

BS"D

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INTERNET PARSHA SHEET ON SHLACH - 5762

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From: RABBI YISSOCHER FRAND [ryfrand@torah.org] To: ryfrand@torah.org Subject: Rabbi Frand on Parshas Sh'lach Seeing The 'Good' In Jerusalem

"And the entire congregation raised up and issued its voice; the people wept that night" [Bamidbar 14:1]. The Spies returned with their report about the Land of Israel. They testified that the inhabitants were stronger than them and that the Jews were incapable of conquering the land. The people cried that night.

To paraphrase Franklin Roosevelt, that was a night that would live in infamy. As the Talmud [Sanhedrin 104b] teaches, that night was the night of Tisha B'Av. G-d stated that since the Jews cried on that night for no reason, He would establish that night as a night of perpetual mourning throughout the generations.

Both Temples were destroyed on Tisha B'Av. In commemoration of those events, Jews throughout the generations remove their shoes, sit on the floor, and cry on that night.

When we cry on Tisha B'Av, we do not only think back to the start of World War I, which 'happened' to break out on Tisha B'Av. We do not only think back to 1492 when the Jews were exiled from Spain on that date. We do not only think back to the destruction of the Second Beis HaMikdash [Temple] or even the destruction of the First Beis HaMikdash. When we sit on the floor on the night of Tisha B'Av and read from the Megilla of Eicha, we have to think back to the incident of the Spies. It all started with the Meraglim.

There is an interesting Medrash which addresses the anomaly in the alphabetically arranged pasukim [verses] in chapters 2, 3, and 4 of Eicha: In those chapters, the pasukim beginning with the letter 'Pay' precede the pasukim beginning with the letter 'Ayin'. (Chapter 1 follows the normal Aleph-Bet sequence of first Ayin and then Pay.)

The Medrash says that the letter Pay (which literally means 'mouth') precedes the letter Ayin (which literally means 'eye') to remind us that the Spies spoke with their mouths that which they did not see with their eyes.

We must consider, however, that the spies fabricated nothing when they spoke of seeing "Giants in the land". They were not lying when they reported having noticed that it was "a land that buries its inhabitants". Our Sages say that they in fact saw many funerals while they were spying out the land. So what is the meaning of the Medrash that says, "They reported with their mouths that which their eyes did not see"?

Rav Shimon Schwab (1908-1995) offers a beautiful interpretation of this Medrash: Two people can see the exact same occurrence and see two different things. It happens all the time.

For example, the pasuk [verse] concerning the Akeidah [Binding of Isaac] says "And he saw the place from a distance" [Bereshis 22:4]. The Medrash comments that Avrohom saw the Shechina [G-d's Divine Presence] in the form of a cloud on top of the mountain. Avrohom asked his son Yitzchak if he saw the same thing. Yitzchak responded in the affirmative. Avrohom then asked Yishmael and Eliezer if they saw it. They responded that they only saw the mountain - nothing above it. They could not see the spiritual phenomenon of the cloud encircling the top of the mountain. Avrohom then told them that they could proceed no further. "Stay here together with the donkeys" [22:5].

If they could see nothing but the physical, they had no right to accompany Avrohom and Yitzchak and view the Akeidah. (The word "chamor" - donkey, is related to the word "chomer," meaning "the physical.)

This was the problem with the Spies. Eretz Yisroel [the Land of Israel] is a different kind of land. It is the Land about which the Torah says, "the Eyes of the L-rd rest upon it from the beginning of the year until the end of the year" [Devorim 11:12]. However, not everyone sees that. Some people go to Eretz Yisroel and are merely overwhelmed with the fact that "It's so stony! There are rocks everywhere you look!" It is, however, possible to go to Eretz Yisroel and sense its uniqueness and its spirituality.

The Medrash is teaching that the Spies failed to see with their eyes that which is there to be seen in Eretz Yisroel. When they arrived at Mount Moriah, they merely saw 'a mountain'. They did not see the site of the Akeida, the site of the future Beis HaMikdash. When they came to Chevron, they saw just another city -- they did not sense the presence of the Patriarchs who are buried there.

They spoke with their mouths. But they did not utilize their eyes to fully see and appreciate that which is there to be seen in Eretz Yisroel. This is what brought about their sin.

Eretz Yisroel must be viewed differently than other countries. If there is one eternal lesson from Parshas Shlach, it is that one must be very careful about how he perceives and certainly how he talks about Eretz Yisroel.

A popular teaching emphasizes the word 'good' in the pasuk "And you shall see the good of Jerusalem" [Tehillim 128:5]. Jerusalem is the type of city that one can visit and see things that upset him terribly. He can see dissention and he can see people throwing stones at each other and he can see sights that will scandalize him. One can see all the problems and negatives. But the pasuk admonishes us to see the GOOD of Jerusalem. We must look beyond the physical and beyond the surface and see with 'different eyes'. This was the sin of the Spies. They did not look beyond the physical. They failed to see the holiness of Eretz Yisroel.

This is a lesson that we must continuously repeat and review. We must not get caught up in only seeing the negative about Eretz Yisroel and Yerushalayim.

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From: torahweb@zeus.host4u.net Sent: Thursday, June 06, 2002 To: weekly1@torahweb.org Subject: Rabbi Michael Rosensweig - Halachic Values in the Aftermath of the Episode of the Meraglim http://www.torahweb.org/torah/2002/parsha/rros_shlach.html
RABBI MICHAEL ROSENSWEIG
HALACHIC VALUES IN THE AFTERMATH OF THE EPISODE OF THE MERAGLIM

The central episode in parshat Shlach is the sin of the meraglim. Upon conclusion of that episode, it is very striking that the Torah turns its attention to a group of halachot that are seemingly unrelated to each other or to the meraglim story. The first two issues, the requirement of nesachim in the context of certain korbanot, and the obligation to separate chalah in the process of kneading and baking bread, focus on life in Eretz Yisrael. These halachot are introduced respectively (Bamidbar 15:2, 18) with the phrases "ki tavou el eretz moshvotchem

asher ani noten lachem" and "bevoachem el ha-aretz asher ani meivi etchem shamah". Rashi (15:2) and Ramban (15:16), invoking these emphases, suggest that the Torah's purpose in delineating these laws in this context was precisely to underscore that notwithstanding the serious setback engendered by the meraglim's betrayal, Jewish destiny in Eretz Yisrael was insured.

However, the subsequent focus on the need for a special korban for the violation of avodah zarah and the presentation of the mitzvah of tzitzis is puzzling. A brief analysis of these mitsvot may, however, reveal a common theme that makes them especially significant, indeed, crucial as a counterweight to Klal Yisrael's failings in the aftermath of the episode of the meraglim and the other "puraniyot" that preceded it.

Chazal (Shabbat 116a) indicate that the overturned "nun's" that bracket the small section of 85 pesukim in parshat Bahalotchah, beginning with "vayehi binsoa ha-aron" (10:35), establish these pesukim as a distinct biblical book ("sefer"). This status has halachic consequences for the issue of tumat yadayim (Yadayim3:5) and the salvaging of a scroll from a fire on Shabbat (Shabbat 116a). This "sefer" was intentionally placed to interrupt between two calamities ("puraniyot"), so as to deemphasize Klal Yisrael's pattern of destructive behavior. However, it is surely noteworthy that the first of these calamities is not at all explicated by the Torah. Ramban (10:35) rejects Rashi's view that it refers to the actions of the "asafus" whose passion for meat led them astray (11:4). Ramban ultimately concludes that the very fact that Klal Yisrael beat a quick retreat from the experience of kabalat ha-Torah lest more mitsvot be imposed upon them, hinted to by the phrase "va-yisui mei-har Hashem", constituted a significant calamity. He sustains this view even though the Torah explicates neither the crime nor the punishment and despite the fact that this hardly seems to qualify as a sufficiently grave offense to justify the characterization of "puranut", requiring the interruption of an entire sefer.

Ramban's perspective on the subsequent offense/calamity is striking, as well. The Torah conveys only generally that "va-yehi ha-am ke-mitonenim ra be-aznei Hashem" (11:1). Again, the Torah obscures the actual crime, although it must have been a serious breach considering the punishment it triggered- "va-tivar bam eish Hashem va-tochal beketsei ha-machaneh". While Rash, Ibn Ezra, and others struggle to pinpoint and reconstruct the specifics of the offending conduct, Ramban (11:1) argues powerfully and simply that the very fact that Klal Yisrael, having experienced Divine providence repeatedly, were capable of petty complaint at this juncture itself justifies such a severe response. According to Ramban, sin, even calamity, is not limited to obviously and objectively reprehensible conduct or the violation of specific stringent aveirot. Flouting broader halachic values, like hakarat ha-tov and ahavat Hashem, especially in contexts that call for and are conducive to more ideal behavior can equally constitute rebellious, reprehensible and destructive behavior, with attendant devastating consequences. It was necessary to divide between the two general, simple, yet powerful failings exhibited by Klal Yisrael by introducing the "sefer" of "va-yehi binsoa". [Undoubtedly, it is not coincidental that Ramban in particular projects this perspective. Ramban demonstrates a pervasive sensitivity to the centrality of broader halachic values that are rooted in but also transcend specific obligations or prohibitions, as evidenced by his famous discussions of kedoshim tihyu , ve-asita hayashar ve-ha-tov , the aseh of shevitha on shabbat-yom tov , arur asher lo yakim et divrei hatorah, etc.]

There is compelling reason to believe that Klal Yisrael did not sufficiently assimilate this lesson, as the episode of the meraglim illuminated the persistence of this fatal flaw. I have argued elsewhere (Parshat Shelach: The Transgression of the Meraglim. TorahWeb.org, 5760) that the inability of the nesim to respond ideally to the challenge of religious leadership in the context of what was needed at that time and in light of all that had preceded, was not merely a sin of omission, but an act of rebellion bordering on blasphemy and idolatry. It is difficult to point to specific aveirot, but their broader spiritual and halachic perspective was certainly significantly flawed. It is possible that the halachot pertaining to the special korban for avodah zarah, and the mitzvah of tzitzis were formulated in the aftermath of the episode of the

meraglim precisely because they project and underscore the importance of a broader commitment and loyalty to halachic life. Numerous commentators (see, for example, Abravanel for this and other discrepancies...) note that one would have anticipated the Torah's treatment of a korban for avodah zarah in parshat Vayikra where parallel korbanot are developed. Moreover, the mefarshim struggle with the pesukim that describe the special korban required to expiate an error leading to avodah zarah. The Torah omits any clear reference to avodah zarah. Instead, it formulates the circumstances that trigger the korban in terms of a general neglect of the mitzvot - "ve-khi tishgu ve-lo tasu et kol hamitzvot ha-eleh asher diber Hashem el Moshe. Eit kol asher zivah Hashem aleichem be-yad Moshe min hayom asher zivah Hashem ve-halah le-doroteichem" (15:22-23). Ramban attacks Ibn Ezra's interpretation precisely because he emphasizes this general theme, ignoring the received tradition that limits this korban to avodah zarah. However, Ramban (15:22) attempts to accommodate both the peshat and the halachah. He appears to argue that while technically the korban is designated only for acts of avodah zarah, the Torah also intends to project a broader concept of avodah zarah that includes lack of identification with Klal Yisrael and a rejection of halachic life generally. Presumably, the Torah projects the significance of avodah zarah as the negation of all Torah (see also Seforno and Neziv), reflected in a unique korban, not only on the basis of its inherent abhorrence as a technical prohibition, but as the embodiment of a total disloyalty and disengagement from halachic life. It was essential to accent this broader motif of avodah zarah in the aftermath of the meraglim episode which was treated in a manner analogous with giduf and avodah zarah despite the complete absence of any technical conduct of this type. Kli Yakar (15:22) examines why the olah of this korban precedes its chatat, an order atypical of other korbanot. He posits that while the maaseh aveirah (prohibited action), the focus of the chatat, is most consequential in other korbanot, it is the improper attitude that triggers the olah that accounts for the particular severity of avodah zarah. One might add in light of our analysis that the theme of national and theological disloyalty and total halachic disengagement that perhaps justify the inclusion of this section in parshat Shlach dictate this unusual order. The parshah concludes with the mitzvah of tzitzis. Chazal (Menachot 43b) declare that this mitzvah has stature that corresponds to the entire corpus of 613 mitzvot. Rashi (15:39) explains this based on the numerical value of the term in combination with the number of strings and knots involved in the mitzvah. Ramban (15:39), however, disputes this, and argues that Chazal simply meant that staring at the techelet in the tzitzis and comprehending its significance brings one to a theological and religious awareness that will insure a total commitment to Torah and halachah. Indeed, the pesukim emphasize this broader theme - "u-reitem oto u-zekhartem et kol mitzvot Hashem va-asitem otam." Moreover, the extraordinarily ambitious prohibition of "velo taturu achrei levavkhem ve-achrei eineichem", focusing directly the prohibition to cultivate improper attitudes (see Sefer ha-Chinuch, no. 387), reinforces the notion that halachic practice needs to be coordinated with halachic values and perspectives, all culminating in the most basic yet most significant affirmation of the Divine presence- "ani Hashem Elokeichem", a truly appropriate antidote to the calamities- puraniyot that culminated with the sin of the meraglim.

http://www.torahweb.org/torah/2001/parsha/rsob_shlach.html
TorahWeb [from last year]
RABBI ZVI SOBLOFSKY
PERCEPTION AND REALITY

The mission of the spies sent to Eretz Yisroel was a simple one involving two tasks. Firstly, the spies were to observe different aspects of Eretz Yisroel including the geography, the agriculture, and the people. Upon returning, they were to report their observations. These seemingly simple assignments were not performed correctly and the results were catastrophic. Why were spies unable to observe correctly what they saw in Eretz Yisroel?

During the forty days through which the spies traveled in Eretz Yisroel they witnessed bizarre events. Chazal tell us that wherever they went they saw people burying their dead. The spies observed fruit which was so large that it could barely be brought back with them. Each of these two events could have been interpreted in two opposite ways. From one perspective, the hand of Hashem could have been perceived clearly. Hashem had brought a plague throughout the land to divert the inhabitants' attention from the spies in their midst. The tremendous fruit could have been viewed as being representative of the overwhelming physical blessing Eretz Yisroel had been endowed with. Alternatively, these two observations could have been made and then interpreted in a completely different way. Eretz Yisroel could be seen as a land that is deadly (hence the wide spread funerals), and just as its fruits are abnormally large, so too must its inhabitants be too powerful for us. Logically, either one of the aforementioned approaches could have been equally employed. That is, the events themselves were neutral, and it was the choice of the spies to interpret what they had seen in such a negative light.

Upon returning, the spies reported that they had appeared as grasshoppers in the eyes of the giants who lived in Eretz Yisroel. The Torah relates the dual phrase the spies used to describe the feeling of inferiority. "We were like grasshoppers in our own eyes and we appeared as grasshoppers in their eyes" (Bamidbar 13:33). Their negative image of themselves was the source of their tragic mistake; they viewed themselves as "grasshoppers". If in their own eyes they were inferior they immediately projected that self image onto the perception others must have of them. A person who is pessimistic about himself will view the whole world as full of potential disasters. Rather than seeing the wonderful protection and blessing from Hashem they saw in the people and the fruit a foreboding of horrible consequences if they would attempt to enter the land.

The downfall of the spies was their inability to observe correctly. Parshas Shlach concludes with the mitzvah of tzitzis. The purpose of tzitzis is to teach us how to correctly interpret what we see. Tzitzis instructs us not to follow the frailties of our hearts when we look at things; tzitzis tells us not to see things with incorrect preconceived notions. Rather, tzitzis teaches us to look at the world searching for the hand of Hashem. Looking at the string of blue on the tzitzis, which reminds us of the heavens above, we are instructed to look at the world around us as a blessing from Hashem. Let us constantly look at ourselves, others, and the entire world, in an optimistic light, searching to find all of the good that Hashem has given us. May Hashem bless us with the clear vision to find Him.

From: RABBI RISKIN'S SHABBAT SHALOM LIST
 [parsha@ohrtorahstone.org.il] Sent: Thursday, June 06, 2002 2:55 AM
 To: Shabbat_Shalom@ohrtorahstone.org.il Subject: Parshiot Shelach (Diaspora) and Korach (Israel) by Rabbi Shlomo Riskin
 Parshat SHELACH (Numbers: 13:1-15:41)
 Efrat, Israel - "The land which we have journeyed into in order to scout out is a land which devours its inhabitants, and all of the people we saw in it are men of great measure" (Numbers 13:32).
 Apparently, ten of the twelve scouts sent out on a reconnaissance mission were deeply repulsed by the Land of Israel, even to the extent of preparing a negative report and refusing to conquer the Promised Land. What did they find that was so disturbing - and why were Joshua and Caleb not similarly disturbed by the same sight?!

"It is a land which devours its inhabitants, and all of the people we saw in it are men of great measure", cry the scouts.

The S'forno takes the simplest approach: the complaint was that the air was polluted, the crops were benighted with insidious bacteria, and so only the most hale and hearty had the ability to survive. Hence, the people they saw were of tall stature - but there were only the small percentage who "made it"; all ordinary humans were doomed to die because of the unhealthy climate.

Nachmanides (the Ramban) takes it very differently. After all, he reminds us, the scouts brought back wonderful fruit - super deluxe grapes - so that it would be difficult for them to claim foul air and under-

developed produce. Moreover, these men were princes of their respective tribes, worthy men of renown; they certainly would not lie! Their sin of an "evil report" stems from their negative interpretation of a positive situation: they duly reported a climate heavily laden with nutrients, plentiful water and luscious fruit which grew to great proportion. Only individuals who themselves are of great stature and healthy disposition can survive such rich and abundant nutrition; "food of this nature will enable powerful people to become even more powerful, but will slay the rest of normal humanity" (Ramban, ad loc). Hence he explains the fact that it was a land which devours its inhabitants - but at the same time the residents were tall and husky, individuals of great measurements.

Fascinatingly, the S'forno saw the scouts as out - and - out liars, whereas the Ramban has them re-interpret the facts on the ground in accordance with their own fearful slave mentality.

Rashi's explanation is radically different - and most instructive for us today in our present situation. This master Commentary cites a midrash to interpret "a land which devours its inhabitants": "Wherever we passed, we found the inhabitants burying their dead," cry the scouts. Indeed, explains Rashi, they did not understand that this preponderance of funerals was for their benefit, so that the residents would be so involved in their mourning that they would pay no attention to the foreign scouts! Rashi goes on to interpret "anshei midot," which we translated earlier as "men of great measure (merit)" to mean "men of arguments and struggle," from the Hebrew word madon; in a similar fashion, the "Additions to Rashi" (found in an enlarged Mikraot Gedolot) interprets the phrase to mean "men of advanced knowledge in warfare, men with army uniforms" from the Hebrew word madim.

Rashi pictures the scouts as having seen the inhabitants of Canaan involved in warfare, dressed in battle uniform and attending the funerals of their dead warriors; and so the scouts became frightened by tackling such bellicose inhabitants, and, upon their return, counseled either returning to Egypt or remaining in the desert as long as they needn't go out to military battle.

This last interpretation fits very well with the manner in which the Da'at Zkenim explains the phrase which - in last week's Torah portion - signaled the desert denouement into disaster, "And the nation was k'mito'neneim," (Numbers 11:1) like mourners, already like mourners for their dead when they anticipated the military conquest of the Land of Canaan - Israel. They conjured in their minds a powerful enemy - and simply ran scared.

But why did Joshua and Caleb remain resolute? What gave them the courage of their convictions, the willingness to take on the necessary battle and conquer the Promised Land? Our Biblical portion opens with a catalogue of the names of the Princes of the tribes, the twelve scouts, informing us that Hoshea was the Prince of Ephraim, and "Moses called Hoshea the son of Nun 'Yehoshua'" (Numbers 13:16). Hoshea was the faithful disciple of Moses; his rebbe re-names him Yehoshua (Joshua), adding the prefix G-d (Yah) to form the new appellation "G-d saves."

Six verses later, we are informed that they (all twelve scouts) began their journey by travelling up to the Negev, and then he (singular) came to Hebron (Numbers 13:22). Rashi immediately comments, "Caleb alone went there, and he prostrated himself on the graves of our patriarchs and matriarchs, the Machpela cave in Hebron."

Joshua was G-d enthused, and Caleb was "national history enthused;" if you feel that G-d is on your side, and if you are inspired by the vision and courage of the founders of our faith, you will not be fearful of facing an enemy in order to take possession of your homeland. Tragically, the other scouts were so distanced from Sinai and the tradition of the covenant, that they felt very small and very alone. "And we were in our eyes like grasshoppers - and so were we in their eyes." They felt powerless - and so did they perceive themselves to be in the eyes of their enemies. Joshua and Caleb will take the next generation into the Promised Land; their faith in G-d and Jewish destiny made them much taller in stature (if not in height) than the indigenous inhabitants of Canaan and exquisitely prepared to partake of the goodly fruits of the land flowing with milk and honey.

Shabbat Shalom

You can find Rabbi Riskin's parshiot on the web at:
<http://www.ohrtorahstone.org.il/parsha/index.htm>
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From: Ohr Somayach [ohr@ohr.edu] Sent: Wednesday, May 29, 2002 2:45 PM To: weekly@ohr.edu Subject: Torah Weekly - Shlach * TORAH WEEKLY * Highlights of the Weekly Torah Portion Parshat Shlach

THE LIFE PENALTY

"and they found a man gathering wood on the day of Shabbat" (15:33) When a person starts to keep Shabbat, he is amazed at the feeling of otherworldliness that comes from merely not answering the phone nor driving a car. Prohibitions that seem like gross infringements of personal liberty to the untrained eye are portals to an infinite spiritual world.

Waking up on Sunday morning after having observed Shabbat correctly, the new Shabbat-observer reaches for the snooze-button convinced that it must be Monday morning. The feeling of time compression is that palpable. It's as if he has been visiting another dimension. However, like all things oft repeated, the observance of Shabbat can become routine, dry and devoid of awakening spirituality. The voice of the Shabbat Queen still beckons, but the channel has already changed.

How can a person re-tune to that mystic broadcast?

In this week's portion, the Torah describes the first instance of capital punishment for the wanton desecration of Shabbat. If the breaking of Shabbat carries the death penalty, the keeping of Shabbat must carry the "life penalty." (And I don't mean 35 years in Sing-Sing!)

There's a fascinating true story about the power of the "wanton consecration" of Shabbat: In Europe before the war, there was a couple whose young child took sick. After a short examination, the local doctor diagnosed a serious heart problem and the exact nature was beyond his experience. He told the parents they must undertake a journey to the best heart specialist in Poland who lived in Vilna. This was a matter of large expense. However, there was nothing else to be done and, mortgaging their meager means, they made two return journeys to Vilna to the heart specialist. As they were about to leave Vilna at the end of the second visit, the specialist sat them down in his office and told them that there was nothing more that he, or anyone else, could do for the child. The tissue of the heart was ravaged by disease and it was a matter of time before the heart ceased to beat. On their sad homeward journey the parents decided they would go seek the aid of the saintly Chafetz Chaim. The Chafetz Chaim was very advanced in years and too weak to receive them. However, they managed to prevail upon the Chafetz Chaim's gabbai (personal assistant) to bring them in for a few moments. They recounted their story to the Chafetz Chaim. After they had finished, he looked at them and said, "What can I do? I am an old man. I have no money to help you." He was about to send them away when the mother said "But we only have one child. This is our entire family."

The Chafetz Chaim looked at the mother, paused and said, "If you are prepared to do what I tell you, I can promise you that your son will live."

The mother thought to herself, "What will he ask of me? To fast for three consecutive days, to take upon myself never to let my hair be uncovered for a second? What great stringency will he ask of me?" She replied "Whatever it is, I will do it."

The Chafetz Chaim said, "If you are prepared for Shabbat every week by noon on Friday, if you have everything ready, the table set, the candles prepared, the food cooked, and you do nothing but sit and wait to receive the Shabbat Queen, I promise you your son will live."

The wife started to do this immediately. And immediately the boy seemed to improve. They took him back to the doctor in their town. The doctor re-examined the boy and said "I want you to take him back to Vilna..." "But we have no more money!" the father of the boy interjected. "No, said the doctor. I want to pay for this. I don't understand what I'm seeing!"

The specialist in Vilna put down his stethoscope. "Okay. No one likes a joke more than me, but this is not my idea of a joke. Where is the boy I examined? This isn't the boy examined. It's his brother. The heart of the boy I examined was mush. This boy has a perfectly normal heart."

"But we only have one child" said the father.

More that the Jewish People have kept Shabbat, Shabbat has kept the Jewish People.

If you like chocolate, what's your idea of a gift? More chocolate, of course! When we want more Shabbat, when we greet the Shabbat Queen early and tarry from taking our leave from her, we show G-d that we feel how precious is the gift He gave us. If we rush into synagogue at the last minute before sunset and keep one eye on our watches to rush out of Shabbat at the other, Shabbat doesn't look much like a gift. But when we add a little of our workday lives to the holiness of Shabbat, we receive a boundless heritage.

We will be sentenced to Life.

Written and compiled by RABBI YAAKOV ASHER SINCLAIR (C)
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From ShabbatShalom@ou.org

http://www.ou.org/torah/tt/5762/shelach62/specialfeatures_mitzvot.htm

MEANING IN MITZVOT

BY RABBI ASHER MEIR

Each week we discuss one familiar halakhic practice and try to show its beauty and meaning. The columns are based on Rabbi Meir's Meaning in Mitzvot on Kitzur Shulchan Arukh.

Moving to Israel

In our parsha, the spies were punished for not showing sufficient desire to enter Eretz Yisrael. Let us study one of the many halakhot which express the importance of moving here.

The Mishna at the end of Ketubot states, "All may compel aliyah to Eretz Yisrael". The main message of the Mishna is that either husband or wife may compel the other spouse to move to Eretz Yisrael. If the other spouse refuses to relocate, this is considered grounds for divorce to obligate the husband to pay the ketubah (if he is the recalcitrant one) or to exempt him from paying (if the wife refuses to move). This is also the ruling in the Shulchan Arukh. (SA EHE 75:3-4.)

One explanation for this rule is that there is a mitzva to come to Eretz Yisrael. It is certainly true that many authorities discuss this rule in the context of the mitzva of aliyah. The Pitchei Teshuva in particular dilates on the importance of this mitzva (Even HaEzer 75:6). However, this explanation is not the only possible one. For one thing, this halakha is brought down by many authorities who nowhere mention that moving to Eretz Yisrael is a mitzva — for example, the Rambam and the Shulchan Arukh.

Another difficulty is that we find in the same place that the husband or wife can also compel a move to Yerushalaim though there is little support for supposing that there is a mitzva to live there.

Another possible explanation can be inferred from the context of this law. The Shulchan Arukh states that the husband can, within certain limits, compel his wife to follow him to nearby places. However, he cannot compel her to go from a beautiful city to an ugly one, nor from one which is mostly Jewish to one which is mostly non-Jewish. (The Rishonim extend this to the case of one which has a strong Torah atmosphere to one where Torah observance and study are not strong. See Beit Yosef citing Rivash.) He can also not compel her to go to a place with a much different climate which may cause her health to suffer. In other words: the wife has a right to her accustomed standards of health, beauty, and Torah!

However, one can compel a move to Eretz Yisrael even from a beautiful city abroad to an ugly one here; even from a mostly Jewish city abroad to a mostly non-Jewish one here; and even if there is a difference in climate. In other words, even according to those opinions which hold that there is no actual obligation to move to Eretz Yisrael, it still holds true that from an inner perspective, Israel is the most beautiful, the most healthful, and the most Jewish place in the world.

According to this explanation, we can easily understand the continuation of the ruling: within Eretz Yisrael, the city of Yerushalaim, "pinnacle of beauty, joy of the land" (Eichah 2:15) is the most beautiful, healthful and Jewish place we can find.

Nowadays, the aesthetic beauty of Israeli cities compares favorably with those of cities abroad, every major Israeli city is mostly Jewish, and Israel has one of the highest life expectancies of any country in the world. Outer and inner considerations concur that this is the perfect place for any Jew to live.

We may argue if the halakha formally obligates us to move to Eretz Yisrael. But we can not dispute that halakha, no less than Midrash and haskhafa, relates to Eretz Yisrael as the ideal place for all Jews to make their home.

[Meaning in Mitzvot gives inspirational meanings of the mitzvot – not binding rulings. It is important to know that Beit Din scrutinizes carefully divorce claims based on a desire to make aliyah, because of the obvious potential for abuse. Also, some authorities state that while it is praiseworthy to move to Israel even if this involves a steep decline in the so-called "standard of living", even so it is problematic for someone self-supporting to move here in order to live off charity. See Pitchei Teshuva and Beit Yosef. I have heard in the name of Rav Yosef Dov Soloveitchik ztz"l that this is one meaning of our prayer in the grace after meals that HaShem should bring us "upright" (komemiyut) to our land. Note that this prayer comes right after the one asking HaShem to provide us with a dignified livelihood.]

Rabbi Meir has completed writing a monumental companion to Kitzur Shulchan Aruch which beautifully presents the meanings in our mitzvot and halacha. It will hopefully be published in the near future.

Rabbi Meir authors a popular weekly on-line Q&A column, "The Jewish Ethicist", which gives Jewish guidance on everyday ethical dilemmas in the workplace. The column is a joint project of the JCT Center for Business Ethics, Jerusalem College of Technology - Machon Lev; and Aish HaTorah. You can see the Jewish Ethicist, and submit your own questions, at www.jewishethicist.com or at www.aish.com.

From: listmaster [listmaster@shemayisrael.com]

PENINIM ON THE TORAH

BY RABBI A. LEIB SCHEINBAUM

PARSHAS SHELACH They arrived at the Valley of Eshkol and cut from there a vine with one cluster of grapes...They named that place the Valley of Eshkol because of the cluster that Bnei Yisrael cut from there. (13:23,24) Geographically, Nachal Eshkol, the Valley of Eshkol, is near Chevron, as indicated in the parsha. It was there that Avraham Avinu's three close friends, Anar, Eshkol and Mamre, lived. One would think that just as Mamre's "home" was called Elonei Mamre, the Plains of Mamre, Eshkol's "home" would similarly be called Nachal Eshkol. The pasuk seems to imply this: "They arrived at the Valley of Eshkol." In other words, when they arrived, it was already known as Nachal Eshkol, not because it was there that the meraglim, spies, cut a vine with a cluster of grapes.

Horav Shimon Schwab, zl, writes that he posed this question to his rebbe, Horav Shlomo Breuer, zl, who gave the following insightful response. He cites the Midrash that relates how when Avraham asked advice from Anar, Eshkol and Mamre regarding his upcoming Bris Milah, Eshkol attempted to dissuade him. He asked, "Why perform a procedure on yourself which will forever mark you indelibly for your enemies?" Eshkol felt that Avraham's descendants would no longer be able to hide themselves from their enemies. Wherever they would go, they would be "marked" people. It did not seem appropriate that a place in Eretz Yisrael, the land inexorably bound up with the Jewish People, should be named after a person who did not understand the significance of mesiras nefesh, self-sacrifice, in the life of a Jew. A Jew who is prepared to conceal his Jewishness is, at best, a coward. Self-sacrifice is a Jewish character trait that flows in our veins - or at least it should.

When Moshe Rabbenu instructed the spies to "strengthen yourselves and take from the fruit of the land," however, despite all of their

malevolence and lack of integrity, they carried out his instructions and cut down a vine and carried it back. They did so even though this put their lives at great risk. Thus, they indicated a proclivity towards mesiras nefesh. We can now revert to calling Nachal Eshkol by its original name. The act of self-sacrifice which the meraglim -- Avraham Avinu's descendants -- performed, was a true example of marking themselves before their enemies. They corrected the earlier "taint" which had for so many years soiled this place.

We arrived at the land to which you sent us...and this is its fruit. But the people that dwells in the land is powerful. (13:27,28)

The meraglim saw wondrous, magnificent fruit. Yet, it had a negative impact on them. Chazal describe how they interpreted the many miracles that took place on their behalf in a similarly negative manner. Why? Because their attitude was wrong from the beginning. They did not want to see the inherent good in the land.

They only sought to disparage, to degrade. When people look with such a skewered and negative perspective, is it any wonder that their reports would not be consistent with reality?

Looking for the inherent good in a person is more than an attitude: it is a requisite for success in life. Parents should look for the good in their children, even when they are hurt by them. Educators must seek out the positive in their students if they are to successfully reach out to them. I recently read a compelling story by Rabbi Abraham Twerski M.D. who employs this attitude in his unique treatment of alcoholics and drug addicts. He explains that the key to success in the field of treatment is the belief in the inherent goodness of every client - regardless of his background.

Indeed, it is difficult to recognize this good in a person who has led a destructive lifestyle for decades, someone whose abuse of alcohol and drugs has caused great suffering for himself and so many others. Yet, each individual's integrity is always there, lurking beneath a veil of miscreancy. Just give it a chance, and it will emerge.

Rabbi Twerski tells a story about Avi, an ex-convict, who was in recovery from substance abuse and was enrolled in an Israeli rehabilitation program. Addressing the group of "freshmen" who were joining the program, Rabbi Twerski spoke of the importance of maintaining one's self-esteem. Suddenly, Avi interrupted and asked, "How can you talk to us of this? I have been a thief since I was eight years old. When I am not in prison, I am out of work, and my family wants nothing to do with me. What kind of self-esteem can I have?" Responding to this compelling question, Rabbi Twerski countered, "Have you ever walked by a jewelry shop and noticed the beautiful diamonds in the window? You know, those diamonds were not always so beautiful. In fact, when they come from the mine, they are nothing more than ugly lumps of dirty stone. Only a professional who understands the diamond can take the shapeless mound and transform it into a brilliant stone. He is able to bring out its intrinsic beauty. That is what we do at the recovery center. We look for the diamond in everyone. We enable the soul to emerge in all its true beauty, as we polish it until it gleams. You, Avi, are like that dirt-covered stone. Our function is to find the diamond within you and polish it until it glows brilliantly."

Two years elapsed, and Avi graduated from the program. He took a job as a construction worker. One day, the young woman who managed the halfway house where Avi had been a resident during his rehabilitation, received a call from a family whose matriarch had recently passed away. They desired to donate her furniture to the halfway house. She called Avi and asked him if he could possibly oblige and pick up the furniture. Avi quickly agreed. When he arrived at the house, he immediately saw that the furniture was not really worth picking up. Yet, he did not want to insult the family, so he took it anyway.

While Avi was toiling to carry the shabby sofa up the stairs to the halfway house, an envelope fell from the cushions. Avi brought in the couch and retrieved the envelope -- in which he discovered five thousand shekalim. Here was a man who had served time in prison for burglary, a recovered drug addict who, a few years earlier, would have broken into a home if he thought it would net him twenty shekalim. Avi

was different now. He called the halfway house and told them about his discovery. They immediately called the family who had donated the sofa and notified them of their added contribution. The family was so appreciative of the integrity which Avi and the members of the halfway house displayed that they contributed the entire sum of money to the halfway house. As a result, the halfway house was able to purchase another bed and provide room for one more person in need. One more thing - Avi no longer perceived himself to be a thief!

Avi relayed the entire incident to Rabbi Twerski in a letter. He wrote, "When I used drugs, I would get high - temporarily. After a short while, I felt miserable and depressed - worse than before. It was a never-ending cycle of highs and lows. Now, it has been three months since I found that money. Every time I think of what I did, I feel great all over again. How different is this feeling from a temporary fix."

About a year went by, and Rabbi Twerski returned to the halfway house where Avi's good deed had set off a wonderful chain of events which led to the addition of another bed - and client. There was a new sign hanging over the entrance. It read: DIAMONDS POLISHED HERE. The diamond in the rough had finally emerged.

From: Kerem B'Yavneh Online [feedback@kby.org] Sent: Sunday, June 30, 2002 7:13 PM To: Parsha English Subject: Parshat Shelach PARSHAT SHELACH

WE SHALL SURELY ASCEND

ROSH HAYESHIVA RAV MORDECHAI GREENBERG SHLITA

The Satmar Rebbe, in Yitav Lev, interprets the sin of the spies from a personal perspective. As a rule, when a person enters Eretz Yisrael, he experiences a spiritual decline at first. However, this descent is for the purpose of ascent, and in the end he will rise above his prior spiritual level.

There are two reasons for this:

1.. "Whoever is greater than his friend, his [evil] inclination is greater than his." (Succah 52a) Therefore, the evil inclination of a person in more powerful in Eretz Yisrael than outside of it, so that special effort is needed in Israel not to stumble. 2.. As with medicines, which draw out the sickness and contagion from the body, there is danger that if the treatment is stopped in the middle, the person will remain having lost on both accounts -- he suffered the painful treatment, and the infection will remain. When a person first enters Eretz Yisrael he will sense a spiritual decline, as the contagion from his years outside of Israel is drawn out, until it leaves him. However, if he does not follow through, the suffering will remain without being healed.

"Avraham journeyed on, journeying steadily toward the south. There was a famine in the land, and Avram descended to Egypt." (Bereishit 12:9-10) "Avram went up from Egypt." (13:1) The Masorah notes: "diminishing steadily," "returning steadily." His journey in Eretz Yisrael at first caused him to diminish, so that he declined from his level, until he descended to Egypt. However, in the end, he returned: "Avram went up from Egypt ... He proceeded on his journeys ... to the place where his tent had been at first" (13:1-4) -- he returned to his prior level.

The same is true regarding the spies. Immediately upon entering the Land they sensed a great spiritual decline. Moshe hinted to them, "Go up here in the south and ascend the mountain" (13:17)-- they should be wary of declining. Rashi alludes to this when he comments: "This is the practice of merchants, they show the inferior quality first." The initial decline is the manner of treatment to draw out the contagion, and thus -- "You shall strengthen yourselves." (13:20)

However, the spies, who immediately sensed the decline and loss, informed Bnei Yisrael that the nature of the Land is to cause decline: "They went and they came ... and brought them back a report." (13:26) They brought themselves as proof. [Cf. Rashi on the pasuk, "he will bring him -- he will bring himself" (Bamidbar 6:13)] "They showed them the fruit of the Land" (13:26) -- this is the result of entering the Land. However, Calev responded to them, "We shall surely go up" (13:30), that this is all a descent for the purpose of ascent, refinement, and purification. However, the other spies said, "We cannot ascend," but rather we will descend, "for it is too strong for us." (13:31) Thus, they

besmirched the Land, that it ruins its inhabitants and lowers them from their level.

"We were like grasshoppers in our eyes." (13:33) It is possible that they said this out of modesty, but it is not so! "And so we were in their eyes," because we actually did descend from our level, so that we were like grasshoppers even in their eyes. However, after Bnei Yisrael recognized that they sinned, "They awoke early in the morning ... saying, 'We are ready, and we shall ascend to the place of which Hashem has spoken, for we have sinned.'" (14:40) They understood that this is not a true decline, and therefore sought to return to the Land to ascend, but Moshe told them that it was now too late. "Do not ascend" (14:42) -- now is not the time for ascent, until the time of redemption comes once again.

Rav Charlop responded in a similar manner to one who complained that he felt more spiritual outside of Eretz Yisrael. Rav Charlop wrote back that outside of Israel a person has a smaller soul, and anything spiritual satisfies it. However, when entering the Land, his soul is elevated, and it does not suffice with the name nourishment that satisfied it outside of Israel. Therefore, the soul is depressed and causes dissatisfaction for the person. If he will try hard to provide the soul more that what he gave it outside of Israel, it will certainly feel calmed.

We now understand why only entering Eretz Yisrael is called aliyah (ascent)!

From: Yeshivat Har Etzion Office [office@etzion.org.il] Sent: Thursday, May 30, 2002 4:46 AM To: yhe-sichot@etzion.org.il Subject:

SICHOT62 -37: Parashat Shelach
SICHA OF HARAV AHARON LICHTENSTEIN SHLIT"A
THE SIGNIFICANCE OF TZITZIT
Summarized by Ari Mermelstein

The concluding section of this week's parasha, parashat tzitzit, is familiar to us as the final paragraph in Keriat Shema, and owes its inclusion in the Shema to the brief reference made to the Exodus from Egypt. However, it is not clear why this parasha merited inclusion in Shema over many other parshiot which mention that redemption. Perturbed by this question, the gemara (Berakhot 12b) suggests that this parasha contains several other components (such as the commandment of tzitzit) which motivated the rabbis to prefer it over others.

However, rather than regarding the reference to tzitzit in purely quantitative terms, as one of several staples of faith which gave this parasha an advantage over others, we could explain that the commandment of tzitzit played a fundamental role in the selection of this parasha. This brings us to the incredible statement of the gemara (Menachot 43b) that "this mitzva (i.e., tzitzit) is equivalent to all the mitzvot." The meaning of this statement is unclear. Rashi (Bamidbar 15:39) explains that the sum of the letters in the word "tzitzit" totals six hundred, and if we add the eight strings and five knots, and we arrive at the number 613, which the gemara (Makkot 23b) establishes as the number of mitzvot in the Torah. Despite this explanation by Rashi and other commentators, we can suggest several alternative explanations which merge into one larger understanding.

One possible explanation focuses on the quantitative nature of the mitzva. There are commandments, such as mezuzah, whose fulfillment is constant. However, this constancy is characterized by passivity; having put the mezuzah on his door, the Jew has fulfilled his obligation. By contrast, tzitzit is unique in the perpetual obligation required of a person. A Jew wearing a four-cornered garment must actively execute this mitzva by insuring that he is surrounded by four strings at all times. In this context, the following aggada (Menachot 44a) is especially appropriate. A man, scrupulous in his observance of the commandment of tzitzit, was overcome by lust and visited a harlot. Upon undressing, he sensed the presence of his tzitzit and recoiled in horror from the act which he had nearly committed. Here we see tzitzit portrayed as the last line of defense, the ever-present

reminder of our obligations even when we have removed the yoke of mitzvot from upon us.

However, the story described in the aggada is an exceptional case. We can suggest another reason tzitzit are equivalent to all the mitzvot, but this explanation will be relevant to ordinary cases as well. This answer focuses on a qualitative difference between tzitzit and other mitzvot. First, we must briefly analyze the role of clothing in society. Prior to his first sin, man lived in his natural state, free of clothing. When he lived a natural existence, his worship of G-d was also natural and intuitive. In such a scenario, the need to cover himself was superfluous.

With the first sin came change. The evil inclination became an essential part of man's being, and with that man's natural worship of G-d disappeared. Thus, man underwent a transition from leading a natural existence to building a society. In this transition, clothing played not only a necessary role but a symbolic one as well. Man's garb represented his passage from being the handiwork of G-d to becoming a creator himself.

In light of its symbolic role in society, clothing has been the subject of debate between two schools of thought. Many, most prominently the Romantics, reject the need for clothing. Clothing, they claim, implies restriction, and restriction stifles the spontaneity, which man was meant to express. Blake gave expression to this sentiment when he said that the suppression of even one desire is tantamount to killing an infant in its crib. Thus, the Romantics longed for a return to primitive life, and eschewed clothing in the process.

By contrast, the Humanists embraced the need for clothing. They celebrated man's status as creator, and recognized the need to curb his desires. Man's exit from Eden represented a new existence, one in which clothing was both necessary and ideal.

The Jewish outlook on clothing bridges the gap between the Romantic view and the Humanistic approach. On the one hand, we unequivocally reject the notion that man should lead an unfettered lifestyle, and that clothing are unnecessarily restrictive. The Torah remarks that "the impulse of man's heart is evil from his youth" (Bereishit 8:21), and man's dress is intended to counteract that inclination. We also acknowledge the importance of man's role in society represented by his garb. However, contrary to the Humanists, our celebration of society and man's role in it as creator stems only from our recognition of the forum which society affords man to better worship G-d. Thus, clothing is important as a symbol of our participation in society, which we can use to elevate man and draw him closer to G-d.

Herein lies the significance of the tzitzit. They hang perpetually from the four corners of our garments, and thereby manifest our true role in society as servants of G-d. They not only hang from our clothing, but also elevate it from a mere piece of cloth into a medium for avodat Hashem. Thus, our garb, which is so representative of man's role in society, guides us towards the establishment of the society which the Torah desires: a society used as a means for coming closer to G-d.

(Originally delivered at Seuda Shelishit, Shabbat Parashat Shelach 5757.)

If you have any questions, please write to office@etzion.org.il - Yeshivat Har Etzion Israel Koschitzky Virtual Beit Midrash Alon Shevut, Gush Etzion 90433 E-Mail: Yhe@Etzion.Org.II Or Office@Etzion.Org.II Copyright (c) 2002 Yeshivat Har Etzion All Rights Reserved.

From: Jeffrey Gross [jgross@torah.org] Sent: Wednesday, June 05, 2002 11:07 AM To: weekly-halacha@torah.org Subject: Parshas Shelach

WEEKLY-HALACHA FOR 5762

BY RABBI DONIEL NEUSTADT Rav of Young Israel in Cleveland Heights

A discussion of Halachic topics. For final rulings, consult your Rav. "They found a man gathering wood on the Shabbos day" (Parashas Shelach 15:32).

TREES, PLANTS, and FLOWERS ON SHABBOS

There are various opinions in the Talmud(1) regarding the nature of the offense committed by the man described in the verse cited above. Which of the thirty-nine forbidden Shabbos labors did he perform? Some say that he gathered sticks which were spread out on the ground ?? "gathering"; others hold that he carried sticks in a public domain ?? "carrying"; while others hold that he tore twigs from trees ?? "reaping." There are many laws that govern handling and touching trees and plants on Shabbos, and this week's Torah reading is an opportune time to review them.

TREES Since it is Biblically prohibited to tear a branch or a leaf from a tree on Shabbos, the Rabbis erected numerous 'fences' [precautionary measures] in order to prevent this transgression. It is Rabbinically prohibited, therefore, to: 1. Shake a tree on Shabbos(2). One may touch a tree if it will not shake(3). 2. Climb, sit, or lean heavily [e.g., to tie one's shoes] on a tree on Shabbos(4). One may sit on a dead tree stump(5). 3. Swing from a branch or from an object directly connected to a tree. Thus a swing or a hammock which is connected to a tree may not be used on Shabbos(6). Even a swing which is connected to a chain and the chain, in turn, is connected to a ring which is attached to the tree is still forbidden to be used(7). If, however, poles are connected to two trees and a swing or hammock is attached to the poles, they may be used, provided that the trees are sturdy and will not move or bend. 4. To place or hang an object [e.g., a jacket, a sefer] on a tree on Shabbos. 5. To remove an object from a tree on Shabbos. Even before Shabbos, it is prohibited to place [or leave] items on a tree that are usually used on Shabbos, since one could easily forget and remove them from the tree on Shabbos(8). 6. To smell a growing, edible fruit while it is growing on a tree, since it could easily lead to picking the fruit from the tree in order to eat it(9). It is even forbidden to eat ?? on Shabbos ?? a fruit that has fallen off the tree on Shabbos. It is permitted, however, to eat it immediately after Shabbos(10). 7. Ride an animal on Shabbos, since it is easy to forget and pull a branch off a tree while riding an animal(11). As an extension of this edict, the Rabbis declared all animals to be muktzeh(12). All trees ?? whether fruit bearing or barren, living or dead ?? are included in these Rabbinical decrees(13). But the restrictions apply only to the part of the tree which is higher than ten inches from the ground(14). Trees and bushes which do not grow to a height of ten inches are not restricted in any way(15).

PLANTS AND FLOWERPOTS

In halachic terms, all potted plants are considered to be "nourished from the ground(16)" and consequently "connected" to the ground and forbidden to be moved or lifted on Shabbos. Regardless of whether the pot has a hole in its base, is indoors(17) or outdoors ?? it is classified as severe muktzeh and may not be moved for any purpose on Shabbos(18). It is permissible, however, to smell, touch and even bend the stem or the leaves, provided that they are soft and flexible and would not break upon contact(19). It is strictly forbidden to move a plant or a flowerpot from a shady area to a sunny area so that exposure to the sun's rays will aid its growth. It is also prohibited to open a window or to pull up a shade with the specific intention of allowing the sun or air to aid a plant's growth. Conversely, if sunlight or fresh air is detrimental to a plant, it would be prohibited to shut them out, since shutting them out promotes the plant's growth(20).

FLOWERS

Flowers, while still connected to the ground, may be smelled and touched, provided that their stems are soft and do not normally become brittle(21). Flowers in a vase may be moved on Shabbos(22). They may not, however, be moved from a shady area to a sunny area to promote blossoming. If the buds have not fully bloomed, the vase may be moved but just slightly, since the movement of the water hastens the opening of the buds(23). One may remove flowers from a vase full of water, as long as they have not sprouted roots in the water(24). Once removed, they may not be put back in the water if that will cause further blossoming. Water may not be added to a flower vase on Shabbos(25). On Yom Tov, however, water may be added but not changed(26). Flowers should be placed in water before Shabbos. In case they were not, they may not be placed in water on Shabbos if the

buds have not blossomed fully. If the buds are completely opened, however, some poskim permit placing them in water on Shabbos(27). One may not gather flowers or create an arrangement and place it in a vase on Shabbos, even if the vase contains no water(28).

GRASS Touching, moving, walking, running, or lying on grass is permissible(29). Some poskim(30) prohibit running in high grass if it would definitely result in some grass being uprooted, while other poskim are not concerned with this possibility(31). Grass which was uprooted on Shabbos and gets stuck on one's shoes is considered muktzeh, since it was attached to the earth when Shabbos began. One may remove it only in an indirect manner(32).

FOOTNOTES:

1 Shabbos 96b. 2 Unless mentioned otherwise, Yom Tov has the same halachos. 3 Rama O.C. 336:13. 4 O.C. 336:1; 336:13 and Beir Halachah. 5 Aruch ha-Shulchan 336:18. Mishnah Berurah's position, however, is not clear. 6 O.C. 336:13. 7 Harav M. Feinstein (oral ruling quoted in Sefer Hilchos Shabbos, vd. 1, pg. 62). 8 Mishnah Berurah 336:12 based on O.C. 277:4 and 514:6. [See explanation by Harav S.Z. Auerbach, quoted in Shemiras Shabbos K'hilchasah, pg. 330. See also a more lenient opinion in Tehilah l'David 277:7.] 9 O.C. 336:10. 10 O.C. 322:3. 11 O.C. 305:18. 12 O.C. 308:39. 13 Mishnah Berurah 336:1. There are some poskim who are lenient in the case of a tree which has completely dried out; see Mishnah Berurah, ibid. and Aruch ha-Shulchan 13. 14 Mishnah Berurah 336:21. 15 O.C. 336:2. However, if the tree or bush which are under 10 inches high are fruitbearing, some poskim prohibit those as well; Mishnah Berurah 336:19. 16 O.C. 336:8. Even a non-perforated pot is nourished a "bit" from the ground; Mishnah Berurah 336:43. Possibly, this is only so with wood or ceramic pots; metal or glass non-perforated pots do not allow for nourishment from the ground (Bris Olam, pg. 31). It remains questionable if plastic is like wood or like glass (see Piskei Teshuvos, pg. 223). 17 View of Chazon Ish, Harav S.Y. Elyashiv, and Harav S. Vosner (quoted in Shalmei Yehudah, pg. 73). There is a minority opinion that non-perforated pots are not "nourished" through solid (wooden or ceramic) floors (Bris Olam, pg. 31). 18 Sha'ar ha-Tziyun 336:38 quotes the Pri Megadim as questioning whether a plant can be moved [when no question of reaping is involved]. While some poskim (Tehilah l'David 336:6; Bris Olam, pg. 32) are lenient and allow moving a flowerpot when there is no question of reaping, many other poskim (Kalkeles Shabbos, Zore'a; Minchas Shabbos 80:194) are stringent. It is proper to be stringent on this issue (Harav S.Z. Auerbach and Harav S.Y. Elyashiv (quoted in Shalmei Yehudah, pg. 73) and Harav M. Feinstein (quoted in Sefer Hilchos Shabbos, pg. 64). 19 Mishnah Berurah 336:48. 20 Entire paragraph is based on the rulings of the Chazon Ish, Shevi'is 22:1; Shvisas ha-Shabbos, Zore'a 10; Har Tzvi O.C. 211; Yesodei Yeshurun, pg. 25; Shevet ha-Levi 4:36. 21 Mishnah Berurah 336:48. 22 Harav M. Feinstein (quoted in Sefer Hilchos Shabbos, pg. 64). 23 Harav S.Y. Elyashiv (quoted in Shalmei Yehudah, pg. 73); Bris Olam, pg. 32. 24 Harav S.Z. Auerbach (quoted in Shemiras Shabbos K'hilchasah, pg. 333). 25 Mishnah Berurah 336:54. 26 O.C. 654:1; Shemiras Shabbos K'hilchasah, pg. 333. 27 See Sha'ar ha-Tziyun 336:48; Yechaveh Da'as 2:53. Harav S.Z. Auerbach is quoted (Nishmas Avraham O.C. 336) as being stringent on this. 28 Igros Moshe O.C. 4:73. 29 O.C. 336:3; 312:6. 30 Mishnah Berurah 336:25 and Beir Halachah. 31 Aruch ha-Shulchan 336:21. See also Shemiras Shabbos K'hilchasah, pg. 331. 32 Mishnah Berurah 336:24. Weekly-Halacha, Copyright © 2002 by Rabbi Neustadt, Dr. Jeffrey Gross and Torah.org. The author, Rabbi Neustadt, is the principal of Yavne Teachers' College in Cleveland, Ohio. He is also the Magid Shiur of a daily Mishna Berurah class at Congregation Shomre Shabbos. The Weekly-Halacha Series is distributed L'zchus Doniel Meir ben Hinda. Weekly sponsorships are available - please mail to jgross+@torah.org .Torah.org: The Judaism Site <http://www.torah.org/> 122 Slade Avenue, Suite 203 Baltimore, MD 21208

From: Kollel Iyun Hadaf RABBI MORDECHAI KORNFELD [kornfeld@netvision.net.il] Sent: Friday, May 31, 2002 7:02 AM To: daf-insights; Yehudah Landy; Avi Feldman; DPKINZ@aol.com Subject: Insights to the Daf: Bava Basra 73-74 INSIGHTS INTO THE DAILY DAF brought to you by Kollel Iyun Hadaf of Yerushalayim daf@dafyomi.co.il, <http://www.dafyomi.co.il> BAVA BASRA 71-75 - Sponsored by a generous grant from an anonymous donor. Kollel Iyun Hadaf is indebted to him for his encouragement and support and prays that Hashem will repay him in kind.

Bava Basra 73

UNDERSTANDING AGADAH QUESTION: The Gemara records a number of extraordinary narratives, particularly the stories of Rabah bar bar Chanah. When read literally, their description of the natural world seem to conflict with the world as we know it. The accounts of the things that Rabah bar bar Chanah saw certainly seem most bizarre. Although the RASHBAM implies that the events actually took place and that the descriptions are real, others (RITVA, RASHBA) explain that some or all of these narratives either were dreams or allegories that the Chachamim chose in order to teach important lessons in Avodas Hashem. Even the Rashbam may agree that these narratives are recorded in the Gemara not only for their literal

meaning, but because of the allegorical messages that they contain. The MAHARSHA, too, while writing that we should not discount the literal meaning of these stories, explains at great length their allegorical meanings. The VILNA GA'ON (in Pirush Al Kamah Agados) and NESIVOS HA'MISHPAT (in Emes l'Yakov) explain that these stories are parables that teach various truths about man's role in this world, about the study of Torah, and about Jewish destiny.

If the lessons contained within these stories are so important, why are they garbed in such obscure expressions, and not written explicitly?

ANSWERS: (a) Some of these lessons contain abstruse concepts which cannot be readily understood by everyone. If they were to be taught explicitly and thereby made available to all, they would be subject to serious misunderstanding and distortion. Therefore, the Chachamim preserved these lessons in a coded form -- the obscure form of parable and allusion. The keys to their true meaning would continue to be transmitted orally, from teacher to student. In this manner, the Torah's deepest wisdom would be preserved, and at the same time it would be protected from the ravages of misunderstanding. Wise students would be shown the way to understand the true meanings behind the parables, while the inept would take them for nothing more than interesting tales or shrewd advice.

However, not all parts of Agadah deal with esoteric wisdom. There are many parts of Agadah which could be conveyed in ordinary language which are taught, nevertheless, in an obscure manner. Many of the parables in our Gemara do not seem so complex that they would be liable to misunderstanding if conveyed in a straightforward manner. Why, then, did the Chachamim convey them in such obscure terms?

(b) One reason the Chachamim taught important lessons in obscure terms is because the Chachamim sought to teach us that wisdom is acquired only by those willing to expend the necessary effort. People who will not exert themselves to understand wisdom do not appreciate its value and certainly will not trouble themselves to live by it. The parables and wordplays are all means of separating the serious students from the uninterested.

(c) The RAMBAM (Introduction to Perush ha'Mishnayos) writes that Agadah was kept obscure "to sharpen the students' minds and to inspire their hearts, and also to blind the eyes of those fools... who, if the full force of the truth were revealed to them, would reject it because of their character deficiencies." When they see that they cannot even understand the statements at face value, they will be humbled and realize that the deficiency in understanding is theirs, and not the Chachamim's.

(d) The Chachamim commonly had many intentions behind their sayings. A parable is the most efficient way of conveying all of these levels of meaning at once.

Also, by using parables, the Chachamim were able to add overtones of meaning to their ideas that shed light in other verses or dictums of the Chachamim, which could not be expressed by an ordinary statement. A plain statement could not possibly be laden with such potency of suggestion.

(e) The Chachamim often used the same metaphors to convey (relatively) comprehensible ideas as they used to convey more esoteric teachings. By using these metaphors early on in a student's career, they introduced him to the meanings hidden therein and thus prepared him for the later time when he would be worthy of studying the hidden aspects of wisdom.

In addition, the Chachamim garbed important lessons in the language of Agadah is so that these lessons can be remembered even by children and beginners, so that when their minds develop they will be able to analyze the memories of their youth and appreciate their deep messages. (RAMBAM, ibid.)

(Adapted from THE JUGGLER AND THE KING, Rav Aharon Feldman, 5750/1990, Feldheim Publishers.)

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