



# מעשה אבות ... סימן לבנים

האנשים אשר שלח משה לתור את הארץ וישבו וילינו עליו את כל העדה להוציא דבה על הארץ ... (ד-לו)

At the outbreak of the First World War, as hostilities erupted between the Russian and German empires, a profound and perilous drama unfolded within the walls of the *Radin Yeshivah* in Poland. During this period of intense wartime paranoia, a certain Russian interloper grew desperate to manufacture a high-profile espionage case to advance his own career and show off his prowess to the authorities. This operative cynically befriended the *yeshivah* students, embedding himself in their inner circle until he discovered a young man named Ephraim Leibowitz, a German citizen from birth. Sensing the perfect opportunity to construct a treason charge, the detective waited for a moment of distraction and covertly slipped a highly confidential, detailed blueprint of the strategic Kaunas Fortress directly into the unsuspecting *bochur's* pocket.

The trap was sprung with devastating speed. That very night, heavily armed Russian military personnel surrounded the *yeshivah's* dormitory, launched a chaotic raid, and discovered the planted military plans exactly where the operative had hidden them. Ephraim was immediately arrested and placed in heavy chains under the gravest charges of wartime espionage.

The fallout was catastrophic, instantly casting a dark cloud of suspicion over the entire *yeshivah*. The Russian authorities were led to believe that the *Rosh Yeshivah*, the holy **Chofetz Chaim ז"ל**, and the entire *hanhala*, were operating a clandestine German spy ring right under their very noses. As for Ephraim Leibowitz, facing a military tribunal during a time of total war, the young *bochur* stood on the precipice of execution, with the death penalty appearing to be an absolute certainty.

In this hour of darkness, R' Yisroel Meir displayed extraordinary bravery, refusing to abandon the boy despite the immense danger. Understanding the difficulty of defending an accused German spy and how it could easily destroy his *yeshivah* and arouse serious suspicions of treason, the *Tzaddik* nevertheless devoted his entire heart and soul to saving the young *talmid's* life.

Recognizing the limitations of residing in Radin, the *Chofetz Chaim* personally traveled through the perilous wartime landscape to the imperial capital of St. Petersburg. His mission was to persuade a highly influential, world-renowned attorney to take up the defense, a monumental task given that practically every attorney in the empire had already refused to intervene in such a politically toxic and dangerous piece of business. Through sheer persistence and devotion, he managed to secure the necessary legal representation, setting the stage for a historic courtroom showdown.

When the high-stakes trial finally took place in 1917, a breathtaking scene unfolded inside the courtroom as the spiritual giants of the generation arrived to stand in the breach. The saintly *Chofetz Chaim*, alongside his prominent son-in-law **R' Tzvi Levinson ז"ל**, and his brilliant *talmid*, **R' Elchanan Wasserman ז"ל**, bravely took the witness stand before the military judges. With absolute conviction, these towering rabbinic figures testified under oath that they were undeniably certain of Ephraim's complete innocence. Their awe-inspiring presence and powerful testimony ultimately swayed the court away from the gallows; instead of the death penalty, the judges sentenced the young man to ten years of grueling hard labor.

When the *Chofetz Chaim* was informed of the verdict, his reaction was profound. He first raised his eyes to heaven and with deep emotion thanked the *Ribono shel Olam* for delivering the boy from the clutches of the executioner.

When asked about the daunting ten-year prison sentence, the *Tzaddik* surprisingly laughed aloud. With a smile of pure faith, he openly mocked the hubris of the Czarist regime, exclaiming, "Such fools! How do the authorities know that they will last even ten months? Are they sure they will last even ten weeks?" His words seemed radical to those frozen in fear of imperial power, but they were rooted in a deep perception of Divine justice. Indeed, the *Chofetz Chaim's* spiritual foresight proved flawless. Barely two months later, on the 22nd of *Adar*, the historic Russian Revolution erupted, swiftly toppling the centuries-old monarchy and deposing the Czar from his throne. As the old regime crumbled into dust, the prison gates were thrown wide open, and the completely vindicated Ephraim Leibowitz walked out into the sunlight of freedom. (**Ish L'Ravahu**)

וישלח יהושע בן נון מן השמים שנים אנשים מרגלים ... (יהושע ב-א)

DEEP, PENETRATING ANALYSIS OF THE WEEKLY HAFTORAH

## תורת הצבי על הפטרות

Prior to the nation's invasion of the Holy Land, Yehoshua sent two spies to scout the city of Yericho and determine the best entry point into *Eretz Yisroel*. This parallels the story of the *Meraglim* that Moshe sent forty years earlier which was a story of extreme slander which caused tremendous damage to the Jewish people. Since the Jews' entry to *Eretz Yisroel* was delayed as a result of the spies Moshe sent, why did Yehoshua even contend to send another group?

**R' Yonah ben Avraham Gerondi ז"ל (Rabbeinu Yonah)** explains that there was a fundamental difference between the two groups of spies. The group that Moshe sent sinned gravely because they misunderstood their mission. Instead of only scouting out the military capabilities of the

enemy, the first group of spies focused on whether they wanted to enter the land at all. Their mission was doomed to failure from the start because they had already decided that they don't like the land and were looking for a way to convince the rest of the nation as well. Yehoshua chose Pinchos and *Calev ben Yephuneh* as his two spies and was confident that the earlier issues would not be repeated because he knew that they were utterly righteous and would stay razor focused on their mission. In addition, Yehoshua made it very clear to them that they shall report only to him and not report their findings to all of *Klal Yisroel* as the earlier spies did. By doing this, no one would be able to misconstrue the exhibition's findings and only the truth will emerge.

וימצאו איש מקושש עצים כיום השבת ... ונתנו על ציצת הכנף פתיל תבלת ... (כו-לבח)

CONCEPTS IN AVODAS HALEV FROM THE FAMILY OF R' CHAIM YOSEF KOPFMAN ZT"l

# מחשבת הלב

Right after the *Torah* tells us the story of the מקושש עצים, the man who chopped wood on *Shabbos*, we read the *parsha* of *Tzitzis*. What is the connection between these two?

There is a *parsha* that says: *Moshe Rabbeinu* said to *Hashem*, all week the men wear *Tefillin* and constantly have a visual reminder not to sin. On *Shabbos* that aide-mémoire is absent. Therefore he sinned, claimed Moshe, advocating on behalf of the מקושש. *Hashem* responded: In that case, go teach the nation about *Tzitzis*, so that they'll have a constant reminder - לנגדי תמיד - שויתי ה' on *Shabbos* and *Yom Tov* as well. While clearly, by simply wearing them, we gain that awareness, there may be another point the *Tzitzis* signify.

**Rashi** on the words "הכנף פתיל" comments: *Tzitzis* have eight strings, to parallel the eight days from when we left *Mitzrayim* until we sang *shira* at the *Yam Suf*. The obvious question is: it was שביעי של פסח, the seventh day of *Pesach*, when *Bnei Yisroel* sang. So in truth, it was only seven days - not eight! Some suggest, based on a *Medrash* that on the night of the 14th of *Nisan*, *Hashem* took us all to ארץ ישראל and back. As such it was a full eight days.

The מהר"ל and the ספר מושב זקנים explain that the counting began from י"ד when we *shechted* the *Korban Pesach*. The מהר"ל continues: That was the exact point in time that we freed ourselves from *Mitzrayim's* negative spiritual grasp, which was the purpose of מצרים. Therefore, יציאת מצרים. Therefore, that was when the count began. Hence, the *mitzvah* of *Tzitzis*, with its eight strings, reminds us of the spiritual freedom, the חירות עולם of being an *eved Hashem*.

Perhaps that is another טעם for the juxtaposition of these two *parshiyos*. As we are בציצית daily, let us focus on its purpose. continually connecting us to and constantly reminding us constantly of *Hashem* and His *mitzvos*.

## משל למה הדבר דומה

דה לה לכם לציצת וראיתם אתו וזכרתם את כל מצות ה' ... (כו-לב)

**משל:** **Reb Mendel Futervas ז"ל**, a renowned *Lubavitcher Chasid* who spent many harrowing years in the Siberian gulags, used to tell a fascinating story. A fellow prisoner had been a world-class tightrope walker. Reb Mendel asked him, "What is the secret? How do you walk on a thin wire so high in the air without falling?"

The man replied, "It's all in the eyes. Before I step onto the rope, I pick a point at the far end, and I never take my eyes off it. If I look down at my feet, I lose my balance. If I look at the crowd, I can fall. My eyes are fixed on the destination."

"I asked him," said Reb Mendel, "what is the hardest part?"

The man replied: "The turn! When you reach the end, you have to turn around to go back. For a split second, you lose

sight of the first point, and the new point isn't yet in focus. That moment of transition is the only time I am in real danger."

Reb Mendel learned from this that we must stay focused on our spiritual destination. The transitions in a person's life is the danger. Whether moving through ups and downs or transitioning from a place of inspiration (like *Yom Tov*) back into the mundane world, those moments of "turning" are when one must hold onto their focus with everything they have.

**משל:** *Parshas Shelach* concludes with the commandment of *Tzitzis*. The *Torah* tells us to "look upon it and remember all the commandments of Hashem," warning us not to "wander after our hearts and our eyes." The *Tzitzis* act as the focal point at the end of the "rope," keeping our eyes riveted on our spiritual destination so we don't fall when navigating the dangers of the mundane world.

סלה נא לעין העם הזה כנגד הוֹדך ... ויאמר ה' סלהני כדברך ... (ד-כב)

GOLDEN NUGGETS ON THE PARSHA WITH A FOCUS ON LESSONS HOW TO SERVE HASHEM AND BE A BETTER JEW BY R' YEHOShUA GOLD

## הנחמדים מזהב

After *Klal Yisrael* cried over the prospect of entering *Eretz Yisrael*, *Hashem* declared that this would become a "בכייה לדורות". Yet, this raises an obvious question. When the nation eventually entered the land under Yehoshua, they did in fact wage wars, conquer cities, and even struggled against certain strongholds. If so, what was wrong with sending spies? Doesn't every military campaign require preparation and intelligence gathering? A second difficulty emerges in *Sefer Devarim*. When *Moshe Rabbeinu* recounts the episode, he says, "*Hashem* was angry with me as well because of you," decreeing that he would not enter the land. Where do we find Moshe being punished as a result of the sin of the spies?

The **Malbim** offers a remarkable perspective. Originally, *Hashem's* plan was for *Klal Yisroel* to enter *Eretz Yisroel* under *Moshe Rabbeinu*, who would immediately build the *Bais HaMikdash*. In that reality, the purpose of creation would reach its completion. There would be no future exile, nor the long process of history leading toward the ultimate *geula*. However, the nation's lack of *emunah* revealed that they were not yet ready for such a destiny and it was decreed that they would perish in the wilderness. Moshe *davened* on their behalf, and *Hashem* accepted his *tefillah*. To do so, the world's purpose would now change. *Klal Yisroel* would defeat their enemies naturally guided by Yehoshua. The *Bais HaMikdash* would eventually be destroyed, and *galus* became part of the Divine plan. Why? So that the entire world could come to recognize *Hashem*. Through centuries of exile and *Kiddush Hashem*, the nations would be introduced to the Jewish nation and witness the unique relationship between *Hashem* and His people. The future *geula* would ultimately rectify not only *Klal Yisroel*, but all humanity.

Had Moshe entered the land, the original plan would have remained intact. His personal sacrifice became part of saving the nation. The lessons are profound: the selflessness of a true leader, our mission to bring awareness of *Hashem* into the world, and the extraordinary love *Hashem* has for His children, even reshaping the course of history so that *Klal Yisroel* would endure.