

SHELACH 1981
Rabbi Joseph Radinsky

The story was told about an Englishman, a Frenchman and a Russian who were discussing what made them the happiest in the world. The Englishman said, "What makes me the happiest is when I come home on a cold day and take off my shoes in front of a hot fire and drink a cup of tea". The Frenchman said, "What makes me the happiest is when I sit down to a gourmet dinner with a bottle of wine". The Russian said, "What makes me the happiest is when I am sleeping in the middle of the night and I hear a knock on the door and it is the Secret Police who say, 'Come with me, Moshe Rabinowitz' and I turn to them and say, 'I am not Moshe Rabinowitz. He lives next door.'" Unfortunately, this is the way the world views the Jew. This last condemnation of Israel in the U.N. was ridiculous. Everyone knew that Iraq was building the atomic bomb to use against Israel. In order to save their oil supply they would say anything. Jews should realize that for most of the world we are considered fossils who have nothing really to contribute to the world, and we should stop getting in the way. We are like retired folk who should stay in the old folks home. If we come out into the real world they are going to smash us. Those people who condemn us we can understand. However, what disturbs me more is our own Jewish people who would agree with these critics. They are similar to the spies who were sent out by Moses to spy out the land. They were all great men but they had a terrible fault. They looked at others and they said, "We are in our eyes like grasshoppers, others are giants". They had no self-confidence or self-esteem. To them the Jew must always be a grasshopper. What don't they like about Begin? They don't like the fact that he is willing to stand up, that he will not curtsy and bow) and say the things the world wants to hear. It is true others may be giants but we are giants, too. Only if you have a positive attitude can you hope to survive. The generation that thought they were grasshoppers were condemned to die in the desert. Only a generation which has inner

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confidence and knows that nobody else will stand up for you can survive. We owe Begin and his government a great debt of gratitude for having the courage to do what he did. He is a grasshopper in nobody's eyes.

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Three times in the Torah it mentions the word "Ureesem". It mentions it once when Moshe told the spies "Ureesem, you shall see the land what is it". It is also mentioned at the end of this Torah portion when we refer to the Tzitzis. It says "Ureesem Uso, and you shall see it and you shall remember all the Mitzvahs of G-d". It is also mentioned a third time when Pharaoh spoke to the midwives. It says "Ureesem and you shall see the Jewish women when they are on the birthstools". Pharaoh commanded the Jewish midwives that if they would see a Jewish boy being born they should kill it, but the girls they could let live. The midwives, of course, did not comply with Pharaoh's command. "Ureesem and when they saw a Jewish child being born they did not harm him in any way." Ureesem refers to vision. It refers to seeing more than the immediate circumstances. The Jewish midwives would not give in to Pharaoh even though they could be severely punished. They were not willing to compromise the Jewish belief in the value of every life. They were going to make sure that the Jewish vision of man lived. The spies, on the other hand, did not follow Moshe's instructions. They did not see with vision. They only saw the circumstances and what the penalties could be. They did not realize what potentials lie ahead for man if they followed Jewish vision. They did not want to enter the world with it. It is our task to try to serve as an example for implementing Jewish vision in the world, to make sure that human life is always considered sacred, to promote the values contained in our Torah. This is why also it says to Ureesem and you shall see the Tzitzis. The most important part of the Tallis is not the embroidery or fabric or the silver Atarah. It is the fringes. Fringes stand for potentiality. We must look at the fringes of society. We must remember that in life there are strings attached. We must always persevere with vision, always trying to implement the ideas and ideals of our religion in life. It has taken thousands of years and still may take another thousand years, but each of us has a responsibility to implement these values as much as we can in our lifetime. We all hope and pray that these young people will do so. The story about a Rabbi who received a call from the IRS. The IRS agent asked him if he could corroborate that Mr. Goodgelt had donated \$10,000 to the Shul. The Rabbi said, "Not exactly". The agent said, "What do you mean not exactly?" The Rabbi said, "He hasn't done it yet, but I am sure once I tell him about this call he will". It is all our responsibility to try to implement the vision of our

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The prime requisite to be a Jew is to have hope. Without hope a person can no longer be a Jew spiritually. Russian Jews today have taught us all a lesson. They have taught us never to give up hope. In America today we constantly are complaining about problems for which we should really be grateful and not complain. We complain that our automobiles do not always work properly when we should be grateful that we have automobiles. We complain about our government and officials when we should be grateful that we can elect them. We complain about our schools when we should be grateful that we can approve them, etc. The people in Russia do not have what we have and yet the literature that has come out from Russian Jewry is hopeful. In America nobody who is acquainted with American literature knows that the whole theme of literature for the past 60 years has been depression and hopelessness. From Hemingway on the theme has been one of despair. We who have everything have really almost thrown it away. Our young people turn to drink and drugs because they cannot handle their problems when really they are only simple problems. The most important thing in life is our attitude towards problems. Small little problems can overwhelm and destroy us if we do not have the proper attitude, while major and serious problems will not break us if we have the right attitude. In Judaism the question is never "Should I live or not?" The question is always "How can I live better?" The question is never "Should I be a Jew or not?" but "How can I be a better Jew?" The spies when they were sent by Moshe to spy out the land were not sent to answer the question "Should we go and take the land or not?" The question they were sent to answer was "What is the best way to take it?" They mistook their mission. They asked the question which doomed them to live in the desert until that generation died out. They asked the question which brought into doubt the whole enterprise. They lost hope. When we face problems we should never say "Can I defeat this problem?" but rather "What is the best way to overcome this problem?" The spies were no longer Jewish spiritually because they were asking the wrong questions. We, in Judaism, never question the values of life. We never ask "Should we live or not?" We ask "How can we live better, how can we be better Jews?" This is the question that the Russian Jews are asking, too. They do not ask "Should we be Jewish?" as many American Jews do. They have hope for the future even though denied every kind of Jewish education.

To open a Jewish school in Russia means imprisonment or worse. Only parents can give their children instruction and even then in a limited way. Trying to practice Judaism at all will cost you your job, but the Russian Jews try to persevere and be the best Jews they can. They only ask "How can I get out of here to be a better Jew" or "If I am forced to be here, how can I be a better Jew in these circumstances?" After the spies gave their evil report the people started to cry and G-d said, "Because you started to cry for nothing on this night you will have something to cry for". This was the night of Tisha B'Av. After the people heard that they were to stay in the desert for 40 years many of them changed their minds. They now said that they would go up. Vaya Pilu "and they arrogantly went up". Moshe told them not to go but they went and they were defeated. Hope cannot spring from drugs or alcohol or because you have been shamed into doing something. It can only come from quiet inner confidence, from day to day knowing that you can cope with your problems if you will but try. One shot stabs never work. To be Jewish means to hope. To be Jewish means to find ways to cope not to give in or give up. The Rabbis say that the spies were all important men, leaders, Anoshim, but they failed for two reasons. They failed, one, because they knew that new leaders would be required in Israel and they could not fill the bill. They did not feel that they could cope not being the leaders. Two, they said that the people in the Land of Canaan were too strong. They used the word Az not the word Chazak. Az stands for idol worship. They did not think that their people could measure up to the problems of the land so instead of coping with the problems they retreated. They preferred the desert. Judaism tells us that we can cope. It gives us hope. Otherwise, we are already dead when we are living like the generation who wandered in the desert, alive but already dead. At the end of this Torah portion we learn about the Tzitzis. One might think that the most important part of the Tallis should be the silver Atarah or embroidery or the fabric, but it is not. It is the strings. Those things which we do not take seriously, which we hardly think about are the things that make us Jewish. It is the attitude of hope. Without it nothing else will work. The story about a business man who was not too well liked in town whose obituary was accidentally put in the paper. When the man read it he became irate and he called the newspaper editor and

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said, "You know that you ran my obituary today?" The editor said, "I know. Could you please tell me where you are calling from." If we do not want to be dead while we are living we should always have hope.

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In life today all too often we forget the basic underlying concept and we concentrate too much on details. When it comes to prayer the most important thing is that there is a G-d Who can hear, Who can listen. If you do not believe that there is a G-d Who can hear your prayers then you will not pray. The argument is not whether we should pray in Hebrew or English or have this prayer or that prayer. That is not the basic argument today. The basic argument today is whether to pray at all. For many people coming to synagogue is just an act of affirming their Jewishness or an act of family solidarity to celebrate a life turning event. These people do not believe that it does any good to pray to G-d. Even if He is listening He cannot do anything about it so all the arguments about how we should pray are really irrelevant. The same thing is true in this week's Torah portion when we speak about the spies. They asked the wrong questions. The word that is used here to describe their mission is "Vayasuru" "and they shall tour." In fact, it is the same as our modern English word for "tourist." They were not called upon to spy the land or bring back a report about the military fitness of the country. In fact, the questions Moshe asked were about whether it was a good land or bad land, whether the land was capable of producing rich crops or scarce crops. There is only one question that could even be interpreted as a military question, and that was if they lived in camps or open cities. The spies knew their job was not to spy out the land. Moshe did not say "Irraglu." He said "Yetoru." They were to go on a mission to Israel to bring back the people a first hand report of the land so they should be excited about it and want to enter it. Moshe, after all, could not give them a first hand report of the land. He had no first hand knowledge of it. That's why the produce of the land was stressed and whether it was a good land and whether there were trees on it, etc. According to Jewish law, a man and woman are not to marry until they see each other. The Jewish people were to be married to the land. They had to know each other first. The spies erred because they asked the wrong question. The question they were called upon to ask was, "Is this a good land?" Instead, they went with the question, "Can we

still be leaders of the Jewish people if we enter this land?" They realized right away that they could not anymore be leaders of the Jewish people. They did not have the abilities or talents needed. It says about them "Anosheem Hamo." They were man. They were leaders of Israel, but they were only fit to be leaders in the desert, in the "Galut." They did not have what it takes to be leaders in Israel. This is similar today when many Zionist leaders from America go to Israel. They stay a few months and then come right back. In Israel they are greeners. No one makes dinners for them or gives them plaques. It is only Americans who get to see the Prime Minister. Try to see him if you are only an Israeli. In Israel different skills are needed. The spies who entered the Land of Israel concluded that if they could not be leaders nobody would be leaders. After all, they were indispensable. Unfortunately, even today we find leaders who have the philosophy "Rule or ruin; I am the one who knows best and if my views do not prevail then let the institution fail." Only Kaleiv Ben Yofuna and Joshua did not concur with the report of the spies, Joshua because he was Moshe's closest confidante and student, he was Moshe's "Meshares." He stayed in the tent with Moshe. Kolehiv, though, was different than the other spies. He was "Kolehiv" "all heart." He went to visit the graves of the patriarchs. He had a vision of the future. It did not make any difference if he was the leader or not. He wanted the vision of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob to be implemented. In this same Torah portion that we learned about the spies we learn about the Tzitzis, the fringes that are put on our garments. We learn that we should look at these fringes and we should remember all the Mitzvahs of G-d and do them so that we will not turn after our hearts or our eyes. It mentions our heart before our eyes. Why is our heart mentioned first? After all, the heart is an internal organ. It is our eyes that bring us messages from the outside. However, this is not really true. We see what we want to see. I remember once more than 25 years ago when I just bought a house, a windstorm came and blew the roof off my house. On the way to work I saw all the roofs, how they were made, what color they were, etc. Before that I never saw a roof. I had no need to see. We see what is in our hearts. The vision in our hearts

is what determines what we see. Kolaiv was all heart. He understood the vision of the forefathers. He did not say only, "How could I be a leader?" He saw what was needed to be done in order for the Jewish people to settle on this good land. Tzitzis are important because they teach us about potentiality. You might think looking at the cloth garment that the garment is important, not the fringes, but the Torah is telling us that this cloth is made from these threads or fringes. It is the fringes which have potentiality, which can be made of different shapes and textures. It is up to us to always have vision, to not just see things as they are but as they could be. We must each have vision. The rabbis say that the other spies said, "Efes Keaz" "but the people are strong", but it can mean "the people of Canaan are filled with Avoda Zora, idol worship." The other leaders thought that the idol worshippers would be too strong in Canaan, and they did not want to take the people from the desert into the Land of Canaan because of it. Kolaiv knew this idol worship could be overcome, too. Leadership requires vision, what can be not just what is. Unfortunately, there are many people who lack vision. There are many people who said day schools in this country would be impossible and did not even try while others said, "We can do it and we will do it." They had vision. I am reminded of the story they tell about a man who sent his assistant to deliver a package. The assistant came back four hours later and he still had the package. The boss looked at him and said, "How come you didn't deliver the package?" He answered, "I didn't deliver the package because I couldn't find the address." The boss said, "If I would have known that I was sending a jerk, I would have gone myself." Unfortunately, there are too many people today who are acting without vision, who either want to ruin a rule or are afraid to do things positively and, unfortunately, act like jerks.

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Why did Yehoshua see this? Why
 does it say e-h could mean
 secretly or pottery merchants
 Why did Mal change Yehoshua's name
 Why like Mal did it call
 call Yehoshua Hakea old name
 Pottery only can become which name from
 inside Pot like Gold to Silver Pottery
 Casually would be what's made
 not Comb Same with human say
 what's name Comb Mal old
 Yehoshua Azak Yamah Be stay to
 suppose why? He should be stay so
 that He could make decisions all
 God to be course to be could about it
 made mistakes to go on and make see
 Lucas. Many people already they
 never want to admit

