabbinic scholars remain unimpressed by these discoveries.

For a full description of this entire topic, one should consult the following website: www.tekhelet.com.

What was my response to the three "storytellers" and their tale? I chose not to share with them my own private reflection to the effect that had these three non-Jews met me, they would have found the blue cord of which they were informed by their own biblical study. Rather, I chose to share with the storytellers one of the explanations given for the blue cord.

This explanation is to be found in a book entitled Sefer HaChinuch, written by a medieval rabbi whose identity is uncertain. The book is an enumeration of all

613 Torah commandments, with an explanation given about the "root" of each command. By "root" he means, in contemporary terminology, the symbolic significance of the commandment. Here is what the author writes, in my own admittedly free translation:

"The underlying reason for this mitzvah is apparent. What can be a better reminder of God's commandments than an appendage attached to one's everyday apparel? But more than that, let us analyze the colors of the cords: blue and white. White is symbolic of the body, which our tradition (see Pirkei D'Rabbi Eliezer 3) teaches us was primordially created from the snow, which is white. Note too, that the body in its early embryonic stage resembles intertwined cords or strings (see Tractate Niddah 25b). The blue cord is reminiscent of the blue sky, of heaven, and is symbolic of all that is spiritual about mankind. Therefore, the blue cord is wound around the white to emphasize that ultimately, the soul is above, and the body is below; the soul is primary, and the body but secondary."

For those of us who wear tekhelet nowadays, and I am proud that I am among them, a powerful image that comes to our mind's eye every time we gaze upon our tzitzit is the image of a blue cord wound around a white one, and it is a constant reminder that our "white body" is best enveloped by our "blue soul," that our earthly selves must be subservient to our heavenly spirit.

Will the beautiful explanation given by the Sefer HaChinuch convince those who do not yet wear tekhelet to begin to do so? Perhaps not. But perhaps you, dear reader, with the addition of so many similar rabbinic passages available on the tekhelet.com website, will be convinced to add this new spiritual dimension to this important everyday mitzvah.

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from: **Rabbi Ozer Alport** <oaalport@optonline.net>

date: Thu, Jun 15, 2017 at 6:50 PM

subject: **Parsha Potpourri - Shelach**

Shlach (Numbers 13-15) One Good Hour by **Rabbi Ozer Alport** In relating that Moshe sent spies to scout out the land of Israel, the Torah refers to the spies using the expression "anashim" (Numbers 13:3). Rashi notes that this is difficult to understand, as the term "anashim" is normally used to describe important men of stature. Why is this word used in conjunction with the spies, who incited the Jewish people to rebel against the Divine plan for them to enter and conquer the land of Israel?

Rashi explains that this term is used to teach that at the time the spies were sent, they were still righteous and had no plans to sin by speaking negatively about the land of Israel. However, he seems to emphasize that the spies "were righteous for one hour," a claim for which there is no apparent source or proof. Why does Rashi use this peculiar expression?

When Rabbi Eizel Charif was eight years old, he was asked to explain Rashi's intention and responded with a brilliant derivation for this assertion. God later decreed (Numbers 14:34) that as a result of the sin of the spies, the Jewish people would be required to wander in the wilderness for 40 years, corresponding to the 40 days that the spies sinned when scouting out the land. If each day - which contains 24 hours - was punished with an additional year - which is made up of 12 months - of wandering, it comes out that for each hour of the spies' expedition, the Jews were punished with an additional half of a month in the wilderness.

The Jews left Egypt on 15 Nissan, the first day of Pesach. They entered the land of Israel on 10 Nissan (Joshua 4:19), which is five days short of the requisite 40-year decree. Further, Rashi writes (Deut. 1:2) that even had the Jews merited to immediately traverse the desert and enter the land of Israel, the journey would have taken 11 days. This period of time cannot be included in the calculation of the additional time they were forced to wander as a result of the sin of the spies.

In light of these considerations, it comes out that half of a month is missing from the 40-year period to which they were sentenced. In order to resolve this difficulty, Rashi concluded that the spies had proper intentions for the first hour of their mission, and it was therefore fitting that half of a month should be reduced from their punishment.

* * *

ROUND CITIES

Upon their return from examining the land of Israel the spies gave a negative report which was full of details intended to scare the people and incite them to rebel against the idea of entering and conquering the land. One of the facts they related is that the cities were heavily fortified (Numbers 13:28). Rashi curiously explains that their intention was to stress the fact that the walls of the cities were round. This is difficult to understand. Why was the shape of the city walls relevant, and what could have been their negative intention in relating such a seemingly trivial detail?

Rashi writes (Leviticus 14:34) that in warning the people about the possibility of tzara'as (leprosy) striking their homes, God was actually conveying good news. Because the previous Canaanite inhabitants hid their treasures in the walls of their houses, the process of scraping a house with tzara'as would actually reveal to them valuable items. However, Rabbi Moshe Yitzhak Segal notes that the Mishnah (Nega'im 12:1) derives from the twofold repetition (Leviticus 14:37, 39) of the phrase "walls of the house" that the laws of tzara'as in houses are only applicable in homes which have four walls, as each phrase refers to a minimum of two walls and the phrase is repeated twice.

The spies feared that upon hearing their negative report, the Jewish people would respond with inspired faith that although the inhabitants of Israel may be strong and the battle would be difficult, it would be well worth it, as they would subsequently be able to discover the valuable possessions which were left behind in the walls. The spies therefore dashed their hopes by emphasizing that the walls were round and therefore not subject to the laws governing tzara'as in houses, which would mean that the people would never know where to look in order to uncover any hidden treasures.

* * *

JOSHUA'S VOWELS

Why is Yehoshua referred to (Numbers 13:16) as Bin Nun - the "son of Nun" vowelized with a chirik (one dot) - and not the more standard Ben Nun, vowelized with a segol (three dots).

Nachmanides (Exodus 33:11) suggests that the phrase Bin Nun can be read as one word - "Binun" - which is derived from the word Navon - insightful - indicating that Yehoshua was the wisest and greatest of Moshe's students.

Alternatively, the Chasam Sofer explains that Bin is associated with the word "hit'bonenut" - thinking - and indicates that Yehoshua studied and had some level of insight into Nun, an allusion to the 50th (and highest) level of wisdom.

Tosefes Beracha and Steipler cite the Talmud (Sanhedrin 107a), which teaches that when Sarah's name was changed from Sarai to Sarah, the letter Yud complained about its replacement and was only appeased when it was added to Hoshea's name to become Yehoshua. However, this only provided a source for the extra Yud which was added to his name, but not for the two dots in the vowel which is written under it, as the Yud in Sarah's name had no vowel under it. In order to add these two dots, they were taken away from the three dots in the word Ben, leaving it with only one dot to be read as Bin.

* * *

CALEV THE SPY

When else in history did Moshe send Calev as a spy, and where did he send him?

In Numbers 21:32, Targum Yonason ben Uziel writes that Moshe sent Calev and Pinchas to spy out the Amorite city of Yazer, and Rashi adds that not only did they examine the city, but they also conquered it themselves to prevent any risk of a recurrence of the debacle which occurred the first time that spies were sent to the land of Israel.

This article can also be read at: <http://www.aish.com/tp/i/pp/158351385.html>

from: Rabbi Kaganoff <ymkaganoff@gmail.com> to: kaganoff-a@googlegroups.com date: Tue, Jun 13, 2017 at 8:20 AM subject: A Woman's Guide to Tzitzis

A Woman's Guide to Tzitzis

By Rabbi Yirmiyohu Kaganoff

The Torn Hole Question # 1 Mrs. Friedman wants to know: "The hole on my son's talis koton in which the tzitzis strings are inserted is torn. Does this invalidate Yanki's tzitzis?"

The Unraveled Knot Question #2 Mrs. Weiss notices that the knots on her son's tzitzis have untied. Are his tzitzis still kosher?

A Bicycle Casualty Question #3, from Mrs. Goldberg: "My son's tzitzis got caught in his bicycle and several strings were torn. Are the tzitzis invalid?"

The Woman's Tzitzis Guide Why write a woman's guide to tzitzis, when women are not required to observe the mitzvah, and, according to many authorities, are not even permitted to wear them? (See Targum Yonasan to Devarim 22:5, that a woman wearing tzitzis violates the prohibition of wearing a man's garment.) In addition, some authorities contend that because women are exempt from fulfilling the mitzvah, they should not attach the tzitzis strings to the garment (Rama, Orach Chayim 14:1 and commentaries). (The Rama concludes that if a woman did attach the tzitzis to the garment, the tzitzis are kosher.)

The reason for this guide is that women are often responsible for the purchase, supervision, upkeep, and laundering of the tzitzis of their boys and men. Indeed, women often ask me questions relevant to these halachos. Men will also find this guide very useful.

In order to answer the above questions thoroughly, we must first understand some basics about how tzitzis are produced.

Please note that throughout this article, "tzitzis" refers to the strings placed on the corners of the garment; the garment itself will be called a "talis koton."

Special Strings Tzitzis are not manufactured from ordinary thread, but only from thread manufactured lishmah, meaning that the threads were spun with the intent that they be used to fulfill the mitzvah of tzitzis.

After completing the spinning, one takes several of these specially-spun threads and twists them together into a thicker string. This twisting, called shezira, is also performed lishmah, with the intent of producing string for the mitzvah of tzitzis. Although, to the best of my knowledge, no early halachic sources discuss how many threads one needs to twist together, some have the custom of twisting eight such threads, which are called kaful shemonah.

The authorities dispute whether attaching the tzitzis strings to the garment and tying them must also be performed lishmah. In practice, we are stringent (Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayim 14:2 and commentaries).

Combing Lishmah? Some authorities require that even combing the fibers -- the process that precedes the spinning -- must be performed lishmah. The authorities conclude that this is not required, although some recommend manufacturing or acquiring tzitzis with this hiddur (Mishnah Berurah 11:3).

Articulation Many authorities contend that when manufacturing an item lishmah, one must articulate this intent (Rosh, Hilchos Sefer Torah Chapter 3). This means that the person spinning or twisting the tzitzis must say that he is doing so in order to make tzitzis for the sake of the mitzvah (Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayim 11:1 and Mishnah Berurah, ad locum). Once one made this declaration (leshem mitzvas tzitzis) at the beginning of the spinning, it is unnecessary to repeat it (Mishnah Berurah).

Hand or Machine? Regarding whether to buy hand- or machine-spun tzitzis, there is much discussion among authorities as to whether one may rely on machine spinning with the machine operator declaring that the tzitzis are being made lishmah (see for example, Achiezer 3:69; Har Tzvi, Orach Chayim 1:10). This is similar to the dispute concerning whether one may fulfill the mitzvah of eating matzoh on Seder night with machine matzoh, an issue that involved a huge dispute among the halachic authorities of 19th century Poland.

As far as I am aware, a talis koton sold for children's use is probably made using machine-made tzitzis. (At the time I first wrote this article, I saw a talis koton meant for children with a hechsher describing that it was made by having the beginning of the spinning done by hand, as a hiddur on the regular machine-made variety.) Both hand- and machine- spun types are readily available for men's tzitzis, for talisim kotonim and for talisim gedolim. One should consult his Rav if he is uncertain whether to purchase the more expensive hand-made variety.

What Material Should Be Used? Although one may make tzitzis threads from other material, universal practice today is to use sheep's wool.

The Garment Does Not Require Lishmah The law requiring that the tzitzis be manufactured lishmah applies only to the tzitzis strings, not the garment to which the strings are attached. This garment, the talis or talis koton itself, does not need to be made for the sake of the mitzvah -- any cloth may be used.

For reasons beyond the scope of this guide, the custom is to make the talis gadol, that is worn for davening, from wool. Some have the custom to insist on woolen material for the talis koton also, though most are satisfied with a cotton talis koton. Authorities discuss and dispute whether the talis koton can be made of polyester or other synthetic materials, and I leave it to our readers to discuss this issue with their halachic authorities. Perhaps one day I'll have a chance to write an article on this fascinating topic.

To review: Before spinning wool to be used for tzitzis, the spinning machine operator, or the hand spinner, should say that he is spinning the threads with the intent that they will be used for the mitzvah of tzitzis. After spinning the wool into threads, one twists several tzitzis threads together into a thick, strong tzitzis string. This latter process also requires lishmah. There is no requirement to make the talis or talis koton garment lishmah.

Inserting the Tzitzis Having completed the tzitzis string manufacturing process, we are now ready to learn how to insert the tzitzis strings into the garment. One takes four of these specially lishmah-made strings and inserts them through a hole in the corner of the garment, in order to fulfill the verse's requirement that the tzitzis threads lie over the corner of the garment. The hole must be not so distant from the corner that the tzitzis are considered to be hanging from the main part of the garment (rather than on the corner), and yet not so close that the tzitzis hang completely below the garment (Menachos 42a; Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayim 11:9). Thus, the hole should be placed in a way that after attaching the tzitzis to the garment, only the upper part of the tzitzis rests on the garment.

Where Should the Hole Be? The Gemara explains that the hole through which the tzitzis are placed should be closer to the corner than "three fingerwidths," which means three times the width of a finger. Whose finger and which finger?

Most poskim conclude that a fingerwidth is the width of an average-sized man's thumb at its widest point.

Measure this distance, multiply it by three, and you have "three fingerwidths." Now, measure three fingerwidths from the two sides of the garment near the corner (not from the actual right-angle corner of the garment) and you can create a square in the corner of the garment (Rama, Orach Chayim 11:9). If the tzitzis are attached beyond this area, they are not considered to be on the corner. Although there is a range of opinion as to exactly how much area this is, most poskim conclude that it is about six centimeters,* or about 2 1/2 inches, from each side.

Others follow a different interpretation of which finger is used to measure this distance, and according to their opinion, the area is a bit smaller (Artzot Hachayim; Mishnah Berurah 11:42).

Closest Hole The closest the hole should be to the sides of the talis or talis koton is the distance from the end of the thumb nail to the thumb joint, measured by the thumb of an average-sized man. (This measures less than two centimeters or less than .75 inches.) If the hole is made closer than this, the tzitzis are not kosher, because the tzitzis strings will hang below the garment and, as I explained above, they are required to be resting partly on the garment itself. However, if one inserted and knotted the tzitzis threads in a hole that was in the correct place, and then subsequently the garment shrunk or was shortened, or the hole tore, resulting in the tzitzis being closer to the corner than they should, the tzitzis are nonetheless kosher (Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayim 11:10).

To sum up: To determine where the hole should be, one can examine the corner of the talis or talis koton and mark inward from the two adjacent sides that form the corner. Within two centimeters of either side is too close to the edge of the garment to attach the tzitzis, and more than six centimeters is too far.

Yes, Mrs. Friedman Although we have not finished our description of tzitzis production, we have sufficient information to discuss Mrs. Friedman's question. The hole through which the tzitzis strings are placed tore, and, as a result, the tzitzis are now closer to the corner of the garment than they should be. Does this invalidate the tzitzis? Since the tzitzis strings were originally inserted into a hole that was correctly located, the tzitzis remain kosher.

I advised Mrs. Friedman to mend and reinforce the garment before it tears so badly that the tzitzis strings fall off, which will invalidate the garment, requiring

sewing the clothing and undoing and restringing the tzitzis again to make it kosher.

Four in One Let us now return to tzitzis production. After making the hole in its correct place, one takes four tzitzis strings that have been spun and twisted lishmah. Three of the threads are the same length, but one of the strings is much longer than the others since it will be coiled around them. After this string is wrapped around the others, it should be about the same length as the other strings.

The strings should be long enough that when they are completely coiled and tied (as I will describe) the free-hanging eight strings should be the length of eight fingerwidths (as described above), which is about 16–20 centimeters or about eight inches.

The Torah requires that there be exactly four tzitzis strings per corner. Using fewer or more strings invalidates the mitzvah and, according to some opinions, violates the Torah prohibitions of bal tosef or bal tigre, adding to or detracting from a Torah commandment (Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayim 11:12 and commentaries).

Pulling Strings At this point, one pulls the four strings through the hole in the talis or talis koton until the three shorter strings are halfway through the hole. The longer string should be pulled through so that on one side it is the same length as the other strings, but the other side is much longer, since this extra length will be wrapped around the other strings.

After the four strings are threaded through the garment, there will be eight strings hanging off the garment, which are then knotted together in a tight double knot. This permanent knot is Torah-required. This knot is made by tying a set of four strings from one side with the set of four strings from the opposite side. To make sure that the two sets of four strings stay together throughout the process of coiling and knotting, one takes the four strings from the side that does not include the long string and loops them together at their end. We will soon see why we perform this step (Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayim 12:1).

The longer string is now coiled several times around the seven others and then the two sets of four strings are knotted tightly. The coiled tzitzis strings are called the gedil.

The accepted custom is to tie the eight strings together in five different places, each separated by an area where the long string is coiled around the others several times. Thus, there are four areas of coiled tzitzis strings, each held in place by double knots.

Remember the Mitzvos! The five knots help us remember all the mitzvos. As Rashi writes, the gematriya (numerical value) of the word tzitzis (when spelled with the letter yud twice) equals 600. When one adds eight for the eight hanging tzitzis strings and five for the five knots that tie them, adds up to 613. Additionally, the five knots remind us of the Torah's five chumashim.

The Torah, itself, did not require all these coilings and knots, but required only one knot and one coiled area. The other knots and coilings are only lichatchilah, the proper way to make the tzitzis. However, if one failed to make these coilings or knots, the tzitzis are nevertheless kosher, provided there is at least one coiled gedil area and at least one knot.

Similarly, if the coiling unravels in the middle -- not an uncommon occurrence -- the tzitzis are still fully kosher, as long as one gedil area remains.

This will help answer Mrs. Weiss' question about some of her son's tzitzis knots being untied. As long as one knot remains, and there is some area where the tzitzis strings are coiled together, the tzitzis are still kosher. Of course, one should re-wind the longer tzitzis string around the others and retie the knots, but in the interim the tzitzis are kosher.

Jewish Labor The person attaching the strings to the garment must be Jewish (Menachos 42a; Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayim 14:1). There was a major scandal a few years ago when unscrupulous manufacturers were discovered to have hired non-Jews to make tzitzis. Hopefully, this problem has been resolved, but one should check that the tzitzis have a reliable hechsher. Based on shaylos I have been asked, I have discovered that many people are unaware that children's talisim kotonim must also be reliably kosher.

By the way, it is preferable that women not be the ones who insert the tzitzis strings onto the garment and tie them, since women are absolved from fulfilling this mitzvah (Rama, Orach Chayim 14:1 and commentaries).

How Many Coils? The number of coils between the knots is a matter of custom. (Based on the Arizal's tradition, common practice is to coil the thread seven times between the first two knots, eight between the next two, eleven between the third and fourth, and thirteen times between the fourth and fifth knots.

To recap, we twist the longer string around the others and tie the tzitzis strings into knots in a way that creates five knots and between them four areas of tightly coiled string that resemble a cable. Torah law requires only that we tie one knot and that there be some area of coiled string.

Hang Loose! After completing the coiling and tying, the rest of the strings are allowed to hang freely. The free-hanging strings are referred to as the "pesil." As I mentioned above, when making the tzitzis, the pesil should be at least eight fingerwidths long, which is about eight inches (Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayim 11:14). However, if the strings become torn afterward, the tzitzis are still kosher, if even a very small amount of pesil remains – long enough to make a loop and knot it, which is probably about an inch (Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayim 12:1).

Tear Near the Top If the tzitzis strings become torn above the first knot, the tzitzis are invalid. As I explained, tzitzis are made from four strings inserted into the garment, and then knotted and coiled. The Torah requires that each of these four strings be attached and hang from the corner of the garment and be included both in the gedil, the coiled part, and the pesil, the loose, hanging strings.

If the thread tore at the top, then it is no longer hanging from the corner of the garment, but held in place by the other threads.

Torn String We can now explain whether tzitzis become invalid when the tzitzis strings are torn, which depends on where the strings tore. If only one of the eight strings tore and only below the first knot, then the tzitzis are still kosher. This is because all four of the original tzitzis still have both gedil, the coiled part, and pesil, the hanging part. If two of the eight strings tore at a point that there is no pesil anymore, then whether the tzitzis are still kosher depends on whether these were part of the same original tzitzis string or not. If they were two sides of the same original tzitzis string, then the tzitzis are invalid, because one of the four original strings now lacks pesil. This is the reason why one should be careful to loop four of the strings together before beginning the coiling and knotting, since this helps keep track in case two or more strings tear, whether they are the two parts of the same string, which will invalidate the tzitzis if no pesil remains, or parts of two different strings, in which case the tzitzis are kosher, if the other end of the string still has pesil.

If a tear takes place somewhere between the first knot and the pesil, we treat the remaining part of that string as nonexistent since it no longer hangs from the garment, but is being kept in place by the coiling and knotting. Thus, if this happens to only one string of the eight, the tzitzis are still kosher, because all four original tzitzis still have some pesil. However, if this happens to two or more strings, one must be concerned that it was two sides of the same original string and the tzitzis may be invalid, because only three of the original strings now have pesil.

Conclusion Rav Hirsch notes that the root of the word tzitzis is "sprout" or "blossom," a strange concept to associate with garments, which do not grow. He explains that the message of our clothing is extended, that is, sprouts and blossoms, by virtue of our tzitzis.

The introduction of clothing to Adam and Chavah was to teach man that his destiny is greater than an animal's, and that his responsibility is to make all his decisions according to Hashem's laws, and not his own desires. Introducing tzitzis onto a Jew's garments reinforces this message; we must act according to what Hashem expects. Thus, whether we are wearing, shopping for, examining, or laundering tzitzis, we must remember our life's goal: fulfilling Hashem's instructions, not our own desires.

* All measurements in this article are approximate. One should check with a Rav for exact figures. _____
from: Chanan Morrison <ravkooklist@gmail.com> to: **Rav Kook** List <Rav-Kook-List@googlegroups.com> date: Wed, Jun 14, 2017 at 5:15 AM subject: **[Rav Kook Torah] Shlach: The Third Passage of Shema**
Tallit

Every evening and morning, we say the Shema, Judaism's supreme declaration of monotheistic faith. In the first passage, we accept upon ourselves the yoke of God's sovereignty. And in the second, we accept God's commandments.

Interestingly, the Sages added a third paragraph to the Shema - the passage commanding us to wear tzitzit (tassels) on the corners of our garments (Num. 15:37-41). Why did they decide to add this particular paragraph, out of the entire Torah, to the central prayer of Judaism?

Six Themes

The Talmud in Berachot 12b explains that the passage of tzitzit contains not one, but six major themes:

The mitzvah of wearing tzitzit on our garments; The Exodus ("I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt"); Accepting the mitzvot ("You will thus remember and keep all of My commandments"); Resisting heresy ("You will not stray after your hearts"); Refraining from immoral and sinful thoughts ("and after your eyes"); Eschewing idolatry ("which have led you astray"). Is there a common motif to these six themes? Most are indeed fundamental concepts of Judaism, but what is so special about the mitzvah of tzitzit, more than the other 612 commandments? **Spiritual Focus**

This mitzvah in fact does contain a fundamental message. It touches on the basic issues of life: how do we realize our spiritual potential? How can we truly fulfill ourselves as human beings?

As Maimonides wryly noted, the philosophers composed numerous volumes and entire libraries trying to answer these questions. Despite their efforts, they failed to exhaust the topic. The Talmudic sages, on the other hand, succeeded in encompassing the subject by revealing its essence in one pithy statement:

"Let all your deeds be for the sake of Heaven" (Avot 2:12). Human perfection is attained by establishing a worthwhile spiritual goal for all of our efforts and activities in life. Once we have set our spiritual focus, we need to direct all of our aspirations, wants and actions according to that objective. Then we will be complete in all aspects and levels of our existence.

This is the message of tzitzit. The sky-blue techelet thread reminds us of the heavens and the Throne of Glory. The soul's external expressions - character traits, emotions and actions - are like a garment worn on the outside, over the body. We need to connect all of these outer manifestations to our inner spiritual goal, our tachlit, in the same way that we tie our outer clothes with the special thread of techelet.

The Exodus from Egyptian bondage expands on this theme. We are no longer slaves, subjected to physical and moral repression. A slave cannot set goals for his life and actions - they are not under his control. But we were liberated from slavery, are we free to elevate ourselves and aspire towards our spiritual calling.

The acceptance of practical mitzvot perpetuates the same message. All of our detailed actions should connect with our overall objective. Thus, we attain completion in all aspects of our existence: our intellect, emotions and conduct. **Avoiding the Pitfalls**

While the first three themes in the passage of tzitzit teach us how to fulfill the maxim, "Let all of your deeds be for the sake of Heaven," the last three themes deal with avoiding three obstacles to this guideline.

The first pitfall is heresy. The fear of all-inclusive commitment, the desire to avoid moral responsibilities, can lead to denial of God or His Oneness. The path of heresy means abandoning elevated goals and rejecting ethical aspirations. Without a comprehensive objective and direction, the soul naturally seeks some other occupation. Lacking an overriding goal, the soul is tossed and flung like flotsam in the ocean, pulled by any internal or external lure. This leads to the second pitfall: attraction to base and corrupt actions.

In the end, however, a self-indulgent lifestyle leaves the soul with feelings of horrible emptiness. The soul recognizes that a life without meaning is a contradiction to its very essence. But since it has already lost its rational beacon by rejecting the light of truth, the soul seeks purpose and meaning in foreign cultures. It tries to find spiritual sustenance in broken cisterns, in idolatrous worship.

Thus, we see that this short passage includes the fundamental themes of Judaism. It describes that which gives our lives meaning and direction, and the major obstacles that can lead the soul astray. It is a fitting conclusion to our acceptance of God's kingship in the Shema prayer.

(Gold from the Land of Israel, now available in paperback. Adapted from Ein Eyah vol. I, pp. 70-71)

See also: Shlach: Repairing the Sin of the Spies

from: **Rabbi Yissocher Frand** <ryfrand@torah.org> reply-to: do-not-reply@torah.org to: ravfrand@torah.org date: Thu, Jun 15, 2017 at 10:22 PM subject: Rav Frand - Our Survival in Galus is Kiddush HaShem Plan B / Why Tzitzis Is Voluntarily

Rav Frand By Rabbi Yissocher Frand

These divrei Torah were adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Tapes on the weekly portion: CD #992 – Your Tallis Katan — Is It Big Enough? Good Shabbos!

Kiddush HaShem: Plan B

In Parshas Shlach, the Almighty was prepared to destroy the Jewish people because of the negative report of the Spies and the ready acceptance by the nation of that slanderous report regarding Eretz Yisrael. Moshe Rabbeinu pleaded on their behalf arguing that the Egyptians would say "Because Hashem lacked the ability to bring this people to the Land that He had sworn to give them He slaughtered them in the wilderness." [Bamidbar 14:16] Moshe then invokes the Thirteen Attributes of Mercy, culminating with the prayer "Forgive now the iniquity of this people according to the greatness of Your kindness and as You have forgiven this people from Egypt until now." The conclusion is: "And Hashem said, 'I have forgiven in accordance with your words (salachti k'dverecha)." [Bamidbar 14:18-20]

What do the words salachti k'dverecha mean? Moshe Rabbeinu had offered two arguments why the people should be forgiven. First, he invoked the Thirteen Attributes of Mercy and then he argued that if they were to be killed out all at once in a plague it would cause a desecration of G-d's Name as the nations would say "because G-d was not able..." The implication of "I have forgiven in accordance with your words" is that this time even the Thirteen Attributes of Mercy were not sufficient for receiving forgiveness. It required Moshe's extra argument — lest the Egyptians say that G-d was not able to fulfill His promise — to win forgiveness.

The next pasuk [verse] continues "But as I live — and the glory of Hashem shall fill the entire world." [Bamidbar 14:21] This is a difficult pasuk to explain. Rashi gives one explanation, which I am not going to discuss, but the Netziv [1816-1893] in his Chumash commentary (HaEmek Davar) says that even though this pasuk is somewhat ambiguous, King Dovid in Psalms fills in for us the blanks in terms of understanding the pasuk. What is not so clear in Sefer Bamidbar, Dovid HaMelech clarifies in Sefer Tehillim.

We read in Tehillim: "Then He lifted up His hand [in an oath] against them, to cast them down in the wilderness, and to cast down their descendants among the nations, and to scatter them among the lands." [Chapter 106:26-27] The Netziv writes when the pasuk in Parshas Shlach says "and the glory of HaShem shall fill the entire world" — G-d promises "I will make a Kiddush HaShem." How will this Kiddush HaShem occur? Dovid HaMelech tells us: "...and to scatter them among the lands." The Kiddush HaShem will be implemented by spreading out the Jewish people throughout all the nations of the world.

What does this mean? The Almighty wished to sanctify His Name. He wished to show the entire world how He took Klal Yisrael out of Egypt, how He cared for them in the wilderness, and how He brought them into Eretz Yisrael. Had the sin of the Spies not occurred, they would have gone into the Land of Israel with miracles and wonders to the extent that all the nations of the world would recognize that "G-d is the L-rd" (Hashem hu ha'Elokim).

But what did happen? The nation got cold feet. They did not trust in the Ribono shel Olam. After all that they saw in Egypt and in the Wilderness, they still lacked faith. Therefore, the Almighty said "Okay. If that is the way you want it, you will not go into Eretz Yisrael with miracles and wonders. The Kiddush HaShem which could have been created will not be created. You will enter the Land and conquer it through natural means and the Kiddush HaShem will be delayed. How and where will the Kiddush Hashem occur? It will occur throughout the course of history because I will scatter you to the four corners of the globe and a miraculous thing will happen: You will survive as a nation."

This is something that history has never seen before. A nation spending so much of its existence in exile — more time in the history of the nation outside of its homeland than inside of it — is nothing less than a revealed miracle. This is what constituted the Kiddush HaShem testifying to Divine Providence guiding the fate of His Chosen People.

L'Havdil [distinguishing between sacred and profane matters], the Dali Lama, who is trying to preserve the Tibetan people so that that they should not be swallowed up by the Chinese, is trying to use the Jewish people as a paradigm. "If we emulate what the Jews did and maintain our identity in our diaspora as the Jews did, then we can preserve our nation as well." What he fails to realize is that the Tibetan people do not have a Torah and they do not have the relationship that we have with the Ribono shel Olam. Maintaining a national identity through thousands of years of exile from a homeland requires nothing less than a nes nigleh [an open miracle].

Rav Yakov Emden (Yavet'z) [1697-1776] writes in the introduction to his Siddur, "Will any philosopher be able to argue that this (the preservation of Jewish identity in exile throughout history) is just a natural occurrence? This surpasses in my mind all the miracles and wonders the Almighty did for our ancestors in Egypt. The longer the exile continues, the greater the miracle becomes."

This reminds me of a sentence I read in a very interesting book called Reb Chatzkel [Art Scroll; 2007] about Rav Yechezkel Levenstein [1895-1974], the mashgiach ruchani of the Mir Yeshiva in Poland, Shanghai, and America who was later affiliated with the Ponevezh Yeshiva in Bnei Brak. The book in great part is a story of the Mir Yeshiva and its sojourn from Mir to Vilna to Kobe Japan to Shanghai China and eventually — after the war — to America and to Eretz Yisrael.

Rav Chatzkel makes a statement that is truly mind-boggling. He says the miracle of the salvation of the Mir Yeshiva is greater than the miracle of Purim.

In spite of the fact that all the factors that went into the salvation of the Jewish people in the days of Mordechai and Esther were clearly Divine Providence, the nes of the hatzalah of the Mir Yeshiva was greater. If one reads all those chapters about the miracles that went on in Shanghai:

How so many times they thought that "this was it" and how time after time they were miraculously saved. How the Russians let them take the train across Siberia and how they thought the KGB were going to kill them at any time. How they escaped from Kobe to Shanghai and how they had to travel on this rickety unseaworthy old boat which had to make three trips across a wide body of water to transport the entire Yeshiva (the boat sank on the return trip after dropping off the last load of Yeshiva students). It is impossible to escape the conclusion that the Hand of G-d was visibly present throughout their miraculous escape from the horrors of the Holocaust. Towards the end of the war, when Shanghai was bombed, none of the Yeshiva students were killed. It was all miraculous!

This is exactly what Rav Yakov Emden wrote: The existence of Klal Yisrael in the Galus is a bigger nes than Yetzias Mitzrayim. It is an open miracle. This is what is alluded to by the pasuk in our Parsha (as explained by Dovid HaMelech in Tehillim) — "the glory of Hashem shall fill the entire world."

The Kiddush HaShem that was supposed to occur with the grand entrance of the Jewish people into Eretz Yisrael in the days of Moshe had to be accomplished by other means — Plan B to achieve Sanctification of the Divine Name. Plan B, unfortunately, triggered all the exiles that we have had to endure. However, it must be acknowledged that survival in the face of such a torturous exile is clear testimony to the Hand of G-d that miraculously guarantees the survival of the Jewish people against all odds.

Why The Mitzvah of Tzitzis Is Voluntarily As Opposed To Obligatory Rav Asher Weiss in his Minchas Asher on Chumash asks a very interesting question. The Gemara says that the mitzvah of Tzitzis is equal to all other mitzvos in the Torah [Nedarim 25a]. This is a very easy mitzvah to perform. All a person needs to do is to go to a Judaica store, buy himself a Tallis Katan for twenty dollars and wear them in order to fulfill the mitzvah of Tzitzis.

The irony of the fact is — and many people do not know this — that a person is not required to wear Tzitzis at all. The technical requirement of the mitzvah of Tzitzis is that someone who wears a four-cornered garment must attach Tzitzis to the corners of the garment. If a person does not wear a four-cornered

garment — and technically speaking all the clothes that we wear today do not have “four corners” — he does not need to wear Tzitzis. Even someone who wears a long Lithuanian style frock (as is common among many Roshei Yeshiva) which has a slit in the back, giving the appearance of a “four cornered” garment is not required to attach fringes to the frock. This is because one of the corners is always rounded — check it out next time you see one who wears such a frock.

Technically speaking, then, a person does not need to put on Tzitzis. Of course, the Tur writes that any person who has brains in his head will avail himself of this special mitzvah because of the guarantee that “you will glance upon them and you will remember all the commandments of the L-rd”. There is a special segulah and reward that comes from wearing Tzitzis so anyone with any sense of spirituality and desire for closeness to the Almighty and His mitzvos will buy himself a special four-cornered garment to fulfill this wondrous commandment. However, technically speaking that is not required.

The Minchas Asher asks — if this is such a special mitzvah why didn't the Torah make it obligatory? We do not say “If you have a pair of Tefillin, put them on in the morning.” No. You must put on Tefillin in the morning. Failing to put on Tefillin makes you in violation of neglecting a positive commandment.

Someone who does not recite Krias Shma is in violation of neglecting a positive commandment. If someone does not hear Shofar on Rosh Hashanah, he is in violation of neglecting a positive commandment. Why then, if one does not put on Tzitzis is everything is fine and dandy. How could this be the case when we are talking about a mitzvah that is “equal in weight to all other mitzvos”? It is a paradox. It is an anomaly.

Rav Asher Weiss addresses this issue by quoting a Gemara in Menachos [43b] — Rabbi Meir used to say: “Greater is the punishment (for not wearing) the white (threads) than the punishment (for not wearing) the techeles (threads).” The Torah requires that the fringes we place on the corners of our garment contain both white threads and blue-like, techeles, threads. Many people say we do not have techeles today so all we have are the white threads. Techeles was always much more expensive and much harder to come by. They need to be made from the dye of a chilazon aquatic creature. Therefore, the Gemara says that if a person fails to put Techeles on his Tzitzis, the punishment is not that bad. However, a person who fails to put on the white threads, which are easy to come by, then the Almighty has a significant complaint against him.

Rabbi Meir backs up his statement with an analogy: “This can be compared to an earthly king who gave instruction to two servants. He asked one servant to bring back a seal made out of clay and he asked the second servant to bring back a seal made out of gold. Both were negligent and did not do what they were asked. Who will receive the greater punishment? Clearly, the servant charged with bringing back the clay seal, which is readily available, is deserving of greater punishment than the servant charged with bringing back the hard to acquire gold seal.”

The analogy of the Gemara refers to Tzitzis as a “seal of clay”. Tosfos there explains that seals of clay were typically attached to the bodies of slaves to show they belonged to a particular owner. Likewise, Tosfos writes, our Tzitzis is our “seal” indicating that we too our slaves. Even though the word “slave” (eved) or even “servant” offends the ear and the sensibility of modern man, in Judaism that is not the case. We take pride in the fact that “avadei hem” (they are My slaves) [Bamidbar 25:42; 25:55]. We are “servants of the L-rd.”

How do we demonstrate that we are servants to the Almighty? This, explains Tosfos in Menachos [43b; D.H. “Chosam shel Tit“], is by wearing our “clay seal”. What is our “clay seal”? It is our Tzitzis!

If that is the case, says the Michas Asher, it is a much bigger statement when someone volunteers to be the “slave” of the Almighty than when someone is forced into wearing that mark of slavery. This is why Tzitzis is not an obligatory mitzvah. Tefillin? Yes. Shofar? Yes. Matzah? Yes. However, the whole purpose of Tzitzis is a statement, a demonstration of “I am Your slave. I accept You as my Master.” If a person is forced to put them on, the statement is not as loud. It is not as clear. When I go out and voluntarily buy that pair of Tzitzis, I am declaring, “Almighty, I want to be your slave.”

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This week's write-up is adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissochar Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Series on the weekly Torah portion. A listing of the halachic portions for Parshas Sh'lach is provided below: ... A complete catalogue can be ordered from the Yad Yechiel Institute, PO Box 511, Owings Mills MD 21117-0511. Call (410) 358-0416 or e-mail tapes@yadyechiel.org or visit <http://www.yadyechiel.org/> for further information. To Support Project Genesis- Torah.org Rav Frand © 2017 by Torah.org. Torah.org: The Judaism Site Project Genesis, Inc. 2833 Smith Ave., Suite 225 Baltimore, MD 21209 learn@torah.org (410) 602-1350

From: **Shlomo Katz** <skatz@torah.org> reply-to: do-not-reply@torah.org to: hamaayan@torah.org date: Thu, Jun 15, 2017 at 4:10 PM subject: **Hamaayan - It All Depends Why** It All Depends Why BS"D Volume 31, No. 33 23 Sivan 5777 June 17, 2017

Moshe Rabbeinu charged the Spies (13:20): “Strengthen yourselves and take from the fruit of the Land.” And so they did. The Gemara (Sotah 34a) relates that eight of the Spies carried the poles from which a huge cluster of grapes hung, one carried a fig, and one carried a pomegranate, and Yehoshua and Kalev carried nothing. The latter two Spies understood that their colleagues' intention was to show Bnei Yisrael that the Land produces “freakish” fruit, and Yehoshua and Kalev wanted no part of this.

However, notes R' Chaim Palagi z"l, Midrash Tanchuma seems to say the opposite, for it records that the Spies did not want to pick fruit. Kalev unsheathed his sword and said, “Either you pick fruit or I will kill you, unless you are able to kill me first.” How can these two accounts by our Sages be reconciled?

He explains: One of the ways that real property (land) can be acquired according to Halachah is by picking some of its produce. When Moshe Rabbeinu told the Spies, “Strengthen yourselves and take from the fruit of the Land,” that was his intention—that they pick fruit to symbolically acquire the Land, which would make Bnei Yisrael's conquest of the Land easier when the time came. Moshe Rabbeinu never intended that the Spies bring any of the fruit back to show Bnei Yisrael.

Picking fruit to acquire the Land is what the Spies refused to do, until Kalev forced them to. They did want to bring fruit back to show off; but, for that purpose, they could have bought fruit in the market or collected abandoned fruit. Showing off the fruit was what Kalev and Yehoshua wanted no part in. (Birkat Mo'adecha L'Chaim: Drush L'chodesh Shevat p.578)

“Shelach lecha / Send forth men for yourself and let them reconnoiter the Land of Canaan . . .” (13:2)

Rashi z"l comments: Hashem told Moshe, “I am not commanding you to send spies. If you want, send them. I already told them the Land is good. Now, I will give them the opportunity to make a mistake!” [Until here from Rashi]

After such a warning, why did Bnei Yisrael send spies nevertheless? R' Avraham Yoffen z"l (1887-1970; Rosh Yeshiva of the Novardok Yeshiva in Bialystok, Poland; New York and Yerushalayim) explains:

R' Yisrael Lipkin Salanter z"l (1810-1883; founder of the Mussar movement) teaches that a person must downplay the challenges that face him. [This will be explained below.] R' Salanter's student, R' Simcha Zissel Ziv z"l (1824-1898; the Alter of Kelm) says that the source for this is the rationale given by our Matriarchs Rachel and Leah for leaving Lavan's home (Bereishit 31:14-15), “Have we still a share and an inheritance in our father's house? Are we not considered by him as strangers?” Yaakov had just related to them Hashem's command (31:13), “Now — arise, leave this land and return to your native land.” In the face of that command, would it have mattered if Rachel and Leah still felt at home with Lavan? We learn from this that rather than face a difficult challenge head-on (in Rachel and Leah's case, the challenge of leaving forever their father's home), one should use rational arguments to lessen the challenge, which is what our Matriarchs did. One should not necessarily force himself to be “brave” in the face of a challenge.

R' Yoffen continues: There are five ways to lessen the difficulty of a challenge. The first is to think of the consequences of one's choice: what looks at first glance like a gain may, in fact, be a loss, and vice-versa! This simple “calculation” may be a more effective tactic than working on one's Yir'at Shamayim / fear of Heaven. In the words of R' Yosef Yoizel Horowitz z"l

(1847-1919; the Alter of Novardok), “Driving away every ridiculous thought by picturing G-d’s wrath is like using a cannon to kill a fly.” A more practical and less dramatic approach may be called for instead.

The second way to lessen a challenge, continues R’ Yoffen, is to question whether one is analyzing the situation honestly. Are one’s biases affecting his decision-making about whether something is Halachically or morally proper? [It is told, for example, that when the Alter of Novardok was debating whether to visit a certain person to request a donation for his yeshiva or for some other reason, he worried that the cold, rain or snow outside might be biasing him. To mitigate this, he would walk to the person’s house and, having removed the potential bias caused by the bad weather, would analyze whether to knock on the door.]

The third approach is to train oneself in advance to withstand challenges, just as soldiers train in peacetime for future battles. Part of this training involves understanding the purpose and benefits of facing challenges. Also, one should view every challenge he faces as preparation for the next, greater challenge. It is a big mistake, writes R’ Yoffen, to seek a life free from challenges.

The fourth way to lessen a challenge is to leave the place or situation that presents the challenge. However, this advice must be qualified. For example, if a person is in a place where he feels inferior to another person and therefore wants to subdue or hurt that person, running away won’t cure his resentment. The time to use this approach is when one feels superior to another person but knows that it would be wrong to act on that feeling of superiority by lording over the other person. In such a case, the best advice may be to distance oneself from the situation.

Finally, the fifth approach—which is particularly applicable to matters of Emunah and Bitachon / faith and trust in Hashem—is to investigate the facts to the greatest extent possible. For example, although we are called upon to believe in Hashem, the Sefer Chovot Ha’levavot [by Rabbeinu Bachya ibn Pakudah z”l (11th century; Spain)] writes that a person should seek logical proofs of our beliefs to the extent he is capable. The only qualification is that he conduct his research after he has steeled himself with Yir’at Shamayim / Fear of Heaven so that he will continue to believe even that which he cannot prove.

That is what Bnei Yisrael thought they were doing by sending spies. Hashem told them that Eretz Yisrael is good, and they were willing to believe Him. Nevertheless, to lessen the challenge inherent in believing, they wanted to investigate. That, alone, was not improper.

Then what went wrong? R’ Yoffen explains that the Spies lost sight of their mission and thought that Hashem was giving them permission to make their own decision. They forgot that their mission was to confirm what Hashem had told them; they thought they were supposed to start with a clean slate. As a result, their biases—in particular, says the Zohar, their knowledge that they would lose their positions of authority once Bnei Yisrael reached Eretz Yisrael—prevented them from seeing objectively.

[Ed. note: One might ask: Is it honest to “investigate” if we already know what conclusion we want to reach? The answer may lie in the recognition that we never investigate anything of significance without some bias or pre-conceived notion. That is human nature. Thus, adding the “bias” that we want to believe what Hashem said does not lead to a foregone conclusion; it merely counteracts whatever biases we have that might favor other conclusions.] (Ohr Ha’mussar p.159)

A Torah Tour of the Holy Land

“They arrived at the Valley of Eshkol and cut from there a vine with one eshkol / cluster of grapes, and bore it on a double pole . . . He named that place the Valley of Eshkol because of the eshkol / cluster that Bnei Yisrael cut from there.” (13:23-24)

Midrash Tanchuma teaches: Thus it is written (Yeshayah 46:10), “From the beginning I foretell the outcome, and from earlier times, what has not yet been.” Everything is visible to Hashem. Eshkol was Avraham Avinu’s dear friend (see Bereishit 14:24). He was named Eshkol because of the cluster that Bnei Yisrael would, in the future, cut from his land. [Until here from the Midrash]

R’ Chanoch Zundel z”l (Eishishok, Lithuania; died 1867) explains that the Midrash is answering two questions. First, if the Spies named the place “Valley of Eshkol,” how can the verse say, “They arrived at the Valley of Eshkol”?

When they arrived, it was not the Valley of Eshkol! Second, why does the verse say, “He named that place”? If the Spies named it, the verse should say, “They named that place”! The Midrash answers these questions by stating that someone named Eshkol had lived there hundreds of years earlier. (Etz Yosef)

The word “Eshkol” is spelled without a “vav” the first time it appears in our verses, i.e., when “they arrived at the Valley of Eshkol,” and with a “vav” all the other times. The absence of one letter hints that, when they arrived, the naming of the place was not yet complete, because the event to which its name refers had not yet occurred. (Peirush Kadmon)

R’ Yehosef Schwartz z”l (1805-1865; Germany and Eretz Yisrael; Torah scholar and geographer) writes: The above Midrash suggests strongly that the Valley of Eshkol is in the vicinity of Chevron. [Chevron is where Avraham lived, and his friends presumably lived nearby.] (Tevuot Ha’aretz p.91)

There are many wadis (dry river beds) near Chevron, and there is no agreement which one is the Valley of Eshkol. (Note 244 to Kaftor Va’ferach ch.11)