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6:52 PM subject: [Parshapotpourri] **Parsha Potpourri by Rabbi Oizer Alport - Parshas Shelach**

Parshas Shelach - Vol. 9, Issue 37 Compiled by Oizer Alport
Shelach lecha anashim v'yasuru es Eretz Canaan (13:2) Parshas Shelach revolves around the sin of the spies who were sent by Moshe to scout the land of Israel. They returned with a discouraging and pessimistic report about their findings which discouraged the rest of the Jewish people from wanting to enter the land. Rashi writes that Parshas Shelach is juxtaposed to Parshas Beha'aloscha to hint that the spies should have learned a lesson about the ill effects of negative speech from seeing what happened to Miriam, who was punished at the end of last week's parsha for speaking critically about her brother Moshe.

This comparison is difficult to understand. There are two entire portions in the Torah - Tazria and Metzora - which discuss at length the evils of speaking disparagingly about others and the punishments for doing so. If the spies are to be criticized for not properly learning about the negative effects of gossip and slander, they should be censured for their failure to study Parshas Tazria and Metzora. Since the episode involving Miriam and Moshe is not the primary source in the Torah for the prohibition against speaking lashon hara, why does Rashi specifically invoke it in his criticism of the spies?

Rav Dov Weinberger explains that Miriam made two mistakes. Her first error was to speak negatively about her brother Moshe, but the Rambam writes (Hilchos Tumas Tzara'as 16:10) that she additionally erred in equating the level of Moshe's prophecy to that of other prophets such as herself and Aharon. In other words, even though Miriam did not intend to disparage Moshe, she still made the mistake of not understanding his greatness relative even to her and Aharon and failed to understand that Moshe was not just another ordinary prophet, as Hashem explained in response to her (Bamidbar 12:6-8), "If there shall be prophets among you, in a vision shall I Hashem

make Myself known to him; in a dream shall I speak with him. Not so is my servant Moshe; in My entire house he is the trusted one. Mouth to mouth do I speak to him, in a clear vision and not in riddles. At the image of Hashem does he gaze; why did you not fear to speak against My servant Moshe?"

In this light, Rav Weinberger suggests that we can appreciate that this was the same complaint that Hashem had against the spies. Just as Miriam erred in not appreciating that Moshe was different and mentally equating him to others, so too did the spies make the mistake of viewing the land of Israel as essentially comparable to other lands, when in reality it is unique and in a league of its own. The spies judged and evaluated Eretz Yisroel using traditional measures and assessments instead of appreciating that, just like Moshe, it is extraordinary and incomparable, and this is what Rashi was referring to when he criticized the spies for not learning the lesson of Miriam.

Along these lines, Rav Weinberger adds that he is appalled by the contemporary use of the word Holocaust in reference to anything other than the unprecedented and unparalleled systematic extermination of six million people in an attempt to annihilate an entire nation. The increasingly common use of this term to describe other perceived injustices degrades and insults those who endured the true Holocaust by attempting to equate that which cannot be equated.

Rabbi Frand adds that Rav Meir Shapiro once commented that the different between the Jews in America and the Jews in Europe is that those in America know how to make Kiddush (sanctify), but only those in Europe also know how to make Havdalah (distinctions). American society and media constantly bombard us with moral equivalencies that are completely absurd, failing to recognize that not everything is equal and able to be compared. Just as Moshe cannot be mentioned in the same breath as other prophets, and just as Eretz Yisroel is completely separate from all other lands, so too do we need to understand when concepts and items can be compared, and when they are fundamentally different.

Vayotzi'u dibas ha'aretz asher taru osah el B'nei Yisroel leimor ha'aretz asher avarnu bah lasur osah eretz ocheles yoshveha hee (13:32)

The first chapter of Eichah is written in the form of an acrostic, with each successive verse beginning with the next letter in the Hebrew alphabet. Although chapters 2-4 follow a similar form, there is one notable exception. The verse beginning with the letter "peh" precedes the verse starting with the letter "ayin," reversing their alphabetical order. The Gemora in Sanhedrin (104b) cryptically explains that this is because the spies sinned by preceding their mouths (peh) to their eyes (ayin) and reporting facts which they didn't actually see. How is this to be understood, and what lesson can we take from it?

Rav Moshe Shapiro explains that in any encounter, a person is able to see or find what he is looking for. Even before he fully takes in and evaluates the new situation, he has already made up his mind. Not surprisingly, he proceeds to find evidence to support his conclusion, a phenomenon referred to as a self-fulfilling prophecy. Rav Chatzkel Levenstein explains that the primary sin of the spies was their character trait of "nirganus." This refers to a person who is constantly full of complaints and has nothing positive to say about anything. Because the spies embarked on their journey already decided that they didn't want to live in Israel, they interpreted everything they saw through negative lenses and returned with a report shaped by their biases.

The importance of how we view a situation and interpret events is illustrated by the following story. In the early 1950s, a large shoe company with stores across North America wanted to increase sales by expanding to new markets. They sent two salesmen to Africa to explore the prospects of opening branches throughout the large and untapped continent.

Less than a week had passed when the first agent sent back a despondent telegram: "I'm coming home at once. No money can be made here. Nobody even wears shoes!" After receiving the bad news, the management felt that they had no choice but to explore other potential options for expanding their

business. Just as they were preparing to send agents to scout out another distant region, they received an important lesson in the power of perspective. More than a month after the first salesman had quickly despaired, the firm received an urgent cable from the second salesman: "Ship 15,000 shoes immediately to fill my five stores. Africa is a land filled with great opportunity - nobody has shoes, and everybody needs a pair!"

The Jewish people were punished (14:34) with an additional year of wandering in the wilderness for each day of the spies' journey. Why were they punished for the entire trip and not just for the lone day on which the spies returned and spoke ill of the land of Israel? Rav Chaim Shmuelevitz explains that the Torah is teaching that they sinned not just upon their return but each day of their expedition when they skewed everything that they experienced.

The Arizal teaches that each month is mystically associated with an idea that we are supposed to rectify during that month. He writes that our mission in the month of Tammuz is to rectify the concept of re'iyah - how we view things. Not coincidentally, Parshas Shelach is read just before this month begins, and it revolves around the tragic events which caused the mourning period which begins in Tammuz. The spies sinned by seeking out the bad in every encounter. Let us learn from their mistakes and adopt a perspective of seeking out the good in every life situation, which will in turn become a self-fulfilling prophecy.

from: Rabbi Yissocher Frand <ryfrand@torah.org> reply-to: do-not-reply@torah.org to: ravfrand@torah.org date: Thu, Jun 12, 2014 at 9:05 PM subject: **Rabbi Frand on Parshas Shlach**

The Price Of Seeking and Receiving Honor

One of the great difficulties of Parshas Sh'lach is how to understand the sin of the Spies. One must bear in mind that the individuals about whom we are speaking were not a bunch of rabble rousers. They were all – certainly at the time that they were sent – distinguished and righteous individuals. Chazal say that the connotation of the word "Anashim" in the pasuk "...They were all 'Anashim'; heads of the Children of Israel were they." [Bamidbar 13:3] indicates that they were distinguished and honorable men.

The Ramban points out that the sequence of the names of the Spies as presented in Chumash follows neither their strict chronological sequence based on tribe nor their strict geographic sequence based on travel formation. Rather, they are listed in descending sequence of importance. The most distinguished individual among them was Shamua ben Zakur, who is mentioned first. Yehoshua bin Nun, who later became the next leader of the Jewish people, was only number 5 on the list, indicating that the people ahead of him were on an even higher spiritual level than he was!

The question then becomes, what happened to them? Why did they come back with such a negative report? We know from Chazal that it was not just a "negative" report. It was a report that bordered on heresy. The Rabbis interpret the statement "ki chazak hu mimenu" ["they are stronger than us"] to have the nuance that "they are stronger than Him". They doubted the ability of the Almighty to successfully take them into Eretz Yisrael. After all they witnessed, this statement certainly borders on heresy if not being heresy itself!

What happened to the Spies? The Zohar addresses this problem and states that the motivating factor that led the Spies to this debacle was a matter of 'Kavod' [honor seeking]. At this point in time, these people all occupied positions of prominence in the Wilderness. They were afraid that when the Jewish people came into the Land of Israel, there would be a new administration, a new world order, and as a result, they would lose their positions of prominence.

Since prestige and honor plays such an important role in people's lives, this skewed their entire view of the situation. They lost their objectivity. They had their own agenda. Their agenda was to NOT go into Eretz Yisrael and not to lose the prestige and importance that they had maintained in the

society of the Wilderness. This agenda warped and perverted their whole view of Eretz Yisrael and of the Almighty's ability, to the extent that they said things that bordered on heresy itself.

We find the same idea in the eleventh chapter of Mesilas Yesharim. The Ramcha"l gives examples how a person's penchant and desire for honor can literally destroy his life. When the Mishna says that "Jealousy, Lust, and Honor Seeking drive a person out of this world" [Avot 4:21], it is not hyperbole. It is not an overstatement. It is the unadulterated truth.

It is part of the human condition that the older we get, the more important 'Kavod' becomes to us. That is why when we often see people acting in a manner that seems appalling to us (How can mature people act like that? How can adults act like that?), it is because their 'kavod' has been affected. People can go on vendettas against others who they perceive have infringed on their honor. Unfortunately, these are every day occurrences that I am sure we have all witnessed. As we do get older, we must become more cognizant of this fact, more aware of this phenomenon, and more on guard against letting ourselves fall victim to this tendency.

I recently read an incredible story involving Rav Yonosan Eybeschutz (1690-1764). Rav Yonosan Eybeschutz was the Rav in a town in Europe called Altuna. Rav Eybeschutz was travelling to Altuna to take over the position in time for Yom Kippur, but was delayed on the road. He decided he would need to spend Yom Kippur in a small town not far from Altuna.

Rav Yonosan Eybeschutz came into shul in the small town on Erev Yom Kippur to daven Mincha. He found a place to daven and was standing next to an old Jew. He could overhear the old Jew pouring out his heart over each of the "Al Chets" that are recited in the Erev Mincha Yom Kippur davening. The Jew would recite each line in German, which was the spoken language of the town and would cry bitterly with each utterance. When the Jew reached the final paragraph containing the words "My G-d, before I was created I was worthless and (even) now that I have been created it is as if I was never created; I am (like) dust in my life, all the more so after my death" the person broke out in such uncontrollable tears.

When Rav Yonosan Eybeschutz finished Mincha, the Gabbai came up to him and asked him where he would like to sit during the Yom Kippur day services. Rav Eybeschutz responded that he would like to sit next to the Jew who he had been sitting next to during Mincha. His request was granted.

During Kol Nidre, this Jew was crying throughout. During Ma'ariv, the Jew again recited the Al Chets in German and cried at every recitation of his sins. He broke down at the paragraph "My G-d, before I was created..." even more so than by Mincha. The same thing happened the next morning by Shachris. Rav Yonosan Eybeschutz, who himself was a spiritual giant, was in awe of this Jew.

The time came for Krias HaTorah and the Aliyos were distributed. By the fifth Aliyah, the Gabbai approached this Jew and asked him "How do you call yourself when you are called up to the Torah?" The Jew said to the Gabbai "Chamishi? So and so you gave Shlishi and so and so you gave Revii, but me you only are giving Chamishi? What do you know? How dare you! I don't want your Chamishi!"

By Mussaf, the Jew was back to his protestation of worthlessness in his prayers of "My G-d, before I was created I was worthless, etc." Betw een Mussaf and Mincha, there was a break. Rav Yonosan Eybeschutz could not hold himself back. He approached the gentlemen and asked the obvious question. "You say you are worthless in your life, certainly so after death. So how could you make the comments you made to the Gabbai? You claim you are like the dust of the earth and then you curse out the Gabbai for offering you Chamishi? How could that be? What kind of hypocrite are you? What kind of faker are you?"

The Jew turned to Rav Yonosan Eybeschutz and said, "I can't understand your problem. When I say 'I am dust in my life, certainly in death' I am speaking to the Master of the World. Compared to the Master of the World, I am like dust. But compared to that Gabbai, that's another matter! I am a great person compared to this Gabbai."

Rav Yonosan Eybeschütz, in his classic fashion, said that he then understood the interpretation of a passage in the Talmud "Greater is that which is taught by Moshe Rabbeinu than that which is taught by Avraham Avinu. Avraham Avinu said 'We are dust and ashes' [Bereshis 18:27] and Moshe said 'What are we?' [Shmos 16:7]" Rav Yonosan Eybeschütz explained why what Moshe said was greater. When Avraham said 'We are dust and ashes,' he was talking to the Master of the Universe but when Moshe said 'What are we?' he was talking to the rest of the Jewish people. This is in fact tremendous humility!

This is a reality of human nature. People have done much worse things just because they 'only' got Chamishi! They have done terrible things because the Rav forget to mention "their great grandmother who is visiting from New Mexico" or other such iniquities. People can become vicious over such trivialities.

Such is the Yetzer HaRah of Honor Seeking ('Kavod'). It did in the Spies. It can do in any of us. We need to be on guard for this. We need to remember that which many ethical works teach: "For every bit of honor we get in this world, that much reward is deducted from our account in the World To Come." Kavod comes at a terrible price. It is not free. The more honor we receive in this world, the less reward we receive in Olam HaBah.

This leads me to one final story.

The Gerer Rebbe and the Chofetz Chaim, both of blessed and righteous memory, once travelled together on a train in Europe. At every stop along the way, throngs of people gathered at the railroad station to greet the great Tzadikim. The Gerer Rebbe would go out at each stop to greet the crowds and to dispense 'blessings'. When the Gerer Rebbe came back to his seat after the first train stop, the Chofetz Chaim told him, "You know that for kavod in this world, they deduct from your account in the Next World. So you go out at each stop, but you are going to have to pay for it!" The Gerer Rebbe responded, "To do a favor for another Jew, one sometimes must give up a portion of his world to come." In other words, to give chizuk [spiritual encouragement] to another Jew, it is worthwhile to even sacrifice a person's own share in the world to come. "I know I will need to pay for it, but I want to honor these Jews who came to see me and I want to strengthen them."

At the next station stop, both the Chofetz Chaim and the Gerer Rebbe went out to greet the assembled people. The Gerer Rebbe had convinced the Chofetz Chaim that it was worth it to sacrifice one's own Olam HaBah to do a favor for a fellow Jew.

This week's write-up is adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yisrocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Torah CDs on the weekly Torah portion.

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Confidence

Britain's Former Chief Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks

It was perhaps the single greatest collective failure of leadership in the Torah. Ten of the spies whom Moses had sent to spy out the land came back with a report calculated to demoralize the nation.

"We came to the land to which you sent us. It flows with milk and honey, and this is its fruit. However, the people who dwell in the land are strong, and the cities are fortified and very large ... We are not able to go up against the people, for they are stronger than we are ... The land, through which we have gone to spy it out, is a land that devours its inhabitants, and all the

people that we saw in it are of great height ... We seemed to ourselves like grasshoppers, and so we seemed to them." (Num. 13: 27-33)

This was nonsense, and they should have known it. They had left Egypt, the greatest empire of the ancient world, after a series of plagues that brought that great country to its knees. They had crossed the seemingly impenetrable barrier of the Red Sea. They had fought and defeated the Amalekites, a ferocious warrior nation. They had even sung, along with their fellow Israelites, a song at the Sea that contained the words:

The peoples have heard; they tremble; pangs have seized the inhabitants of Philistia. Now are the chiefs of Edom dismayed; trembling seizes the leaders of Moab; all the inhabitants of Canaan have melted away. (Ex. 15: 14-15)

They should have known that the people of the land were afraid of them, not the other way round. And so it was, as Rahab told the spies sent by Joshua forty years later:

I know that the Lord has given you the land, and that the fear of you has fallen upon us, and that all the inhabitants of the land melt away before you. For we have heard how the Lord dried up the water of the Red Sea before you when you came out of Egypt, and what you did to the two kings of the Amorites who were beyond the Jordan, to Sihon and Og, whom you devoted to destruction. And as soon as we heard it, our hearts melted, and there was no spirit left in any man because of you, for the Lord your God, he is God in the heavens above and on the earth beneath. (Joshua 2: 9-11)

Only Joshua and Caleb among the twelve showed leadership. They told the people that the conquest of the land was eminently achievable because God was with them. The people did not listen. But the two leaders received their reward. They alone of their generation lived to enter the land. More than that: their defiant statement of faith and their refusal to be afraid shines as brightly now as it did thirty-three centuries ago. They are eternal heroes of faith.

One of the fundamental tasks of any leader from president to parent is to give people a sense of confidence: in themselves, in the group of which they are a part, and in the mission itself. A leader must have faith in the people he or she leads, and inspire that faith in them. As Rosabeth Moss Kanter of the Harvard Business School writes in her book *Confidence*, "Leadership is not about the leader, it is about how he or she builds the confidence of everyone else." [1] Confidence, by the way, is Latin for "having faith together."

The truth is that in no small measure a law of self-fulfilling prophecy applies in the human arena. Those who say, "We cannot do it" are probably right, as are those who say, "We can." If you lack confidence you will lose. If you have it – solid, justified confidence based on preparation and past performance – you will win. Not always, but often enough to triumph over setbacks and failures. That, as mentioned in a previous Covenant and Conversation, is what the story of Moses' hands is about, during the battle against the Amalekites. When the Israelites look up, they win. When they look down they start to lose.

That is why the negative definition of Jewish identity that has so often prevailed in modern times (Jews are the people who are hated, Israel is the nation that is isolated, to be Jewish is to refuse to grant Hitler a posthumous victory) is so misconceived, and why one-in-two Jews who have been brought up on this doctrine choose to marry out and discontinue the Jewish journey. Harvard economic historian David Landes in his *The Wealth and Poverty of Nations* explores the question of why some countries fail to grow economically while others succeed spectacularly. After more than 500 pages of close analysis, he reaches this conclusion:

In this world, the optimists have it, not because they are always right, but because they are positive. Even when wrong, they are positive, and that is the way of achievement, correction, improvement, and success. Educated, eyes-open optimism pays; pessimism can only offer the empty consolation of being right. [2]

I prefer the word "hope" to "optimism." Optimism is the belief that things will get better; hope is the belief that together we can make things better. No

Jew, knowing Jewish history, can be an optimist, but no Jew worthy of the name abandons hope. The most pessimistic of the prophets, from Amos to Jeremiah, were still voices of hope. By their defeatism, the spies failed as leaders and as Jews. To be a Jew is to be an agent of hope.

The most remarkable by far of all the commentators on the episode of the spies was the Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson. He raised the obvious question. The Torah emphasizes that the spies were all leaders, princes, heads of tribes. They knew that God was with them, and that with His help there was nothing they could not do. They knew that God would not have promised them a land they could not conquer. Why then did they come back with a negative report?

His answer turns the conventional understanding of the spies upside down. They were, he said, not afraid of defeat. They were afraid of victory. What they said to the people was one thing, but what led them to say it was another entirely.

What was their situation now, in the wilderness? They lived in close and continuous proximity to God. They drank water from a rock. They ate manna from heaven. They were surrounded by the Clouds of Glory. Miracles accompanied them along the way.

What would be their situation in the land? They would have to fight wars, plough the land, plant seed, gather harvests, create and sustain an army, an economy and a welfare system. They would have to do what every other nation does: live in the real world of empirical space. What then would happen to their relationship with God? Yes, He would still be present in the rain that made crops grow, in the blessings of field and town, and in the Temple in Jerusalem that they would visit three times a year, but not visibly, intimately, miraculously, as He was in the desert. This is what the spies feared: not failure but success.

This, said the Rebbe, was a noble sin but still a sin. God wants us to live in the real world of nations, economies and armies. God wants us, as he put it, to create “a dwelling place in the lower world.” He wants us to bring the Shekhinah, the Divine presence, into everyday life. It is easy to find God in total seclusion and escape from responsibility. It is hard to find God in the office, in business, in farms and fields and factories and finance. But it is that hard challenge to which we are summoned: to create a space for God in the midst of this physical world that He created and seven times pronounced good. That is what ten of the spies failed to understand, and it was a spiritual failure that condemned an entire generation to forty years of futile wandering.

The Rebbe’s words ring true today even more loudly than they did when he first spoke them. They are a profound statement of the Jewish task. They are also a fine exposition of a concept that entered psychology only relatively recently – fear of success.[3] We are all familiar with the idea of fear of failure. It is what keeps many of us from taking risks, preferring instead to stay within our comfort zone.

No less real, though, is fear of success. We want to succeed: so we tell ourselves and others. But often unconsciously we fear what success may bring: new responsibilities, expectations on the part of others that we may find hard to fulfil, and so on. So we fail to become what we might have become had someone given us faith in ourselves.

The antidote to fear, both of failure and success, lies in the passage with which the parsha ends: the command of tzitzit (Num. 15: 38-41). We are commanded to place fringes on our garments, with among them a thread of blue. Blue is the colour of the sky and of heaven. Blue is the colour we see when we look up (at least in Israel; in Britain, more often than not we see clouds). When we learn to look up, we overcome our fears. Leaders give people confidence by teaching them to look up. We are not grasshoppers unless we think we are.

[1] Rosabeth Moss Kanter, *Confidence*, Random House, 2005, 325.

[2] David Landes, *The Wealth and Poverty of Nations*, London, Little, Brown, 1998, 524.

[3] Sometimes called the “Jonah complex” after the prophet. See Abraham Maslow, *The farther reaches of human nature*, Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1977, 35-40.

[http://techeiles.org/viewer.php?filename=library/English/Twerski.%20Rabbi%20Chaim%20E.%20-%20Identifying%20the%20Chilazon%20\(Volume%2034,%20RJ%20Journal%20of%20Halacha%20and%20Contemporary%20Society\)%20www.techeiles.org%20.pdf](http://techeiles.org/viewer.php?filename=library/English/Twerski.%20Rabbi%20Chaim%20E.%20-%20Identifying%20the%20Chilazon%20(Volume%2034,%20RJ%20Journal%20of%20Halacha%20and%20Contemporary%20Society)%20www.techeiles.org%20.pdf)

Identifying the Chilazon1 THE JOURNAL OF HALACHA Rabbi Chaim E. Twerski

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The Disappearance of Techelet

Techelet, an integral part of the mitzvah of tzitzit, was lost to us many centuries ago. The exact time and circumstances of this loss is subject to historical speculation, but it is known that it was available during the time of the Amoraim (which closed toward the end of the fifth century of the common era) and was no longer available at the middle of the Gaonic period (the eighth century)2.

The best estimate is that the loss of the technology of the techelet dyeing process and/or the identity of the chilazon (the specific species needed to make techelet) is that it was a consequence of the Arab conquest of 639 CE,3 or perhaps the result of the Christian massacres of 628 CE.4

The chilazon was never available in Bavel (Babylonia), the center of Jewish population during this era, and until that time techelet was imported from Eretz Yisroel5. Thus, with the destruction of the yishuv in Eretz Yisroel, came the ultimate disappearance of techelet.

Rav Leiner’s Attempt of Rediscovery

In 1887 HaGaon HaRav Gershon Henoch Leiner (the Radziner Rebbe) undertook the monumental task of rediscovering the lost chilazon.6 After proving from the talmudic texts that there is no reason to assume that the chilazon became either extinct or irretrievably lost,7 he postulated that the chilazon is very likely extant in the waters of the Mediterranean Sea, where it was known to exist at one time. With this theory in hand, he undertook a journey to Italy to visit an aquarium where he might study the various species of fish in order to determine, based on the descriptions culled from talmudic literature, the identity of the chilazon. Despite his great efforts, his formidable erudition, and three treatises that he wrote to support his contention, the Radziner Rebbe’s conclusion, that the chilazon is the species *Sepia officinalis* (cuttlefish), was met with a great deal of skepticism in his time and years later was conclusively refuted by Rav Yitzchok Isaac Halevi Herzog.8 However, his efforts were not all in vain, for in addition to writing the most authoritative work on techelet with regard to many facets of this mitzvah, he laid the groundwork for a future generation to seek the chilazon.

Recent Attempts at Rediscovery

In recent years, a group of religious scientists who have since formed an association called Amutat Ptil Techelet, took up the task of finding the elusive chilazon. They claim that this time the efforts have been met with success.

At the outset, any such claim should be greeted with a healthy dose of skepticism, since even the esteemed Rav Leiner was in error in this very matter and the skepticism that greeted his claim was proven to be quite justified. If so, we must suspect that lesser qualified persons would be at least as likely to come to erroneous conclusions.

However, this should not mean that the claim of the modern discovery should be ignored. Rather, it needs to be examined carefully, and if, after carefully weighing the evidence, it turns out that the claim lacks foundation, it should be rejected. On the other hand, if the evidence in favor of positive identification is overwhelming, then the return of techelet should be accepted by the majority of shomrei mitzvot, for this will afford chovevei mitzvot an opportunity that has not been available for nearly 1400 years. It should thus

be regarded with great excitement and enthusiasm, as a precious and dear element of the mitzvah of tzitzit may well have been retrieved.

The Claim

The Ptil Tekhelet Institute claims that a species of snail called by its official Latin name, *Murex trunculus*,⁹ is the chilazon. The evidence of this come from a variety of disciplines including history, chemistry, and archeology, intermixed with textual proofs from the Talmud and Midrash. An outline of the evidence follows:

1) The Talmud,¹⁰ regarding tzayadei chilazon states the following: ..these are the fishers of chilazon from Haifa to Sidon. From this statement we can derive that the natural habitat of chilazon was off the shores of what is today northern Israel and southern Lebanon, and what was, in ancient times, Phoenicia. 2) It is documented that the center of the dye industry in the ancient world was Phoenicia. 11 The most famous of the dyes was Tyrian Purple, an extremely expensive dye that was in great demand by the nobility and the extremely wealthy, as it was unique in its beauty and color-fastness. 3) If one opens a *Murex trunculus* snail and squeezes the hypobranchial gland one will obtain a clear mucus.¹² This mucus, if taken out of the shell and exposed to the air, will change from its clear color to yellow, then to green, then to blue and finally to purple.¹³ 4) In the late 19th and early 20th century, there were archeological findings of enormous numbers of broken *Murex* shells discovered near the cities of Sidon and Tyre.¹⁴ These were buried in large pits and each broken opposite the hypobranchial gland—a manner consistent with the method needed to extract the dye material found naturally in these snails (and inconsistent with the method employed for its use as a food). The pit near Tyre contained broken shells of *Murex brandaris* and *Thais haemastoma* (a third type of *Murex* which yields a reddish dye) shells while the pit near Sidon had *Murex trunculus* shells exclusively. Off the coast of Lebanon and Northern Israel these same species can be found even today.

Now, from these facts alone, we have no identification whatsoever regarding the chilazon. It stands to reason, of course, that these snails must have been used in the dye industry of ancient Phoenicia, since such vast amounts of snail shells broken in a peculiar manner buried in pits can only mean that these snails were used in the dye industry. But the color that results from these snails is purple, not blue. Purple is the color of argaman, an important dye in halacha, as this was needed for the bigdei k'hunah and other sacred objects. Techelet is assumed by tradition and verified through a host of other sources, to be a blue dye, and not purple. The last piece of the puzzle came to light about 15 years ago when it was discovered that if the dye obtained from *Murex trunculus* is exposed to direct sunlight during the dyeing process, the resultant dye changes from purple to blue.¹⁵ Chemically, after exposure to oxygen the dye of the *Murex trunculus* is dibromoindigo, with a certain amount of indigo intermixed. In the process of making the dye substance water soluble, the dye must be reduced (deoxidized). If, in the reduced state, it is exposed to sunlight, the sun's ultraviolet rays have the power to unbind the bromide atoms from the indigo molecule, leaving the remaining chemical dye, indigo. This indigo is chemically identical to plant-derived indigo, and the dye is therefore the identical color. Plant-derived indigo has the Hebrew name k'la ilan.¹⁶ K'la ilan is the false techelet mentioned several times in the Talmud, and which is obviously identical in color to techelet.

With this, we now have sufficient grounds to identify *Murex trunculus* as a very likely candidate for chilazon. 1) It is known that this species was found near Sidon. 2) The remains of a dye factory near Sidon had thousands of *Murex trunculus* shells. 3) This shell produces a dye that can be converted to a blue indigo dye without much difficulty; and 4) This dye is chemically the same as k'la ilan, which the Talmud states is the same color as techelet.¹⁷

We need also realize that before the 19th century, when Henry Perkins opened the field of synthetic coal-tar dyes, there were very few natural dyes available.¹⁸

That chilazon was a shell fish (mollusk) is shown by inferences in the Talmud and Midrash. For one, the Midrash says that the shell (nartik) of the chilazon grows with it.¹⁹ Second, the Talmud²⁰ says that one who cracks open (ha'potzeiah) a chilazon violates the Shabbat. The word potzeiah from the word petza, means to strike with force. When applied to opening a chilazon, this word implies cracking something open, as in p'tziat egozim (cracking open nuts). If an animal is cracked open, it must have a hard shell to crack, otherwise the term to "cut" (lachtoch) or merely to "open" (liftoach) would be employed.

The Talmud also says that "the treasures buried in the sand" (Deuteronomy 33:19) is a reference to chilazon.²¹ Snails do burrow into the sands of the shallow waters.

Further support that chilazon is a snail (or conch) is that in some Middle Eastern languages, (Farsi and Assyrian²²), the word for snail or conch is chilazon.²³ Middle Eastern languages, as Latin languages, often share nouns in common.

A further linguistic proof comes from a statement by the Raaviya²⁴, who quotes a Yerushalmi identifying techelet with the Greek word properin. Properin is the Greek word for *Murex*.

Chilazon is known to be an uncommon species. This is true of *Murex trunculus* and *Murex brandaris*, for these are found only in some areas off the Mediterranean coast²⁵ and are difficult to obtain in the large quantities needed for dyeing.²⁶

Further, the Talmud tells us that the dye needs to be extracted while the snail is yet alive, or soon after.²⁷ This is in total agreement with the nature of the mucus of the *Murex trunculus* and *Murex brandaris*, since in order for the color changing processes to develop, a specific enzyme, purporase, must be present. This enzyme deteriorates soon after the death of the *Murex* and if the exposure to the air does not occur within a few hours, the mucus will not develop into dibromoindigo.²⁸

Putting this all together, when looking for chilazon, we are seeking a mollusk, or more specifically a snail, that was found off the coast of ancient Phoenicia, that was used in the dye industry, that is difficult to obtain, and that can produce a blue dye that is identical in color to indigo and which must be squeezed from the snail while yet alive or immediately after the death of the snail. All these match *Murex* and no other known mollusks.

But, one may argue, even granting all this, we still do not have positive identification for chilazon. One might suggest that the true chilazon is a yet-undiscovered mollusk and that *Murex*, although it can produce a blue indigo dye, is possul for techelet nonetheless, since this is the wrong mollusk. After all, it is possible (even if highly improbable) that two different mollusks have the same chemical in the mucus and share all the other characteristics stated above.²⁹

Rav Herzog, in his thesis, argues quite forcefully that this is a fallacious argument, for the following reason:³⁰ Surely, the chachmei ha'mishna were well aware of the dyes produced just north of them in Phoenicia. Now, if the dye produced by the *Murex* is indeed not valid, then, just as the Mishna admonished against the use of k'la ilan, the Mishna would have admonished to avoid the use of the "possul" mollusk and would have described the differences between the two species³¹ (as the Talmud took the trouble to identify the differences between the arava and the zafzafa).³² Needless to say, there is no such Mishna or Braitha that does so. The absence of such a dictum is a strong indication that there was indeed only one known mollusk that was used for the blue dye and if so, this was *Murex*.

Rejection of Sepia as Chilazon

As mentioned earlier, the Radziner Rebbe, Rav Gershon Henoch Leiner, identified the chilazon as the common cuttlefish, *Sepia officinalis*. He amassed impressive evidence to prove this, and in fact, many were convinced by the weight of his evidence and the strength of his conviction.³³

Rav Yitchok Herzog, who studied Rav Leiner's sefer with great interest, subjected his argument to rigorous analysis. He obtained some samples of the Radziner techelet and sent them to three different laboratories in three

different countries, for chemical analysis. The results astonished him. It turned out that all three laboratories came to the same conclusion — the dye claimed to be techelet was in fact a well-known synthetic dye known to the world as “Prussian Blue”, first synthesized in 1704. 34 He then sent a letter to the Radziner’s son (Rav Gershon Henoch had passed away in 1891) asking for the exact process by which the techelet was made. He received a reply from one of the manufacturers as to the exact method. Rav Herzog’s further investigation into the process led him to understand that the sepia ink had little to do with the final product, and that it was the chemicals added to the mixture that were, in fact, the basis for the resultant dye. The sepia ink is not a necessary ingredient for the dye produced by this process. Any organic compound will do, and in fact the original Prussian Blue was manufactured using ox blood as one of the ingredients.

Rav Herzog, recognizing the greatness and integrity of the Radziner Rebbe, suggested that Rav Leiner must have enlisted the help of a chemist in order to find the method to change the black ink to blue. The chemist did his best by introducing the chemicals needed to synthesize Prussian Blue.³⁵ Rav Leiner assumed that since the added chemicals had no intrinsic color (they were either clear or white) that the blue color is inherent in the black ink. The chemicals added only removed the impurities from the sepia ink and what was left behind was a pigment extracted from the sepia itself. He was therefore convinced that the Prussian Blue dye that emerged from the squid ink is the techelet that he sought for so long.

It is obvious, however, that the secretion of the chilazon that makes techelet must be the basic dye itself, not an inconsequential ingredient that can be supplied by any organic source.

Although this in itself is more than enough to discredit the Radziner Rebbe’s theory, there are quite a number of other discrepancies that make this identification highly questionable. For one, cuttlefish are quite common and were, in fact, a source of common ink at one time.³⁶ The Talmud indicates that techelet was very expensive, so much so that even the few threads for tzitzit amounted to an expense.³⁷ This does not square with cuttlefish ink.

Second, the Talmud says that “the treasures buried in the sands” refers to the chilazon.³⁸ Cuttlefish cannot exist in sand.

Third, the cuttlefish does not have an external shell³⁹, and it appears from the Talmud that the chilazon has a hard shell which needs to be cracked in order to obtain the dye.

Last, the techelet is known to be a very permanent dye, while the Prussian Blue will wash out with soap. (The Radziner Rebbe addresses these issues, of course, but gives answers that are quite forced.)

Rav Herzog’s Thesis

As we noted earlier, Rav Herzog’s doctoral thesis was on the subject of techelet. After refuting the claim of the Radziner Rebbe, he investigated other possibilities and set forth as a final point, his own hypothesis. In his thesis he came close to suggesting that *Murex trunculus* was indeed the chilazon. However, due to four difficulties in this identification, he was forced to reject *Murex trunculus*. The greatest of the objections is that the dye of *trunculus* is purple, not blue. The second objection is that the dye is not especially permanent. The third objection is based on a statement of the Talmud that “the body of the chilazon is like the sea.”⁴⁰ Rav Herzog understood this to mean that the color of the chilazon is like the color of the sea (blue). *Murex trunculus* shells are not blue but rather a light brown color. The final objection is that it does not appear “once in seventy years” as the Talmud says is the nature of chilazon.⁴¹

The first two objections have, with new knowledge, been adequately answered. As noted earlier, the *trunculus* dye is indeed purple, but if the dye is subjected to sunlight it will turn blue in the dyeing process. The second objection, that it is not especially fast, is simply not so. Rav Herzog was ill informed as to the fastness of the dye by someone who did not study the dye sufficiently.⁴² In fact, if properly prepared with the correct reduction agents, (chemicals used to treat wool to absorb the dye) the dye is extraordinarily

fast. In a recent test, a thread of techelet was bathed for three days in strong bleach solution without the slightest effect.⁴³ The third objection has been answered by viewing the snail in habitat. The snail in the water will take on a blue-green color due to the sea—fouling organisms. The snail that Rav Herzog had in hand was evidently cleaned of its fouling and therefore did not have the appearance of the sea.

The last of the objections remains, for we do not know of any comet-like appearance of *Murex trunculus* or *Murex brandaris*. However, several suggestions have been made to explain what the Talmud might have meant by this. In any case, the Rambam, in identifying techelet did not mention this as one of the identifying features of the chilazon, and the Radziner Rebbe, in identifying sepia, gave an interpretation that would fit the *Murex* equally well.

It is clear that one did not need to wait seventy years to get the chilazon, for an industry existed upon its basis, and it is obvious that no industry can exist where the supplies become available only once in seventy years. Rather, it seems that the Talmud is saying that only rarely chilazon come up ashore and become available in abundance.

Some speculative answers as to why this may be include, perhaps this could be due to reproductive patterns that we are not yet aware of, or perhaps the Talmud was referring to a rare storm or other such rare occurrence that would cause the chilazon to come ashore in large numbers.

Rav Herzog concluded his thesis without an identification of the chilazon, but left open a suggestion that it might be a snail called *janthina*, which has a violet colored shell. He suggested that perhaps the mucus of this snail may have the properties needed to create a blue dye. In addition to the blue color of the shell, one other feature is striking with regard to the *janthina*. This species often live in large groups that are attached to one another. In rare occasions, they are known to wash ashore by the millions. This could easily be what the Gemara means by the description of “once in seventy years”, meaning, as we would say, “once in a lifetime”. Rav Herzog noted that the Talmud does not state, when giving the reason for the enormous expense of techelet, that the amount of snails needed is immense,⁴⁴ but that the occurrence of the species is rare.

Nonetheless, Dr. Sterman writes that modern research has shown that *janthina* could not have been the chilazon, for, among other reasons, although it does secrete a blue liquid, it does not produce a dye that can be used to color cloth, for this fluid turns brown after a few minutes and, in addition, is water soluble. Chemists have not found a way to use the secretion as a viable fabric dye.⁴⁵ Moreover, this species lives by floating on the water, and will drown underwater. It cannot, therefore, live in the sand, and the scriptural description of *sefunei t’ munei chol* cannot describe the *janthina*.

The Color of Techelet

While the color of techelet is thought to be blue by virtually all, one of the modern scholars who has done pioneering work in this field, Dr. I. Zeiderman, (in an article published in *Techumin* volume 9) has suggested that it is not so. In that same article, he marshals much evidence to prove that *Murex trunculus* is indeed the chilazon, but argues that that the color of techelet is not blue but rather purple with a bluish shade (*segol hanota l’kchol*).

To this, he presents the following argument:

The Talmud asks how one can distinguish between *k’la ilan* and techelet.⁴⁶ The Gemara then gives a method of chemical testing. The threads are soaked in a series of chemicals. If the color does not fade, then it is techelet. If it does, then it should be subjected to another series of chemicals. If the color becomes bright again, it is techelet. If it remains faded, it is *k’la ilan*.

Now, if the dye obtained from *trunculus* is indeed indigo, then it would seem that it would be impossible for there to be any difference at all between the two. Any chemical that will fade one will fade the other, and similarly. Equally, any chemical that will not fade one will not fade the other.

However, if the color of techelet is purple, then we can understand that the artificial techelet is made from a combination of the indigo dye with a red dye. It is the red dye that will be affected by the chemicals stated in the gemorra, and that is why the pure techelet will stay fast while the ersatz techelet will fade.

R. Yehudah Rok of Yeshivat Har Etzion, in disagreement with Dr. Zeiderman, brings much evidence that the color of techelet is indeed a pure blue. Among his proofs is the fact that Rambam states that the color of techelet is the color of the sky, and that the Gemara says the color is like that of the sea. Neither the sky nor the sea are purple or any shade of purple.⁴⁷ Further proof may be adduced from the fact that it has been translated as “blue wool” by tradition, a point raised by Rabbi Leiner in his work against those who have claimed in his time that techelet was green or black. The Greek translations, made yet when techelet was extant, also translate techelet as “iakinthos”, which, when transliterated into modern language is “hyacinth” which is known to be a blue colored flower.⁴⁸

R' Yehuda Rok, acknowledging that Dr. Zeiderman does have a point, contends, correctly, I believe, that the direct evidence in favor of blue techelet far outweighs the indirect evidence he advances to identify techelet as purple.

Possible answers to solve the riddle of the chemical testing cited by the gemorra may lay in variant methods used for dyeing with indigo rather than in the dye itself.⁴⁹ It is also possible that although the dye chemical of both the Murex trunculus extract and the indigo plant are identical, nonetheless, the impurities that are inherent in both the animal and vegetable materials may have some effect upon the take of the dye into the fabric.

Other Objections

One of the major points raised by Rav Leiner in support of his theory is that the Rambam states⁵⁰ that the color of the secretion of the chilazon is black like ink.⁵¹ This identifies quite well with sepia and not at all with Murex trunculus. On the other hand, however, Rashi and Tosafot⁵² both seem to state that the color of the chilazon extract was blue, not black,⁵³ a point conceded by Rav Leiner in his sefer, Eyn Hatechelet.⁵⁴

Another objection can be deduced from a notable statement of Rabbenu Bachya with regard to why silk was not used in the construction of the mishkan.⁵⁵ He answers that silk, since it is derived from a worm, which is an impure species, would not be fitting for the mishkan. He then asks that if so, why is tola'at shani used to make the red wool? He answers that the color does not come from the worm itself, but from a shell in which the worm is contained. Evidently, Rabbenu Bachya would have to assume that the chilazon is also a type of a kosher species, for otherwise how could it be valid for the use of dyeing the priestly vestments and the mishkan itself?⁵⁶ However, Rashi says explicitly that the chilazon is a type of tola'at (worm).⁵⁷ It does not seem possible to reconcile Rashi's opinion with that of Rabbenu Bachya. In matters of fact, such as whether or not chilazon is a kosher species, both cannot be correct.

Another objection that can be raised is that the Talmud states that “the body of the chilazon is like the sea and its creation is like a fish.”⁵⁸ How does this statement square with Murex trunculus?

The first half of that statement has been discussed earlier, that the color of the shell, in the water, is indeed like the color of the sea. The second part of the statement was taken by Rav Leiner to mean that the nature of the species is similar to that of a fish, a fact that can easily be regarded as consistent with Sepia officinalis; but in which way could this be true with regard to Murex trunculus? Perhaps the “creation” means its coming into being, i.e. its method of birth. Murex trunculus, like fish, are spawned from eggs.

Other Halachic Considerations

When the Radziner Rebbe took his findings to the gedolei Yisrael of his time, he met with some measure of resistance. Among the most significant responses were those of the Kutna Rav (Rav Yisrael Yehoshua Trunk, known as Reb Yehoshua Kutna, author of Yeshuot Malko) and the Brisker Rav, Rav Yosef Ber Soloveitchik (author of Bet Halevi).

The Kutna Rav's rejection was based on the fact that the dye was made with added chemicals, and he quoted Rashi and Tosafot as inferring that the color of the extract of the chilazon itself was the dye color.

As we have seen, the Kutna Rav's argument was exactly on target. His suspicion, that the chemicals added were the main coloring agent and that the sepia was therefore not the chilazon was the very same objection that Rabbi Herzog raised and substantiated. However, this objection cannot be said with regard to the Murex trunculus, as it is indeed blue before any chemicals are added, and the chemicals that are added to enable the dyeing process do not affect the outcome of the dye itself.

The Bet Halevi's objection is a more complicated one. In fact, exactly what he said is also a matter of disagreement, and quite unverifiable, since there is no written record. His letter to the Radziner was not printed verbatim in the Radziner's third sefer, but was paraphrased. Rav Yosef Ber Soloveitchik had a somewhat different version regarding the objection of his great-grandfather.⁵⁹

According to the Radziner Rebbe, the objection of the Brisker Rav was as follows. In order to accept that Sepia officinalis is the chilazon, we will have to explain why it was not available during the 13 centuries that it was not used. For if it was available, then the very fact that it was not used during this entire time is ample proof that sepia is in fact not the chilazon. The Radziner countered that he did indeed explain that the science of making a blue dye out of the black ink was indeed lost, and that it was only after much effort that he rediscovered the process. In addition, the identification of the fish itself would have been lost over the period of time, since the loss of one element (the process) would have eventually resulted in the loss of the second (the identification of the species).

It would appear that the Brisker Rav was not satisfied with this answer, for the sepia is a common sea animal and was available in many places in the world where Jews lived. Evidently, it did not seem reasonable to him that the sepia would be so unavailable that the science of making the dye would ever have been lost.

This objection does not apply to Murex trunculus, which is an uncommon species. Had a generation elapsed without Jews in northern Israel, as did happen in the sixth century of the Common Era, then the identification of this species would have been forgotten to all the sages who lived in Babylonia and other countries of the Diaspora.

According to Rav Yosef Ber Soloveitchik, the objection was much more basic. The reason he did not accept sepia was simply because we no longer have a mesorah (tradition) with regard to the identity of chilazon, and without a mesorah, we cannot know that we have identified the chilazon.

The Radziner did not counter this objection because it was not presented to him. However, one might argue on his behalf that one does not need absolute certainty in halacha with regard to the establishment of a factual matter, but rather all that is ever needed is a reasonable basis. Indeed, the principle of rov (that we follow the majority) or chazaka (that we follow the status quo), the two most used instruments of halacha in matters of issur and heter, are prime examples of where the halacha instructs us to follow reasonable assumptions even though there is no certainty of fact.

The halachic basis for identifying chilazon is simple — the evidence has created an umdana d'muchach, a relative certainty that exceeds the power of rov. Rov is not a sufficient basis, for example, to decide a monetary issue against a defendant (muchzak) yet an umdana d'muchach can be sufficient evidence according to some opinions.⁶⁰ If so, in matters of mitzvot or even matters of issur, where rov is sufficient to determine a matter of fact, all the more so may one rely upon an umdana d'muchach.

Moreover, although it must be acknowledged that mesorah is a very strong force in halacha, by no means does a mesorah create a certainty of fact. For example, what could be a greater matter of mesorah than the method of making t'fillin? Only soferim are involved and each sofer was trained by an older sofer. Yet, although the order of the parshiot in a set of t'fillin must be correct for the t'fillin to be valid, there is a lack of absolute certainty as to

what is the correct order, with no fewer than four differing opinions.⁶¹ If the halacha would demand absolute certainty in the essential elements of a mitzvah, then we would not wear t'fillin today because there is an area of disagreement as to the correct order of the parshiot. But we do wear t'fillin. Evidently, the framework of halacha allows for the possibility of error, and instructs us to follow the most reasonable likelihood, be it based on rov, chazaka, umdana, or any method of determination of fact accepted within the halachic framework.

Conclusion

The argument for identifying chilazon as *Murex trunculus* has much merit. However, it cannot be said this identification can be 100% absolute, both with regard to the species or even with regard to the color. Nonetheless, the element of certainty would seem to surpass the threshold needed for identification l'halacha. Moreover, there is no issue in wearing a blue colored thread in the tzitzit, even if it turns out that this is not techelet, a point made poignantly by the Radziner Rebbe, in his sefer, *Ptil Techelet*.⁶²

As with anything that is not definite, this matter is likely to be controversial for a long time to come. If I may offer my own humble opinion it would seem that this identification ought to be accepted by many, if not the majority of poskim. But it will likely take much time for this to happen, for halacha is by its very nature conservative, and in general, a consensus is reached only after much debate and deliberation.

from: Rabbi Ephraim Z. Buchwald <ezbuchwald@njop.org> reply-to: ezbuchwald@njop.org date: Mon, Jun 9, 2014 at 4:14 PM subject:

Weekly Torah Message from Rabbi Ephraim Z. Buchwald

Shelach 5774-2014 "Do Not Follow After the Desires of Your Heart and Eyes" by Rabbi Ephraim Z. Buchwald While the major theme of parashat Shelach concerns the scouts who return from the Land of Israel with an evil report and the Al-mighty's decision that the people of Israel will not enter the Promised Land for forty years, there are several other important themes found in the parasha. Other topics in parashat Shelach include: the proper amounts of meal offerings and wine libation that are brought together with the various sacrifices, the requirement to give a piece of the dough (Challah) to the priests, the laws regarding intentional and unintentional idol worship, and the story of the M'ko'shaish, the person who violated the Shabbat in the wilderness by gathering wood on the Sabbath day. The parasha concludes with the well-known third and final paragraph of the Shemah prayer, regarding the mitzvah of Tzitzit, the fringes required to be placed on all four-cornered men's garments. The last five verses of parashat Shelach, Numbers 15:37-41, speak of the commandment of Tzitzit. The children of Israel are commanded to make for themselves Tzitzit (fringes on the corners of their garments) throughout their generations. Each fringe is to have a thread of T'chaylet a special blue dye, so that when the Jew sees the Tzitzit, he shall remember all the commandments of G-d and perform them. Numbers 15:39 concludes The purpose of the Tzitzit is] so that you not follow the desires of your heart and your eyes, which lead you astray. The paragraph concludes: It [this Mitzvah] is for you to remember and perform all of G-d's commandments, and be holy for your G-d. I am the L-rd, your G-d, Who brought you out of the land of Egypt, to be your G-d. I am the L-rd, your G-d. There is no other nation like the people of Israel, who are so thoroughly obsessed with learning and education. Maimonides writes (Laws of Torah Study 1:8) that every Jew is required to learn Torah, whether rich or poor, healthy or ailing, young or weakened by old age. Even a pauper or a man with a large family has to establish set times for Torah learning during the day and night. The obsession with learning Torah and education has led our rabbis to say (Mishnah Peah 1:1) that, "Learning Torah is equal to all other mitzvot" and that (Talmud Kiddushin 40b), "Studying is greater than doing, because studying leads to doing." Rabbi Yaakov Philber, in his important and insightful volume *Hemdat Yamim*, notes that there is a longstanding debate among the classical Jewish philosophers regarding the

requirement to study Torah and the pursuit of education. Does the requirement apply to the study of Torah and Judaism exclusively, or does it also include secular education? It is a debate that continues to rage to this very day. However, all agree, that only those secular studies that enhance Torah study should be pursued. "Secular studies" that are destructive, may not be studied. (There are some authorities who maintain that it is important to know what the heretics and enemies say, in order to respond properly to skeptics, when necessary). Because of the dangers that abound in being exposed to destructive ideas and philosophies, the Torah sets boundaries, and demands that Jews not follow "the desires of their hearts and eyes." These limitations set by the Torah, fly against much of contemporary opinion and values. Effective education, declare many contemporary experts, must be "open" and "open-minded," requiring the legitimization of virtually all speech and study, even that which is harmful and dangerous. They further believe that those who honestly seek truth, must allow for an uncompromised free exchange of ideas in the media and press, in universities and in all places of study. Judaism also recognizes and values the benefits that accrue from open-mindedness and honest intellectual inquiry. Yet, Jewish law sets limits. Just as there are limits to what a person eats, in order to protect one's physical health, so must caution be exercised when imbibing ethical and spiritual knowledge. In fact, many Torah rules are purposely designed to "limit" our physical and intellectual activities. The laws of Lashon Hara restrict wanton speech, the laws of Kashrut restrict what foods may be eaten, and the laws of forbidden marital relationships restrict certain sexual activities. Rabbeinu Bachya, in his introduction to *Chovot Halivavot*, *Duties of the Heart*, strongly advocates openness in education; arguing that without broad knowledge, grasping the depths of the Torah to its fullest would be impossible. On the other hand, Rabbi Judah HaLevi, in his masterwork, the *Kuzari*, argues that the Torah of G-d is entirely and totally pure, rendering it superior to any other body of knowledge, or the intellectual explorations of any researcher or scholar (Kuzari: Article 2:26).

I believe it was the literary critic, Lionel Trilling (1905-1975), who once quipped that, "Some people are so open-minded that their brains fall out!" This is the apparent condition of contemporary society. As we write, the media continues to focus on the most recent mass killing that occurred near the campus of the University of California Santa Barbara. The young gunman, described as mentally ill or demented, authored a long "manifesto," spelling out his grievances toward the women on campus who rejected him socially. This recent attack has touched off an anguished conversation regarding the ways in which women are perceived sexually, and the violence frequently perpetrated against them. Talk of "misogyny" has captured the airwaves. Men and women are urging authorities to consider the implications of the recent attack and its impact on society. Women are no longer willing to tolerate the unrelenting catcalls, leers, and the fears of sexual violence that they constantly experience. No longer free to walk the campus alone, they need to travel in packs and carry pepper spray in their purses for protection.

Yet, the issue is greater than male attitudes toward women and people's obsession with sexuality. What we see today is nothing more than the seeds that we have sown over the past thirty, forty years, with the increasing and unrelenting breakdown of morality and moral behavior. How can it be that a noble nation such as ours, has been reduced by such ignoble values and behavior? Should we really be surprised by the contemporary lack of morality and decency when more than 85% of American entertainment features violence and sex? And much of the change of values took place long before the internet pushed the envelope, providing much greater exposure of new perversions, which were beyond imagination just a few years ago. In 1973, Karl Menninger wrote, "Whatever Became of Sin?" Wendy Shalit published, "The Return to Modesty." 3300 years earlier the Torah declared: Set limits! Limits must be established and must be enforced-one may not follow the desires of one's heart and one's eyes. "Anything goes" is a recipe for anarchy, which is exactly where we find ourselves today. Gone are the calls for good and noble deeds and behavior. No longer are actions of

chivalry, kindness and good manners, admired, praised or esteemed. "We want what we want, and we want it now!" Woe onto the person who tries to stop us from getting what we want. The Tzitziot, the little tassels on the corner of the garments are meant to remind us that there are limits. But more important than the Tzitziot themselves, is the need for a determined citizenry to set its endangered ship straight. We must declare boldly that, "Enough is enough!" The debauchery, harmful behaviors, perverted values, will no longer be tolerated. Freedom of speech and freedom of thought are wonderful values- theoretically. But when exercised without limits, they are destructive, not constructive. Judaism has always taught that "structure" is what sets us free and allows us to accomplish much more than those who act without structure. Lack of structure and boundaries lead to chaos. As the savagery progresses, no one is really safe. We are all subject to the blandishments of the evil that surrounds us. Whether we acknowledge it or not, we are all being rapidly reduced as human beings, even those who think they live in protective cocoons and isolated ghettos. Remember the Tzitziot, the fringes, and the message of the tassels, and especially heed the final words of the Torah's message regarding the Tzitziot (Numbers 15:40), remember and perform. It is not sufficient to simply remember, it is necessary to remember and perform. By carefully performing mitzvot both major and minor, without regard to their respective reward, we can be transformed into a holy nation, distancing ourselves from those evil passions that tend to corrupt. In that way, we will hopefully become Holy to G-d. And if we, the People of Israel, are indeed successful in transforming ourselves, we will be in a powerful position to influence society at large. The message of the tassels may not only save us, but the world as well, by creating a universe thoroughly devoted to morality, goodness and holiness. Remember the message of the Tzitziot! May you be blessed.

from: Shabbat Shalom <shabbatshalom@ounetwork.org> reply-to: shabbatshalom@ounetwork.org date: Thu, Jun 12, 2014 at 5:33 PM subject: Shabbat Shalom from the OU

Given Eyes to See: Seeing is Not Always Believing...

Rabbi Eliyahu Safran

Reality is that which, when you stop believing in it, doesn't go away.

They say that you cannot tell a book by its cover. True, but more damning is that we very often are reluctant to make an effort to look closely enough to see the thing itself, to see deeper than the superficial. As a result, we almost always remain blind to the wonder and beauty of what's really right there in front of us, preferring it seems to sleepwalk through life, believing that the cover actually does say something about the book!

We pass by a young man hobbled by a physical deformity and simply presume that his limitations extend to his imagination, intellect and dreams. We see a tall, powerfully-built lad and we bestow upon him the presumption of courage and inner-strength. We see a teenager in a hoodie...

We judge, we presume, we anticipate and we react based on what? a cursory glance at the surface? There is the story of a young executive, driving his late model Jaguar through neighborhood streets, his thoughts on recent business decisions. He was aware enough to keep his eyes watching for children darting out from between the cars parked along the road.

He slowed when he thought he saw something but then began to speed up again when it appeared to be nothing. Suddenly, a thud sounded against the side of his car. He slammed on his brakes and jumped from the car. He looked at his precious car to see a deep dent in the door. And there, on the street alongside the car, was a brick. He grabbed the first youngster he saw and shoved him against a park car.

"What was that all about?" he shouted.

"Please," the youngster sobbed. "I... I didn't know what else to do. No one would stop."

The man leaned closer to the youngster, his expression more menacing. "What?"

The youngster, tears streaming down his cheeks, pointed toward a parked car. "My brother... my brother rolled off the curb and fell out of his wheelchair. He's hurt. I can't lift him up. I need help. Please, help me..."

The man looked over and he saw, there on the road between two parked cars, a toppled over wheelchair and a boy maybe twelve years old lying on the street.

"No one would stop. I didn't know what to do..."

The driver felt a lump form in his throat. Forgetting about his car, he went over to the hurt boy and did what he could to help.

"God bless you," the youngster said as he pushed his brother in the wheelchair. "God bless you and thank you."

The man was still too shaken to speak. He simply watched the youngster as he moved down the sidewalk.

Although the damage to his cherished car was obvious, the man never repaired the dent. It remained a reminder to him to not go through life so fast that someone has to throw a brick at him to look beyond.

God whispers in our souls and speaks to our hearts. Sometimes, when we think we don't have time to listen, He has to throw a brick...

How ironic that we Jews, who have been so unfairly judged, are often guilty of seeing only the surface! We judge so much around us by the chitzoniyus – by externals. We see one in Chassidic garb and exclaim, "Oh, he must be pious!" The black hat? "He must be learned!" The gray hat? "Ha! Where is he from?"

Recently, a fine Chassidishe yungerman shared with me the story of a meaningful Torah gathering and celebration of major Torah writings where, "a clean shaven man with a bend down hat" gave a deep Talmudic discourse in Seder Kodshim. He was then followed by a young man with a kipa seruga who captivated the learned audience, "with novel chidushim in Z'vachim."

But that was "just too much to handle." Chidushim from a kipa seruga! Cannot be! Oh, yes we have become very chitzoniyus-oriented indeed. Our reality is what is in front of us. Black suit, great! Gray suit, ha! Kapote, great! Colored shirt, ha!

On and on. In every aspect of Jewish life and practice, we see the superficial, the external, the "apparent" and presume from that something more. But in doing so, we never use our eyes' spiritual pupils, only our weak physical eyes. As a result, we see not with our spectacles but with our prejudice, with our negius. We view the world and all that's in it as we would have it be rather than as it is. We shun everyone who is "not like me" and embrace everyone who looks like we do.

I have heard Chassidishe children see a man in a suit and tie, with a bend-down hat, ask, "Iz er a yid?" They see a man, but they do not see a Jew.

To see.

Parshas Shlach begins and ends with seeing. The Meraglim instructed to spy on the land, are specifically told, U'reisem es haArtetz – "and you shall look at the Land." The parsha concludes with the mitzvah of tzizis. U'reisem oso- – "and you shall look at the tzizis."

The Meraglim were without tzizis? The mitzvah of tzizis is instructive; it teaches the Jew how to look and see. To the uninitiated, the Jew with tzizis is a silly man who has forgotten to remove the sales tags from his garment! On the surface, tziziz are little more than hanging strings. Or... or they are constant reminder of all "the mitzvot haShem.

The tzizis do not change. How they are viewed, how they are seen, does!

The Talmud in Menachos comments on the techeles, the blue thread in the tzizis. The techeles is like the sea; and the sea looks like the sky; and the sky calls to mind the Kiseh haKavod – the Divine Throne. To call to mind the Divine Throne is to call to mind all of God's commandments. Imagine! All of God's commandments from a single blue thread amidst the other tzizis strings.

The techeles doesn't change. How you look at it does! Is it merely a blue thread that contrasts and highlights the white threads? Or is it a direct

connection to the sea, the sky, the Heavenly Throne and God's commandments?

The Meraglim too were told to go and see... to see what? A land promised to each of our Avot, the land promised to a people born into slavery only to be redeemed by the Hand of God. What else could they have seen but a land blessed by God Himself. Yet, ten of the twelve saw only the chitzoniyyus.

They saw hats – shtreimels, kipot srugot; they saw beards and payos; they saw wigs, snoods – they saw the external.

They saw much to frighten them. Big people, strong people. Giants! They saw fortified cities, a land of menschen fressers, an ertz ocheles yoshveia. It was all so intimidating. The ten, they saw the giants and the danger but none of God's providence. They were blind to the holiness all around them.

Has anything changed, even today? How many refuse to see all that is holy on every street corner of Eretz Yisrael? How many speak only of a secular state, of a non-religious government, of a depraved, Western culture? Of an ertz ocheles yoshveia – of bureaucracy, of the hassles of integrating into this tough, sabra society?

They see with the eyes of the ten spies!

Jews, where are your tzizis? Ureiesem es haAretz!

Where are your tzizis? Your vision is limited because of your chitzoniyyus approach....

Sadly, and frighteningly, seeing Israel with such narrow vision is not just a flaw of Jews and, specifically, the Orthodox; it is a flaw shared by the world at large. Since the State's birth in 1948, we have been viewed and characterized with every negative connotation imaginable, with new ones added regularly. In just the last few months, "apartheid" has been added to the long list of condemnations. Israel is a war monger, a brutal occupier, an oppressor of human rights; intolerant, insensitive, militaristic brutes incapable of even the slightest sympathy for the suffering Palestinians...

Where are the tzizis?

Recently, Marcella Rosen decided, Enough! She would help the world and interested Jews too, to see the real Israel. She decided that she teach the world of another way of seeing the incomparable State of Israel. That the media creates an overriding negative impression of Israel does not make that impression true. So, turning her back on "the ten", she aligned herself with Yehoshua and Caleb. Marcella decided to tell and share Untold News (www.untoldnews.org).

She gathers and disseminates the positive, glorious, and miraculous ways that Israeli innovation brings help, hope and healing to the world. "While everyone has been focused on the country's decades of military conflicts, Israel has quietly become the most energetic, ambitious, go-go incubator of entrepreneurialism and invention the planet has ever seen. It's true: Israel is a barrier-breaking dynamo of a kind never before witnessed in history. Acre for acre, citizen for citizen, no place is churning out more ideas, more products, more procedures and devices and technologies than this tiny strip of land along the Mediterranean. And the work that Israel is turning out is saving and improving lives around the world, every day."

While the world has seen Israel as one-dimensional, a function of its relation with its Arab and Palestinian neighbors, something profoundly different has been happening "below the radar." Israel has quietly become the little country that changed the world – and your life – for the better... without you even knowing about it.

In the online magazine 'Frontpage Mag,' Jim Fletcher wrote about just two such innovations. We know that hospital infections are potentially deadly, yet sometimes hand washing, clean door handles and antibacterial aerosol are not enough. So, Aharon Gedanken, a chemist at the Bar-Ilan University Institute of Nanotechnology and Advanced Materials focused on the fabrics used in hospitals – pajamas, sheets, gowns – and created an anti-bacterial "coating" that soaks into the very fabric, rendering it bacteria free.

Saving lives.

We know the world is becoming drier. The need for water is defined as one of the great national security issues of our time. So, consider the stunning

achievements Israelis have made with drip irrigation. In a region where water is a prized and rare commodity, Israeli agriculturalists have been able to grow vast crops, using a fraction of the water supply other countries use.

Israel, a land of creativity, genius and innovation! Israel, a land where more Torah is being learned today than ever before in Jewish history; where there is a renewal and rejuvenation of every major Chassidic community, a proliferation of every category of Jewish scholarship from every segment of the Jewish community! Israel, this tiny land that others see as an ertz ocheles yoshveia, is doing more for the world than countries one hundred times its size!

The myopic, limited view of Israel is put forth by "the ten". And not only the New York Times or CNN. These "ten" are all anashim, men and women of distinction; leaders, celebrities. But when all is said and done, their ability to see was limited by their refusal to see beyond the obvious and superficial.

It is time for everyone to add the blue techeles to their tzizis; to join luminaries like Warren Buffett ("If you go to the Middle East looking for oil you don't need to stop in Israel. If you go looking for brains, energy, integrity, it's the only stop you need to make in the Middle East") and Bill Gates ("Israel is by many measures the country relative to its population that has done the most to contribute to the technology revolution") and to see with the eyes of Yehoshua and Caleb; see a land flowing with milk and honey, with creativity, innovation and genius; a land astonishing in its Torah learning and yiddishkeit; a land promised to God's people and a gift to the world!

from: TorahWeb <torahweb@torahweb.org> to: weeklydt@torahweb2.org date: Thu, Jun 12, 2014 at 7:44 AM

Rabbi Yakov Haber
Completing the Divine Creation

The last mitzvah in our parasha is the commandment of tzitzis. Eight strings adorn each of the four corners of a garment. These eight strings, comprised of blue and white, must be wound and knotted partially (the g'dil) with the rest of the strings hanging loose (the anaf).

R. Meir Simcha of Dvinsk in his Meshech Chachma suggests an insightful reason for the mitzvah of tzitzis and many of its details. Here we present his inspiring words with some additional elaboration. Hashem Yisbarach created a world in which His Divinity is hidden. In the upper worlds, Hashem's majesty is directly manifest. The heavenly angels are immediately aware of the reality of the Divine Existence and that It alone is true reality. Their kabbalas 'ol malchus shamayim is reflective of a given reality: "baruch sheim k'vod malchulso l'olam va'ed - may the name of the glory of His majesty be blessed forever." There the majesty is already apparent; they need no convincing. Mankind, living in the lower world, one in which G-d's presence is not apparent, needs to reveal G-d within the world. They need to convince themselves that the world is just a mask hiding the inner dimension of G-dliness within. Their kabbalas 'ol malchus shamayim is "Sh'ma Yisrael, Hashem Elokeinu, Hashem Echad." To paraphrase, "Listen to me Reb Yid, the world might appear to follow a natural order but within this order G-d's Presence is always there; He is always ready to be discovered and the world was built for this purpose. Make sure not to get caught up in this concealment and forget the Creator c"v!"

The initial creation of the world is therefore described as a garment. The verse many recite before donning the talis states: "[Hashem] wraps light (the first creation) like a garment" (Tehillim 104:2). Just as a garment hides the person, so too, the world hides, so to speak, its Creator. By creating such a world, an incomplete world, where G-d's presence is not immediately apparent, Hashem allowed Man to actualize his latent potential in discovering Him and utilizing all of the physical aspects of the world to serve his Creator. In doing so, he partners with G-d to complete the world. In the famous analogy, R' Akiva teaches the Roman general, Turnurufus, that just as bread is tastier than wheat having been processed by Man, so too do we do mila indicating that the human being must perfect himself and the world. This was directly in contrast with the Roman notion that circumcision is needless mutilation and Man is already perfect. This is not so - G-d created Man in an imperfect state commanding and directing that he perfect himself and the world as well by revealing the Creator.

Tzitzis, too, highlights this partnership. On the garment - perhaps we can add the four cornered one symbolizing the "four corners of the world" - we place strings that are seemingly incomplete and not woven together with the rest of the garment. This represents the arena for Man to elevate himself by completing the creation, recognizing

G-d, and utilizing the world to connect to Him. But even within this sphere of activity, G-d's assistance is ever present. Even within the unfinished strings, they are partially wound with techeiles, symbolizing G-d's presence and assistance (see Sota 17a). Man is not alone in his endeavor to reveal his Creator's presence; he is constantly assisted. Hashem is "maichin mitz'adei gever - He prepares the steps of Man" and constantly assists Him (see Kiddushin 30b).

In a somewhat different vein, I once heard from Rav Aharon Lichtenstein shlita, (any error in presentation is my own) that Jews share a common humanity and human values with the rest of the nations of the world. But in order to demonstrate that these common values, this common humanism, also must be imprinted with specifically Jewish, Torah values we tie the tzitzis onto our garments which distinguish us from the animal kingdom - only humans wear clothing. The Jewish people indicate that their human value system, symbolized by their clothing, is a uniquely Jewish one.

Perhaps according to both of these ideas we can understand an additional reason (see Berachos 12b) why the parsha of tzitzis is included in the recital of the shema, symbolizing as it does both the entire purpose of creation and the unique Jewish attitude toward human values.

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from: Office of Rabbi Berel Wein <info@jewishdestiny.com> reply-to: info@jewishdestiny.com date: Wed, Jun 11, 2014 at 4:59 PM subject: Parshat Shlach 5774 - **Rabbi Berel Wein**

PRAYING FOR PEACE

The much heralded public prayer for peace and reconciliation between Israel and the Palestinian Authority took place this week at the Vatican in Rome. The event was hosted and sponsored by Pope Francis and included the participation of religious leaders and official clergy of the three main monotheistic faiths. But the main stars of the event were Shimon Peres, Mohammed Abbas and naturally, the Pope himself. I am all in favor of prayer and I am certainly an avid supporter of peace. But somehow I have a queasy feeling about this public relations coup to promote the Catholic Church as the alternate diplomatic mediator in the Israeli - Palestinian dispute. What makes this entire public event somewhat questionable is the fact that neither Peres nor Abbas are well-known for participating in either public or private religious prayer. As all of us are well aware, public prayer is a very delicate matter. Sometimes it is too public at the expense of meaningful prayer itself. Even though public prayer with a minyan is obligatory in Jewish law and tradition, we are all aware that the moment of private and truly heartfelt prayer offered alone can also be most meaningful and spiritually satisfying. In my opinion this latest Vatican prayer session suffers from too much formality and publicity. I don't know if it was possible, but if the Pope could have gotten Abbas and Peres alone in a room without media and fanfare and their true prayer would have been offered, perhaps the entire event would yet have proved to be of benefit. As it stands now, very little positive accomplishment is on the horizon from this overly advertised event. Jews pray three times daily for peace. It is the final blessing of the amidah, the central prayer of the ritual prayer service. The reason that it is the final prayer of that service is because it encompasses all of the blessings, hopes and longings that the other preceding texts of prayer expressed. The Talmud saw peace as being the proper receptacle that can carry and contain all of the other prayers, benefits and rewards of life. Without peace and inner serenity even the blessings of family, wealth and physical well being remain somehow unfulfilled and unsatisfactory. Therefore peace and the prayer for peace are viewed as the most necessary repository of human attainment and achievement. But even though we ask Heaven on a regular basis for this blessing of peace the truth is that the fulfillment of that blessing, as perhaps of all other blessings in life, is dependent upon us. We are taught in Psalms that we are to search for peace and pursue it. Peace is made on earth by human effort and Divine blessing. Heaven has created peace on high without the necessity for human aid and intervention. However, peace on earth also requires Heavenly guidance and encouragement but as in all matters here on earth what human beings do and decide has influence and consequence. Apparently it is not sufficient to only pray for peace but one must search for it and pursue it in order to achieve it. And that is what makes our situation here in the Middle East one of such difficulty since it is not at all clear that the pursuit of peace with Israel is really one of the objectives of Abbas and the Palestinian Authority. Nevertheless, I do not want to be the one to cast cold water on the Pope's initiative for praying for peace. Many times what we initially and even halfheartedly pray for becomes what we actually later desire and work toward. So this public media event at the Vatican can bear fruit if the parties involved internalize the wish for peace and pursue it. Peace is always costly and imperfectly achieved. Many a wrenching experience must be undergone on the road to achieving peace, whether it is on a personal level or on a national level. To a certain extent peace involves sublimating memory and releasing the hold of the past on one's vision of the future. In order for

that to happen, since this is contrary to human nature, Divine assistance is vitally necessary. Hence, our thrice daily prayer to the God of Israel that He grant us the blessing of peace and the strength to pursue it. Again, I believe that prayer without the trappings of undue publicity and media notoriety is the most effective way of invoking Heaven's blessing upon us. I hope that all of the parties involved in this week's prayer session did so in sincerity and will truly pursue the search for the ways of peace needed so desperately. Shabbat shalom Berel Wein

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The fundamental issue raised in this week's parsha is how could so many wise and ostensibly pious leaders of Israel make such a fundamental error in vision and judgment and thereby condemn them and their constituents to death and ignominy? All of the commentators to Torah from the Talmud and Midrash forward in history have attempted to unravel this mystery for us. Various theories, each one correct in its own view, have been advanced to deal with this difficult issue. Yet, as is the case so many times in trying to analyze human behavior and thought, after all of the answers are considered and accepted, the question still remains to trouble us. And that in itself is perhaps one of the main lessons of this sad narrative of the Torah. Human beings are prone to error, even great and noble human beings. Man proposes but only God disposes. Rashi, based on Midrash, comments that even Moshe misunderstood the situation and sent the leaders of the tribes to spy out the land even though the Lord had never specifically told him to do so and left the final decision to do so to his judgment.

Life is usually not so much a comedy of errors as it is a tragedy of errors. And many times in history we can easily note that great people are also prone to make great errors of judgment and policy. So was it in First Temple times with the kings of Judah and Israel and so was it certainly in Second Temple times even with the descendants of the righteous Hasmoneans. And the story of our people in exile is strewn with erroneous messianism and bad policy decisions. Such is life and human folly. We cannot live without leadership and direction, opinion and advice. But we should always be aware that human beings by definition are not omniscient and all knowing. The gift of prophecy no longer resides with our community. Because of this, caution is always advisable in matters of trust of others. The Psalmist cautions us not to trust the great, generous, noble and mighty blindly for they too are only mortal and subject to the decay of dust. Another important lesson that appears here in the parsha is that the majority opinion is not always the correct one. Calev and Yehoshua dissented from their colleagues. The Jewish people disregarded their words and followed the overwhelming majority verdict regarding the Land of Israel. The strength of the survival of the Jewish people throughout the ages has been its ability to dissent from majority opinions and ruling cultures. Cultures change and opinions shift with time and circumstances. But Godly truth never wavers and changes. Democracy may represent the will of the majority. But even democracy is never infallibly right on major crucial issues. The Torah serves as a brake against the tyranny of the majority. It provides a standard by which events and opinions can be judged and measured. Calev and Yehoshua will survive and lead the Jewish people into the Land of Israel. The other nobles and leaders, the wise men and naysayers, the majority and the politically correct will fade away and die in the desert. Shabat shalom Rabbi Berel Wein Subscribe to our blog via email or RSS to get more posts like this one.