

**Fill Your Own Cup**

**Parshat Shelach - On Grasshoppers, Self Confidence, and Fringes**

**1) Numbers 13:1-3, 25-33, 14:1-10**

<sup>1</sup> God spoke to Moses, saying,  
<sup>2</sup> "Send men to scout the land of Canaan, which I am giving to the Israelite people; send one man from each of their ancestral tribes, each one a chieftain among them."  
<sup>3</sup> So Moses, by God's command, sent them out from the wilderness of Paran, all the men being leaders of the Israelites.  
 ...  
<sup>25</sup> At the end of forty days they returned from scouting the land.  
<sup>26</sup> They went straight to Moses and Aaron and the whole Israelite community at Kadesh in the wilderness of Paran, and they made their report to them and to the whole community, as they showed them the fruit of the land.  
<sup>27</sup> **This is what they told him: "We came to the land you sent us to; it does indeed flow with milk and honey, and this is its fruit.**  
<sup>28</sup> **However, the people who inhabit the country are powerful, and the cities are fortified and very large; moreover, we saw the Anakites there.**  
<sup>29</sup> Amalekites dwell in the Negeb region; Hittites, Jebusites, and Amorites inhabit the hill country; and Canaanites dwell by the Sea and along the Jordan."  
<sup>30</sup> Caleb hushed the people before Moses and said, "Let us by all means go up, and we shall gain possession of it, for we shall surely overcome it."  
<sup>31</sup> **But the men who had gone up with him said, "We cannot attack that people, for they are stronger than us."**  
<sup>32</sup> **And they spread defamatory statements about the land they had scouted among the Israelites, saying, "The country that we traversed and scouted is one that devours its settlers. All the people that we saw in it are men of great size;**  
<sup>33</sup> **we saw the Nephilim there—the Anakites are part of the Nephilim—and we looked like grasshoppers to ourselves, and so we must have looked to them."**

**Chapter 14**

<sup>1</sup> The whole community broke into loud cries, and the people wept that night. <sup>2</sup> All the Israelites railed against Moses and Aaron. "If only we had died in the land of Egypt," the whole community shouted at them, "or if only we might die in this wilderness! <sup>3</sup> Why is God taking us to that land to fall by the sword? Our wives and children will be carried off! It would be better for us to go back to Egypt!" <sup>4</sup> And they said to one another, "Let us head back for Egypt."  
<sup>5</sup> Then Moses and Aaron fell on their faces before all the assembled congregation of the Israelites. <sup>6</sup> **And Joshua son of Nun and Caleb son of Jephunneh, of those who had scouted the land, rent their clothes** <sup>7</sup> **and exhorted the whole Israelite community:**

**במדבר יג: א-ג, כה – לג, יד: א-י**

וַיְדַבֵּר יְהוָה אֶל־מֹשֶׁה לֵאמֹר:  
 שְׁלַח־לְךָ אַנְשִׁים וַיְתַרְוּ אֶת־אֶרֶץ כְּנָעַן אֲשֶׁר־אֲנִי נֹתֵן  
 לְבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אִישׁ אֶחָד אִישׁ אֶחָד לְמִטַּה אֲבוֹתָיו  
 תִּשְׁלַחוּ כֹל נְשִׂיא בְהֵם:  
 וַיִּשְׁלַח אֹתָם מֹשֶׁה מִמִּדְבַּר פָּאֵרָן עַל־פִּי יְהוָה בְּלֵם  
 אַנְשִׁים רָאשֵׁי בְנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל הֵמָּה:  
 ...  
 וַיָּשֻׁבוּ מִתּוֹר הָאָרֶץ מִקֶּץ אַרְבָּעִים יוֹם:  
 וַיָּלְכוּ וַיַּבְּאוּ אֶל־מֹשֶׁה וְאֶל־אַהֲרֹן וְאֶל־כָּל־עֵדֶת בְּנֵי־  
 יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶל־מִדְבַּר פָּאֵרָן קְדֻשָּׁה וַיִּשְׁיִבוּ אוֹתָם דְּבַר  
 וְאֶת־כָּל־הָעֵדָה וַיִּרְאוּם אֶת־פְּרֵי הָאָרֶץ:  
 וַיְסַפְּרוּ־לוֹ וַיֹּאמְרוּ בָּאֲנֹו אֶל־הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר שְׁלַחְתָּנוּ וְגַם  
 זָבַת חֶלֶב וְדָבַשׁ הִוא וְזֶה־פְרִיָּהּ:  
 אָפֶס כִּי־עַד הָעַם הַיֹּשֵׁב בָּאָרֶץ וְהַעַרְוִים בְּצִרּוֹת גְּדֹלַת  
 מְאֹד וְגַם־יְלֵדֵי הָעֵבֶק רָאִינוּ שָׁם:  
 עַמְלֶק יֹשֵׁב בָּאָרֶץ הַנֶּגֶב וְהַחִתִּי וְהַיְבוּסִי וְהָאֲמֹרִי  
 יֹשֵׁב בְּהָר וְהַכְּנַעֲנִי יֹשֵׁב עַל־הַיַּם וְעַל יַד הַיַּרְדֵּן:  
 וַיִּהְיֶה כָּלֵב אֶת־הָעַם אֶל־מֹשֶׁה וַיֹּאמֶר עָלַי נַעֲלָה  
 וַיִּרְשָׁנוּ אֹתָהּ כִּי־יֻכַל נוֹכַח לָהּ:  
 וְהָאֲנָשִׁים אֲשֶׁר־עָלוּ עִמּוֹ אָמְרוּ לֹא נוֹכַח לַעֲלֹת אֶל־  
 הָעַם כִּי־חַזֵּק הִוא מִמֶּנּוּ:  
 וַיּוֹצִיאוּ דְבַת הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר תָּרוּ אֹתָהּ אֶל־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל  
 לֵאמֹר הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר עֲבַרְנוּ בָּהּ לְתוֹר אֹתָהּ אָרֶץ אֲכָלֶת  
 יוֹשְׁבֵיהָ הִוא וְכָל־הָעַם אֲשֶׁר־רָאִינוּ בְּתוֹכָהּ אַנְשֵׁי  
 מְדוֹת:  
 וַיִּשְׁמְעוּ רָאִינוּ אֶת־הַנְּפִילִים בְּנֵי עֵנַק מִן־הַנְּפִילִים וְנָהִי  
 כְּעֵינֵינוּ כְּחַגְבִּים וְכֵן הָיִינוּ בְּעֵינֵיהֶם:  
 וַתִּשָּׂא כָל־הָעֵדָה וַיִּתְּנוּ אֶת־קוֹלָם וַיִּבְכוּ הָעַם בְּלֵילָהּ  
 הַהִוא:  
 וַיִּלְכוּ עַל־מֹשֶׁה וְעַל־אַהֲרֹן כָּל בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיֹּאמְרוּ  
 אֲלֵהֶם כָּל־הָעֵדָה לֹא־מִתְּנוּ בָּאָרֶץ מִצְרַיִם אוֹ בַּמִּדְבַּר  
 הַזֶּה לֹא־מָתָנוּ:  
 וְלִמָּה הָיִה מָבִיא אֹתָנוּ אֶל־הָאָרֶץ הַזֹּאת לְנַפֵּל בְּחָרֶב  
 נַשְׁנוּ וְנִסְפָנוּ וַיְהִי לָבָד הַלּוֹא טוֹב לָנוּ שׁוּב מִצְרָיִמָּה:  
 וַיֹּאמְרוּ אִישׁ אֶל־אָחִיו וַתִּתְּנָה רָאשׁ וְנִשְׁבַּה מִצְרָיִמָּה:  
 וַיַּפֵּל מֹשֶׁה וְאַהֲרֹן עַל־פְּנֵיהֶם לִפְנֵי כָל־קְהַל עֵדֶת בְּנֵי  
 יִשְׂרָאֵל:  
 וַיְהִישַׁע בּוֹ־נֹון וְכָלֵב בּוֹ־יִפְנָה מִן־הַתָּרִים אֶת־הָאָרֶץ  
 קִרְטוּ בַּגְּדֵיהֶם:

**“The land that we traversed and scouted is an exceedingly good land. <sup>8</sup> If God is pleased with us, God will bring us into that land, a land that flows with milk and honey, and give it to us; <sup>9</sup> only you must not rebel against God. Have no fear then of the people of the country, for they are our prey: their protection has departed from them, but God is with us. Have no fear of them!” <sup>10</sup> As the whole community threatened to pelt them with stones, the Presence of God appeared in the Tent of Meeting to all the Israelites.**

וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֶל־כָּל־עַדְת בְּנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל לֵאמֹר הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר  
עָבְרָנוּ בָּהּ לְתוֹר אֹתָהּ טוֹבָה הָאָרֶץ מְאֹד מְאֹד:  
אִם־חִפֵּץ בָּנוּ יְהוָה וְהֵבִיא אֹתָנוּ אֶל־הָאָרֶץ הַזֹּאת  
וּנְתַנָּהּ לָנוּ אָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר־הִיא זָבַת חֶלֶב וְדָבָשׁ:  
אֲךָ בִּיהוָה אֶל־תִּמְדְּדוּ וְאַתֶּם אֶל־תִּירְאוּ אֶת־עַם  
הָאָרֶץ כִּי לַחֲמִנּוּ הֵם סָר צֶלֶם מַעֲלֵיהֶם וַיהוָה אִתָּנוּ  
אֶל־תִּירָאִים: וַיֹּאמְרוּ כָּל־הָעֵדָה לְרֹגֹם אֹתָם בְּאֲבָנִים  
וַיִּכְבֹּד יְהוָה נְרָאָה בְּאַהֲל מוֹעֵד אֶל־כָּל־בְּנֵי  
יִשְׂרָאֵל: {פ}

**2) Dr. Erica Brown, Leadership in the Wilderness; Authority and Anarchy in the Book of Numbers, Chapter 8**

The land they described was one bounded by subjective perceptions. The enemy looked insurmountable, and they saw themselves as defeated. Yet they made one more assumption based on this vision; if they felt small in their own eyes, surely the enemy would see them as insignificant. All of these assumptions were based on what they *thought* they saw. As a result, they arrived at conclusions that would result in particular actions. They influenced the group to “rail against Moses and Aaron” and decided to renege on the journey: “Let us head back for Egypt.

**3) Numbers 15:37-41**

The Lord said to Moses as follows: “Speak to the Israelite people and instruct them to make for themselves fringes on the corners of their garments throughout the ages; let them attach a cord of blue to the fringe at each corner. This shall be your fringe; look at it and recall all the commandments of the Lord and observe them, so that you do not follow your heart and eyes in lustful urge. Thus you shall be reminded to observe all My commandments and to be holy to your God. I am the Lord your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt to be your God: I, the Lord your God.”

**במדבר טו:לוז – מא**

וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל־מֹשֶׁה לֵאמֹר:  
דַּבֵּר אֶל־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאָמַרְתָּ אֲלֵיהֶם וְעָשׂוּ לָהֶם צִיצִית עַל־כַּנְּפֵי  
בְּגְדֵיהֶם לְדֹרֹתָם וְנָתַנוּ עַל־צִיצִית הַכָּנָף פִּתְיֵל תְּקָלָת:  
וְהָיָה לָכֶם לְצִיצִית וּרְאִיתֶם אֹתוֹ וּזְכַרְתֶּם אֶת־כָּל־מִצְוֹת יְיָ  
וְעָשִׂיתֶם אֹתָם וְלֹא־תִתּוּרוּ אַחֲרָי לְבַבְכֶם וְאַחֲרָי עֵינֵיכֶם  
אֲשֶׁר־אַתֶּם זֹנִים אַחֲרֵיהֶם:  
לְמַעַן תִּזְכְּרוּ וְעָשִׂיתֶם אֶת־כָּל־מִצְוֹתַי וְהִייתֶם קְדוֹשִׁים  
לֵאלֹהֵיכֶם:  
אֲנִי יְיָ אֱלֹהֵיכֶם אֲשֶׁר הוֹצֵאתִי אֶתְכֶם מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם לְהִנֹּת  
לָכֶם לֵאלֹהִים אֲנִי יְיָ אֱלֹהֵיכֶם: {פ}

**4) Rabbi Aviva Richman, Believing In Ourselves, Owning Our Inheritance, Parshat Shlah**

<https://www.hadar.org/torah-tefillah/resources/believing-ourselves-owning-our-inheritance>

The relationship of the *mitzvah* of *tzitzit* (*fringes*) to the broader story is not just one of proximity. *Tzitzit* seem to serve as a *tikkun*, antidote, to the behavior of the scouts. The Torah explains that *tzitzit* are meant to ensure we don’t “go astray” (ולא תתור), a clear allusion to the verb used to describe the scouts’ journey (לתור). And while the adjuration against going astray is often understood as prohibiting lust for what one sees or desires (going after “your heart and your eyes”), it is worth observing that the failure of the scouts does not seem to be a problem of lust. The problem was that they felt too small; they didn’t let themselves feel at home and have a sense of ownership over the promised inheritance. In their minds, the land was not for them; it was for “giants,” not “grasshoppers.”

The meaning of the thread of *tekhelet* (*blue*) in *tzitzit* may be interpreted in this vein as a response to the scouts’ sense of insecurity and inadequacy. Threads of *tekhelet* indicate something special, something that is holy to God. *Tekhelet* adorns the head of the high priest as part of the *tzitzit* headpiece, inscribed with the words “holy for God.” We know that *tekhelet* was a symbol of royalty in the ancient world. A thread of *tekhelet* on everyone’s garments in *tzitzit*, then, conveys the message that a relationship with God isn’t only for the *kohen gadol*—it is for everyone. God’s inheritance is not for someone bigger or greater than me; it is meant for me.