

A Taste of Text: Source based learning for Shabbat

This weekly sheet is brought to you by Rabbi Dr. Moshe Freedman of the New West End United Synagogue in conjunction with Shapell's/Darché Noam

PARSHAT SHELACH LECHA

DVAR TORAH: TZITZIT, OUR CLAY SEALS

Tzitzit is not a standard mitzvah obligation. Even though its importance is immeasurable – it reminds us of all of the rest of the mitzvot and prevents us from sin – technically one is only obligated in tzitzit if he chooses to wear a four cornered garment. But already in the times of the Tosafot (see Tosafot Erchin 2b Hakol) men were not accustomed to wear four cornered garments. Yet, say the Tur and the Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chaim 24:1), it is “good and proper” for all men to make sure to wear a “tallit katan” all day to fulfill the mitzvah and remain constantly conscious of all of the rest of the mitzvot. Harav Asher Weiss, שליט"א, asks the obvious question: Why didn't Hashem just make tzitzit obligatory the way tefillin are? Why aren't we simply obligated to put on a four cornered garment with tzitzit on it?

He answers based on a statement by Rabbi Meir (Menachot 43b) that likens the white threads of tzitzit to a “clay seal.” This odd-sounding analogy is explained by the Tosafot (“Chotam”): Servants would have a clay seal embedded in their clothing as a sign of their servitude. Our tzitzit are our “clay seal” showing that we are servants of Hashem.

Great servants of Hashem accept their servitude joyfully. Hashem's model servant is Moshe Rabbeinu: “My servant Moshe, the most trustworthy of My household” (Bamidbar 12:7); “Moshe, God's servant” (Devarim 34:5). And his servitude brought Moshe great joy, as we say in our Shabbat morning prayers: “Moshe will rejoice in his portion, for you called him your trusty servant” - ישמח משה במתנת חלקו כי עבד נאמן - קראת לו.

Not only Moshe, but all of Israel accepted Divine servitude willfully and joyfully (see Tanna Devei Eliahu Rabbah 17) when they declared “Everything that God said we will do, and will listen to whatever He commands us” – “כל אשר דבר ה' נעשה ונשמע” (Shemot 24:7).

This explains the strange conceptual nature of the obligation to wear tzitzit, that I am only obligated in the mitzvah if I choose to wear a four cornered garment. Tzitzit is a celebration of being an עבד ה', a servant of God. We joyfully choose this servitude. We therefore must choose to wear a four cornered garment, and then, as servants, we are now obligated in tzitzit.

This is how Rav Asher Weiss explains an anecdote about the Rav Yehudah Aryeh Leib Alter זצ"ל, the Sfas Emes (1847–1905, the second Gerrer Rebbe). The Sfas Emes told his chasidim one Sukkot that saying אבא ה' with great intention can bring about awesome things. The elder chasidim differed about whether the Rebbe was referring to אבא ה' הושיעה נא or אבא ה' הצליחה נא. When they later asked the Rebbe himself, he said he was referring to אבא ה' כי אני עבדך.

Sukkot is the time of our most intense joy, the time of והיית אך שמח. That is the time of the Simchat Beit Hashoevah, the ecstatic rejoicing in the Temple in Yerushalayim. That is exactly when we should affirm to God that we are joyfully His servants. That can bring about great things.

SOURCE GUIDE: KALEV – TRIPLE AGENT

In one of the Chumash’s dramatic scenes, Kalev manages to quiet the nation that had just heard the ten spies’ fearful report. They melted the hearts of the people by telling them of a land full of giants, fortified cities, and hostile enemies in the south, on the mountains, and on the coastal plain. **How did Kalev manage to quiet them all, get their attention, and say “We will rise up, conquer them, and take hold of the land”?**

Kalev: Triple Agent

Here is the verse where Kalev quiets the nation:

<p>1. Bamidbar 13:30 (30) Kalev quieted the nation towards Moshe, and said, “We will surely rise up and inherit it (the land), for we are able to.</p>	<p>במדבר יג:ל (ל) וַיְהִי כִּלְבָב אֶת הָעָם אֶל מֹשֶׁה וַיֹּאמֶר עֲלֵה נַעֲלֶה וַיִּרְשְׁנוּ אֹתָהּ כִּי יָכוֹל נוֹכַח לָהּ:</p>
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The Midrash fills in the blanks: Why was there a need to quiet the nation? How did Kalev succeed in doing it? Why didn’t the ten spies stop him from speaking?

<p>2. Midrash Tanchuma Shelach 10 “Kalev quieted the nation”: Initially he told them, ‘I am with you on this plot.’ But in his heart he told the truth, for it says, “I responded according to that which was in my heart, but my brethren who went up with me (to spy out the land) caused the people’s hearts to melt” (Yehoshua 14:8). Thus the Holy One, blessed be He, testified about Kalev: “My servant Kalev, since he had a different spirit within him ...” When the spies came they said ‘We can trust Kalev.’ Immediately he got up on a bench and quieted the entire nation who were speaking out against Moshe. “Kalev quieted the nation.” They thought he was going to speak negatively, so they were quiet. He opened by saying, “We will go up and inherit the land, for we are able to.” Immediately when they heard what he said they countered him and said, “We are not able to rise up against the nation for they are stronger than we. They (the spies) thereby spread a bad report against the land that they spied out.”</p>	<p>מדרש תנחומא שלח פרק י “ויהי כלב את העם:” שבתחלה אמר להם ‘אני עמכם בעצה אחת, ובלבו היה לומר אמת, שנאמר (יהושע יד) ‘ואשיב אותו דבר כאשר עם לבבי ואחי אשר עלו עמי המסיו.’ וכך הקב”ה מעיד עליו שנאמר, ‘ועבדי כלב עקב היתה רוח אחרת וגו’.” כשבאו המרגלים אמרו נאמן עלינו כלב. מיד עמד על הספסל ושתק את כל ישראל שהיו מסיחים על משה: “ויהי כלב את העם אל משה.” והן היו סבורין שהיה אומר לשון הרע, לפיכך שתקו. פתח ואמר “עלה נעלה וירשנו אותה כי יכול נוכל לה.” מיד כששמעו כך חלקו כנגדו ואמרו “לא נוכל לעלות אל העם כי חזק הוא ממנו ויוציאו דבת הארץ אשר תרו אותה.”</p>
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All twelve spies were first appointed by Moshe as agents on a secret mission, to spy out the land and bring back an accurate and objective report. Moshe, of course, thought the report would inspire the nation to enter the land with confidence and conquer as God had commanded. But ten of the spies became, in effect, double agents, spying against Moshe and Hashem though appearing to fulfill their mission. They plotted to bring back a report that would frighten the nation and collected information that would emphasize how difficult the conquest would be.

Kalev, says the Midrash, appeared to play along with them but in his heart remained true to Moshe Rabbeinu and Hashem. ‘Kalev is with us against Moshe,’ the ten spies thought, so they let him speak. Kalev succeeded because he had the presence of mind to appear to be a double agent – he could be defined as a “triple agent,” one who appears to be a double agent for the enemy but is really serving his own nation. [See, however, Rabbi Shuster’s article where, based on the Or Hachaim, a different picture of Kalev emerges.]

Rabbi Zechariah: Faking Being a Fake

The same presence of mind, the same acting ability was used by the hero of a story that appears at the end of Yerushalmi Peah, Rabbi Zechariah, who appeared to be extremely sinful.

3. Yerushalmi Peah 8:8

Everyone was badmouthing Rabbi Zechariah the son-in-law of Rabbi Levi. They were saying that he didn't need financial assistance yet was taking tzedakah money. When he died they investigated and found that he had been distributing the money to others.

ירושלמי פאה ח:ח

רבי זכריה חתניה דר' לוי היו הכל מליזין עליו. אמרו דלא צריך והוא נסב. כד דמוך בודקין ואשכחון דהוה מפליג ליה לחורנין:

Let us take a closer look at the background behind this story:

A. **Fakes:** The Mishnah (Peah 8:8) has harsh words for one who fakes a physical handicap in order to arouse sympathy and collect alms: "Someone who feigns a limp or blindness [in order to collect tzedakah] will not leave the world until he actually has that handicap." This is, of course, built on the Torah's high standards of truthfulness and its abhorrence for falsehood.

B. **Secrecy:** Some of the highest levels of tzedakah – the Rambam's second and third of his eight levels – involve distributing it secretly. This protects the poor person from the embarrassment that goes with poverty and receiving alms. The anecdotes in the Yerushalmi immediately preceding that of Rabbi Zechariah were of great tzadikim secretly distributing tzedakah in the middle of the night.

Rabbi Zechariah went a step further. He faked being a fake in order to be able to provide tzedakah to a number of poor people who otherwise would not have received what they need. He created the impression that he was himself poor in order to collect tzedakah that he could then pass on to others secretly. He prevented them embarrassment while during his entire lifetime being the butt of community gossip.

Both of these unique individuals, Kalev ben Yefuneh and Rabbi Zechariah the son-in-law of Rabbi Levi, utilized skills that are usually found in the worlds of acting and espionage but harnessed them for the service of Hashem. The ability to play the role of one suspected as being an imposter opened up a lofty world of secret tzedakah to Rabbi Zechariah; and being able to not show his cards, to give the impression that he was party to the meraglim's plot allowed Kalev to publicly stand up to the rest of the spies.

Caution is needed here. These are unique paths taken by unique people in unique situations. But we can also apply the messages these stories teach us: to stay true to Hashem despite opposition, to utilize all of our skills to serve God, and to think of creative ways to help others while preserving their dignity.

KALEV, MY SERVANT BY RABBI FYVEL SHUSTER

The Or Hachaim Hakadosh points out a very interesting discrepancy. There were two spies who didn't participate in the complaining about Eretz Yisrael, Yehoshua and Kalev. Interestingly, Kalev is singled out for tremendous reward. Hashem calls him "עבדי כלב", "My servant Kalev" (Bamidbar 14:24). Very few people are ever given that appellation עבד השם. The verse explains why: "עקב היתה רוח אחרת עמו" "since he had a different spirit," "וימלא אחריי" "and he fulfilled his mission after Me" (Bamidbar 14:24). Kalev is then rewarded with a portion in the land, Chevron, the place that he had gone to.

The Or Hachaim asks: What about Yehoshua? Why don't we see him singled out? Why don't we see that same reward? And he says a fascinating thing. Yehoshua's name was changed from Hoshea. Chazal reveal to us, and Rashi brings it down in the beginning of the parshah (Bamidbar 13:16), that the representation of that name change was "קה יושיעך מעצת מרגלים" "Let Hashem save you from the plot of the meraglim, the spies." Moshe Rabbeinu, through his special relationship with his talmid Yehoshua, was able to pray for him, to daven for him in a way that he would be totally removed from the world of the meraglim. He would have no temptation to join them. He would have no battle; he would have no struggle.

Kalev, on the other hand, had no such tefillah for him. He had רוח אחרת. רוח אחרת, says the Or Hachaim, does not mean that he had a spirit contrary to the meraglim. On the contrary, he had the same spirit – the yetzer hara – that was with the ten meraglim. Because Kalev had a yetzer hara that he had to wrestle with and, yet וימלא אהרי – despite that he managed to stand against the pressure of the meraglim and, says Hashem, to fulfill My Will, then he merits that special reward.

This is what is called an עבד ה', a servant of God, and this is what is called a true שליח, a messenger. Chazal, in this context, speak in the praise of a שליח who does his שליחות, a messenger who fulfills his mission. This was Kalev; and in order to complete his mission Kalev used every tool he had available. When he sensed himself weakening he went to Chevron and davened at the Mearas Hamachpelah for help in his battle.

If we have a sense of ourselves as שליחים, a sense of שליחות, a sense of mission in our Judaism, that means that we realize that we're in the battle. We also have a רוח אחרת; there are many foreign spirits pulling us this way and that, and like Kalev we should want to use every tool available to fight them.

This brings us to the end of the parshah, the parshah of tzitzis. Tzitzis is a fascinating mitzvah. The Torah tells you the mitzvah you have to do when you wear a four cornered garment. And many people might have the automatic response: But if I don't wear a four cornered garment I don't have to put them on – right? I don't wear four cornered garments – I'm free.

But if you have something in the Torah that tells you וראיתם אותו וזכרתם את כל מצוות ה' ועשיתם אותם ולא תתורו "Look at the tzitzis and remember all of Hashem's commandments and fulfill them, and you will not stray after your hearts and your eyes," (Bamidbar 15:39) you should take advantage of it. The Torah tells us: This will help you do and fulfill the mitzvos of Hashem. This will help you resist sins in all sorts of ways. If we're following in the pathway of Kalev then we're servants of God with a sense of mission. Then we do not want to describe our lives as 'making it through the obstacle course of Judaism so it doesn't disturb us too much in life.' Somebody I know once said: The 613 mitzvos are not 613 roadblocks to having a good time. The point of life is not to try to avoid the mitzvos.

If a person has a sense of וימלא אהרי – I view keeping the mitzvos as my מלאות, my fulfillment in life – he will jump to try to keep the mitzvah of tzitzis in the best way possible. He'll try to treasure it and to honor that mitzvah as part of his שליחות, his mission. [Rabbi Shuster originally presented these ideas during his Thursday afternoon "Mashgiach's Minute."]

This issue is dedicated in memory of
Eva Morgenstern, ז"ל

*This publication is compiled by the staff and Rabbonim at **Shapells/Yeshivat Darché Noam** for men and **Midreshet Rachel v'Chaya Seminary** for women in Jerusalem. Find out more about the **married couples' programme** and the **Pathways Israel** and **Pathways Plus** programmes offered at www.darchenoam.org +972-2-651-1178, 5 Beit Hakerem Street, Jerusalem.*

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