

At the beginning of our *Parashah*, Moshe Rabbeinu instructs the Spies. He says to them, "Ascend here in the *Negev*/ south and climb the mountain." *Rashi z"l* comments: "The *Negev* was the worst part of the Land of Israel. Moshe told them to visit this part first because such is the way of merchants--they show a prospective purchaser the inferior goods first and afterwards they show the best." [Until here from *Rashi*]

R' Ze'ev Wolf z"l (*Chassidic Rebbe* in of Zhytomyr, Ukraine; died 1798) writes: Since the Torah is eternal, there must be a practical lesson here for us, as well. That lesson is the following: Ideally, one's focus when praying should be on bringing about the revelation of the *Shechinah*, not on one's personal needs. Unfortunately, not only does the typical person not do this when he prays, he is hard-pressed to remember *Hashem* at all during his prayers. Instead, the typical person's mind--even that of the typical learned person--wanders the wide world while praying. Likewise, when people go to hear a *Mussar*/ character development lecture, they often come out worse than when they entered--not searching for ways to implement what was spoken about, but instead saying *Lashon Ha'ra* about how someone else needed to hear this lecture.

Moshe Rabbeinu is teaching us, continues R' Ze'ev Wolf: "Start small!" The reason merchants show their inferior wares first is so that customers can gradually develop an appreciation for the "good stuff." Likewise, we should set our spiritual goals very high, but we should build up to them gradually. (*Ohr Ha'Meir*)

Tefilah

This year, we will *iy"H* devote this space to discussing various aspects of our prayers. This week, we continue discussing the thirteen types of prayer identified by the *Midrash Rabbah* and *Midrash Yalkut Shimoni*.

R' Shimshon Dovid Pincus z"l (rabbi of Ofakim, Israel; died 2001) writes: Just as a person should not be content to study one tractate of *Talmud* his entire life--rather, he should pursue broad Torah knowledge--so one should learn how to utilize multiple forms of prayer, each as appropriate to the occasion. (This is in addition to ensuring that one prays with *Kavanah* and in accordance with all the laws of prayer). R' Pincus illustrates:

The *Gemara* (*Berachot* 32a) teaches that one must praise *Hashem* before making requests of Him, and that is how *Shemoneh Esrei* is structured: the first three blessings recite *Hashem's* praises--the form of prayer that the *Midrash* calls "*Rinah*" / "song"; only then, the next thirteen blessings make requests--the proper place for the form of prayer the *Midrash* calls "*Ze'akah*" / "crying out." [R' Pincus' more precise definition of "*Ze'akah*" will be presented in a future issue.] If one has a sick relative, the place for *Ze'akah* is the eighth blessing of *Shemoneh Esrei*: "*Refa'einu*" / "Heal us." Though the second blessing of *Shemoneh Esrei* describes *Hashem* as the "Healer of the sick," that is in the context of *Rinah*--praising Him as the Healer. That blessing is not the place for *Ze'akah*. R' Pincus writes: Crying during *Rinah* / praise is equivalent to seeking the laws of *Shabbat* in *Bava Kamma*, the Talmudic tractate that deals with tort laws, instead of in Tractate *Shabbat*. One will not find what he seeks.

Even so, one's prayer for the sick also can be expressed in a blessing whose subject is praise, R' Pincus writes--not by crying out, but by thinking: "You are the Healer of the sick. I wish to sing to You enthusiastically to express my joy that You heal the sick again and again. I pray to you with *Bitachon* / confidence that Your unending kindness can extend to my sick relative as well." Maybe, R' Pincus concludes, that is exactly the type of prayer needed in a particular situation.

(*She'arim B'Tefilah* p.1)

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לע"נ ליבא דבורה בת אהרן שמעון ע"ה

“Speak to *Bnei Yisrael* and say to them that they shall make ‘*La’hem*’ / for themselves *Tzitzit* on the corners of their garments, throughout their generations, and they shall place upon the *Tzitzit* of each corner a thread of *Techeilet* / turquoise wool. It shall constitute *Tzitzit* for you, so that you may see it and remember all the *Mitzvot* of *Hashem* and perform them ... So that you may remember and perform all My *Mitzvot* and be holy to your *Elokim*.” (15:38-40)

R’ Yitzchak of Volozhin *z”l* (Belarus; died 1849) writes: On the simplest level, wearing *Tzitzit* is meant to remind us of the *Mitzvot* the way tying a knot in one’s garment or around one’s finger reminds him of something he needs to do. Why, then, do we typically not remember the *Mitzvot* when we see our *Tzitzit*?

He answers: Tying a knot can serve as a reminder only if the person who ties it is thoughtful and if the object of the reminder is something important. In contrast, when a naughty child ties together handkerchiefs to use as a whip to hit his friend, there is little chance that those knots will remind the child of anything meaningful! Likewise, writes R’ Yitzchak, *Tzitzit* will serve as a reminder only if you wear them with the right intention, as the verse says: “So that you may remember and perform all My commandments and be holy to your *Elokim*.”

Rashi z”l writes that the word “*Tzitzit*” comes from the root meaning, “To look” (see *Shir Ha’shirim* 2:9). R’ Yitzchak elaborates: We read, “They shall make ‘*La’hem*’ / for themselves *Tzitzit* ...” The word “*La’hem*” seems to be superfluous, but its purpose is to instruct us that we should not only look at the *Tzitzit*, we should look at “ourselves” as well. No matter how much Torah we have learned or how many *Mitzvot* we have performed, we should never be complacent, because we are only human, and “sin crouches at the door” (*Bereishit* 4:7). From the moment of birth, we are subject to the *Yetzer Ha’ra*. This parallels the first of the three points that the sage Akavyah ben Mahalalel instructs a person to focus on in order to withstand sin (*Pirkei Avot* 3:1): “From where you came.”

Our verses continue: “On the corners of their garments, throughout their generations.” “Garments” refers to the body, the garment for the soul, until the body dies and gives way to future generations. This parallels the second point Akavyah tells us to focus on: “Where you are going.”

Lastly, the Torah instructs us to include in the *Tzitzit* “a thread of *Techeilet* / turquoise wool.” Our Sages say: “*Techeilet* is reminiscent of the sea, which is reminiscent of the heavens, which is reminiscent of the Throne of Glory.” Thus, the *Techeilet* reminds us of the third thing Akavyah tells us to look at: “Before Whom you are destined to give an accounting.” When one “looks” at these points, the *Tzitzit* will, indeed, remind him of all the *Mitzvot*. (Mili D’avot 3:1)

“For the tribe of Reuven, Shammua son of Zachur.” (13:4)

Rashi z”l (to verse 3) comments that all of the Spies were righteous at the moment Moshe dispatched them.

R’ Yaakov Abuchatzzeira *z”l* (Morocco; 1806-1880) writes that the names of the Spies illustrate how *Tzaddikim* attempt to purify each limb and organ of their bodies by performing the affirmative commandment that corresponds to each limb/organ and refraining from committing the negative commandment that corresponds to each part of the body.

He continues: “Reuven” comes from the root that means “to see.” A *Tzaddik* guards his eyes and does not look at things he is not supposed to see. This leads to “Zachur”--remembering the *Mitzvot*, as we read at the end of the *Parashah* (15:39): “So that you may see it and remember all the *Mitzvot*.”

(*Drushei Abir Yaakov* IV 8)

“Hashem, Slow to Anger, Abundant in Kindness . . .” (14:18)

R’ Yerachmiel Shulman *z”l Hy”d* (*Menahel Ruchani* of the *Bet Yosef*-Novardok Yeshiva in Pinsk, Poland; killed in the Holocaust) writes: The *Gemara* (*Rosh Hashanah* 17a) interprets “Abundant in Kindness” to mean that *Hashem* tilts the scales of justice towards kindness. How so? The sage rabbi Elazar says, “He applies pressure to the side of merit to tip it downward.” The sage Rabbi Yosé bar Chanina says, “He places His hand under the side of guilt to tip it upward.” [Until here from the *Gemara*]

R’ Shulman continues: These are the two strategies that a defense counsel uses. He can argue: “True, the defendant committed the crime, but it is not as bad as it looks because of mitigating circumstances.” Or, he can argue, “True, the defendant committed the crime, but think of all the good that he does in the community.” Indeed, this is how every person should judge each other person: Even if he did something wrong, it is not as bad as it looks. Moreover, he actually is a person with many fine qualities.

(*Peninei Ha’shlaimut: Sha’ar Ha’savlanut* 1:5)

“But as *Ani* / I live--and the glory of *Hashem* shall fill the entire world.” (14:21)

Midrash Lekach Tov comments: “The glory of *Hashem*” refers to *Yisrael*. [Until here from the *Midrash*]

R’ David Cohen *shlita* (*Rosh Yeshiva* of the Chevron Yeshiva in Yerushalayim) explains: If the Jewish People had not been dispersed around the globe, *Hashem*’s glory never would have become known to the nations of the world, which, in the days of old, were idolators who did not know Him. The word “*Ani*” refers to the speaker in his perfected state. Thus, says *Hashem*, through *Yisrael*, who have caused My glory to fill the entire world, I am “*Ani*.” Through the sin of the Spies, *Bnei Yisrael* caused a tremendous *Chillul Hashem* / desecration of His Name. As a result, says our verse, the Jewish People will be exiled around the world, where we will correct the earlier *Chillul Hashem* by creating a *Kiddush Hashem* / sanctification of His Name. (*Z’man Cheirutenu* p.311-312)