



SHABBAT PARSHAT SHLACH · 23 SIVAN 5770 · JUNE 5, 2010 · VOL. 17 NO. 33

PARSHA INSIGHTS

BEYOND THE FRINGE

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

There’s an interesting grammatical anomaly in this week’s Parsha. When describing the 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.

PARSHA 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.

## SECRET OF SUCCESS

“Any attempt to sever oneself from the Jewish heritage and tradition while suggesting an alternative secular culture or identity is doomed to fail. Without tradition constituting a significant facet of our culture we won’t be able to make achievements in fields considered secular, and not only literature.”

Thus spoke Ariela Zim, a teacher in the Neveh Shmuel Yeshiva High School in Efrat, whose students had the highest average score in the 2008 literature tests in the national matriculation exams. She was commenting on the fact that

the top five schools with the best average on this test were religious institutions.

As we hear this week’s Torah portion read in our synagogues we are saddened by the failure of our ancestors to appreciate the gift of Eretz Yisrael. At the same time we who have been privileged to enter the Promised Land must be aware that it can only be a true Jewish state if our tradition is an essential part of our culture, enabling us to make achievements in every field and guaranteeing Israel forever.

## LOVE OF THE LAND - THE PLACES

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

### KADOORI – THE MAN, THE GIFT AND THE SCHOOL

Some of Israel’s most prominent leaders received their education in the Kadoori Agricultural School located at the foot of Mount Tabor in Galilee.

The school is named for Sir Eliyahu Kadoori, a resident of Hong Kong whose money made possible its establishment in 1931. In his will Kadoori left a large



sum for Palestine. Since the will did not stipulate that it was for the benefit of his fellow Jews, the British Mandate authority claimed ownership. After much negotiation it was decided to divide the gift into two funds – one for an agricultural school for Jews and one for the Arabs in Tulkarem.

THE JEWISH LEARNING LIBRARY PRESENTS

## SEASONS OF THE MOON

THE AUERBACH EDITION

BY RABBI YAAKOV ASHER SINCLAIR

ORDER ONLINE AT [WWW.OHR.EDU](http://WWW.OHR.EDU)

OHRNET magazine is published by OHR SOMAYACH Tanenbaum College

POB 18103, Jerusalem 91180, Israel • Tel: +972-2-581-0315 • Email: [info@ohr.edu](mailto:info@ohr.edu) • [www.ohr.edu](http://www.ohr.edu)

© 2010 Ohr Somayach Institutions - All rights reserved • This publication contains words of Torah. Please treat it with due respect.

## PARSHA Q&A ?

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

## PARSHA Q&A!

### Answers to this Week's Questions!

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

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

- The law concerning witnesses exposed as liars
- Which such witnesses are punished with the penalty they tried to inflict and which receive lashes
- When they are free from any punishment
- How it is possible for one of them alone to be punished
- False witnesses regarding payment of a *ketubah* or the terms of a loan
- When the *shmitah* year cancellation of loans does not apply
- When can a loan with an unspecified date for repayment first be collected
- Some laws concerning disqualification of a *mikveh*
- When one is guilty of a sin punishable by lashes and simultaneously obligated to compensate victim
- How witnesses are exposed and how they share responsibility
- The fate of false witnesses if the defendant has been executed
- When one false witness disqualifies the entire set
- Seeing or testifying separately and the role of a translator
- Location of Sanhedrin and frequency of capital punishment
- When accidental homicide warrants exile to a city of refuge

## THE SAGE'S FAME AND NAME

A woman brought a pair of witnesses to court to testify in her behalf but they contradicted themselves in their interrogation and were therefore disqualified. The same thing happened with a second pair of witnesses. When she succeeded in presenting a third pair of witnesses who did not contradict themselves, Rabbi Shimon bar Lakish (Reish Lakish) raised the challenge that she had already established herself as one who brings false witnesses, and they too should be disqualified. "If she has aroused suspicion," countered Rabbi Elazar, "are all Jews also to be suspected as liars?"

A similar case came before Rabbi Yochanan who offered the same rejoinder as Rabbi Elazar when Reish Lakish raised

his objection. When it thus became clear to Reish Lakish that the source for Rabbi Elazar's position was Rabbi Yochanan, the master of both of these Sages, he scolded Rabbi Elazar for failing to mention to him that he had learned what he said from "Bar Nafcha".

Why Rabbi Yochanan was referred to as Bar Nafcha is explained by Rashi (*Mesechta Sanhedrin* 96a). One version is that Rabbi Yochanan's father was a blacksmith (*nafcha* in Aramaic) so that he was called "Bar" (the son of) "Nafcha". Another version is that this was a nickname which paid tribute to Rabbi Yochanan's exceptional beauty by using a term indicating the exact opposite – the blackened face of a blacksmith – as a reverse euphemism.

• *Makkot 5b*

## What the SAGES Say

"If one is punished for simply attaching himself to sinners – such as the first two false witnesses who could have committed their crime without him – we can conclude that one who joins people doing a mitzvah even in a peripheral manner will earn a great reward."

• *Rabbi Akiva - Makkot 5b*

AVAILABLE AT JEWISH BOOKSTORES & WWW.OHR.EDU

THE JEWISH LEARNING LIBRARY PRESENTS

THE WASSERMAN **TALMUDIGEST** SERIES

*A tantalizing gateway to the incomparable wealth of intellect and guidance contained in the Talmud*

NOW AVAILABLE !

VOLUME ONE - THE COGUT EDITION  
VOLUME TWO - THE WINKLER EDITION

## CIRCUMVENTING CIRCUMCISION

**From: Hank**

*Dear Rabbi,  
Since an important part of fulfilling the mitzvot is having the right intention while doing so, how come we do brit milah on boys when they are infants when they have no say in the matter (in fact, if we asked them, they'd probably refuse)? Wouldn't it be better for men to fulfill the mitzvah when they are at least bar mitzvah so they could fulfill the mitzvah willingly?*

Dear Hank,

As you know, the reason we do circumcision is because G-d commanded Avraham to perform this mitzvah and perpetuate it among his descendents. The command from G-d to Avraham is two-fold: He simultaneously commands Avraham to circumcise himself, while also commanding him to do so to the male members of his household. Regarding his son Yitzchak and his progeny, G-d tells Avraham that they must be circumcised specifically on the eighth day of life.

From here we learn that a Jewish father is required to circumcise his Jewish son as an infant on the eighth day; but if he hasn't done so for whatever reason, he is required to do so before the child comes of age, from which time the person himself becomes responsible to do so.

Now, as you note, intention is extremely important. That's why, according to ancient teachings, although Avraham intuited the *mitzvot* before they were given, and actually preformed them, he refrained from becoming circumcised until he was commanded. Since it's something that's only done once, he preferred to do so with the right intention, the foremost of which is

intending to fulfill G-d's will.

However, the mitzvah as commanded by G-d to Avraham regarding the descendents of Yitzchak was that a Jewish father is commanded to do *brit mila* on his Jewish son. That's the father's mitzvah, for which he is required to have intention. This may be compared to other obligations a Jewish father has regarding his children, like supporting them and teaching them Torah, even though these are obligations that the child will assume upon coming of age.

Your suggestion that if we "asked" the infant he would most probably say "No" is an interesting point, but not necessarily true. So you ask, "Who would willingly undergo circumcision?" Thousands of Jews from the former Soviet Union where *brit mila* was forbidden, but are now free to be Jewish, are the answer to that question. If the infant was really able to understand, his answer would also be "Yes". This covenant is an integral expression of his being Jewish – if not from day one, at least from day eight.

That being said, even if one was circumcised as an infant, there is still a way to fulfill the mitzvah as an adult. Our Sages connect the following verse to *brit mila*: "I rejoice over Your statute as one who finds great spoils" (Psalms 119:162). The Chatam Sofer notes a contradiction in the wording: "finding" implies happening upon something with no effort of one's own; "spoils" are something one obtains through the efforts of battle. He explains that the former refers to an adult who "finds" himself already circumcised since childhood: While the mitzvah has been performed on him, he's done nothing to perform the mitzvah himself. The verse therefore enjoins him now as an adult to battle the drive to abuse the *brit* by upholding and maintaining its sanctity. In this way, rather than circumventing it, he confirms his commitment to the covenant.

**NOW AVAILABLE AT YOUR JEWISH BOOKSTORE OR WWW.OHR.EDU**

FROM THE JEWISH LEARNING LIBRARY

# QUESTION MARKET

## VOLUME ONE - THE KLEIN EDITION

*Relevant, informative, and thought-provoking answers to contemporary questions on Jewish law, customs, and ethics*

## “MINOR” DAMAGES

**Question:** My ten-year old, while playing, did some damage to a neighbor's property and now my neighbor claims that I am responsible for compensating him. What is the right thing to do?

**Answer:** While it would be a nice thing for you to offer compensation, there is no halachic responsibility for damage

caused by a minor. Your son, as well, has no responsibility to pay even when he grows up, but it is a good idea for him to repent his act at that time.

Minors who behave as juvenile delinquents and cause ongoing trouble must be dealt with by the rabbinical court which has the authority to take proper measures to keep them under control.

## THE HUMAN SIDE OF THE STORY \_\_\_\_\_

### HOW MUCH MATZAH?

The rabbi of a European community of long ago dedicated his traditional Shabbat Hagadol sermon to a scholarly discussion of the correct amount of matzah which a Jew must eat on Pesach eve in order to fulfill that important mitzvah.

When he concluded, his congregation surrounded him with accolades in regard to the brilliance of his presentation. One of them, however, had a very different reaction.

“How can I possibly fulfill my responsibility to eat that

amount of matzah,” he asked, “when I spent all the money I have on medical care for my wife and have nothing left with which to purchase any matzah?”

The rabbi quickly returned to his podium and made the following announcement:

“What I said in my sermon about the amount of matzah needed to fulfill the requirement of the mitzvah is incorrect! No one's requirement is fulfilled until it is ascertained that every Jew in the community has matzah for Pesach.”

THE JEWISH LEARNING LIBRARY IS PROUD TO PRESENT

# THE ESSENTIAL MALBIM

THE KOHN FAMILY EDITION

VOLUME ONE - FLASHES OF INSIGHT ON BEREISHET/GENESIS

PUBLISHED BY ARTSCROLL / MESORAH

**NOW AVAILABLE AT YOUR JEWISH BOOKSTORE OR [WWW.OHR.EDU](http://WWW.OHR.EDU)**