



When the tailor died at a ripe old age, his passing didn't attract any special attention. Yet his funeral was most unusual for an ordinary tailor, for the Chief Rabbi of Lemberg himself led the funeral procession all the way to the cemetery. And of course, as the Chief Rabbi led the procession all the Jews of the town joined in giving the final honors to the deceased. The result was a funeral the likes of which is normally reserved for great rabbis or tzadikim.

The Jews of Lemberg had no doubt that the tailor had been a person of extraordinary merit, and they waited anxiously to hear what a wonderful eulogy the Chief Rabbi would give at the funeral. They were not disappointed when the rabbi told them the following tale:

Many years before, the rabbi had spent Shabbat at a village inn. The innkeeper related a story about a Jewish jester who lived in the mansion of the local poretz, the landowner of all the surrounding area. This jester had once been a simple, but G-d-fearing Jew, who by profession was a tailor. On a number of occasions he had done work for the poretz, and as he was an entertaining man with a beautiful singing voice, and very funny, the poretz and his family became very fond of his company. They finally asked him to join their household in the capacity of a jester, which was common in those days. He accepted, and slowly began to neglect his Jewish observance, until he no longer conducted himself as a Jew at all. The innkeeper felt very sorry for this Jew, and both he and the rabbi expressed their deep wishes for his return to the fold.

That Friday afternoon, just before Shabbat a man came galloping up to the inn and requested to spend the Shabbat there. To their surprise the horseman was none other than the Jewish jester, who explained that he had come in order to gather material for his jokes and spoofs.

The innkeeper was afraid to refuse, and so agreed to have the jester as a guest. At the Shabbat table the rabbi spoke about the Torah portion and described how both Terach, Abraham's idol-worshipping father, and Ishmael, Abraham's unruly son, repented and were forgiven by G-d.

"Words that come from the heart penetrate the heart," is the saying, and the words of the rabbi affected the Jewish jester, who became more and more thoughtful as Shabbat progressed. By Saturday night the jester so deeply regretted his life, that he approached the rabbi, and asked how he could do penance. The rabbi told him to leave his position with the poretz and withdraw for a time into a life of prayer, meditation and fasting. He should maintain this regime until such time when he would receive a sign from heaven that his repentance was accepted.

The jester accepted this advice wholeheartedly. He went to Lemberg where he entered a large synagogue and made an arrangement with the caretaker. According to their deal he would be locked in a small room where he would spend the entire day in prayer. At night before locking up, the caretaker would release him so that he might eat a little and stretch out for the night on a bench. Only on Friday night in honor of the Shabbat would he leave the synagogue to spend the day more comfortably.

This routine continued for many weeks until one Friday night the caretaker forgot to release him. The heartbroken tailor was now sure that G-d had forsaken him, and he wept bitterly. Hungry and tired, he fell into a deep sleep and dreamt. In the dream an old man appeared to him, and told him, "I am Elijah the Prophet, and I came to tell you that your teshuva has been accepted. Fast no longer. Every night I will come and teach you Torah, Torah such as only the righteous merit to learn."

The tailor opened a small shop and made a modest living. Late one night the Chief Rabbi passed his home and saw a bright light coming from the window. But when he entered, he saw only the tailor working by the light of a small candle. This happened two more times, and each time the rabbi found only a small candle illuminating the tailor's room.

The third time the rabbi pressed the tailor for an explanation, and was told all that had transpired since they had met at the village inn. The tailor also related that the prophet had told him that no inhabitant of the village would die as long as he lived.

The following day the rabbi instructed the local burial society to inform him every time there was a death in the city. True to the prophesy, each time there was a death, the deceased was not a resident, but someone who happened to be passing through. The rabbi concluded his strange tale, admonishing the townspeople that the power of teshuva is unlimited, and no matter what, G-d is always waiting for His children to return.

THOUGHTS THAT COUNT

on the weekly Torah portion

And what the land is...where there are trees or not (Num. 13:20)

When the Canaanites living in the Land of Israel heard that the Jews had left Egypt and were on their way, they uprooted and destroyed all the fruit trees in the land so that the Jews would not benefit from them. This was one of the things the spies were sent to investigate. (Midrash Raba)

And G-d spoke to Moses saying: Send out some men to spy out the land of Canaan (Num. 13:1, 2)

According to Rashi, "send out" means "send according to how you see fit." The Hebrew word for send--shelach--implies a sense of mission and purpose. Every Jew is entrusted with a Divine mission to transform his surroundings into a "Land of Israel," by bringing the light of Torah and mitzvot to even the most remote and isolated locations. This mission, moreover, must be accomplished "according to how we see fit." G-d has given man intelligence to be utilized to that end. (Lubavitcher Rebbe)

That you may look upon it and remember all the commandments of G-d (Num. 15:39)

Why do we need a large tallit to pray if we can remember the commandments by looking at the tzitzit, the fringes which are already attached to our tallit katan, the four-cornered undergarment worn under the clothes? A tallit totally envelopes the individual and symbolizes that which cannot be understood or encompassed by the human mind. It reminds us that the 613 mitzvot of the Torah stem from a source far greater than mere human understanding. (Likutei Sichot)

That you shall not seek after your heart and after your eyes (Num. 15:39)

Why does heart come before eyes? Do not the eyes first see and then the heart desires that which is forbidden? Sometimes the process works in the other direction as well: an individual first gets an urge to sin and then looks around where he shouldn't to fulfill that urge. (Lubavitcher Rebbe)

8:12 Candle Lighting Time

NY Metro Area
24 Sivan / June 20
Torah Portion Shelach
Ethics Ch 3
Shabbat ends 9:21 pm



בס"ד

1878

24 Sivan, 5785

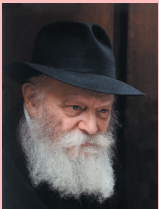
June 20, 2025

The Weekly Publication
for Every Jewish Person

יוסף תרומה השלושים

Dedicated to the memory of Rebbetzin Chaya Mushka Schneerson
(Our help is in the name of the Lord, Who made heaven and earth" (Psalms 124:8)

L'Chaim



LIVING WITH THE REBBE

from the teachings of the Rebbe
on the Torah portion

In this week's Torah portion, Shelach, we read about the report of the spies whom Moses sent to explore the Land of Israel. The reaction of the Jewish people to the spies' negative report was immediate: "Our wives and children will surely be taken captive by the strong people living there. Let us appoint a new leader and go back to Egypt." G-d, therefore, decreed that they would not be allowed to enter the Land. "But your children, of whom you said 'they will become prey,' them I will bring in, and they will know the land you have despised." The children, the younger generation, will be the ones to enter Israel, G-d promises.

Why is there such an emphasis on the children in this dialogue? Because the children play such a crucial role, as we see.

Concerning young children our Sages comment: "A baby breaks into crumbs more than he manages to eat." This means that a young child utilizes only a small portion of the food he is given, while most of it ends up on the floor.

This can also be understood spiritually: A baby - someone with little wisdom and understanding, wastes most of his 'food' - Torah opportunities, and they lie as "crumbs on the floor." Yet an adult - one who is wise, devotes the major portion of his life to doing mitzvot and fulfilling his mission in life.

This, in fact, was the claim made by the spies: "Why must we enter the Land of Israel and waste our precious time involving ourselves with physical matters? Here in the desert where all our physical needs are miraculously met, we can devote ourselves totally to learning Torah. For even if we will have time to learn once we enter the Land, most of our day will be wasted! It is far better to stay in the desert than to lower ourselves to that level!" they claimed.

To which G-d responded, "Your children ... will be the ones to inherit." For the job of a Jew, the purpose G-d created us for, is not to absorb ourselves solely with the spiritual, as these Jews wanted to do. It is to pursue a different path, working hard to provide the physical necessities of life, while at the same time imbuing our surroundings with G-dliness and holiness.

The Torah learning of young children is also especially dear to G-d. "The learning of little children may not be disturbed, even to build the Holy Temple!" we are told. Their pure faith and belief in G-d has the power to arouse G-d's mercy and foil the evil plans of the enemies of the Jewish people.

Dance to the Beat of Creativity

By Rabbi Yosef Y. Jacobson

TWELVE JEWS ON A MISSION

This week's portion, Shelach, tells the story of 12 men who were dispatched by Moses from the desert to go and survey the Land of Canaan. The purpose of their journey was to prepare the Jewish people for the subsequent settlement of the Land.

Upon discharging the spies on their mission, Moses presented them with a list of questions they needed to answer. When the twelve spies returned they presented to the people a report of their findings.

"We arrived at the Land," the spies said, "and indeed it flows with milk and honey and this is its fruit. But the people that dwell in the land are powerful, the cities are greatly fortified and we also saw the offspring of the giants. We cannot ascend to that people for it is too strong for us," they proclaimed.

The report demoralized the Jewish nation and drained it of the motivation to enter the Land. As a result, the spies died, and much of the generation died in the desert, never making it into the Promised Land. Only 39 years later, in the year 1276 B.C.E., did the children and grandchildren of this generation cross the borders and settle in the Promised Land.

KILL THE MESSENGER?

One of the many questions raised by biblical commentators concerns the reason for the spies being condemned to punishment. Moses gave them a detailed list of questions about the Land; he

instructed them to make their own observations as to what will await the people upon their arrival.

Why were the men faulted for relating what they had seen? Is this not a case of "kill the messenger?"

INTRODUCING PARALYSIS

The answer is that if the spies did more than merely relate to Moses and to the people the reality of the situation as they saw it. They used the difficulties they observed as an excuse to capitulate in the face of fear.

The spies are condemned for substituting the legitimate and important question "How will we do it?" with the despairing and helpless conclusion, "We can never do it!"

CONQUERING YOUR DARKNESS

Each of us has a domain in our life that needs to be conquered. We must confront challenges within our psyches, our marriages, and our families. Since these challenges can be frightening, we are naturally tempted to believe that we are incapable of overcoming our darkness and we surrender to the obstacles.

The story of the spies is our personal story. My trauma tells me, "I can't," but with lots of empathy and faith in my inner Divine self, I can discover a deeper untarnished, unfearful core that has the power to say: I can, and I will; now let me figure out how. I want to dance to the beat of creativity and connection, not despair to the beat of survival and loneliness.

Ask not "whether," but rather "how."

