

LIVING WITH THE PARSHAH 5778

PARSHAS SHELACH

By Rabbi Yaakov Feitman, Kehillas Bais Yehudah Tzvi

Parshas Shelach begins with the annual enigma of the great leaders who turned evil. What went wrong and why did Moshe Rabbeinu seem to go along with the tragic error? Furthermore, what is the connection to the mitzvah of tzitzis which culminates the Parsha? One answer which the *meforshim* allude to revolves around the concept of *kavanah* and ones intentions. According to some meforshim, the Meraglim initially meant well because they felt that the era of open miracles was over. Now that they were entering Eretz Yisrael, where they would have to engage in normative parnasah such as farming, they thought that their warfare would be the same. They would have to utilize planning, spying and other methods to conquer the land. Even Moshe Rabbeinu seemed to go along with this strategy when he ordered a limited reconnaissance of Yaazer (Bamidbar 21:32). He and the Meraglim themselves meant only to fulfill the edict of “*ain somchin al ha'nes* – we do not rely upon miracles.” Of course, they all knew that it would be impossible to conquer seven and more nations without Hashem’s intervention. However, they thought that it was still best to do as much as possible *bederech ha'teva* – using the laws of nature and then Hashem would, so to speak, take over. For the Meraglim, unfortunately, this took on a life of its own, to the point that most of them eventually questioned Hashem’s providence in running the world.

Yet, we still wonder: what saved Moshe Rabbeinu himself and then Yehoshuah and Kalev from this bitter fate? The answer might be hidden in the name of one of the Meraglim, Sesur ben Michoel, from shevet Asher. Chazal (Sotah 34b) reveal that his name, which represented those of the other Meraglim as well, means that he contradicted the words of Hashem and attempted to reduce His power in the world. Now this name, as well as the others, were ostensibly given upon their birth, indicating that their evil tendencies had been with them for many years. It would seem that sometimes a person does not even realize his own true intentions. Moshe Rabbeinu and the two “good Meraglim” had honorable kavanos from beginning to end. The others, sadly, rationalized their doubts and hid their true intentions, even from themselves. Where Yehoshua and Kalev saw great beauty, abundance and potential, the other Meraglim saw only danger, overwhelming strength in the enemy and impossible odds against them.

The mitzvah of tzitzis is the antidote to the tragedy of the Meraglim since it teaches us how to look at things. “And you shall look upon them and remember all the mitzvos” (15:39). Chazal (Chulin 89a) teach that when we see the blue techeiles it reminds us of the sea, which evokes the sky, which eventually leads us to the Divine Throne. Tzitzis teaches us to think deeply about all the consequences of a given scene and its significance on multiple levels. Most of the Meraglim could not get beyond the frightening images and oversized fruits which for them spelled doom and destruction. Yehoshua and Kalev saw Hashem’s Hand guiding them to a land where they would have easy parnasah and would be able to serve Hashem in tranquility. Rav Itzele of Volozhin zt”l teaches that tzitzis must be made with the proper kavanah because life is all about our intentions. The best of actions can deteriorate into evil when the original intentions were not pure. On the other hand, the seemingly simplest of strings can help us remember who we are and where we are going.

A GUTTEN SHABBOS AND A GUTTEN CHODESH

HALACHA OF THE WEEK 5778

PARSHAS SHELACH

BY RABBI YAAKOV FEITMAN

KEHILLAS BAIS YEHUDAH TZVI

With schools ending soon, we become full-time parents again, at least until camp starts. It is therefore a good time to review some chinuch Halachos regarding parental obligations toward children.

Question: Is there an obligation to stop or reprimand a child who is transgressing a Halacha?

Answer: The Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chaim 343:2) writes that “if a child is eating non-kosher food Bais Din is not obligated to stop him. The Rama adds that if he has reached the “age of chinuch” we are obligated stop him. Although the Shulchan Aruch uses the term Bais Din, it is clear from the Gemara (Yevamos 114a) that this refers to every Jew who sees such an action. The age for stopping a child from transgressing an issur d’oreisa such as eating tref food is younger than the age for teaching him to perform mitzvos. For restraining him from a *lo saaseh*, a negative prohibition, the age of “understanding” is 3 years old. That being said, when it comes to eating non-kosher foods, there is another consideration which causes us to try to stop all children, no what the age. This is the fact that treif foods “contaminate the soul” (*timtum ha’lev*) and can cause r”l great problems for the child later in life. The Pri Chodosh (Yoreh Deah 81:26) warns that “in our days since people are not careful about these matters, most of the children go off the derech and become the impudent people of the generation.” We should therefore be very careful during the summer that children eat only that which is absolutely kosher.

Question: I keep the zman of Rabbeinu Tam after Shabbos. Must I impose this upon my young children who are under bar and Bas Mitzvah but over the age of chinuch?

Answer: No. Children must keep basic halachos but not necessarily chumros (stringencies) which are not kept by many in Klal Yisrael (Piskei Teshuvos Hilchos Shabbos, page 947, note 107).

Question: Is a parent obligated to pay for damage done by his young child, such as if he broke a window playing ball?

Answer: If it was just an accident and the parent was not negligent (such as giving a child something unusually dangerous or hazardous), there is technically no responsibility (Pischei Choshen, Nezikin 5:7). However, for chinuch purposes the child should be made to pay “something” to learn responsibility Shvus Yaakov 1:177). One major Posek (Sefer Chassidim 692) holds that the child should pay the *entire* damage when he grows up.

Question: When we are on vacation without an eruv, may I have my young son or daughter carry for me?

Answer: This is the subject of a major machlokes Rishonim. The Shulchan Aruch (343:13) seems to be machmir, but the Biur Halacha cites a number of Rishonim who are lenient. The Taz (346:6) and Shoel Umeishiv (3:117) hold that for a mitzvah such as carrying the siddur etc. it is permissible. The Chasam Sofer (6:13) holds that this may be done occasionally but it should not be done regularly. All of this applies only on most of our streets which are not a Reshus Harabbaim d’oreisa, but in Manhattan and other large cities, it may be a d’oreisa and is forbidden (Pischei Teshuvos page 952).

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