

INSIGHTS

Into The Weekly Parsha

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Based on the Torah of our Rosh HaYeshiva HaRav Yochanan Zweig

PARSHAS SHELACH

Mob Mentality

These are the names of the men whom Moshe sent to spy out the land. And Moshe called Hoshea son of Nun "Yehoshua" (13:16).

This week's *parsha* opens with the infamous incident of the twelve spies who were sent to explore Eretz Yisroel. The spies conspired to convey a very grim interpretation of what they observed during their forty day journey. This led to Bnei Yisroel questioning whether or not going into Eretz Yisroel was a good idea, which inexorably ended with Hashem's decreeing that Bnei Yisroel should wander the desert for forty years. This incident also led to the ninth day of Av being marked as a day of tragedy for all future generations.

Only two of the original twelve spies refused to participate in the conspiracy of the others. Rashi cites the Gemara (*Sotah* 34b), which explains that Calev ben Yefunah traveled to Chevron to pray at the tombs of the patriarchs that he would not be ensnared in the plot of the others. Rava (ad loc) says that Moshe added a letter to Hoshea's name (a letter "yud" making his name Yehoshua, and creating Hashem's name with the first two letters) so that his name could be understood as meaning "Hashem should save you from the scheme of the spies."

Why did Moshe only see fit to pray for Yehoshua? At the very least he could have also prayed for Calev, the other spy who didn't participate in the plot.

This very same question seems to be bothering Targum Yonasan ben Uziel. The Targum comments on this very verse (13:16); "When Moshe saw his

humility, he changed his name from Hoshea to Yehoshua."

Yehoshua was on a very high level and clearly was the greatest of all the heads of the tribes. He shadowed Moshe and was permitted to go on Mount Sinai where others were not. He also eventually succeeded Moshe Rabbeinu as leader of Bnei Yisroel and, as Rashi points out (*Devarim* 31:29), as long as Yehoshua was alive Moshe felt as if he himself was alive. Yet, Moshe saw Yehoshua's humility as a potential problem. Why? As we saw in last week's *parsha* (12:3), Moshe himself was the most humble person on the face of the earth! What was the problem with Yehoshua's humility?

Moshe was concerned that Yehoshua's humility would prevent him from taking a stand against the other spies. The principal character trait of someone being modest and humble is the understanding that other people see things that he doesn't and that their perspective has some validity. Moshe was concerned that Yehoshua would be complicit with the other spies because his humility would prevent him from condemning them outright.

Moshe himself had been vested with the responsibility of leading the Jewish people. Leadership requires making decisions that you feel are proper regardless of what others may think or say. Therefore, his responsibility to act in the best interest of Bnei Yisroel



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superseded his humility and it was thus not detrimental to his leadership ability.

On the other hand, Yehoshua had not yet been chosen to be the leader of the Jewish people. Hence, his humility could possibly prevent him from taking a stand against them, so Moshe felt compelled to *daven* for Yehoshua.

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WYSIWYG

Speak to Bnei Yisroel and say to them that they shall make themselves tzitzis on the corners of their garments [...] And they shall place upon the tzitzis of each corner a thread of turquoise. It shall then constitute tzitzis for you and you shall see it and you shall remember all the commandments of Hashem [...] (15:38-39).

This week's *parsha* ends with the instructions to make *tzitzis* on our garments. This *mitzvah* is so precious and significant that all five verses have been incorporated as the final paragraph of the *shema*, which is said twice daily. Rashi (ad loc) says that the *mitzvah* of *tzitzis* reminds us of all the *mitzvos* in the Torah because the numerical value of the word *tzitzis* is 600 and there are 8 strings and 5 knots on every corner, equaling 613 – the number of *mitzvos* that Bnei Yisroel have to perform.

Tosfos (*Menachos* 39a) points out, that in actuality, the Torah spells the word *tzitzis* without the second “*yud*.” This renders the numerical value of the word *tzitzis* as 590 – not 600 as Rashi claims. Incredibly, Tosfos goes on to explain that the third instance of the word *tzitzis* has the letter “*lamed*” in front of it; if one divides the numerical value of 30 into the occurrences of the word *tzitzis* then we have an extra ten for each and we are back at Rashi’s calculation of 600 as the numerical value of *tzitzis*. This Tosfos seems almost surreal; Tosfos doesn’t usually give us far fetched explanations that sound like something made up by a

school child. What does Tosfos mean?

Remarkably, for something that is repeated twice every day of our lives, most of us fail to see that the simple translation of these verses do not seem to make sense: “*they shall make themselves tzitzis on the corners of their garments [...] And they shall place upon the tzitzis of each corner a thread of turquoise. It shall then constitute tzitzis.*” What does the Torah mean they shall make *tzitzis* on the corners of their garments, then add a turquoise thread on the corner, and only then it shall constitute *tzitzis*? We already made it *tzitzis* in the first part of the verse! What does the Torah mean that after we add the *techeles* then it shall be *tzitzis*?

Rashi (15:38) says that the word *tzitzis* has two meanings; the first meaning is tassels. By adding threads to the corner we now have tassels on each corner. The second explanation of *tzitzis* is to peer; as *tzitzis* are something to look at, as the *possuk* says; “and you shall look at it” (15:39). Rashi is giving us an incredible clue on how these *pesukim* are to be read: You should put *tzitzis* on each

corner of your garment. Now you have tassels on each corner known as *tzitzis*.

But that isn’t enough. When you add the blue thread you are changing the essence of the *tzitzis* from merely tassels on a garment to something that you gaze at. As the Talmud (*Menachos* 43b) teaches, “The color blue is similar to the sea, which is like the clear blue sky, which is the color of the God’s heavenly throne.” In other words, gazing at the *techeles* reminds us of Hashem and, presumably, our obligation to keep all His *mitzvos*. Adding the *techeles* changes the very essence of the *tzitzis*.

This is what Tosfos is telling us. The third occurrence of the word *tzitzis*, which follows adding the *techeles* to each corner, refers to the change of the very essence of the *tzitzis* from tassels to something to gaze at to remind us of all the *mitzvos*. That’s why the “*lamed*” that precedes it is divided with the other two to give each one a value of 600. Coupled with each one’s 8 strings at 5 knots gives us 613, which, as the *possuk* so clearly states; “*you will see them and be reminded of all the mitzvos of Hashem.*”

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