

TORAH WEEKLY

ט"ב

23 June – 29 June, 2019
20 Sivan – 26 Sivan, 5779
Torah: Numbers 13:1-15:41
Haftorah: Joshua 2:1-24
PARSHAT SHLACH

CALENDARS

We have Jewish Calendars. If you would like one, please send us a letter and we will send you one, or ask the Rabbi / Chaplain to contact us.

FAMILY PROGRAMS

Do you have family on the outside struggling? Please contact or have them contact our office to learn more about our family programs. You and they are not alone, we are here to help.

GRAPE JUICE & MATZAH

We offer free Grape Juice and Matzoh for you to be able to make the blessings every Shabbos. Please have your chaplain / Rabbi contact us to enroll (available to all prisons).

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HEADS UP! Perspective: what a difference it can make. How we look, where we look and the way we look at things always colors our impressions.

In this week's Parshah, the word ur'eetem--"and you shall see"--occurs twice. The first is at the beginning of the Parshah, in the story of the spies sent by Moses to investigate the Promised Land; and the second time is at the very end, in the chapter on the mitzvah of tzitzit. In the first verse, Moses instructs the spies "And you shall see the land, what is it... are the people strong or weak... is the land fertile or lean... are the cities open or fortified?" In the second verse, we are commanded to place tzitzit--fringes--on the corners of our garments and told: "And you shall look upon it and remember all the commandments of G-d, and fulfill them." The same word, ur'eetem, is used both times; yet look at the stark contrast between these two chapters. The first time, with the spies, it turned tragic. Their negative report of the land caused the people to reject the Divine promise; their cries of fear and despair caused G-d to decree that that day would become a time of "weeping for generations." Indeed, it was Tisha B'Av, and the resulting 40-year delay in entering Israel was to be the first of many national calamities to befall our people on that same day. On the other hand, the second instance of the word ur'eetem in our Parshah is a positive one: looking at the fringes is a way to remember all G-d's commandments and to observe a G-dly life.

It all depends on how we look at things. It all comes down to where we go looking. To see the land as the Spies saw it is to see earthiness, a materialistic perspective. To see the tzitzit is to gaze at a mitzvah of G-d, a heavenly perspective.

Ever watch an army of ants at work? Isn't it fascinating how they march in a straight line? Such disciplined workers, it is quite amazing. Ants, you see, have one-dimensional vision. That's why they follow their noses and the guy right in front of them. They have no peripheral vision and therefore no distractions from their single-minded, though limited, perspective.

I remember a farbrengen (Chassidic gathering) in yeshiva in Montreal when I was a student. Reb Velvel Greenglass, the mashpia and mentor (may he be well) was waxing lyrical on the difference between a human

being and an animal. The animal was created in a horizontal line. The cow, naturally, looks downward, at the grass. Munching grass is its full-time occupation. All a cow thinks about all day is its food. Ever see a cow looking up at the sky and pondering the meaning of life? Human beings, however, were created in a vertical orientation. It is much easier for humans to look upward, to contemplate that which is higher and more meaningful. (I guess that's why the chimps and baboons that stand vertically think they are ganzte menschen.)

To be people of vision we must look upward. There is a higher purpose to life. There is a deeper meaning to what meets the eye. The whole of Kabbalah and mysticism is based on the principle of the metaphysical. This fundamental principle is that there is not only the self-evident body but also the invisible soul; not only the universe but also a cosmic plan and a profound reason for every experience in life, whether it be obvious to us or not. If we only look at the land, at that which is earthly and material, the world is crass and careless, helter-skelter and hollow. But when we raise our sights and lift our heads heavenward, we see so much more. When we utilize our unique human mind power and spiritual potential, we can better discern the wood from the trees, the lofty from the low. The Sages of the Talmud noted that by looking at the tzitzit, we not only see the commandments of G-d but we discover G-d Himself. Hence the singular ur'eetem oto, rather than the plural ur'eetem otam. I guess, where you look always determines what you find.

by Rabbi Yossy Goldman

NEW AND IMPROVED With increased government involvement in failing industries, we are hearing a lot about companies "reinventing themselves." The ad campaigns tout the redesigned, leaner and meaner corporate model. Many advertise their revamp by boldly adding the word "new" to their familiar corporate name. What, if any, substantive changes have actually been made will only be discovered in the future. So what does the Torah say about renaming products: Is it remarkable or just marketing? Perhaps a one-liner uttered by Moses in advance of the debacle of the spies sheds some light.

June 25, 2019 22 Sivan, 5779

Miriam Quarantined (1312 BCE). Miriam, the elder sister of Moses and Aaron, was afflicted with tzaraat (leprosy) after speaking negatively of Moses, and was quarantined outside of the camp for seven days--as related in Numbers 12

June 26, 2019 - 23 Sivan, 5779

Jeroboam Barricades Jerusalem (797 BCE). After King Solomon's passing in 797 BCE, 10 of the 12 tribes of Israel, led by Jeroboam ben Nebat of the tribe of Ephraim, rebelled against Solomon's son and heir, Rehoboam. The Holy Land split into 2 kingdoms: the "Kingdom of Israel" in the north, with Jeroboam as its king and the city of Samaria as its capital; and the southern "Kingdom of Judah" with its capital Jerusalem, where Rehoboam ruled over the two tribes (Judah and Benjamin) that remained loyal to the royal house of David. The spiritual center of the land, however, remained Jerusalem, where the Holy Temple built by Solomon stood, and where every Jew was obligated to make a thrice-yearly pilgrimage for the festivals of Passover, Shavuot & Sukkot. Seeing this as a threat to his sovereignty, Jeroboam set up, on Sivan 23 of that year, roadblocks to prevent the people's pilgrimage to Jerusalem, introducing instead the worship of two idols, in the form of gold calves, which he enshrined on the northern and southern boundaries of his realm.

The barricades remained in place for 223 years, until Hoshea ben Elah, the last king of the Northern Kingdom, had them removed on the 15th of Av of 574 BCE. By then, the 10 tribes residing there were already being expelled from the land in a series of invasions by various Assyrian and Babylonian kings. The last of these occurred in 556 BCE, when Shalmaneser of Assyria completely conquered the Kingdom of Israel, destroyed its capital, exiled the last of the Israelites residing there, and resettled the land with foreign peoples from Kutha and Babylon. These peoples -- later known as the "Samaritans" -- assumed a form of Judaism as their religion, but were never accepted as such by the Jewish people; they subsequently built their own temple on Mount Gerizim and became bitter enemies of the Jews. The "Ten Lost Tribes of Israel" were never heard from again, and await the coming of the Moshiach to be reunited with the Jewish people.

Passing of R. Yaakov Pollack (1525). R. Yaakov Pollack served as rabbi first in Prague and then in Cracow. In Cracow he established a large yeshiva that attracted thousands of students. R. Yaakov devised a new method of Talmudic study known as pilpul, with the goal of stimulating the intellectual abilities of his students. Although many scholars of subsequent generations opposed this method, R. Yaakov succeeded in bringing about a renewal of Talmudic study in Poland, which became a major Torah center for the next four centuries.

When the twelve spies are ready to be dispatched in advance of the Children of Israel's entry into the land, Moses senses something is amiss. Eager to protect his protégé, Hoshea, from the spies' harmful designs, Moses blesses him: "May G-d rescue you [from the plot of your colleagues]." Moses employs a mystical technique to effectuate this blessing. He changes Hoshea's name, adding a yud prefix; his name is now Yehoshua (Joshua). Chassidic thought is flush with commentary on the indicative aspect of names. What you're named is who you are. So Moses' name change is an effective technique to reconfigure his student's identity. The newly redesigned Joshua is not merely a repackaged Hoshea, he is transformed, a new person, as a result of the name change. He is protected from the seduction of fear that sinks the others. There seems to be an obvious question: Moses is suspicious, so he blesses Hoshea, changing his name and uplifting him. Why not simply change all the spies' names and thus protect each of them and, by extension, all of the Jewish people? Is Moses playing favorites with his prized student? But it is because Hoshea has developed an intense relationship with Moses that he is receptive to this name-changing/essence-altering blessing. Would Moses similarly bless all of the spies, it would not make any difference. They have not readied themselves to receptivity. They have not logged the time with Moses that Hoshea has. Herein lies the key of effective blessing (transformation) via name change. Like rain, a blessing bears fruits on cultivated fields.

The fifth Chabad-Lubavitch Rebbe, Rabbi Shalom DovBer, once denied a chassid a blessing (!). Distraught, the man crumpled in tears. And then the Rebbe blessed him, explaining that the blessing would only have significance after the petitioner had done the introspection that made him eligible for divine assistance. Simply hearing a blessing is not the same as being blessed, and simply declaring a product improved is not the same as improving it. Titles must reflect change, not be the change. Simple proclamations such as "I try harder" or "We are the new (fill in the blank) company" that are not predicated on substantive enrichment are catchy yet vapid. A new name can be a source of a new attitude or fresh start only when it is the result of genuine transformation. Joshua's yud addition is effective because of the hard work he has invested—it is due more to Joshua's efforts than to Moses' sanctity. We are similarly on the threshold of Israel, waiting to go in, as we were in Joshua's time. We have paid our dues and developed our brand: "The Jewish People." It's time to change one letter to reflect our achievements, adding an aleph to golah ("exile") and transforming it into geulah ("redemption")!

By Rabbi Baruch Epstein