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PARSHA INSIGHTS

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Shlach Lecha Complaints Department

“...they shall know the Land that you have despised.” (14:31)

The Gemara (Yoma 9b) states that the destruction of the First Beit HaMikdash was due to the three cardinal sins: idol worship, murder, and immorality. However, the Gemara in Nedarim (91a) cites as the reason for the Temple's destruction that the Jewish People neglected to make a blessing over the Torah before studying it.

So, which was it?

In Sefer Shmuel Aleph 24:4-5, David spares Shaul's life when Shaul enters the cave in which David was hiding. David cuts off a corner of Shaul's robe to prove that he could have killed him. But he harbored no ill intent. Despite this seemingly insignificant act, our Sages viewed David's cutting Shaul's cloak as disrespect to clothing.

And so it was, that when King David was old, despite the many cloaks with which his servants covered him, he could not be warmed. What one does not value, will not stand by the person when needed.

The Gemara in Kiddushin 30b says, "I (Hashem) have created the evil inclination, and I have created the Torah as its antidote."

We are also taught, "The Torah guards and protects." But that's only when you respect it. When the Jewish People didn't treat the Torah with the proper reverence, by not making a blessing before learning, they lost that protective influence. And, thus, the Torah would not be a protection for them against the three cardinal sins, which resulted in the destruction of the First Beit HaMikdash.

The two reasons are one and the same.

**Sources: based on the writings of the Ishbitzer Rebbe*

TALMUD TIPS

by Rabbi Moshe Newman

Shlach Lecha

Masechet Avodah Zarah 2 - 8

Under the Mountain

Rabbi Dimi bar Chama said, "The Holy One, Blessed is He, held a mountain (Sinai) as if it were an enormous vat over the heads of the Jewish People who gathered at Mount Sinai to receive the Torah, and said, 'If you choose to accept the Torah, good! And if not, here will be your burial place!'"

The Talmudic Sage quoted here seems to derive this teaching from the manner in which the verse describes how the Jewish People stood at Mount Sinai immediately prior to receiving the Torah. "Moshe brought the people out towards Hashem from the camp, and they stood at the foot of the mountain." (Shemot 19:17) Rabbi Dimi bar Chama saw that the word "*b'tachtit*" that appears in this Torah verse is a somewhat unusual word choice since the word "*b'raglei*" (lit., at the foot of) or "*al yad*" (next to) would have been more natural ways to express that they stood at the foot of the mountain. The word "*b'tachtit*" is from the root meaning "*tach*", which implies being underneath something else. Saying "*b'tachtit*" therefore implies that the Jewish People were standing literally underneath the mountain, due to the fact that Hashem held the mountain over them with the threat that they would either receive the Torah or would be buried under the mountain.

A question that is asked by many commentaries is why Hashem acted in this manner to essentially force the Jewish People to accept the Torah, seeing as how the Jewish People had already stated that were quite willing to accept the Torah when they said, "We will fulfill what it says, and we will listen to what it teaches." (See Shemot 19:8 and 24:7.)

One answer is that although the Jewish People indeed wanted to accept the Torah with great passion and love, Hashem nevertheless wanted to compel and force the Jewish People to receive the Torah. Giving the Torah in this manner teaches an important lesson. The Torah is a "must" for the world and everything in it to exist. A world without Torah cannot truly exist as the Creator intended it to be.

▪ Avoda Zara 2b

Like a Fish Out of Water

Rav Yehuda said in the name of the Sage Shmuel, “Why are the Jewish People compared to the fish of the sea? To teach you that just as fish of the sea die immediately when they leave the water for dry land, likewise, Jewish people die immediately if they separate themselves from learning Torah and fulfilling mitzvot.”

This warning is one of a number of teachings that the *gemara* states is possible to derive from a verse in the writings of the Prophet Chavakuk (1:14): “You have made man like the fish of the sea.”

The Maharsha explains that this teaching in our *gemara* — that Torah and *mitzvot* are essential for life — is the very same message that is taught in the well-known parable of Rabbi Akiva, as recorded in *Masechet Berachot* (61b), as follows. The wicked kingdom of ancient Rome decreed that the Jewish People were forbidden to study Torah. A man named Pappus ben Yehuda saw Rabbi Akiva gathering large groups of people and teaching them Torah in public. Pappus asked Rabbi Akiva why he was not afraid of the government’s decree. Rabbi Akiva answered with a parable:

A fox was walking along a river and saw fish jumping from place to place. The fox asked them why they were fleeing. The fish answered that they were fleeing from the nets of people who were trying to catch them. The fox then invited them to join him on the dry land where he told them they would be safe. The fish replied: “Are you really the one who has the reputation of being the cleverest of animals? You are not wise, but stupid! If in the place where we naturally survive (the water) we fear for our lives, all the more so would we have cause for fear in the place where we would naturally die (dry land)!”

Rabbi Akiva explained to Pappus that the same message applies to the Jewish People. “When we study Torah, of which it’s written (in Dev. 30:20) that ‘It is your life and the length of your days’ we are presently in danger due to the evil decree, how much more so would we be in peril if we would abandon Torah study!”

▪ *Avoda Zara 3b*

Just as with fish in the sea, bigger fish swallow smaller fish, likewise with people, if not for fear of governmental authority, whoever is bigger than his fellow man would swallow his fellow man.

This statement is an additional way of understanding the aforementioned verse in Chavakuk (1:14). The *gemara* states that this teaching expresses the same idea as we find in Pirkei Avot (3:2): Rabbi Chanina, deputy to the *kohanim*, would say, “Pray for the peace and integrity of the government, because without fear of its authority a person would swallow his fellow man alive.”

I once heard an interesting idea that explains why Rabbi Chanina emphasized the fact that person would be “swallowed alive” as opposed to merely being disposed of in some more “conventional” manner. The innate “inhuman” nature of a human being is such that it would not satisfy a hater’s desire to get rid of an opponent by merely disposing of him, but rather his nature would also drive him to seek the additional pleasure and satisfaction of hearing his adversary making guttural pleas for “let me out of your belly!” I heard this from a great rabbi in Jerusalem who said it in the name of another great rabbi — without breaking a smile. I think he was serious.

- *Avoda Zara 4a*

PARSHA OVERVIEW

At the insistence of the *Bnei Yisrael*, and with G-d's permission, Moshe sends 12 scouts, one from each tribe, to investigate 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 the *Bnei Yisrael* will finally enter the Land. The people are commanded to remove *challah*, 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.

Questions

1. Why is the portion about the *meraglim* written immediately after the portion about Miriam's *tzara'at*?
2. To what was Moshe referring when he asked the *meraglim* "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?

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

Answers

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 *challah* 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.

COUNTING OUR BLESSINGS

by Rabbi Reuven Lauffer

Shlach Lecha

KRIAT SHEMA AL HAMITAH (PART 16)

Kriat Shema al Hamitah continues: “May our eyes see, our heart be glad, and our heart exult in Your salvation, when *Tzion* is told, Your G-d has reigned. Hashem reigns, Hashem has reigned, Hashem will reign for eternity. For the kingdom is Yours and You will reign for all eternity in glory, for we have no king except for You.”

The phrase “Your G-d has reigned” is part of a verse from the prophet Yeshayah (52:7). The entire verse describes how, when Eliyahu announces the imminent onset of the Messianic Era, the whole world will recognize and embrace Hashem’s Majesty. It is for that moment that we yearn, because it will be then that we all finally be able to serve Hashem in purity and perfection. We will not be distracted by everything around us because, just like us, everything around us will also only be focused on Hashem’s Glory. The aspirations and dreams of every believing Jew needs to be that we will experience that exquisite moment very, very soon.

Carl Sandburg (1878-1967), an American poet who President Lyndon B Johnson described as, “More than the voice of America...He was America”, wrote, “Nothing happens unless first we dream.” Words that are so true and so poetic. And, as we prepare to go to sleep for the night, we begin the process of tapping into our inner selves. Before we enter into the world of our dreams, we remind ourselves of what is truly important – that our dreams should include Hashem. That we are waiting to hear those beautiful words, “Your G-d has reigned.”

The world of psychology explains that, “Our dreams serve as a window into the labyrinth of our emotions and thoughts, offering a unique glimpse into the hidden recesses of our subconscious minds. They draw upon the tapestry of our daily experiences, memories, and innermost desires, weaving them into vivid narratives or symbolic imagery.” (Integrative Psych)

When used correctly, our dreams are the ingredients of the future. But only when our dreams motivate us to become greater than we currently are. Rabbi Shimon Schwab related how he was once walking with Rabbi Yitzchak Ruderman (1900-1987), the legendary founder and head of Yeshivat Ner Yisrael in Baltimore, in the Forest Park neighborhood where the Yeshiva was originally located. As they walked past a very large old house Rabbi Ruderman turned to Rabbi Schwab and said, “This building can hold two hundred *talmidim* [students].” In those early days, there was probably no more than thirty *talmidim* learning in Ner Yisrael. Rabbi Schwab, somewhat taken aback by Rabbi Ruderman’s seemingly inexplicable confidence, asked himself why Rabbi Ruderman was paying attention to a house that could fit two hundred *talmidim*. Back then the idea of a Yeshiva with two hundred *talmidim* in a central location like New York was unheard of. How much more so in Baltimore! But Rabbi Ruderman wasn’t deterred by the present. He was dreaming about a future that no one else could see at that moment besides him. Rabbi Ruderman may have been dreaming, but he was not a “dreamer,” but rather was a visionary who used his dreams to create a new reality.

And what a dream! Today, the Ner Yisrael campus is located on *nearly one hundred acres*! There is a high school with approximately 250 students. The Yeshiva has 300 *talmidim* and the Kollel has another 200. Who, except for Rabbi Ruderman, could have envisaged such a thing! Because, truly, nothing happens unless first we dream.

To be continued...

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WHAT'S IN A WORD?

Synonyms in the Hebrew Language

by Rabbi Reuven Chaim Klein

Shlach: Growing the Fringes (Part 1/2)

The end of *Parashat Shlach* talks about a very special mitzvah that is dear to Jews across the world — the commandment of *tzitzit* requires a male Jew to attach four strings to the four corners of one's four-cornered garment (Num. 15:37–41). That passage is read twice daily as part of the *Kriyat Shema* and in that context it uses the word *tzitzit* three times. In this two-part essay, we explore the different words used for *tzitzit*, with Part I focusing on the word *tzitzit* itself and its synonym *gedilim*, while Part II will focus on other words like *petil*, *tallit*, and *kruspidin*.

As mentioned above, the word *tzitzit* (or *tzitzis* as typically pronounced in the Ashkenazi tradition) word appears thrice when outing the commandment of *tzitzit* (Num. 15:38–39). But that word appears one more time in the Bible, namely in the Book of Ezekiel in references to the hair that juts out from the side of one's head (Ezek. 8:3). The classical Hebrew lexicographers of the triliteralist persuasion trace the Biblical Hebrew word *tzitzit* to the three-letter root TZADI-YOD-TZADI. That root yields several other meanings in Biblical Hebrew, including “growing/sprouting,” “peeking/peering,” “branch/wing/fin,” and “forehead plate” (like a sort of decorative metallic bandana, as in the Kohen Gadol's *tzitz*). Indeed, Rashi (to Num. 15:38) connects *tzitzit* to both the hair that juts out from the side of one's head and to the “peeking/peering” meaning.

Likewise, Rashi (to Jer. 48:9) writes that anything that juts out or sticks out from a person or animal's body is called a *tzitz*, an explanation that can be used to bridge the various meanings of the root TZADI-YOD-TZADI. Likewise, Malbim (in *Sefer HaCarmel*) defines *tzitz* as something that protrudes or otherwise sticks out from the main body in a way that makes them very visible. In the very same way, the *tzitzit* strings protrude from the main garment and that makes them all the more visible. In Mishnaic Hebrew, the vestigial foreskin tissue that remains on the male member after one has completed a circumcision is referred as *tzitzin* (*Shabbat* 19:6) because such clings-on appear to protrude from the main organ.

In both *Yeriot Shlomo* and *Cheshek Shlomo*, Rabbi Shlomo Pappenheim traces the word *tzitzit* to the monoliteral root TZADI. This understanding is also implied by Menachem Ibn Saruk in *Machebret Menachem*, albeit he does not specifically list the word *tzitzit* as a declension of that root. The way Rabbi Pappenheim explains it, the core meaning of that single letter is "exiting/outwardness." He lists a whole slew of words as related to this core root, but for our purposes it is sufficient to note that he has two different ways of connecting *tzitzit* to that core root. In *Yeriot Shlomo*, Rabbi Pappenheim explains that TZADI gives way to the idea of "growth/sprouting" because mid-process a sapling can be showing some outward signs of growing, while still not being fully germinated. From this, he explains that the "peeking/peering" meaning of TZADI(-YOD-TZADI) actually refers to one "squinting" with one's eyes in order to see better. The conceptual link is that just as a sapling beginning to sprout is only partially visible, so is the eye of a squinting person only partially revealed. As a corollary to this, he explains that the words for *tzitzit* and the Kohen Gadol's *tzitz* derive from "peeking" in the sense that they are highly visible ornaments that people will end up looking at. In his work *Cheshek Shlomo*, he takes a similar approach that sees *tzitzit* as something that appears to "exit" from the garment to which it is tied.

In something of a parallel to Rabbi Pappenheim's explanations, Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch (to Ex. 28:36) uses his signature system of phonetic etymology to connect the root TZADI-YOD-TZADI to the root SIN-YOD-SIN (*sasson*, "gladness" which is an outward manifestation of inner happiness) and ZAYIN-YOD-ZAYIN (*ziz*, the "mammary gland" as an outward manifestation of the inner motherly instinct for providing nourishment). In this way, he explains that *tzitz* (and, by extension, *tzitzit*) refers to that which protrudes from an ambient surface in a way that it is made visible to all and sundry. He also notes that this is similar to the "growth" meaning of TZADI-YOD-TZADI by which a plant flourishes outwardly from its budding seed.

Interestingly, one of the prominent noblemen of Jerusalem in the generation preceding the destruction of the Second Temple was named Ben Tzitzit (*Bereishit Rabbah* 42:1, *Pirkei DeRabbi Eliezer* ch. 3, *Avot D'Rabbi Natan* ch. 6:3). Rabbi Nossan of Rome (in *Sefer He'Aruch*) explains that he was called so because his *tzitzit* were so long that they would be dragged along on top of pillows and blankets wherever he went. The way I understand it, this means that he was considered so prominent, that wherever he went, he had an entourage that brought along the ancient equivalent of a red carpet, so that his extralong *tzitzit* will not drag along the floor.

Segueing to an alternate word for *tzitzit* that appears in the Bible, we now turn our attention to the word *gedilim*. This term appears in the Bible only once in conjunction with *tzitzit*: "you shall make for yourself *gedilim* on the four corners of your clothing" (Deut. 22:12). The word *gedilim* also appears another time in the Bible in reference to a braided chain of metal (I Kgs. 7:17), but that seemingly has nothing to do with *tzitzit* (see below).

All the early Hebrew lexicographers (like Ibn Saruk, Ibn Janach, Ibn Parchon, and Radak) trace the word *gedil* (the singular form of *gedilim*) to the triliteral root GIMMEL-DALET-LAMMED, which also gives us words like *gadol* (“big/large,” “great/important,” “grown/expanded”). Ibn Janach defines *gedilim* as *tzitzit*, and Radak expands on that definition to define *gedilim* as free-hanging *tzitzit*. On the other hand, Ibn Parchon uses the term *petil* (discussed below in Part II) to define *gedilim*, while Ibn Saruk actually uses the word *chut* (literally, “string”) to define it.

Rabbi Hirsch (to Num. 15:38) explains that a braided rope is called a *gedil* because it is thicker than a single string, so it appears to have “grown” and become “bigger” — ideas which fit with the broader meanings associated with the root GIMMEDL-DALET-LAMMED. Rabbi Hirsch parenthetically notes that the Rabbinic Hebrew *gudal* (“thumb”) does not refer to the *longest* finger, but to the *thickest* finger. Alternatively, we can connect *gedilim* to *gadol* by noticing how the string hanging off the corners of a garment serve to “expand” the edges of the garment as those it has grown wider than the edges of the actual fabric. Such an explanation is offered by Radak’s father, Rabbi Yosef Kimchi (*Sefer HaGalui*). Or we can see *gedilim* as a mere extension (“overgrowth”) of the garment, just like the *gudal* can be viewed as a sort of extension of the hand.

What is the difference between *gedilim* and *tzitzit*?

The Talmud (*Menachot* 39a) states that the *tzitzit* string tied to the garment’s fringes should be arranged in such a way that one third of the strings’ length should be like a *gadil* (that is, braided) and two-thirds of its length should be left hanging like a tree branch (*anaf*). When Radak in his *Sefer HaShorashim* cites this Talmudic passage, he frames it as a resolution as to why the Torah sometimes uses the word *gadil* and sometime uses the word *tzitzit* in reference to the same commandment: One part of the *tzitzit* string is like a branch (hence the connection to the “branch” meaning of TZADI-YOD-TZADI from whence *tzitzit* derives), while another part of the *tzitzit* string is like a *gadil*. A similar understanding is put forth by Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch (to Num. 15:38).

I was thinking that perhaps we can take Radak’s understanding a step further and see the exact proportions mentioned in the Talmud as reflected in the Torah’s verbiage: The commandment of *tzitzit* appears in three verses (Num. 15:38, 15:39, and Deut. 22:12). In two out of those three verses, the Torah employs the term *tzitzit* (so two-thirds of the string should be like a branch), while in one out of those three, it uses the term *gedilim* (so one-third should be “braided”).

To be continued...