



PARSHAS SHELACH LECHO – LAURENCE ROSS

SCHLACH LECHO ANASHIM: Send for yourself men...

Vayaalu vanegev vayavo ad hevron (And they ascended in the South, and he came unto Hebron...) (13:22).

Rashi [see Gemorah Sotah 34b] points out that this starts in the plural and goes into the singular tense. The twelve went up, but Calev went to Hebron alone, to disassociate himself from the designs of the spies, and prostrate himself upon the burial places of the Patriarchs. It is a long and authentic tradition to seek inspiration from our fathers and forefathers, even those who passed away long ago. This might well mean cutting ourselves away from our present day companions, and instead to commune with the great ones.

Alo naaleh... afilu bashamayim (We will surely ascend...even to Heaven) (13:30); (Gem.Sotah 35a).

Even if the whole world around us is going down, and sinks as low as Nephilim, we will go higher and higher ... even up to the Heavens... We will lift up and elevate this earthly existence; we will put Heaven into it. With the spirit of G-d in us, we will conquer and we will win. Instead of Nephila (sinking low) there will be Aliyah (rising up). [adapted from Dayan Swift, Moreshet Moshe].

Alo naaleh (We will surely ascend) (13:30)

The Ostrovitzer Rebbe explains that if a rebbi were to advise a student to ascend to great spiritual heights all at once, the student would not be required to listen to him. But if the rebbi guides his students to lofty levels of greatness bit by bit, as climbing a spiritual ladder, students are obligated to listen to him. The ladder system is the ideal way to help students advance in their Torah study. Calev said 'We will surely ascend', we will attain such a level to conquer Eretz Yisroel, by climbing a spiritual ladder, one rung and then another [adapted from Aleinu L'Shabeiach, from the teachings of R. Yitzchok Zilberstein and written down by R. Moshe Zoren].

Ad-anoh yenaatzuni haam hazeh (To what point will this people anger Me?) (14:11)

R. A.Y.Barzel recalled the time that he went to consult with Rav Shach concerning an important matter. Rav Shach heard the question, began answering and fell asleep! Rav Shach's family explained to him that Rav Shach had not closed his eyes for the past two nights. There had been a desecration of Hashem's Name in the Knesset, and he had been too upset to sleep [from Rav Shach on Chumash]. Though we may not be of the level of sensitivity of Rav Shach, at least we can guard our actions and our senses to the open defilements that might be around us.

Pokeid avon avos al-banim al-shilaim v'al-ribaim (Visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third generation and unto the fourth generation) (14:18)

Sforno points out, G-d is long-suffering (containing His anger). The sins of the fathers are extended until the fourth generation. A child is only punished for his father's sins if he is guilty of the same sins, if he repeats them or adds to them. If they do not add to those sins, He will wait. If children hold fast to the evil deeds of their fathers, G-d will wait until the fourth generation. If they still do not repent by the fourth generation, their measure will be full, for then there is no hope, and they will perish. How much more so, the positive side. When a righteous son follows in the ways of a righteous father, how highly will he be rewarded for the good deeds of his father?

V'osu lohem Tzitzis (That they shall make themselves Tzitzis) (15:38)

Towards the end of the Sedra, there is the section on Tzitzis. Rashi (on 15:39) has a famous Gematria based on his calculation of the numerical total of the word Tzitzis and the number of strings and knots, to come to the number '613', to show that by doing this Mitzvah, one will thereby remember all the commandments. However, Rashi's computation is strongly challenged by Ramban (based on Gem Menachos 41b). He points out that using Rashi's method, it does not come to 613 [see Ramban there: eg the word Tzitzis he says as written in the Torah does not have a double Yod, so the word only comes to 590 and not 600, etc]. Nevertheless, even Ramban agrees that tzitzis serves as a reminder for all the commandments albeit for different reasons. Normally our 'Rebbe' is Rashi. Rashi can counter-argue. Whichever of these two greats we find more appealing in this discussion, we should be inspired to remember all the commandments.