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From: ravfrand-owner@torah.org on behalf of Rabbi Yissocher Frand [ryfrand@torah.org] Sent: Friday, June 24, 2005 12:04 AM To: ravfrand@torah.org

"RavFrand" List - Rabbi Frand on Parshas Sh'lach - These divrei Torah were adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Tapes on the weekly portion: Tape # 465, Donning a Tallis for the Amud. Good Shabbos!

A Similar Thought Found in Mussar and Chassidus

I would like to combine two disparate sources that teach similar insights. One of these sources is from the school of Mussar and the other is from the world of Chassidus, but, as the astute student is aware, many times -- if not most of the time -- these two worlds make similar points. I will first quote an observation from Reb Yeruchem Levovitz, the Mir Mashgiach, and then from the Baal Shem Tov, the founder of the Chassidic movement.

At the beginning of the parsha, Rashi explains the juxtaposition of the incident of the Spies and the prior story of Miriam's leprosy at the end of last week's parsha. Miriam was afflicted with Tzara'as for having spoken Lashon HaRah against her brother Moshe Rabbeinu. "These wicked people," Rashi says, "saw what happened to Miriam for speaking misplaced slander and did not take the lesson to heart (lo lakchu mussar)." [Rashi Bamidbar 13:2]

Rav Yeruchem points out that the Spies were guilty of many far more serious crimes than failing to be more contemplative regarding taking the lesson of Miriam's leprosy to heart. That would seem to be the least of their sins.

They spurned the Land of Israel. They lacked Emunah (Faith in G-d). They suggested -- according to Rabbinic exegesis on the pasuk "for they are stronger than us (mi'menu)" [Bamidbar 13:31] -- that the inhabitants of Canaan were stronger even than the Almighty. This amounts to blasphemous heresy. With this litany of crimes among their sins, it seems incongruous to make a big deal out of the fact that they "refused to take mussar" (from Miriam's misfortune).

But, says Rav Yeruchem, life is all about taking mussar from different events that take place around us. The key to success in life is a person's ability to look at life and learn from what he sees. People would be much better off if they would be more observant and more receptive to events that surround them.

The Baal Shem Tov makes a similar point on another pasuk in the parsha. The spies were instructed: "You shall strengthen yourself (v'his-chazaktem) and take from the fruits of the Land" [Bamidbar 13:20]. On a simple level, the reason the pasuk calls for "strengthening" regarding taking from the fruits of the Land is because the fruits were very heavy. They weighed so much because of their lushness that it took several people to carry a single cluster of grapes.

However, the Baal Shem Tov provides a Chassidic insight to the same pasuk. The Baal Shem Tov states: It was necessary to strengthen themselves to take the appropriate lesson from the fruits of the Land. It was necessary to look at the fruit and ask how fruit come about in the world. Seeing a fruit and being able to recite a bracha and eat that fruit should be viewed as the end of a very long and arduous path.

The path started with a farmer who many months ago tilled his land and waited until the soil was dry enough. Then it rained and the soil became muddy and he couldn't till it again for a while. Finally he was able to take seeds and throw them into the ground. The seeds had to first germinate and then decompose. The farmer waited, not knowing what was going to be with these seeds. Are they good seeds? Will they take to the land or won't they take to the land? Finally the seeds began to sprout. The farmer had to fight the different conditions of nature. He had to water and fertilize the trees. He had to prune them. He had to worry about the different weather conditions. After months and months of worry and toil and sweat and tears, a fruit finally emerged.

The Baal Shem Tov explains that the meaning of "And you shall strengthen yourselves and take (u'lekachtem) from the fruit of the Land..." is that we must take a lesson (from the expression lekach tov -- a good lesson) from this fruit. Study the fruit and learn a lesson for life. Life is like a fruit. There are so many endeavors in life where we invest worry and toil and sweat and tears. We sometimes question "Is it really worth all the effort we put into it?" But we know that the only way we will ever be able to reap the fruits is if we go through the entire process. Take a lesson of life from how a fruit grows. This requires strength (v'his-chazaktem). Consequently the Torah tells us to gird ourselves - and only then take the lesson (l'kachtem = lekach tov) from the fruit of the Land.

Sign of Strength and Sign of Weakness

Editor's preface: The following is presented with the caveat that the exact context of Rav Elya Meir Bloch's statement is not known, nor can one necessarily infer that what was said then is necessarily applicable in our times.

I saw an interesting observation from Rav Elya Meir Bloch on the pasuk "And you will see - how is it? And the people that dwell therein - are they strong or weak?" [Bamidbar 13:18]

Rashi says that the way the spies were supposed to determine whether the inhabitants of the land were strong or weak was by the type of cities they inhabited. Dwelling in un-walled cities indicated that they were strong, since they relied on their strength, while living in fortified cities was a sign of weakness.

Our gut reaction would be just the opposite. Our first thought would be that if they live in fortified cities, they would be hard to conquer. Fortresses, we think, are signs of a mighty nation. On the other hand, one would think that a nation that lives in a bunch of tents would be defenseless, and easy to conquer. It should be a pushover!

No. Appearances are deceiving. If they need to fortify themselves from the outside, it is a sign that internally they are weak. On the other hand, if they have the confidence to live openly, this is a sign that internally they are strong.

Rav Elya Meir (I am not sure in what context he made this remark, and it may seem to be a rather surprising observation to be coming from the Rosh Yeshiva of the Telshe Yeshiva!) said that there exists an old conflict as to whether it is better "to insulate" or "to isolate." In other words, should a person surround himself with walls to spiritually protect himself from the

corrupting influences of the outside world, or should he live openly and have contact with one and all as a means of retaining spiritual vitality?

Rav Elya Meir writes that people who insulate themselves by building strong fortresses are not necessarily demonstrating signs of strength. As Rashi points out, these fortresses may in fact be signs of weakness. People who are internally strong have no need for such walls. On the other hand, people who live openly and intermingle with the rest of society must have an internal strength that allows them to preserve their integrity without resorting to artificial barriers that separate themselves from the allure of surrounding influences.

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This week's write-up is adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Torah Tapes on the weekly Torah portion. The complete list of halachic portions for this parsha from the Commuter Chavrusah Series are: Tapes or 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.

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Rabbi Mordechai Kornfeld

POINT BY POINT SUMMARY OF THE DAF

prepared by P. Feldman of Kollel Iyun Hadaf daf@dafyomi.co.il,
<http://www.dafyomi.co.il> Sotah 34

THE MERAGLIM (a) Based on this, we can calculate the size of the cluster of grapes that the Meraglim took (we assume that they took one as heavy as they could carry) - "they carried it on a pole, with two people." (b) Question: Always, two people carry something on a pole!

(c) Answer: Rather, the verse teaches that it was on two poles.

(d) (R. Yitzchak): There were (two) poles bearing the load, and (two) poles under the poles bearing the load. 1. Eight Meraglim carried the cluster, one took a pomegranate, and one took a date. 2. Yehoshua and Kalev did not carry fruits, either because they were too important, or because they refused to assist in the plot to dissuade Yisrael from coming to Eretz Yisrael. (e) (R. Ami or R. Yitzchak Nafcha): According to R. Yehudah, Yisrael crossed the Jordan the way they camped (a square 12 Mil by 12 Mil). According to R. Elazar, we crossed one by one (therefore, the water stacked up very high. Tosfos - R. Yehudah does not mean exactly like they camped, for the Yarden is only 50 Amos wide, and Yehoshua addressed all of Yisrael while they were all inside! Rather, they were 12 Mil long, like they camped, and stood densely to fit within 50 Amos width.)

34b-----34b

(f) (The other of R. Ami or R. Yitzchak Nafcha): Both Tana'im agree that Yisrael crossed the Jordan like they camped. R. Yehudah holds that people walk as fast as water flows, R. Elazar b'Rebbi Shimon holds that water flows faster than people walk. (g) (Reish Lakish): "Send for yourself men" - if you (Moshe) want to. One does not choose a bad

portion for himself. (Hashem would not tell him to send Meraglim, knowing that the outcome will be bad.) (h) (Reish Lakish): Moshe said "it was good in my eyes", but not in Hashem's eyes. (i) (R. Chiya bar Aba): "V'Yachperu (they will search) the land for us" - the Meraglim intended to disgrace the land - "v'Chofrah (will be shamed) the moon..." (j) (R. Yitzchak): We have a tradition that the name of each spy relates to his deeds. The only one we know is Sesur ben Micha'el. 1. He was Soser (contradicted) the deeds of Hashem. He made Him(self - this is a euphemism) Mach (weak). (k) (R. Yochanan): We can also explain Nachbi ben Vafsi. Hichbi (he hid) the words of Hashem; Pise'a (he skipped) the attributes of Hashem. (l) Question: Why does it say "they went up to the south, and he came to Chevron"? It should say 'they came!' (m) Answer (Rava): Kalev separated from the counsel of the Meraglim, and came alone to the graves of the Avos, to ask the Avos to request mercy for him, lest he accede to the Meraglim's counsel. 1. Moshe already prayed for Yehoshua - "Moshe called Hoshe'a bin Nun 'Yehoshua' - Kah (Hashem) should be Moshi'a (save) you from the counsel of Meraglim. 2. "My servant Kalev. (I will bring him to the land to which he went, and his seed will inherit it." We know that Chevron was given to Kalev (Yehoshua 14:13,14).

3) CHEVRON (a) "There (in Chevron) were Achiman, Sheshai, and Talmai..." Achiman was MeYuMaN (strongest) of his Achim (brothers). Sheshai made craters in the ground (where he stepped, like pillars of Shesh (marble)). Talmai made the ground like Telamim (furrows, where he walked). 1. Alternatively, Achiman built Anas, Sheshai built Alash, and Talmai built Talbush. (b) "Children of the Anak (giant)" - because of their great height, the sun seemed to shine around their necks like an Anak (necklace). (c) Question: What does it mean "Chevron was Nivnesah seven years (before Tzo'an of Miztrayim)"? 1. It cannot mean that it was built earlier. One does not build a house for his younger son before his older son! i. Chevron is in Eretz Kena'an, Cham's fourth son. Miztrayim was Cham's second son.

(d) Answer: Rather, it was seven times more Mevuneh (fertile) than Tzo'an. 1. Chevron is the rockiest part of Eretz Yisrael, therefore it was used for burial. Miztrayim is the best land in Chutz la'Aretz - "like the garden of Hashem, like Eretz Miztrayim." Tzo'an is the best part of Miztrayim - "his nobles were in Tzo'an." Still, Chevron was seven times more fertile. (e) Question: Is Chevron really rocky?! 1. (Rav Avya): "At the end of 40 years, Avshalom said to the king 'I will go...' - he went to bring sheep from Chevron. 2. (Beraiisa): Rams are brought from Mo'av, and sheep from Chevron. (f) Answer: Yes! Because it is rocky, it was used for grazing flock (grass grows there)!

Sotah 35

1) THE SPIES RETURN (a) "They went and they came (to Moshe)" equates their going to their return, 1. Just like they returned with an evil counsel, they went with an evil counsel. (b) (R. Yochanan) "And they said '... (the land flows with milk and honey.) but it is for naught, for the inhabitants are (too) strong." (They began with praise of the land, because) if Lashon ha'Ra (slander) does not include some truth at the beginning, it will not last. (c) (Rabah): "And Kalev hushed the nation towards Moshe" - he enticed them with words. 1. He saw that when Yehoshua tried to speak, they silenced him. If one's head is cut off, can he speak?! 2. He reasoned - if I defend Eretz Yisrael, they will silence me also. 3. He said 'is this the only thing Moshe did to us?!' They thought that he was going to criticize Moshe, so they let him continue. 4. He took us out of Miztrayim, he split the sea for us, he brought manna down for us. If he would tell us to make ladders and ascend to Heaven, wouldn't we listen?! "We will go up and inherit the land!" 5. (R. Chanina bar Papa): "The Meraglim who went with him said 'we cannot... he (the nation there) is stronger Mimenu.'" Do not read 'than us', rather, 'than He.' (Rashi, Tosfos Erchin 15b - the word is pronounced the same either way. Ibn Ezra (Shemos 1:9) and Teshuvah Rashba (attributed to Ramban) 232 - western Sefarim (which follow the

tradition of Eretz Yisrael have a Dagesh (dot) in the Nun either way, but eastern Sefarim (which follow the tradition of Bavel) have no dot when it means 'than us'. i. It is as if they said that the Owner of the house cannot retrieve His Kelim from His house. (d) (Rava): "The land consumes its inhabitants" - Hashem intended to help them, but they viewed it negatively; 1. Wherever the Meraglim went, an important Kena'ani died. This distracted the Kena'anim, so they did not occupy themselves with the Meraglim. 2. Others explain that Iyov had died, and all were busy eulogizing him. (e) (Rav Mesharshiya): "We were like grasshoppers in our eyes, and also in their eyes" - this was a falsity! 1. They could know how they viewed themselves, but they could not know how the Kena'anim viewed them! (f) Rejection: They could know! The Kena'anim would give a first meal to a mourner under a cedar tree. When the Meraglim were seen, they climbed into trees. They heard the Kena'anim say that they saw ant-sized people in the trees. (g) "The whole Tzibur raised their voices and cried" - it was the eve of the Tishah b'Av. Hash-m said 'they cried for no reason. I will fix the day to be a day of crying for generations.' (h) (R. Chiya bar Aba): "The whole Tzibur said that they will stone them (Yehoshua and Kalev). And the honor of Hash-m (appeared in the Ohel Mo'ed)" - they threw stones up towards Hash-m. (i) (Reish Lakish): "The men who gave a bad report of the land died harshly in a plague" - this was a bizarre death. 1. Opinion #1 (R. Chanina bar Papa): Their tongues hung out and stretched to their bellybuttons. Worms came from their tongues and entered their bellybuttons and vice-versa. 2. Opinion #2 (Rav Papa): They died of croup.

Thanks to hamelaket@hotmail.com for collecting the following divrei torah:

From Destiny Foundation/Rabbi Berel Wein <info@jewishdestiny.com>
Subject Weekly Parsha from Rabbi Berel Wein

Jerusalem Post :: Friday, June 4, 2010
WEDDINGS :: Rabbi Berel Wein

June is the month of weddings both here in Israel and in America. Weddings are happiness and joy, tension and nervousness, and sometimes disagreements and confrontations between the "opposing" sides. I have been a rabbi for many decades, thank God, so I have seen many an eventful wedding.

I had a groom faint dead away under the canopy/chupah and the ceremony continued only after he was revived, seated and regained full consciousness and reasserted his intention to actually get married to the bride left standing under the canopy/chupah. More tragically and indelibly impressed in my memory was the instance when the mother of the groom suffered as fatal heart attack under the canopy/chupah.

The Talmud in Ketubot discusses such an instance, as how to proceed regarding the wedding ceremony, the week of sheva brachot and the shiva/mourning period – which ritual has the priority of time and place. But as a young student then in the yeshiva, I was convinced that the Talmud was being fanciful in discussing an unrealistic situation. But the Talmud is always realistic and true to life and everything recorded in the Talmud therefore does happen at one time or another.

I have also witnessed bitter disputes between the respective parents of the bride and groom that were continued under the canopy/chupah during the ceremony itself. I was then not only the officiating rabbi at that wedding but the referee of a domestic dispute taking place publicly to the horror of all of the onlookers and invited guests.

But these are all exceptional events not truly representative of weddings generally. Yet the Talmud again, unerringly realistic, warns us that there is no wedding without aggravation, frustration and potential disagreement.

Knowing this truth going into the wedding planning and ceremony allows one to take defensive measures to minimize problems, smooth out differences and allow the festive mood of the wedding to permeate the time and place of the wedding ceremony.

I am always emotionally touched by a wedding because the Torah has taught us that the Jewish people are constructed and perpetuated on the basis of family and home. Nothing takes precedence over the importance of family – not career or education, wealth and seeming worldly opportunities. The count of the Jewish people in the Torah is always by family and, in fact, Jewish tradition forbids counting Jews directly as individuals.

So a wedding confirms our continuity and growth and is a symbol of belief in the future and optimism in our personal and national lives. The rabbis of the Talmud placed great store in helping the bride and groom rejoice on their wedding night. Singing, dancing, music (though I am not convinced that they had the deafening volume now employed at many weddings in mind.) clapping of hands, etc. are all part of this joyful time. The Talmud even teaches us the wicked queen Izevel, the wife of Achav and an idolater and tyrant, was rewarded for clapping her hands and dancing at weddings, in that the dogs that tore her body apart left her hands and feet untouched. God's justice is exact and exacting

Being a participant in a wedding of a child, sibling or grandchild is certainly a special privilege and occasion. Then one witnesses the continuity of one's own family and senses the immortality within us that enables one to see beyond the grave. One wishes the best for the young couple though one always realizes that problems, difficulties, adjustments, and challenges await every family in life. Yet, there is a sense of serenity and hope present at a wedding for the union of a man and woman in matrimony is a Godly ordinance, the basis of all human life and civilization.

The blessings that are recited at the wedding ceremony and feast confirm this view of the event. The Lord Himself, so to speak, blesses this new union of man and woman as He did the original marriage of original man and woman, Adam and Chava in the Garden of Eden. God, so to speak, is one of the many invited guests at all Jewish weddings where these blessings are recited. It is His presence, so to speak, that elevates the entire ceremony and feast into a holy and joyful occasion.

The wedding ceremony and accompanying feast and merrymaking show us that the new couple now carries a whiff of eternity with them into their new lives together. June is certainly a happy month for it brings with it the gift of weddings and everything holy and wonderful that they represent. Shabat shalom.

From Destiny Foundation/Rabbi Berel Wein <info@jewishdestiny.com>
Subject Weekly Parsha from Rabbi Berel Wein

Weekly Parsha :: SHLACH :: Rabbi Berel Wein

Too much self confidence is also a detriment. Moshe sends forth the leaders of the tribes of Israel to search out the Land of Israel and report back to him. He gives them specific instructions as to what their report should contain and confidently awaits their successful return from their potentially hazardous mission.

It apparently never dawns upon him that these chosen leaders are capable of bringing back a negative report about the Land of Israel and that they would, in spite and resentment, publicize such a report and incite the people of Israel to rebel against Moshe's leadership and God's Providence. Moshe never imagines that the leaders of the tribes of Israel would somehow view the land of Israel differently than he does. To Moshe it is the Promised Land, the land of the forefathers of Israel and of Jewish destiny and future. But the men sent to bring back the report to Moshe - except for Calev and Yehoshua - see only the problems and difficulties that will confront the Jewish state.

Moshe glimpses eternity and they see only giants and fearsome warriors. Moshe longs for entry into the Land of Israel and they are ready to return to Egyptian bondage. Moshe's confidence in the people and their erstwhile leaders is shattered. And Moshe's confidence in his own self and in his judgment of people and circumstances is now weakened and self-doubt creeps into his psyche. Moshe's frustration and disappointment is palpable in the parsha reading. Moshe's generation is doomed.

Every person in a position of leadership and responsibility, especially younger people who are in such positions, experiences the same pitfall that Moshe experienced in this week's parsha. I remember that as a fledgling young rabbi I attempted to bring a well known yeshiva into our community and establish a branch of its main institution. Our community then badly needed such an educational institution in its midst.

I presented the plan at a public meeting called by me to advance this plan. I thought to myself "Who could oppose a yeshiva, so desperately needed by our community?" So in my naiveté I did not prepare adequately for the meeting nor did I make phone calls to the supporters of the yeshiva to show up and be prepared to fight the battle. I was supremely confident that everyone saw the issue my way and through my vision for the community. I was therefore shocked to hear the torrent of verbal abuse and opposition to the yeshiva project voiced at the meeting and the whole plan collapsed. I had assumed that everyone would see the matter through my eyes and hold my vision to be correct. Years later and in a different community I was able to establish a yeshiva, also over many naysayers, but this time I was prepared and had a much better feel as to how true human nature works. I could not assume that anyone else would see the situation quite as I did and therefore this time I prepared the meeting properly. Moshe assumed the best and was unprepared for what actually occurred. Naysayers always abound. We always have to prepare properly to overcome them and their objections.

Shabat shalom.

From Ohr Somayach <ohr@ohr.edu>
To weekly@ohr.edu
Subject Torah Weekly

Ohr Somayach :: Torah Weekly :: Parshat Shlach
by Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair - www.seasonsofthemoon.com
Overview

At the insistence of Bnei Yisrael, and with G-d's permission, Moshe sends 12 scouts, one from each tribe, to reconnoiter Canaan. Anticipating trouble, Moshe changes Hoshea's name to Yehoshua, expressing a prayer that G-d not let him fail in his mission. They return 40 days later, carrying unusually large fruit. When 10 of the 12 state that the people in Canaan are as formidable as the fruit, the men are discouraged. Calev and Yehoshua, the only two scouts still in favor of the invasion, try to bolster the people's spirit. The nation, however, decides that the Land is not worth the potentially fatal risks, and instead demands a return to Egypt. Moshe's fervent prayers save the nation from Heavenly annihilation. However, G-d declares that they must remain in the desert for 40 years until the men who wept at the scouts' false report pass away. A remorseful group rashly begins an invasion of the Land based on G-d's original command. Moshe warns them not to proceed, but they ignore this and are massacred by the Amalekites and Canaanites. G-d instructs Moshe concerning the offerings to be made when Bnei Yisrael will finally enter the Land. The people are commanded to remove challa, a gift for the kohanim, from their dough. The laws for an offering after an inadvertent sin, for an individual or a group, are explained. However, should someone blaspheme against G-d and be unrepentant, he will be cut off spiritually from his people. One man is found gathering wood on public property in violation of the laws of Shabbat and he is executed. The laws of tzitzit are taught. We recite the section about the tzitzit twice a day to remind ourselves of the Exodus.

Insights

Beyond the Fringe

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

There's an interesting grammatical anomaly in this week's Parsha. When describing the mitzvah of the tzitzit (the fringes that must be attached to a four-cornered garment), the Torah says, "It will be for you a tzitzit and you will see it and remember all the commandments of G-d and perform them." Ostensibly, the Torah should have written, "you will see them," referring to the tzitzit strings in the plural. The spiritual masters (Menachot 43b) explain that the phrase "and you will see it" can also be read as "and you will see Him," meaning when someone does this mitzvah with all the appropriate intention and concentration it has the power to open his eyes to the Divine Presence, the Shechina "and you will see Him."

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

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

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

Finally, the word tzitzit is connected to "lehazitz" which means "to peek." Tzitzit allow you a "peek" beyond.

Beyond the fringe.

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From Shema Yisrael Torah Network <shemalist@shemayisrael.com>
To Peninim <peninim@shemayisrael.com>
Subject Peninim on the Torah by Rabbi A. Leib Scheinbaum

Peninim on the Torah by Rabbi A. Leib Scheinbaum

Parshas Shelach(resent)

We arrived at the Land, to which you sent us, and indeed it flows with milk and honey, and this is its fruit. (13:27)

The spies returned from their ill-fated tour of Eretz Yisrael, and ten of them projected a jaundiced view of the Holy Land. Interestingly, they included in their report that the land flowed with milk and honey. In addition, they presented the exceptionally large fruit of the land for all to see. One wonders why they would do two things that, in effect, reflected a positive aspect of Eretz Yisrael. Rashi explains that the spies were well aware that even a liar must establish his credibility by introducing some aspect of truth into his story. They first stated emphatically that conquering Eretz Yisrael was impossible. Then they added that it was a land flowing with milk and honey, and here were its fruits. What Rashi says seems impractical if their goal was to use the truth as a way of strengthening the lie, since they should have first mentioned the truth, followed by the lie - not vice versa. Furthermore, when Moshe Rabbeinu sent them off, he instructed them to check for seven factors which would confirm their ability to conquer the land. One of these items was: Are trees growing there? Rashi explains that this question was really a metaphor for: Are any righteous people living there who could shelter the populace in the "shade" of their merit? The rationale for this question was based upon Hashem's comment to Avraham Avinu that the Jewish People would defeat the inhabitants of Eretz Yisrael only after the sin of the people of the land had become so bad that there was no longer room for forgiveness. This is why Moshe instructed the spies to determine whether righteous people were living there. How were the spies to discern whether individuals of such merit resided in the land?

Horav Yaakov Meir Sonnenfeld, zl, cites a passage in the Talmud Kesubos 112a, which serves as basis for his answer to these questions. The Talmud relates that Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi once passed by a grapevine in Gavla, a place in Eretz Yisrael. He was amazed by the incredible size of the grapes. He declared, "O Land! O Land! For whom are you producing such fruits? For these Arabs who, because of our sins, have displaced us?"

Rabbi Yehoshua's question indicates his expectation that the production of Eretz Yisrael is to be correlated with the merit of its inhabitants. This is the underlying motif of Shemittah, whereby the land produces in relationship with the Shemittah observance of its inhabitants. This is why Rabbi Yehoshua was shocked to find remarkable produce in Eretz Yisrael, despite the fact that the Jewish People had been exiled from it.

We now understand how the spies were able to determine whether Eretz Yisrael had people of merit living there. They would simply look at its fruit. If the fruits were large and plentiful, it was proof that righteous people did, in fact, live there. The spies made a point to show off the fruits of the land as soon as they returned. It was their way of saying: "The people in Eretz Yisrael do not warrant being driven out. Look at their fruit. We will fail in conquering the land. There is no hope for us."

Yehoshua and Caleb countered that it was a "land flowing with milk and honey." The land was prepared especially for us. Everything exceptional that we observed there was Hashem's "welcome package" for us. The incredible fruits and the milk and honey, were all there in our merit, not the merit of its inhabitants, because they have no merit. This is why Hashem will deliver them into our hands. They all saw the "fruits." The difference was in the interpretation. Has that not always been the point of dispute?

The entire assembly raised up and issued its voice; the people wept that night. All (Bnei Yisrael) murmured and Moshe and Aharon. (14:1, 2)

How often does it occur that we study a pasuk in Chumash, translate it, yet its meaning continues to elude us, either due to our indifference to its message or by intention to avoid following through on the Torah's demands? Regrettably, the number of times is not decreasing. The Torah relates that following the spies' communication of their slanderous reports, the people reacted in what seems to have been an atypical manner. They complained, but the Torah does not share their complaint with us. In the beginning of Sefer Devarim (1:27), however, when Moshe Rabbeinu issues his rebuke to the people prior to his death, he says, "You slandered in your tents and said, 'Because of Hashem's hatred for us did He take us out of the land of Egypt, to deliver us into the land of the Emori to destroy us.'" Even though we read these words every year, we tend to ignore what this statement intimates.

Imagine, Hashem took Klal Yisrael out of Egypt amid the greatest and most spectacular array of miracles and wonders. He then split the Red Sea to allow their safe passage through its waters. Hashem's benevolence continued as He sustained the nation with manna and other forms of sustenance. Yet, what do the people declare? He did all of this to kill them in the wilderness. He carried them on the wings of eagles, protected them from harm with the Pillars of Cloud and Fire, so that they may enter into the Promised Land. Why? So that the Emori could destroy them? Is this not ludicrous? Nothing could be more absurd than such a statement.

Horav Shimshon Pincus, zl, asserts that this is exactly the way we act every time something does not go our way. We are guests in Hashem's world, in which He sustains us, grants us health and welfare. We are recipients of countless miraculous gifts from Hashem on a daily basis. The moment that something goes awry, however, such that the balance of our lives is not exactly perfect, we blame Hashem. "What does He want from me? Why is He always picking on me? What did I do to deserve this?" Whether it is a minor delay or a major trauma, we always perceive that it is the hand of Hashem, Who no longer loves us.

Now I ask you once again: How often have we read the episode of the Jewish People's reaction to the spies' report and ignored this powerful

message? We do not seem to think that their reaction was absurd, because we probably would have reacted similarly! Indeed, we do it all of the time! Rav Pincus takes the message further. Not only is it ridiculous to "blame" Hashem - it is equally dangerous. No greater danger or hazard exists than alienation from Hashem. When we foolishly forget how much Hashem loves us, we become vulnerable to the most alien, inappropriate thoughts that drive a wedge between us and our belief in the Almighty. Let us observe how far our ancestors' murmuring led them, to what depths of iniquity they plummeted, and how we today are still paying for it.

"The people wept that night." Chazal teach us that that fateful night was Tisha B'Av, the day that would become our national day of mourning. Why? Hashem told them, "You wept needlessly. I will give you a reason to weep." That night, the decree that the Batei Mikdash would be destroyed and Klal Yisrael would go into exile was pronounced.

We begin the day thanking Hashem in the Modim prayer of Shemoneh Esrai, for "our lives that are committed to Your power." Suddenly, something goes wrong during the day, and we immediately forget our declaration of Hashem's unabiding love for us. Furthermore, at times, what appears to be a tragedy is actually the greatest favor, in disguise. Indeed, the spies returned with the news that Eretz Yisrael is a land that kills its inhabitants. After all, why else would the populace be so involved in funerals? Wherever the spies went, they saw a funeral. Little did they realize that Hashem was causing these funerals so that the people would be thoroughly engaged, in order not to notice the Jewish spies.

Is it any different in our own lives? We are often privy to occurrences which, from a cursory glance, appear to have a serious, negative connotation. In the end, everybody lives "happily ever after." When one keeps this idea prominently focused on his radar screen of life he will never doubt Hashem's love for him. During the most taxing moments, under the most vexing circumstances, he will remember that ultimately all of his pain and troubles will transform into joy and salvation.

But my servant Calev, because a different spirit was with him and he followed Me wholeheartedly. (14:24)

Yehoshua and Calev believed in Hashem, despite the insurmountable pressure mounted against them by the other ten spies, and, later, by the nation. As a result of their resoluteness, they were both rewarded: Calev with Chevron; and Yehoshua, as successor to Moshe Rabbeinu. One would think that simply being saved from the decree of death which was issued against the entire nation would suffice. Yet, we see that they were granted individual, exclusive rewards. Why? Horav Chaim Mordechai Katz, zl, explains that the distinct rewards were for their ability to act in a unique manner, to rise above the fray and stand up against their colleagues and the nation, not to waver under pressure. When a person takes an exclusive stand, when he reflects individuality, he is rewarded accordingly.

The ability to stand alone - often as the subject of ridicule, disdain and animosity - is the hallmark of a gadol b'Yisrael, Torah leader. When the alien winds of progressiveness and liberal change attempt to uproot the traditions of millennia, it is the Torah leader who stalwartly stands firm and, often, quite alone. It has been this individuality that has sustained our People in its battle for spiritual ascendancy. A leader is strong; he is resolute; most of all, he is prepared to stand alone.

What generates this ability? From where does the Torah leader harness the power to stand alone, often without the support of his very own "supporters"? I think the answer lies in the words, ruach acheres, "different spirit." What is the "spirit" that Calev, and apparently every Torah leader, must possess?

When Moshe saw that he was not going to enter Eretz Yisrael, he petitioned Hashem to appoint his successor. His appeal began Yifkud Hashem Elokei ha'ruchos l'chol basar ish al ha'eidah. "May Hashem, G-d of the spirits of all flesh, appoint a man over the Assembly." (27:16) Rashi notes that Moshe could have addressed Hashem in any of a number of ways. Rather than refer to His Omnipotence, His wisdom and various other qualities in which He is unparalleled in any way, Moshe chose, Elokei

ha'ruchos l'chol basar, "G-d of the spirits of all flesh." This describes Hashem's knowledge of the intricacies of the human mind and personality, the awareness that each human being is different and that every person has his own virtues and shortcomings. Moshe intimates that a leader must be sensitive to the needs of his followers. He must also be acutely aware of what motivates them. Thus, when an individual complains, makes demands, is afraid to ask, or questions everything, the leader understands why he is acting in this manner.

A leader will always have dissenters, but he must understand why they are disputing his leadership. Is it philosophic, or is it motivated by arrogance and greed? Throughout the generations, Torah leaders have sustained challenges to authentic Judaism by individuals who have labeled themselves representatives of Judaism. Unfortunately, their demands have not been founded in Jewish concerns. Other than seeking ways to permit them and their followers to act like their secular counterparts, their claims have been baseless. There has been nothing philosophic about their desire to breach the laws of ritual purity, kashrus, Shabbos and to dispute the Divine Authorship of the Torah. Everything has been motivated by a desire to live like the gentiles. When a leader understands that his battlefield has nothing to do with theology and that his adversary is nothing more than a baal taaveh, miscreant who cannot control his urges, thus seeking ways to justify his actions, he no longer has anything to fear. He can stand tall and resolute in the knowledge that his beliefs will not be challenged and that the integrity of his leadership will not be impugned. He knows with whom he is dealing.

But, they defiantly ascended to the mountain top...the Amalek and the Canaani...descended...they struck them. (14:44, 45)

When the Jewish People listened to the slanderous reports of Eretz Yisrael, they reacted negatively, indicating their disdain for the Holy Land. After being chastised for their attitude and negative reaction, they realized the tragedy their lack of faith had catalyzed. Because they did not appreciate Eretz Yisrael, they would not live to see it. During the remainder of their time in the wilderness, they would learn what they had allowed to slip through their hands. Some of them, who recognized their sin and sought to rectify the damage, attempted to turn back the clock and they were going to go forward on their own in order to attempt to conquer the land. Hashem, however, no longer wished to give Eretz Yisrael to that generation. They had committed too many infractions and, as a result, their fate was sealed. Yet, they still insisted on going on their own, which proved to be a fatal error. This group goes down in history as the maapilim, a reference to their self-determined advancement.

There is no question that what the maapilim did was wrong, but it is not considered to be a particularly grave sin. We must bear in mind that their intentions were noble, their motivations pure. They were idealists who meant to do good, but, regrettably, they were wrong in their actions. They should have waited for Hashem's command - and not have gone out on their own. This was their form of teshuvah, repentance. Unfortunately, it was too late to save them from their fate. Idealism is a wonderful trait, but it can portend danger. At times, one can become carried away with his goal that he totally forgets, ignores, or even rejects anyone who stands in his way. His mind is made up; he knows the right thing to do and he acts upon his feelings. He refuses to see that the only aspect of the undertaking that is "correct" is his desire to see it through. He acts with mesiras nefesh, dedication and self-sacrifice, for what he believes in, for what strikes his fancy.

The maapilim were motivated by a sudden return of love for the Land which they had earlier slandered. At that moment, however, they were chozer b'teshuvah, returned to the commitment, which was expected of them. Their idealism motivated them to surge forward. Regrettably, they did not seek Hashem's approval, which tainted the very foundation of their action.

Chavakuk HaNavi addresses the future liberation of our nation from its present exile. "For there is yet another vision about the appointed time; it

will speak of the end, and it will not deceive. Though it may tarry, await it, for it will surely come; it will not delay. Behold, his soul is defiant; it is unsettled within him, but the righteous person shall live through his faith." (2:3, 4) In describing the evil Babylonian King Nevuchadnezer, the Navi uses the word uflah (Hinei uflah), "Behold his (soul) is defiant," a word which has the same source as the maapilim. In his commentary, the Malbim explains ophel, which is the root of uflah and maapilim, as a reference to someone who seeks to ascend to a plateau which is above him, a level which is beyond his grasp; yet, he goes for it anyway. Such a person is considered by the Navi to be lo yashrah, unsettled. Malbim goes on to assert that those individuals who refuse to wait for Moshiach, who make calculations - based upon statements made by Chazal - as to when Moshiach will arrive, who attempt to bring him before the designated time, are guilty of this serious infraction.

Throughout history, we have experienced movements whose leadership have inspired the common Jew to "ascend" and undertake endeavors that were not sanctioned by the Torah. They were all in the name of Judaism, nationalism, idealism. Manipulating the minds and emotions of people who had suffered from racism and bigotry, they instigated revolutions for the people. In the end, they only revolted against Hashem. They venerated Jewish nationalism, the Jewish land, making leaders out of individuals whose very essence was the antithesis of Torah. Every generation has its false messiahs who rallied the people to support various causes - everything - but Torah Judaism. These were the maapilim who refused to "wait." The common foundation of most religious movements has been an inability to wait. When a person's soul returns to its Source, it is asked, Tzipisa l'yeshuah? "Did you wait for salvation?" This is a referral to Moshiach Tzidkeinu. In his derashos, the Chasam Sofer asserts that tzipisa, "Did you wait?" is more than a question. It defines the way a Jew should act. He is to be patient, unwavering in his commitment to bide his time and defer to Hashem's determination concerning when Moshiach should arrive. This is the reason, explains the Chasam Sofer, that we give children sweets at the Seder table, so that they should wait - and continue waiting - until the story of the Exodus is concluded, and then we eat the meal. Waiting for Moshiach, waiting for Hashem's signal, is an integral principle of Yiddishkeit.

That you may see it and remember all the commandments of Hashem... and not explore after your heart and your eyes. (15:39)

Rashi cites the Midrash that teaches how Tzitzis reminds us of the mitzvos. The numerical equivalent of the Tzitzis is 600. We add to this the eight strings and five knots to arrive at a grand total of 613, which is the number of mitzvos we, as Jews, are to faithfully observe. This concept is reiterated by the commentators either through the gimatriya, numerical equivalent, or the Tzitzis acting as the Jewish uniform which indicates our allegiance to our "Commander-In-Chief." The obvious incongruity is: We do wear Tzitzis, and some of us even have the Tzitzis displayed externally, yet, it does not seem to prevent us from slipping down the slippery slope of sinful behavior. It is not as if we do not "remember" the mitzvos. We seem to have a short-lived memory. Apparently, wearing Tzitzis is not as helpful a reminder as indicated.

Horav Baruch Sorotzkin, zl, explains that "remembering" the mitzvos through the medium of Tzitzis is dependant on another condition which facilitates the memory effort. In other words, one can see Tzitzis and even derive the important lessons concerning mitzvah observance which Tzitzis has to offer, but, in order for this reminder to be effective, another condition must be fulfilled. V'lo sasuru acharei levavhem, v'acharei eineichem, "And do not explore after your heart and after your eyes after which you stray."

The sequence of the pasuk implies that remembering the mitzvos has a preventative effect on straying of the heart and eyes. This is not so, for the pasuk which follows states: L'maan tizkeru va'asisem es kol mitzvosai, "So that you remember and perform all My commandments" (Ibid: 40), which implies that remembering to perform the mitzvos is the result of not straying after the heart and eyes. The Rosh Yeshivah explains that seeing is

not effective, unless one expunges the desires from his heart. Remembering is no guarantee, unless the eyes are shielded.

One may be exposed to the most profound and captivating lessons, but they will have little or no long term influence, if the individual does not divest himself of his heart's desires and prevent his eyes from gazing in areas that have a deleterious spirit effect on his ability to see properly. We take sight for granted, but "what" we see and how we view it is often predicated upon our selectivity.

Horav Eliezer Silver, zl, would often relate an incident that occurred with him in a displaced persons camp following World War II. As head of Vaad Hatzalah, relief and rescue organization, he had access to the DP camps and had first-hand knowledge of what took place in the years preceding their liberation. His goal was to give both physical and spiritual sustenance to the survivors, giving them hope and bolstering their fragile emotions. He organized minyanim, quorums for daily prayer services, and provided Taleisim, Tefillin and Siddurim for the survivors' use.

In one of the camps, there was a lone Jew who absolutely refused to put on Tefillin. Nothing could convince him to ease up on his recalcitrance and pay tribute to the Almighty who allowed him to survive the purgatory of the Holocaust. He was adamant; he wanted nothing whatsoever to do with religion. Rav Silver could not ignore this person. Such an attitude clearly was the result of some pathological trauma. He had to get to the bottom of the problem. "I hear that you refuse to join the minyan, or to put on Tefillin," Rav Silver began. "I am sure that you must have a very good reason for acting this way."

"Rabbi," the survivor replied, "let me tell you why I want nothing to do with Judaism or its traditions. There was a man in my camp who was somehow able to sneak in a siddur. He would rent it daily to his Jewish brothers for half of their daily portion of bread. Can you imagine such heartlessness? To take advantage of one's brother, whose meager portion is hardly sufficient staple to provide him with nourishment, and charge half of that portion to allow him to daven with a siddur for ten minutes! Such a religion is not for me!"

Rav Silver listened intently and said, "My friend, I feel for you and I understand your pain, but permit me to ask you a question. Why do you look so negatively upon the Jew who acted with cruelty, so that he could sustain himself at the expense of his brother's spiritual devotion? Why are you not impressed with those Jews who daily gave up half of their bread, so that they could daven from a siddur for ten minutes?"

Some people see a half-empty glass, while others see one that is half-full. It is all a question of perspective. That perspective is controlled by the heart. The eyes see what the heart directs them to see. Two individuals can simultaneously observe the same incident, yet, their perceptions of what actually took place and their ramifications can be quite different. It is not in the eyes. It is in the heart!

Va'ani Tefillah

Va'yevareich David es Hashem l'einei kol ha'kahal.

And David blessed Hashem in the presence of the entire congregation.

Horav Shimon Schwab, zl, makes note of the use of the word l'einei - literally, before the eyes or in the presence of - rather than the customary lifnei - before/in front of, the people. Simply, this was done for a practical reason. Not everyone had the opportunity to hear David. The crowd was vast, and - except for those in the front - hearing was impossible without some sort of amplification, which they probably did not have. Thus, most of the assemblage relied on their eyes. They did not hear the king; they did, however, see him.

On a more profound level, Rav Schwab interprets l'einei as being related to iyun, look/delve into a subject. The tefillah that David was articulating was of such significance that even if the listeners did not, at first, understand its message, they were obligated to review it over and over until they did understand it. They should have been me'ayein, delving into its meaning, because it was of great import.

We might suggest another explanation. Ayin is also connected to me'ein, wellsprings, intimating that David wanted each listener to integrate this message into his psyche and then transmit it to the others, to the next generation. It was not only meant for those who were present, but for the einei, wellsprings, within each of the assembled, so that they employ their ability to inspire, to reach out and invigorate others with David's message. Sponsored by The Klahr Family (New York) In loving memory of our grandparents Phillip and Lillian Finger who were long-time friends and family of the Hebrew Academy. li"n R' Zalman Fishel ben Chanina HaLeve a"h Maras Ettl Leah bas R' Yeshaya HaLeve a"h t.n.tz.v.h.

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N'sachim: Central Supplement of Korbanot

Rabbi Yakov Haber (The TorahWeb Foundation)

After the tragic episode of the m'rag'lim, the spies slanderous report about the Land of Israel and the subsequent decree that the entire generation of Jews would perish in the desert, Hashem commands the Jewish people concerning several seemingly unrelated mitzvot - the first being the commandment of n'sachim, the mitzva to offer a mincha and pour wine on the mizbei'ach after the bringing of various korbanot (Sh'lach 15). Elsewhere (The Cheit HaM'rag'lim and Three Mitzvot), we presented various approaches attempting to explain the connection of these mitzvot to each other and to the sin of the spies. Here, we focus on the commandment of n'sachim, elaborating on themes mentioned in the previous article. Several questions emerge concerning the n'sachim. The fact that the Torah introduces the section with the phrase: "when you enter the Land of your settling" leads the Sifrei (see also Kiddushin 37) to conclude that the obligation only applies in Eretz Yisrael. Since some n'sachim were certainly offered in the desert as well (T'veh 29:40-41), R. Yishmael maintains that only in the Land of Israel would they be instituted for korbanot yachid, individual offerings, as well but only after the 14 years of kibush v'chiluk. R. Akiva maintains that n'sachim were obligatory immediately upon entry even on a bamat yachid, a private altar. Why should this mitzva, not dependent per se on the Land, be dependent - at least partially - upon entry into Eretz Yisrael? Furthermore, why the distinction between the individual and the tzibur? Converts are specifically included in this mitzvah (15:15). Why is there a need to do so since they, by default, are obligated in all mitzvot? Furthermore, n'sachim only accompany a korban olah or sh'lamin. Why are they not also brought with a chatas or asham? The Talmud (B'rachot 15b) teaches in the name of R. Yochanan that one who reads k'riyat sh'ma without t'fillin is as one who brings a korban without a mincha or n'sachim. Explaining this connection, Rav Avraham Yitchak HaKohen Kook zt"l (Ein Ayah ibid.) writes that a person is enjoined to serve G-d with his higher, human faculties (such as speech and thought) as well as with his lower, natural faculties which he shares in common with the rest of creation (such as eating, drinking, etc.). The animal korban represents service of G-d with the higher faculties. This, however, must be accompanied by offerings of both flour and wine, since they represent service of Hashem with the lower, natural faculties - flour and wine growing from the ground and representing a lower form of life than animals. One who would offer just the animal offering without the vegetable offering would indicate an unwillingness to serve Hashem with all of his faculties. Similarly, one who reads sh'ma - a mental and verbal commitment to service of G-d - without accompanying its recital with the donning of t'fillin on the head and hand - representing total Divine service with all of his faculties, indicates an incomplete commitment to Hashem.

This concept only applies to an olah and sh'lamim representing positive aspects of Divine service, mitzvot asef. Concerning chatas and asham offerings, representing distancing from sin, mitzvot lo ta'aseh, only the higher, human faculties are involved. The lower, natural faculties in man follow the decisions made by the higher intellect. For example, the stomach is satisfied with either kosher or non-kosher food. Consequently, only an animal, representing these higher faculties, is brought as an atonement for sin. (See Rav S. R. Hirsch zt"l for a similar approach to n'sachim.) Perhaps we can humbly add to the piercing insight of Rav Kook. Whereas on a communal, K'lal Yisrael level, this concept applied in the desert as well - after all, K'lal Yisrael wholeheartedly accepted the totality of Torah with "Na'aseh v'nishma" including all of its components encompassing all aspects of human activity - however, the individual member of the Jewish people in the desert did not have too many opportunities to serve Hashem with the lower, natural faculties. The Jews were sustained through miraculous, spiritual food, drank water provided miraculously and heard Torah constantly from Moshe, the prophet of G-d. There were no fields to plant, businesses to tend to, or politics to engage in, or families to raise within the natural world. The true test of elevating all of creation through all the faculties of Man would only come in the Land of Israel where all the commandments would be placed into action (see aforementioned article). Consequently, n'sachim - representing this added dimension of Divine service, sanctification of all aspects of life - only applied to the individual upon entry into the Land. This commandment, representing so central a concept, was specifically made incumbent upon the convert, especially since he did not have a formal portion in the Land (see Rav Hirsch). May Hashem grant us the assistance and will to merit elevating ourselves to fully serve our Creator with all of our faculties.
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From Rabbi Chanan Morrison <ravkooklist@gmail.com>
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Rav Kook List **Rav Kook on the Torah Portion**

Shelach: Garments of the Soul

"Speak to the Israelites and tell them to make tassels (tzitzit) on the corners of their garments for all generations. They shall include a thread of sky-blue [wool] in the corner tassels." (Num. 15:38)

Three Levels of the Soul

How is the human soul recognizable to the outside world? We may speak of a hierarchy of three levels:

The soul itself.

Its character traits - compassion, generosity, tolerance, humility, and so on.

Its actions and conduct.

The innermost level, the soul itself, is in fact hidden from the outside world. The soul can only be observed through the outer two levels, its traits and actions. Character traits are like the soul's 'clothing.' Through its distinctive characteristics, the soul reveals itself to the outside world. This is similar to the way we present ourselves to others through our garments. We are judged by the style and quality of our clothes. Yet, we are not our clothes; we may change them at will. So too, we are judged by our character traits, but they are external to the soul itself, and may be changed.

The Symbolism of Tzitzit

The ultimate manifestation of the soul in the outside world is in its day-to-day deportment. If our character traits constitute a metaphoric garment that clothes the soul, then our deeds are tassels that emanate from the corners of the garment. Each trait of the soul is revealed in a variety of actions, since different situations require specific responses. These varied actions are like the many tzitzit (tassels), extending naturally from the corners of the garment.

To summarize the metaphor:

The inner soul is represented by the body.

Personality traits are clothes covering the body.

Actions are the tassels extending from the garment.

The Thread of Techelet

We are accustomed to the tassels being white, but the actual Halachic requirement is that they be the same color as the garment. Sharing the same color indicates that our actions derive their power and direction from the garment, i.e., our character traits.

One thread, however, is not the color of the garment. The Torah instructs us to tie an additional thread, dyed sky-blue techelet. This color reminds us of hidden, sublime matters: the sea, the sky, and God's Holy Throne (Sotah 17a). Sky-blue is the background color of the universe. The techelet thread connects us to the very Source of life, from whom all forces flow. Together with the other threads, which correspond to the color of the garment and represent the diverse range of human activity, the techelet thread complements and completes the function of the tassels.

The Torah teaches that the mitzvah of wearing tzitzit corresponds to all 613 mitzvot: "When you see [the tassels], you will remember all of God's commandments and you will observe them" (Num. 15:39). By wearing a garment with these special tassels, we envelop our souls in the Torah's magnificent fabric of values and deeds.

(Gold from the Land of Israel, pp. 246-248. Adapted from Olat Re'iyah vol. I, pp. 4-5) Comments and inquiries may be sent to: mailto:RavKookList@gmail.com

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Weekly Halachah

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Proper Respect for Sefarim

Sifrei kodesh, sacred scriptures, vary in their degree of kedushah, holiness, and consequently, one accords them varying degrees of honor. A Sefer Torah is given the most honor, followed closely by other Sifrei Tanach written on parchment. All other sefarim, including the Talmud, its commentaries and codes, do not have the level of kedushah that a Sefer Torah has, but still they must be treated with respect and dignity. In many cases, the Rishonim rule that sefarim are to be accorded the same level of respect and honor as tefillin.¹

With the advent of the printing press in the fifteenth century, the Torah authorities of the time debated whether printed sefarim had the same level of kedushah as handwritten works. The consensus of the poskim was that a printed sefer is to be treated no differently from a handwritten one. The Taz,² one of the great Torah luminaries of the time, warned that one who demeans the holiness of printed sefarim will suffer the consequences in the World to Come. With few exceptions, this has become the accepted halachah.³

Let us review some of the halachos that pertain to the proper treatment of sefarim.

Sefarim are treated with dignity and respect. Thus:

- * A sefer should be handed from one person to the other; it may not be thrown or tossed around.⁴
 - * A sefer should not be placed face down. If it is found in this position it must be turned face up.⁵
 - * A sefer should not be stood upside down. If it is found in this position, it must be stood right side up.⁶
 - * A sefer may not be placed, either lying or standing, directly on the floor.⁷
 - * A sefer that fell to the ground must be picked up immediately, even if one will have to interrupt his Torah learning to do so.⁸ If a sefer falls to the floor during Shemoneh Esreh and that interferes with one's concentration, he may pick it up after finishing the blessing that he is reciting,⁹ even if it entails taking a few steps.¹⁰ If, however, the fallen sefer does not disturb his concentration, then he may not pick up the sefer during Shemoneh Esreh.¹¹
 - * One may not sit or lie on a chair, bench, couch or bed if a sefer is lying (or standing)¹² directly¹³ on it.¹⁴ If, however, the bench or couch is made of "split (separate) seats" it is permitted to sit on any seat other than the one that is holding the sefer.¹⁵
 - * Some poskim prohibit sitting on top of a bench, chest or chair that has sefarim stored underneath,¹⁶ while other poskim permit it.¹⁷ In order to satisfy both opinions it is recommended that there be at least a tefach of space between the seat and the sefer.¹⁸
 - * One should not place any other sefer on top of a Chumash,¹⁹ or any sefer other than a Chumash on top of a Nach.²⁰ (Although some poskim maintain that this halachah pertains only to Chumashim and Nachim that are on a scroll, not to printed and bound Chumashim and Nachim,²¹ it is customary to be stringent in this halachah.²²) All other sefarim and siddurim, however, are permitted to be placed randomly.²³
- Sefarim are treated with kedushah. Thus:
- * It is prohibited for males (over the age of nine) or females (over the age of three) to be completely unclothed in the presence of a sefer.²⁴ But it is permitted to learn from a sefer in an area where there is a swimming pool.²⁵
 - * It is prohibited to enter a restroom or a washroom with a sefer in hand, unless the sefer is concealed in at least one covering. Preferably, the sefer should be inside two coverings, e.g., one bag encased in another bag, or an envelope inside an attaché case.²⁶
 - * A child should not be diapered or toilet-trained in a room full of sefarim. But it is permitted to diaper or train a child in a room where there is an occasional sefer or bentscher, etc.²⁷
- Sefarim are for the purpose of learning only; they may not be used for other purposes. Thus:
- * It is prohibited to place anything,²⁸ except chidushei Torah, inside a sefer²⁹ or on top of a sefer.³⁰
 - * When learning from a sefer, it is permitted to use another sefer (of equal or lesser kedushah) to raise the height of the sefer one is learning from.³¹
 - * It is prohibited to use a sefer for personal protection, e.g., to shield oneself from the sun's rays, or to block another person's view.³² However, one is permitted to cover his face with a sefer so as to block a forbidden sight from his eyes.³³
 - * It is permitted, when no other item is available, to use another sefer to block the sun from shining on a sefer from which one is learning.³⁴
 - * When needed, it is permitted to use a sefer as a hard surface for writing Torah-study notes.³⁵
 - * One may not place a sefer on his lap and lean on it with his elbows.³⁶ One should also not lean or sleep on top of a sefer.³⁷ After learning is over . . .
 - * It is prohibited to use a sefer as a bookmark by placing it inside another sefer.³⁸

- * Some poskim permit folding a page-corner of a sefer so that it serves as a bookmark,³⁹ while other poskim forbid it.⁴⁰
- * One should avoid leaving a sefer open if he is leaving the room for an extended period of time⁴¹ because it is considered degrading to the sefer. In addition, the poskim quote the chachmei ha-Emes as saying that doing so may cause one to forget his learning.⁴²
- * Although there is no known source in the poskim for the practice of kissing a sefer after learning from it,⁴³ this custom is brought down in sifrei Kabbalah.⁴⁴
- * When a sefer ages and is no longer usable, it must be put aside in a safe place or buried in the ground. It may not be burned or thrown out.⁴⁵

- 1 Tosafos and Rosh, Berachos 26a, quoted in Beis Yosef, O.C. 240:6.
- 2 Y.D. 271:8. See also Be'ur Halachah 83:5, s.v. ein, where the Chafetz Chayim tells of a severe punishment that befell a particular family because they were not careful with the kedushah of their sefarim.
- 3 Mishnah Berurah 40:4. A minority view, led by the Chavos Yair and Eliyahu Rabba, disagrees and maintains that printed matter is on a lower level of kedushah than handwritten material; *ibid.* In extenuating circumstances, we take this opinion into consideration; see Kaf ha-Chayim 40:16 and Shevet ha-Levi 2:143, 6:8. In addition, some authorities hold that sefarim in offset print are on yet an even lesser level of kedushah since offset is merely a photograph of the print; see Maharsham 3:357 and Sefer Shevilei Taharah, pgs. 176-180.
- 4 Y.D. 282:5.
- 5 Rama, Y.D. 282:5. See Shiyurei Berachah *ibid.*, who bemoans the fact that many people are not aware of this strict prohibition.
- 6 Beis Lechem Yehudah, Y.D. 282:7, quoting Maharil; Aruch ha-Shulchan 282:11.
- 7 Rama, Y.D. 282:7. Rav Y.S. Elyashiv and Rav C. Kanievsky are quoted (Nekiyus v'Kavod baTefillah, pgs. 97 and 187) as ruling that placing a bed sheet or a newspaper on the floor is not sufficient. See Orchos Rabbeinu, vol. 3, pg. 163, which states that Rav Y.Y. Kanievsky was careful not to place sefarim within a tefach of the ground. See also Chut Shani, Ribbis, pgs. 167-168.
- 8 Bais Lechem Yehudah, Y.D. 282:7; Aruch ha-Shulchan 282:11. It is customary to kiss a sefer after picking it up from the floor; *ibid.*
- 9 Mishnah Berurah 96:7.
- 10 Be'er Moshe 3:13.
- 11 Mishnah Berurah 96:7, based on Pri Megadim.
- 12 Rav M. Feinstein (oral ruling quoted in Ginzei ha-Kodesh 2, note 15); Rav S.Z. Auerbach (oral ruling quoted in Mevakshei Torah, vol. 4, pg. 124); Rav Y.S. Elyashiv (oral ruling quoted in Avnei Yashfei 1:16); Rav N. Karelitz (Chut Shani, Ribbis, pg. 168); Rav C. Kanievsky (written response published in Nekiyus v'Kavod baTefillah, pg. 188).
- 13 If the sefer is lying or standing on an object which is at least a tefach high, it is no longer considered as if it is lying or standing on the bench or chair; Shach 282:8 and Aruch ha-Shulchan 282:12.
- 14 Rama, Y.D. 282:7. [In a crowded beis midrash where it may be difficult to observe this halachah, some poskim permit sitting on a bench together with the sefarim; see Shach 282:9. A rav should be consulted.]
- 15 Shevet ha-Levi 3:11. Some poskim permit sitting on the same bench with sefarim so long as there is a barrier between them; Teshuras Shai 2:169, quoted in Tzedakah u'Mishpat 16, note 61.
- 16 Taz, Y.D. 282:4. If the chest or bench is nailed to the wall, it is permitted even according to this view; *ibid.*
- 17 Nekudos ha-Kesef and Shiyurei Berachah, Y.D. 282:7; Pischei Teshuvah 282:8.
- 18 Mishnah Berurah 40:13.
- 19 Y.D. 282:19.
- 20 Sefer Chasidim, quoted by Beis Lechem Yehudah Y.D. 283:1.
- 21 Aruch ha-Shulchan, Y.D. 282:22, based on Rama, Y.D. 283:1. See also Beis Baruch 31:187, who agrees with this opinion.
- 22 Rav S.Z. Auerbach, written ruling, published in V'aleihu Lo Yibol, vol. 1, pg. 269).
- 23 Chazon Ish (quoted in Dinim v'Hanhagos and Orchos Rabbeinu, vol. 3, pg. 162).
- 24 Mishnah Berurah 45:5, 75:23. But this prohibition applies only to ervah mamash; we do not invoke tefach b'ishah ervah concerning this issue; Rabbi P.E. Falk (Kol ha-Torah, vol. 46, pgs. 187-194).
- 25 She'arim Metzuyanim b'Halachah 5:8; Ishei Yisrael 53:28.
- 26 Mishnah Berurah 43:25. Putting a sefer into one's pants pocket is considered one "cover." When the pocket is covered with a jacket or an overcoat, it is

- considered as two coverings; Rav Y.S. Elyashiv (Nekiyus v'Kavod baTefillah, pg. 94). [See Machazeh Eliyahu 8:30, who opines that a pocket with a lining is considered a double covering.]
- 27 See Machazeh Eliyahu 5-8 for an entire review of this subject. See also Teshuvos v'Hanhagos 2:137.
- 28 One should not place parts of torn pages from one sefer in between the pages of another sefer; Rav Y.S. Elyashiv (Avnei Yashfei 1:202).
- 29 See Pischei Teshuvah, Y.D. 282:17; Mishnah Berurah 154:31; Aruch ha-Shulchan, Y.D. 282:23. This includes blank sheets of paper which will be used for chidushei Torah. See, however, Igros Moshe, O.C. 4:72, who permits placing blank paper intended for chidushei Torah in a sefer.
- 30 Igros Moshe, O.C. 4:72.
- 31 Mishnah Berurah 154:31, 315:30.
- 32 Mishnah Berurah 154:31.
- 33 Rav Y.S. Elyashiv (Nekiyus v'Kavod baTefillah, pg. 100).
- 34 Mishnah Berurah 154:31.
- 35 Mishnah Berurah 154:31.
- 36 Rama, Y.D. 282:7.
- 37 Chazon Ish (quoted in Orchos Rabbeinu, vol. 3, pg. 161); Rav N. Karelitz (Chut Shani, Ribbis, pg. 169).
- 38 Pischei Teshuvah, Y.D. 282:17; Rav Y.S. Elyashiv (Avnei Yashfei 1:202).
- 39 Rav S.Z. Auerbach (Avnei Yashfei 1:203). Some recommend that the page should be folded on the margin, not on the spot where there are words printed; Beis Baruch 31:186.
- 40 Chazon Ish (quoted in Orchos Rabbeinu, vol. 3, pg. 162).
- 41 Aruch ha-Shulchan, Y.D. 277:2. See also Da'as Kedoshim 277.
- 42 Shach, Y.D. 277:1.
- 43 Rav C. Kanievsky (Nekiyus v'Kavod baTefillah, pg. 189).
- 44 See Ohr Tzaddikim 22:17.
- 45 Mishnah Berurah 154:24. See Chelkas Yaakov 3:161, which maintains that a sefer which is no longer in use but is still usable may not be buried in the ground; it must be put aside in a safe place. See, however, Ginzei ha-Kodesh 8:2 and Ashrei ha-Ish, vol. 1, 29:16 who quote Rav Y.S. Elyashiv as permitting the burial of sefarim that are not going to be used even if they are still in relatively good condition.

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 By Rabbi Yirmiyohu Kaganoff

Halachah Talk

Fasting on the Wedding Day

By Rabbi Yirmiyohu Kaganoff

Question #1: Our wedding is going to be after nightfall. Do we fast until the wedding, or do we break the fast when it gets dark?

Question #2: Yocheved asks: I usually do not fast well, and I am concerned how I will feel at my wedding if I fast that day. What do I do?

Question #3: Sheryl's dilemma: "What will I explain to my non-observant parents when they exclaim at my pre-chupah reception - 'What! You can't eat anything at your own wedding?'"

Sheryl comes from a much assimilated background. Let her explain: "In my extended family, my parents were considered the religious ones since they were the only ones who married Jewish. Furthermore, my Dad was the only one who fasted on Yom Kippur, albeit with a little cheating on the side. So when my family members heard that I had become Orthodox, they were shocked at many of my new practices, despite my efforts to keep things as low key as possible. None of them had a clue what it means to really keep kosher or Shabbos. Now that I'm getting married, many of them are curious to attend my wedding and I would like to make the experience a Kiddush Hashem for them. Therefore, I intend to explain our mitzvos and customs to them in the best possible light."

Sheryl's goals are indeed noble. How will she explain the reason we fast on one's wedding day to someone who knows little about Yiddishkeit? The prospect seems almost ominous.

Fasting in our Parsha

In this week's parsha, Yaakov Avinu marries four times. Assuming that he fasted on his wedding days, he would have observed this fast four different times!

Why do we fast?

Although early authorities cite at least six different reasons for this custom, most halachic authorities discuss only two of them (e.g., Levush, Even Haezer 60:1; Magen Avraham and Eliyah Rabbah, introduction to 573; Beis Shmuel 61:6; Chachmas Adam 129:2; Aruch Hashulchan 61:21):
 Reason #1: To Avoid Inebriation

Some explain that the practice is to ensure that the chosson and kallah are fully sober when they participate in the wedding ceremony. By not eating and drinking, they will certainly drink nothing intoxicating prior to the ceremony. Some commentaries provide an interesting twist to this custom. They explain that the concern is that if one of the marrying parties drinks anything intoxicating on the wedding day, they may subsequently claim that they were inebriated and that therefore the marriage is invalid (Levush, Even Ha'ezer 60:1)! As someone once said, love is not only blind, but also sometimes intoxicating.

Reason #2: To Achieve Atonement

Since a bridegroom is forgiven for all his sins, he should fast as atonement (Yevamos 63b; Yerushalmi, Bikkurim 3:3).

By the way, one allusion to this atonement is found in the last verse of last week's parsha. The Torah records that one of the additional wives Eisav married was Machalas, the daughter of Yishmael. The Yerushalmi points out that although her name was actually Basamas and not Machalas, the Torah calls her Machalas to indicate that even someone sinful as Eisav was forgiven on his wedding day (Shu"t Divrei Yatziv #259).

I am sure you are already asking why I said that the chosson fasts on his wedding day, and omitted the kallah. This leads us directly to our next question:

Who Fasts?

Are there any halachic differences between the two reasons given for the fast? Indeed, there are several. One issue that might be affected is whether only the chosson fasts, or also the kallah. The authorities dispute whether the wedding day atones for both parties, or only for the chosson. Indeed, Talmudic sources only mention the chosson in this connection, and some later authorities contend that the wedding is indeed an atonement day only for the chosson and not for the kallah. Following this approach, some authorities conclude that only the bridegroom fasts and not the bride (Ben Ish Chai, 1: Shoftim: 13). Others contend that despite that the Gemara only mentioning atonement of the chosson's sins, since the kallah is a direct cause of his atonement, she also receives forgiveness on this day (Aishel Avraham Butchach 573).

However, if the reason for the fast is to guarantee the sobriety of the parties, the kallah too should fast even if the day is not a day of atonement. Of course, it won't be easy for Sheryl to explain all this to her parents at the reception prior to her wedding. I will soon mention other reasons she can provide to her family.

On the other hand, many authorities rule that the wedding day atones for both kallah and chosson, the same as Yom Kippur (Magen Avraham, introduction to 573; Eliyah Rabbah 573:2; Beis Shmuel, 61:6). Following this approach, the kallah should also fast even if we are not concerned about her becoming inebriated at her wedding (Rama, Even Ha'ezer 61:1). This, too, is why both chosson and kallah say viduy after mincha on the day of their wedding (Pischei Teshuvah, Even Ha'ezer 61:9). In addition, the couple should pray for a happy marriage that is blessed with children who bring great credit to themselves and to Hashem (Aruch Hashulchan 61:21). Sheryl can certainly tell her family this reason for the sanctity of the day and say that this is why she will be fasting. This will also provide her with the

opportunity to explain that a Torah marriage involves holiness, sanctity, and opportunity for spiritual growth, all ideas that will impress her family.

How long must one fast?

There are other halachic differences that result from the two reasons quoted above. If the reason to fast is to ensure that the couple remains sober, then they should continue their fast until the wedding ceremony even if it does not take place until after dark. Accordingly, if the ceremony takes place on a winter night, they should logically continue their fast even if this means that it extends into a second halachic day (Shu"t Mahari Bruno #93; Aruch Hashulchan 61:21). On the other hand, if the fast is atonement, then, once they have completed the day they can break the fast. A third opinion holds that when the ceremony is at night, their fast does not begin until sunset that day – since prior to sunset is still the day before their wedding (Aishel Avraham Butchach 573). To the best of my knowledge, this last approach is not followed.

How do we rule?

The Chachmas Adam (129:2) concludes that since the fast is only a custom, one need not be stricter than the requirements of halachah for established fast days and therefore one may end the fast at dark. However, one should be careful not to drink anything intoxicating until sipping the wine at the chupah (Pischei Teshuvah, Even Ha'ezer 61:9). The Aruch Hashulchan disagrees, but I believe accepted practice follows the Chachmas Adam (Shu"t Mahari Bruno #93).

What about the opposite situation -- when the ceremony takes place before nightfall? According to the rationale that the fast is an atonement, some contend that one should fast the entire day even if the ceremony transpired in the afternoon (Bach, Orach Chayim 562 at end; Beis Shmuel 61:6). This means that even after the wedding ceremony is complete, the chosson and kallah continue to fast until nightfall, even through the chupah and the yichud room! However, accepted practice is for the couple to end their fast at the ceremony even when it takes place before nightfall.

Do Sefardim fast?

Most sources citing the custom of fasting on one's wedding day are Ashkenazic. Whether or not Sefardim fast on this day is subject to local custom. The popular Hebrew halachic anthology, Hanisuin Kehilchasam, mentions many Sefardic communities that followed the custom of fasting on the wedding day, at least for the chosson, including the communities of Algeria, Baghdad, Crimea, Salonica and parts of Turkey (pg. 198, note 56). On the other hand, the prevalent custom in Constantinople, Egypt, and Eretz Yisroel was to not fast on the day of the wedding (see Birkei Yosef, Orach Chayim 470:2; Shu"t Yabia Omer 3: Even Haezer: 9). It is interesting to note that some explain that the custom in Egypt was that they did not fast because the weddings were always conducted in the morning. They explain that when the wedding is held late in the day we are concerned that the chosson and kallah may drink something intoxicating, but when the wedding is in the morning there is no such concern (Birkei Yosef, Orach Chayim 470:2). One could thereby argue that when the Sefardim marry in the evening, they should follow Ashkenazic practice and fast.

Nevertheless, the common practice among Sefardim in Eretz Yisrael today is not to fast. Rav Ovadyah Yosef even rules that Sefardim who moved to Eretz Yisrael should not fast on the day of the wedding even if they come from communities where the custom was to fast. Although he respects this custom of the Ashkenazim to fast, he contends that since this is a day of celebration, those who do not have the practice are not permitted to fast. Like Receiving the Torah

What are the other reasons mentioned for the fast?

One early source states that the reason for the fast is that the wedding ceremony commemorates the giving of the Torah at Har Sinai. Indeed, many of our wedding customs, such as the carrying of candles or torches by those accompanying the chosson and kallah, commemorate our receiving the Torah. Continuing this analogy, one early source mentions that just as the Jews fasted prior to receiving the Torah, so too a chosson fasts the day

of his wedding (Tashbeitz [Koton] #465). What I find interesting about this reason, is that I am unaware of any Medrash that mentions the Jews fasting on the day they received the Torah. Obviously, the Tashbeitz was aware of such a Medrash. Perhaps this is why the later halachic authorities do not discuss this opinion or any halachic ramifications that result from it. This is a beautiful reason to observe the fast, although I suspect that Sheryl's family might not appreciate it.

To Avoid Rift

Here is another very meaningful reason mentioned for the fast, although it is largely ignored by the later authorities: The Gemara (Shabbos 130a) states, "No kesubah is signed without an argument." Unfortunately, it is common that differing opinions about wedding arrangements or setting up the newly marrying couple cause friction between the families making the wedding. Since this problem is common, the couple should strive their utmost to avoid any conflict at all, and they should also pray and fast that the wedding should pass with no disputes (Shu"t Mahari Bruno #93). Somehow, Sheryl did not think that her parents would appreciate this reason for her fast and I tend to agree with her.

The King gets Judged Daily

Others explain that the origin for the custom is because the chosson is compared to a king and we are taught by the Talmud Yerushalmi that a king is judged daily (Sanhedrin 2:3). Thus, the chosson fasts because he is being judged on his wedding day (Shu"t Mahari Bruno #93). Although we may not fully understand what this means, it is certainly a reason to do teshuvah and fast.

To Appreciate the Mitzvah

The above-mentioned anthology Hanisuin Kehilchasam mentions yet another reason, which he attributes to the Rokayach. Great tzadikim were in such eager anticipation of performing rare mitzvos, that they could not eat on the day they had an opportunity to perform such a mitzvah. Similarly, the chosson and kallah look forward to performing their mitzvah with such excitement that they cannot even eat!

Do they say Aneinu?

Do the chosson and kallah say Aneinu in their prayers even if they will end their fast before the day ends?

The Rama (562:2) rules that the chosson recites Aneinu in his prayers, even if he is not going to complete the fast, such as when the wedding ceremony takes place during the daytime. In this latter situation, where he will not be completing the fast, many recommend that he omit the three words in Aneinu, BeYom Tzom Taaneiseinu, on this day of our fast, since for him it is not a full day of fasting (Rav Shelomoh Zalman Auerbach).

Accepting the Fast

Usually, someone intending to have a voluntary fast must state at the end of mincha on the day before that he intends to fast the next day. Does the chosson accept the fast during mincha on the day before?

The halachic authorities recommend that the chosson and kallah make this declaration after mincha the day before the wedding, and recommend specifying that one intends to fast only until the time of the ceremony. Nevertheless, even if one did not declare the day to be a fast, and even if one did not mention the stipulation, one may assume that they should fast and they are required to fast only until the ceremony (Mishnah Berurah 562: 12). If the ceremony is before nightfall, the chosson and kallah should daven mincha before the wedding ceremony so that they can recite Aneinu, since once they break their fast, this prayer is inappropriate (Mishnah Berurah 562:12). By the way, if they forgot to say Aneinu, they do not repeat Mincha.

Are there days when they do not fast? Indeed, a chosson and kallah must refrain from fasting on the many days when fasting is prohibited. This includes weddings taking place on Chanukah or Rosh Chodesh. The Magen Avraham (573:1) adds that they should not fast even on minor holidays such as Isru Chag, Tu Bishvat and the Fifteenth of Av. But maybe they will get intoxicated? I understand that they are not allowed to fast—but if the reason for the fast was that they should not become

inebriated, how will this be prevented? To avoid this danger, they must be careful not to drink any intoxicating beverages before the ceremony (Pri Megadim, Mishbetzos Zahav 573:1). Observing this precaution halachah is an actual fulfillment of the custom to fast. If they choose to down a few drinks after that deadline, they may do so on their own cognizance.

What about Lag BeOmer?

Technically speaking there is no halachic problem with fasting on Lag BeOmer or during the month of Nisan, even though the custom is not to. Since halachah permits fasting on these days, the custom is for a chosson and kallah to fast. This also applies during the month of Tishrei or the first part of Sivan, even on days when we do not say Tachanun (Magen Avraham 573:1, 2). There are some who record a practice that chasanim and kallahs not fast on days when we do not say Tachanun (Eliyah Rabbah 573:3, quoting Nachalas Shivah). The Eliyah Rabbah, who records this approach, rallies many proofs from earlier authorities that this is not the halacha, but concludes that one who chooses to be lenient and not fast on these days will not lose by his lenient practice (hameikil lo hifsid).

What about a Second Marriage?

Does someone marrying for a second time fast on his wedding day?

According to the rationale that the fast is out of concern that someone might be intoxicated, there is no difference between a first or second marriage, and one is required to fast. Similarly, according to the reason that this is a day of atonement they should also fast, since the day of a second marriage also atones. This is obvious from the Biblical source that teaches us that this day atones. When Eisav married Basamas/Machalas he was already married to two other women, yet the Torah teaches that the day atoned for him. Thus, we see that even a subsequent marriage atones and someone marrying for second or third time should fast on the day.

What if they are not feeling well?

At this point we can address the second question raised above: Yocheved asks, "I usually do not fast well, and I am concerned how I will feel at my wedding if I fast that day. What do I do?"

We should be aware that on the most minor of the required fasts, Taanis Esther, even someone suffering from a relatively minor ailment is not required to fast. The custom to fast the day of the wedding is certainly more minor than Taanis Esther and therefore if either the chosson or the kallah suffers from a minor ailment or could get weak or dizzy from the fast, they should not fast (Aruch Hashulchan 61:21). Of course, specific questions should be addressed to one's rav.

Conclusion

The Ashkenazic practice of fasting on the day of one's wedding is within the category of custom, minhag, and therefore, as we have seen, includes many leniencies. Indeed, when these reasons apply, there is no reason to fast unnecessarily. Thus, if one is a Sefardi, not feeling well, or marrying on a day when Tachanun is not recited, one has a solid basis not to fast.

However, when none of these reasons apply one must follow the accepted minhag. The Gemara teaches that customs accepted by the Jewish people come under the category of *al titosh toras imecha*, do not forsake the laws of your mother, and that one is obligated to observe them.

May the fasts of our chasanim and kallahs contribute towards the increase of much shalom and kapparah and the creation of many happy marriages in Klal Yisroel.