



by Rabbi Dr Raymond Apple z"l

B'HA-ALO-T'CHA

Grasshoppers

When the delegation of spies came back from investigating the Holy Land they made a remarkable comment – remarkable in a bad, not a good way.

They said, “We looked like grasshoppers in the eyes of the inhabitants, and that’s how we seemed to ourselves” (Bamidbar 13:33).

That’s the way persuasion works: people tell you bad things about yourself, and after a while you begin to believe the criticisms.

The modern world with its tragic recrudescence of antisemitism has its own version of the grasshopper allegation. The antisemites tell us we are flawed and inferior and (God forbid) some Jews think it might be true.

The opponents of Israel smear our State with words like “apartheid” and “racist” and (God forbid) we sometimes wonder if they might not have a point.

True, we’re not perfect and neither is Israel, but we have to be fair to ourselves.

A Lesson from Tzitzit

The end of the sidra is the origin of the verses (Bamidbar 15:37-41) that we call the third passage of the Sh'ma. Their subject is tzitzit – fringes on the corners of our garments.

The passage begins with a doubled verb, “Speak to the Children of Israel and say to them”. The commentators apply the doubled verb to the two generations that co-exist, you and your children. The adults have to tell the children about the mitzva.

One of the lessons we learn from tzitzit is that every aspect of our surroundings should remind us of God – cleanliness of our bodies, fringes on our garments, m’zuzot on the doors of our rooms and houses, and modesty in whatever we do.

In England Sir Christopher Wren said, “If you want a monument, look around you”; Judaism said, centuries before, “If you want dedication, enhance yourself and your surroundings”. -OZ

Y’HI ZICHRO BARUCH