



Parashat Shelach 5771 - #190

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On the Parashah...

Righteous on an Individual Level, Wicked in Public Matters

[Tal Chermon, first edition, p. 437]

The Spies were distinguished and upright persons: "All of them [important] men, they were the heads of Bnei Israel" (Bemidbar 13:3). Rashi comments: "Anytime the term 'men' [anashim] is used in the Torah, it denotes important men, for at that time they were [still] righteous" (His source is Midrash Raba.). Our Sages teach, however, that at the same time they were also wicked. Rashi asks why the Torah repeats itself by writing, "And they went and they came" (Bemidbar 13:26). He deduces from this that their return was analogous to their departure - "Just as they returned [from their mission] with evil intentions, so did they depart with evil intentions." How can we reconcile these comments?

We must answer that they were righteous on a personal, individual level, but wicked in public matters. They did not believe that the Nation's Kedusha (sanctity) was powerful enough to pervade all of the Land of Israel. They did not distinguish between the status of the Nation of Israel in exile and the status of the Nation of Israel in the Land of Israel. Sanctity in exile is limited to spiritual matter; in the Land of Israel it diffuses throughout everything. In the Land of Israel, every physical matter has Divine value. The Spies said, "He is stronger than we are/He is ('memenu' can refer to either 'we' or 'He')" (ibid. 13:31), and Rashi, following the Gemara in Sotah, comments: "They were referring to Hashem." They meant: "It's too hard for us, and too hard for Hashem. The sanctity will not be powerful enough to pervade all aspects of life in the Land of Israel."

The Spies were giants of the spirit, but they were still unfit to form the Divine leadership of the Nation of Israel in the Land of Israel. The Zohar tells us that they said, "In the desert we were worthy of being the leaders, but in the Land of Israel, we will not be the leaders." On a personal, individual level, they were outstandingly righteous, and this was sufficient to make them leaders in the Exile. However, they were wicked insofar as their inability to raise the People of Israel to spiritual perfection in the Land of Israel (see Rabbi A. Kook, Chavash Pe'er, Drush Aleph, p.24). This sin has followed us ever since, until today, when we are

beginning to learn how to function on a national level of Kedusha, thanks to the wonders which G-d has performed for His Nation.

Rav Aviner on... Searching for a Torah Scholar

[Be-Ahavah U-Be-Emunah – Naso 5771 – translated by R. Blumberg]

Question: Many girls are looking for a righteous, G-d fearing boy with sterling qualities, but some of them insist on going out only with boys who have decided to devote all their lives to Torah pursuits. The years go by and they don't find what they are looking for. What is the proper path?

Answer: The girls' yearning to wed a Torah scholar is appropriate, for Rambam wrote, "It is the nature of man to be drawn after the opinions and behavior of his friends and acquaintances, and to conduct himself like the people of his region. Therefore one must attach oneself to the righteous and always spend time with the wise in order to learn from their deeds. As it says, 'To Him shall you hold fast' (Devarim 10:20). One should wed the daughter of a Torah scholar and marry off his daughter to a Torah scholar" Hilchot (De'ot 6:1-2).

Obviously, we cannot know the future, and if a girl weds a yeshiva student whose plans are to learn Torah all his life and to be a rabbi, there is no guarantee that he will hold fast to this goal. Conversely, quite a few persons with various professions have decided at a certain point to devote themselves to Torah, and have emerged as Torah scholars. Yet if a yeshiva student is determined to become a rabbi, there is a much greater chance he will achieve this than if he has other aims in life.

Still, the central question is to define what is a "Torah scholar". Our Rabbi, Ha-Rav Tzvi Yehuda Kook, opposed the idea of "Kollel" for married students, and he viewed it as an option only for those who had already learned before their weddings to continue learning afterwards. He held this view because he was against fixing a defined purpose for a Kollel, such as a program preparing rabbinic court justices, rabbis or halachic decisors. Rather, he said that the purpose of a yeshiva must be to produce true Torah scholars. He explained that there are professional Torah scholars whose profession is Torah, and there are non-professional Torah scholars who have a different profession, yet who obviously are replete with Torah, its study, its fulfillment and its character.

This does not mean that they will have no influence on our Nation's path, for as is well-known, influence does not have to be formal. Our master, Ha-Rav Rabbi Avraham Yitzchak Ha-Cohain Kook, in his work "Eder HaYakar", explains that the main influence of a Torah scholar comes about through his very personality, and his oral and written influence is only secondary. This is likewise the meaning of "The Torah's application is greater than its study". In other words, the personal influence of the Torah scholar is greater than his academic influence (Ein Aya, Berachot 7). This is true regarding anyone, all the more so regarding a Torah scholar's wife, who when all is said and done is not influenced precisely by her husband's articles or lectures but by his very personality, and the same applies regarding his children.

Therefore, a woman should not seek to wed precisely a Torah scholar who will provide her with the title of "Rebbitzin", but someone who will lead a life of Torah.

Stories of Rabbenu — Our Rabbi, Ha-Rav Tzvi Yehudah Ha-Cohain Kook

Tzitzit

Our Rabbi would encourage his students to wear their tzitzit with the tzitzit hanging outside of their clothing, and he made no distinction between Sephardic and Ashkenazic Jews. One of our Rabbi's leading students, Ha-Rav David Chai HaCohen, once asked if this ruling to wear tzitzit outside of one's garments applied to him as well, for his family's custom was to wear tzitzit tucked in (Ha-Rav HaCohen's uncle was an important Torah scholar and a faithful follower of the Ben Ish Chai). Ha-Rav HaCohen said that he would abide by whatever ruling our Rabbi gave. Our Rabbi told him that he did not have to wear his tzitzit outside of his clothing. (From the article "The Appearance of a Meticulously Observant Jew" by Ha-Rav Eliezer Melamed)

Our Rabbi would often emphasize the words of the Magen Avraham (Orach Chaim 8:13) that the essence is that the tzitzit be seen outside of one's clothing. (Gadol Shimusha p. 71)

A newly observant Jew asked our Rabbi for the source for wearing a kippah. He answered that according to the opinion of the Vilna Gaon (Orach Chaim 8:2), there is no ancient source for a kippah, but wearing tzitzit outside of one's clothing is from the Torah. The newly-observant Jew immediately bought long tzitzit, (and obviously wore a kippah as well!). (Gadol Shimusha p. 70)

Tzitzit at night

Our Rabbi would wear his tzitzit not only during the day, but when he slept at night as well. (Ha-Rav Yechezkel Greenwald)

Wearing Tzitzit Out

Our Rabbi would say that one should wear his tzitzit hanging outside of his clothing. A student asked: And what about the Arizal (who said that one should wear the tzitzit inside – although there is a dispute regarding the meaning of his words)? Our Rabbi responded with a smile: I know the Arizal. And he added: And do you perform everything that the Arizal says? (see Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim 8:11, Magen Avraham ibid., Mishnah Berurah ibid. Ha-Rav Yosef Bedichi)

Jewish Clothing

Our Rabbi would teach that one should wear his tzitzit out, and that Jewish clothing is not necessarily a kippah, but tzitzit and tefillin. Regarding a kippah, he would quote the words of the Vilna Gaon that wearing a kippah is an act of righteousness (Biur Ha-Gra, Orach Chaim 8). (Ha-Rav Yechezkel Greenwald)

Shut She'eilat Shlomo - Questions of Jewish Law

Techelet

Question: What is Ha-Rav's opinion about wearing Techelet?

Answer: We only wear white. This is based on three reasons, each of which is sufficient on its own:

1. One of the authorities of last generation, the "Beit Ha-Levi," Ha-Rav Yosef Dov Soloveitchik of Brisk, held that in the absence of a continuous tradition, it is impossible to reinstitute the identification of the Techelet, even with proofs. This identification has disappeared until the reestablishment of the Sanhedrin. But even if we say that it is possible to reinstitute it with the aid of proofs, they must be strong, clear and beyond doubt. The proofs relating to the Murex Trunculus are not one hundred percent. And the identification of the Techelet today is the third time it has been identified. The first time was by the Chasidic Rebbe of Radzyner, and the Breslav Chasidim also adopted it. The second identification was by Ha-Rav Yitzchak Herzog, who later became the Chief Rabbi of Israel. So this is now the third such identification. The great Rabbis of our generation have not accepted these suggestions, and are waiting for a fourth possibility.

2. We are not strict to wear any Techelet since our Sages said that wearing a blue color which is not Techelet (called "kala ilan") invalidates an entire Talit (see Bava Metzia 61b and Menachot 40a, 43a). It is thus possible that wearing this Techelet could invalidate the entire Talit. Furthermore, when we are strict about something in general, it is when we are certain that we are better off regarding the mitzvah, but if we are uncertain, it is not considered a "stricture."

3. This is casting dispersion on earlier Jews and the great Rabbis of our generation who did not and do not wear the Techelet. A Torah scholar once asked Maran Ha-Rav Kook about Techelet. He did not ask if he should wear Techelet. He said: "I wear Techelet on my Tzitzit which I tuck in. Should I also wear them on my Talit?" Maran Ha-Rav Kook answered: "No, by doing so you would be casting dispersion on the earlier ones who did not do so. It is fine if you are wearing them and they are tucked in, 'I walk with wholeness of heart within the confines of my house' (Tehillim 101:2), but do not wear them out."

It is also forbidden to act with "yuhara" – religious arrogance – before the great Rabbis of our generation. The Gemara in Baba Kamma (81) discusses that Yehoshua bin Nun made the inheritance of Eretz Yisrael conditional on ten laws. One of them is that people may walk on the side of the road (on the border of others' property) to avoid hardened clumps of dirt on the road. Rav and Rabbi Chiya were once walking on the road, and they veered off to the side of the road to avoid the clumps of dirt. Rav Yehudah bar Kenosa was ahead of them, and walked in the middle, taking big steps to avoid the obstacles. Rav said: "Who is that? It is 'yehura' not to rely on Yehoshua's enactment!" Rabbi Chiya said: "Perhaps it is my student, Rav Yehudah bar Kenosa. All his actions are for the sake of Heaven." It is haughty to act strictly in front of one's Rabbi. Rav Yehudah bar Kenosa was different, however, as he always acted strictly. If someone wears Techelet, we do not disparage him, he has on whom to rely. But if someone comes and asks, we say to him: "do not display 'yuhara.'" The Torah scholars of our generation wore and wear white Tzitzit and we are going to act strictly in front of them? Do we know more about Techelet than Ha-Rav Avraham Shapira ztz"l?! Do we know more about Techelet than Ha-Rav Mordechai Eliyahu Shilt"a?!

In sum: We need to continue to research the matter, and it is a long journey. Although the heart aches, we wait. In the meanwhile, we wear white, "it has completely turned white, it is pure" (a play on Vayikra 13:13).

[MT – note: It is worth noting that Rav Aviner was once asked: What was Maran Ha-Rav Kook's attitude regarding Techelet?

Answer: When a Torah scholar, who wore Techelet on his Tzitzit, asked Maran Ha-Rav if he should also put Techelet on his Talit, he responded: "It is sufficient for you to have the Tzitzit with Techelet. Techelet on your Talit will be seen as casting dispersion on the earlier ones who did not put Techelet on their Tzitzit" (brought in "Sefer Ha-Techelet of Rav M.

Bornstein, p. 192). "When Maran Ha-Rav saw that Ha-Rav David Cohain, Ha-Nazir, put Techelet on his Tzitzit, he asked him: Do you feel the lack of the Techelet on your Tzitzit and that you have a need for it? Ha-Nazir took this as a criticism and ceased putting on the Techelet. After a short time, Maran Ha-Rav came in a second time and said to him: Nu, nu, continue putting the Techelet on your Talit. Ha-Nazir however held fast to the first comment and refrained from doing so, and only put on the Techelet in private after the death of Maran Ha-Rav" (ibid., p. 188). I – the lowly one – heard the story in the following version: "When Maran Ha-Rav saw Ha-Nazir wearing Techelet on his Tzitzit, he rebuked him that he should not follow a path about which almost all the great Rabbis of Israel had reservations. Ha-Rav then entered his room and after a few minutes came out again and said to Ha-Nazir that there is nonetheless a place for this. Despite that this is not the path to be followed by the community, unique individuals may follow it, and since Ha-Nazir is unique and special, he could follow this special path."]

Family Matters - Ha-Rav writes weekly for

the parashah sheet "Rosh Yehudi" on family relationships

The Ideal Nursery School Teacher

How does one choose a nursery school? Based on the teacher.

And how does one choose a teacher? As is known, the teacher fills the place of the mother. Therefore, the most important trait for a nursery school teacher is to be motherly.

The second trait is awe of Heaven (Yirat Shamayim). This does not mean that she teaches the children awe of Heaven, but that she herself is filled with the holiness of Torah, attends Torah classes to the best of her ability, cleaves to women who are Talmidot Chachamot, yearns for holiness, and then the children will absorb it from her. An educator is not one who commands others to elevate themselves spiritually, but who is doing so on his own, and brings others along with him. Rabbenu Ha-Rav Tzvi Yehudah used a parable: An educator is similar to an oven which heats itself inside and then radiates warmth out - the warmth of holiness, integrity and Torah.

The third trait is the educational techniques used by the teacher. Sometimes, there is a teacher who uses many techniques but is dry, and it is better to have a motherly teacher, who is filled with displays of love for the children.

In sum, the business card of a nursery school teacher is: 1. Motherliness. 2. Yirat Shamayim. 3. Educational Technique.

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