

THE COMMON THREAD

by Rabbi Label Lam

But the men who ascended with them said, "We cannot ascend to that people for it is too strong for us!" They brought forth to the Children of Israel an evil report on the Land that they had spied out, saying, "The Land through which we have passed to spy it out, is a Land that devours its inhabitants! All the people we saw in it were huge! There we saw the Nephilim, the sons of the giant from among the Nephilim; we were like grasshoppers in our eyes, and so we were in their eyes!" (Bamidbar 13:31-33)

What does it say about the spies that they included in their report that they felt- "like grasshoppers" in "their own eyes" and in "their eyes"? What type of subjective evidence is this? How do they know how they are perceived in the eyes of the inhabitants? What does it matter? What was their tragic flaw? Maybe we can determine from the cure, from the medicine prescribed at the very end of the Parsha what was the fault, the disease at the beginning.

HASHEM said to Moshe saying: "Speak to the Children of Israel and say to them that they shall make for themselves Tzitzis on the corners of their garments, throughout their generations. And they shall place upon the Tzitzis of each corner a thread of turquoise wool. It shall constitute Tzitzis for you that you may see it and remember all the Commandments of HASHEM and perform them; and not explore after your heart and after your eyes after which you stray. So you may remember and perform all My Commandments, and be holy to your G-d. I am HASHEM your G-d, who has removed you from the Land of Egypt to be a G-d unto you; I am HASHEM. (Bamidbar 14:37-40)

It seems, the remedy involves "seeing" or "perceiving" differently. That's the part of the psyche that needs continuous prompting. Tzitzis are for all generations and for some reason are meant to remind of HASHEM's Mitzvos and that we were taken from Egypt!

This past Shevuos at a hotel program there was a symposium about "Jewish Outreach", and the floor was open for questions. A fine gentleman raised his hand and asked the ensemble of Rabbis in the front of the auditorium, "While walking home from Shul on Shabbos I sometimes see a Jewish neighbor who is involved in a garage sale. He's not doing anything related to Shabbos. What should I do Rabbis? Should I wish him a "good Shabbos" or just leave him be and walk on by?"

The Rabbis exchanged glances until one felt compelled to answer. He cleared his throat and hesitatingly said, "Let me tell you a story! A few years back I was walking in Kew Gardens in Queens on Shabbos on my way to Shul when my eyes met a man in a cherry picker high up amongst the

wires doing his work. I said to him, "good Shabbos" and a conversation ensued. Since then we have become the best of friends. He became Shomer Shabbos and now his entire family is involved in the learning and teaching of Torah." The Rabbi stopped abruptly, "That's all I'm gonna say!" The answer was clear and definitive and the audience was sufficiently impressed with the possibilities in simply wishing someone a friendly "good Shabbos", but that's not the end of the story.

Later this Rabbi who gave the answer came over and told me an amazing and curious piece of information. The fellow who asked that question was the man in the cherry picker. Amazing! How can someone forget a true historical fact like that?

The Torah tells us the very same thing, so to speak, "Don't worry about managing results! Honor the process! That's the nature of partnerships- being to you a G-d. You remember to do all the Mitzvos- what you are Commanded to do, and remember daily I took you out of Egypt. You stay focused on your job and I'll do Mine. That just may be **the common thread!** DvarTorah, Copyright © 2007 by Rabbi Label Lam and Torah.org.