

## The Grasshopper Mindset

### TIFERES SHLOMO ON THE PARSHA

*If Hashem desires us, and He will  
bring us into this Land...*

When the spies came back from Eretz Yisrael, they succeeded in sowing fear in the hearts of Bnei Yisrael.

Yehoshua and Kalev tried to rally the faith of the Jewish people, declaring, "If Hashem desires us, and He will bring us into the Land."

Using the word "if" seems to suggest that this was subject to doubt. But since Hashem had told them that He would bring them into the Land, why should there be any room for doubt?

The Tiferes Shlomo presents a novel interpretation of these words. First, he points out that the spies were Tzaddikim, who would not speak slanderously about the Holy Land.

In truth, the spies were afraid that the prosperity of Eretz Yisrael would cause the Jewish people to forget about Hashem. This is why they brought back the bountiful fruit and described the Land as one that "devours" its inhabitants.

Kalev was telling the Jewish people that they had nothing to fear. The challenge of wealth and success did not have to take them away from Hashem.

"If Hashem desires us", can also be read as "if the desire of Hashem is within us". If we strengthen ourselves in the fear of Hashem and not get caught up in the pursuit of physical indulgence, there is not reason for fear. If the primary desire within our hearts is for Hashem and to serve Him, He will bring us into the Land.

And not only that, but ועלה נעלה וירשנו - "We will surely go up and conquer it". We will raise ourselves spiritually and conquer the temptation for material pleasure, pushing it aside to attain our true desire of serving Hashem.

We all experience challenges in our lives. Sometimes these challenges seem overwhelming and insurmountable and we give up without even trying. But is the basis for such resignation always true? Perhaps the problem is not the challenge, but our perception of it and of ourselves.

In Kislev 5717 - 1957, the Rebbe sent a letter to one of the great pioneering Chassidim in Melbourne, Reb Zalman Serebryanski. Reb Zalman had written to the Rebbe about challenges facing the fledgling community and the institutions that the Chassidim were trying to build. The Rebbe replied;

"Concerning that which you write about facing difficulties and concealments; you have certainly heard the allusion in the verse ... ונהי בעינינו כחגבים, If only those who fear Hashem ... would recognise the tremendous strengths that have been given to them, they would approach all issues with much greater courage than until now. Then automatically the difficulties and the concealments would disappear".

The Pasuk quoted in the Rebbe's response, comes from the report of the spies on their return from Eretz Yisrael found in this week's Parsha.

Hoping to scare the Jewish people and dissuade them from wanting to enter the Land, they described the mighty inhabitants whom they would have to fight, "And there we saw the Nefilim, the sons of giants". They continued ונהי בעינינו כחגבים, "And we were like grasshoppers in our own eyes and so we were in their eyes".

Rashi quotes the Midrash, which describes how the spies overheard the giant inhabitants of Eretz Yisrael saying that they had seen grasshoppers that looked like people. This explains how the Meraglim knew that they were like small grasshoppers in the eyes of the giants.

But why did they preface this by saying that we were like grasshoppers in our own eyes? This is the insightful allusion that the Rebbe was referring to in his letter.

In face of the giants, the Meraglim felt inferior and insignificant. They were insecure and felt small and weak - like grasshoppers - in their own eyes. They could not believe how they could be capable of overcoming such mighty and formidable opponents.

The Torah is hinting to us that in truth, the reason that they believed that they were like grasshoppers

in the eyes of the giants, was because "we were like grasshoppers in our own eyes".

The giants were challenging but not insurmountable. Bnei Yisrael had Hashem's assistance and possessed great strength. Their failure was not believing in themselves. It was their low self-image in the shadow of the challenge, that caused them to see the challenge as being impossible to overcome, believing that everyone else saw them as weak as well.

The Alter Rebbe teaches a similar insight. In Parshas Vaeschanan, Moshe told Bnei Yisroel that Hashem will cause them "to inherit (the land belonging to) גוים גדולים ועצומים ממך, "Nations who are greater and mightier than you".

The word ממך can also be read as "from you". The Torah is teaching that the greatness and strength of the nations which seem so overpowering, is coming from you, from your projection. You have built them up with your own insecurities, lack of faith and not knowing your true inner strengths and potential.

Instead of "growing" our opponents and magnifying our fears and challenges, we should "lower them down" by realising our potential and believing in our own strengths.

This was Yehoshua's reaction. He saw the very same formidable giants as the other spies, yet he was courageous and undeterred. Yehoshua told Bnei Yisrael not to fear them, because "their protection has departed from them and Hashem is with us".

This is an incredibly empowering lesson. Even more restrictive than the limitation placed on us by others, is the limitations we place upon ourselves. I can't do that! It's too hard! It's impossible! Look at who I am, how could I possibly achieve that?

Conquering Eretz Canaan and transforming it into Eretz Yisrael represents the overcoming of spiritual challenges.

We have to know that in this conquest, we are not grasshoppers. We are the giants and Hashem is with us. We possess tremendous inner strength from our Neshama that is a part of Hashem Himself. With these strengths, nothing can stand in our way and we can overcome any adversity.

When we advance with this perspective, knowing that we are capable and have the strength, believing in ourselves with confidence and faith, all of the difficulties and concealments will disappear.

# The Weekly Halacha Analysis

## Tzitzis on Bedsheets and Blankets

Rabbi Yonason Johnson

In the third passage of the Shema which speaks about the Mitzvah of Tzitzis, we read וראיתם אותו "and you shall see it"<sup>1</sup> (i.e. the Tzitzis). From this Pasuk, the Gemara<sup>2</sup> derives that a night-time garment (כסות לילה) is exempt from Tzitzis. This is because night is not the time of "seeing".

The meaning and application of this exemption is subject to debate by the Rishonim:

The Rosh<sup>3</sup>, learns that the obligation to place Tzitzis into a garment will depend on what type of garment it is. He defines a night-time garment as a garment that is made for wearing at night, for example pyjamas. Such a garment is exempt from Tzitzis even if it is worn during the day. Conversely, day-time clothing would be obligated in Tzitzis even when worn at night.

The Rambam<sup>4</sup> explains that the type of garment is not of consequence. What matters is when the garment is being worn. Any garment worn at night is exempt from Tzitzis, even if they are daytime clothes. Any garment worn during the day is obligated in Tzitzis, even if they are night-time clothes.

The Shulchan Aruch<sup>5</sup> brings both opinions without issuing a ruling. As such, we take the stringencies of both opinions. Therefore, Tzitzis should be placed in any 4-cornered garment worn during the day. They must also be placed in day-time clothing even when worn at night.

Concerning the Bracha however, we follow the principle of ruling leniently in cases of doubt. Therefore a Bracha is only recited when both opinions would agree on the obligation of Tzitzis i.e. a day-time garment worn during the day.

### Tzitzis on sheets

Two halachos later, the Shulchan Aruch rules that we do not put Tzitzis into sheets, even though they are worn in the morning.

Both the Shulchan Aruch Harav and the Mishna Berura observe that this ruling is in accordance with the opinion of the Rosh. According to the Rambam, since the sheet is worn during the daytime, it should be obligated in Tzitzis<sup>6</sup>.

Elya Rabbah<sup>7</sup> explains that the Shulchan Aruch's ruling is even compatible with the Rambam's opinion. He explains;

Since the beginning of (and primary) 'wearing' of a sheet is at night, it is treated as purely a

night-time use. The few hours into the morning are merely incidental. This would explain the language of the Shulchan Aruch in the continuation of this Halacha - "even though a person sleeps in them in the morning". This also explain why the Shulchan Aruch who earlier brings both opinions does not write that this law is subject to the same dispute.

This explanation takes care of the few hours we sleep-in after sunrise. But what about the Shabbos afternoon Shluff when the entire sleep is during daylight hours?

In the Siddur<sup>8</sup>, the Alter Rebbe appears to agree with this distinction between a blanket used for a daytime sleep and for a night-time one. In his Shulchan Aruch the Alter Rebbe discusses a cover with which one sleeps also in the morning. But in the Siddur, the Alter Rebbe refers to a cover with which one covers themselves when sleeping in the day.

There is another dispute among the Rishonim on this topic:

The Mordechai<sup>9</sup> exempts all sheets and blankets. He distinguishes between a garment with which one covers themselves in a manner of wearing and a sheet/blanket which one merely covers themselves with, or spreads over themselves. However, Tosfos<sup>10</sup> rules that there is no such distinction.

### The Alter Rebbe's ruling

The Alter Rebbe, based on the Magen Avraham<sup>11</sup> rules that if the sheet or blanket is made of wool, one of the corners should be rounded to exempt it from Tzitzis according to all opinions. This is also the ruling of the Mishna Berura.

The rationale of this ruling to be strict with woollen blankets but lenient with other fabrics is based on a combination of leniencies and doubtful cases. Whilst we generally do not act leniently in each individual case, we do so when they come in combination. In this case we combine the following opinions and rulings:

- The view of the Rosh that a night-time garment is exempt from Tzitzis even if worn in the day.
- The view of the Mordechai who rules that since sheets and blankets are not 'worn' they are exempt from Tzitzis.
- The view of the Rif and Rambam that only a woollen or linen garment is obligated in Tzitzis Min Hatorah (other materials are only obligated Rabbinically).

In the Siddur, the Alter Rebbe rules that one should round a corner of the blanket (Koldra) which one uses to cover themselves during the day. Here the Alter Rebbe does not distinguish between wool and other types of materials.

### In practise

Despite the rulings of the Shulchan Aruch Harav and Mishna Berura, there are Poskim who rule that common practice does not follow the Magen Avraham<sup>12</sup>. This is also the ruling of Aruch Hashulchan who is lenient even with woollen sheets.

There are Poskim<sup>13</sup> who rule that even according to the stricter opinion, there is no question of having to require Tzitzis (or to round-off of a corner) on a puffy blanket such as an eider-down or doona. They argue that due to the thickness of the stuffing, the corner is already considered 'rounded'.

Even though the quilt cover itself is flat and has 4 corners, it too would be exempt. This is because the quilt cover is *Batel* to the doona which it covers<sup>14</sup>.

It should also be noted that even the stringent opinions refer to sheets with which one covers themselves. Sheets which a person lies on top of are exempt according to all opinions. Neither of these leniencies would apply to flat top-sheets or flat blankets with 4 corners.

Whilst common practice even amongst G-d-fearing individuals is not to round the corners of blankets which are used also during the day, scrupulous individuals would do so. There is strong basis, especially for those who follow the rulings of the Alter Rebbe to be stringent, especially for blankets which are made of wool. But before taking out your scissors, please check with your local Rov<sup>15</sup>.

1. Bamidbar 15:39
2. Menachos 43a
3. Hilchos Tzitzis Simon 1
4. Hilchos Tzitzis 3:7-8
5. OC 18:1
6. See Hagahos Maimonios in the name of R' Eliah.
7. 18:4
8. Hilchos Tzitzis ד"ה מלבושים שלנו
9. Hilchos Tzitzis Simon 941
10. Menachos 41a ד"ה תכלת
11. OC 18:3
12. Mor Uketzia 18, Eshel Avraham Butshash 18. The Chazon Ish was personally stringent but wrote that those who are lenient have on what to rely.
13. Eshel Avraham Butshash 18
14. Shu"t Hisorerer Teshuvah 1:9
15. See Siddur Rabbeinu Hazakein (Raskin) Milumim Simon 7 for a possible justification for the general lenient approach on this issue.

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