

SH'LACH



37th of the 54 sedras;
4th of 10 in Bamidbar

Written on 198 lines, ranks 25th

10 Parshiyot; 7 open, 3 closed

119 p'sukim, ranks 21, 6th in Bamidbar

1540 words, ranks 27, 5th in Bamidbar

5820 letters, ranks 27, 4th in Bamid.

Sh'lach has shorter than average p'sukim, which explains the drop in rank for words and letters, yet the rise in rank within Bamidbar indicates that there are sedras in Bamidbar with even shorter p'sukim.

MITZVOT

3 mitzvot - 2 positives - Challah & Tzitzit, and 1 prohibition, not to follow the temptations of your heart and eyes.

As we point out often, the distribution of mitzvot in the Torah is very uneven. With only 3 mitzvot, there are 25 sedras with fewer mitzvot than Sh'lach and 26 with more. 3 is the median number of mitzvot per sedra in the Torah. T'ruma and Chukat also have 3 mitzvot each. 17 sedras have no mitzvot counted among the Torah's Taryag (613)

Aliya-by-Aliya Sedra Summary

[P>] and [S>] indicate start of a parsha p'tucha or s'tuma. X:Y is Perek:Pasuk of the beginning of the parsha; (Z) is the number of p'sukim in the parsha.

Numbers in [square brackets] are the Mitzva-count of Sefer HaChinuch AND Rambam's Sefer HaMitzvot. A=ASEI; L=LAV (prohibition). X:Y is the perek & pasuk from which the mitzva comes.

Kohen - First Aliya - 20 p'sukim - 13:1-20

[P> 13:1 (43)] G-d tells Moshe to send "people" to "scout out" the Land. ("People" is in quotes because commentaries point to the word ANASHIM and say that it means people of high calibre and repute - except that we know how it turns out...) The emphasis in the wording of the pasuk is on Moshe being the one sending the Meraglim, not at G-d's command nor by His "desire".

The representatives of each tribe are named and the Torah, further testifies to the high caliber of each man.

SDT: Back in Bamidbar, when the Tribal leaders were named, Efrayim and Menashe were identified as the sons of Yosef - within the same pasuk. Here, only Menashe is identified with Yosef, and Efrayim's scout, Yehoshua, is listed three

p'sukim earlier, without reference to his father. Commentaries note that Yosef had been involved in "negative reports" (against his brothers), as was the scout of Menashe involved in negative reports on the Land. Yehoshua remained clear of the taint of DIBA RA'A and is therefore not mentioned together with Yosef, in this context.

(It is interesting to note that the words immediately before 'for the tribe of Efrayim...' are BEN YOSEF, in this case, the father of Yig'al, the scout for Yissachar. Not Yosef the father of Efrayim. Nonetheless, it is interesting that Efrayim is juxtaposed to the name Yosef even though he is 'distanced' from his own father's name.)

And Moshe called Hoshei'a bin Nun, Yehoshua.

SDT: Rashi says that by adding a YUD to Hoshei'a's name, he was giving him a bracha that he should be saved from the group attitude of the other Meraglim. Question: MIMA NAFSHACH (whichever way you want to look at things) - Why did Moshe not "bless" the other scouts similarly? And why would Yehoshua need a bracha when Kalev apparently did not?

Whether a Scout will come back with the proper attitude or not was based on each individual's personality, perceptions, and conclusions. That

was up to each of the 12 individuals. That's not why Moshe gave a special bracha to Yehoshua. Moshe had a separate fear concerning Yehoshua. He could imagine Yehoshua joining the ten Meraglim in discouraging the People from entering the Land so that Moshe's life would be prolonged. Eldad and Meidad had prophesied that Moshe would die and Yehoshua would lead the people into the Land, Yehoshua heard that and was quite agitated. Moshe's bracha to Yehoshua was to keep Yehoshua honest, so to speak, so that he would not join the "evil advice" for any reason, even one to benefit Moshe himself.

Of course, this can only be in the realm of D'RASH since it assumes that Moshe knew in advance what was to happen. If so, why would he send the Meraglim in the first place. He wasn't commanded to do so; G-d said to him, if you (Moshe) want, then send them.

Moshe gives the scouts instructions and an itinerary, hoping that they will return with an encouraging report for Bnei Yisrael. It was the time of the ripening of the grapes, Y'mei Bikurei Anavim.

Levi - Second Aliya - 20 p'sukim - 13:21-14:7

The Torah describes the 40-day "tour" of the scouts. When they returned, they reported to the People about the

truly beautiful land to which they had been sent. They showed the samples of the fruits they brought back with them. They described the apparent strength of the inhabitants (in an attempt to scare the people). And they mentioned Amalek and other nations (knowing it would have a discouraging effect).

Kalev silenced the people and told them that they should go to the Land; "We can do it!" The other ten scouts objected and spoke further against the Land, causing wide-spread panic among the people. Moshe, Aharon, Kalev, and Yehoshua are greatly troubled by the words of the Meraglim and by the reaction of the people. Kalev and Yehoshua proclaim the goodness of the Land.

SDT: ...and we were in our eyes like grasshoppers (compared to the giants of Canaan) and so we appeared to them. The Kotzker Rebbe and others define two components of the Sin of the Spies from this part of the pasuk. First, that we saw ourselves as small and insignificant, compared with the nations in Eretz Yisrael. Second, that we were concerned about how others perceived us. With G-d obviously on our side (we knew what happened to Egypt and we witnessed so many miracles performed on our behalf), we should not have viewed ourselves that way. And, how others perceive us is their problem, not ours. (In fact, it should

often be an asset for us.) Sadly, each of these attitude problems exists in our own time.

- Notice how the first time the Meraglim spoke to the people, they did not say that we shouldn't go into Eretz Yisrael. They "just" described some of the difficulties we would face and apparently hoped that their report would scare off the people. After Kalev took the microphone, so to speak, and gave a brief but enthusiastic "Aliya pep-talk", the Meraglim dropped the subtle approach and spoke out openly against going into Eretz Yisrael. This is what the Torah described as DIBA AL HA'ARETZ, Lashon HaRa against the Land.

It might be said that people who tell other Jews about terror attacks and wars and other difficulties that we face in Israel are "guilty" of "first-stage" Meraglim-talk. Those who add "you gotta be crazy to live there" or words to that effect, are repeating and perpetuating what is maybe the greatest communal sin in the history of the Jewish People. The sin of the Meraglim created the blackest day on our calendar, Tish'a b'Av. The destructions of the two Batei Mikdash and the various causes of the CHURBAN were "merely" add-ons to Tish'a b'Av. When we totally repudiate - by action, not just by word - the Sin of the Spies, and embrace - by action, not just by word

- the righteous behavior of Kalev and Yehoshua, then we can hope for the fulfillment of the prophecy of Zecharya that will see Tish'a b'Av and the other three Churban-related fasts become Yamim Tovim.

Shlishi - Third Aliya - 18 p'sukim - 14:8-25

"If G-d wants us to go there, then we will obviously be able to prevail. Just don't rebel against Him." The people wanted to stone Kalev and Yehoshua for those words.

And sadly, there are many Jews today who still don't hear - or want to hear the words of Yehoshua and Kalev.

[P> 14:11 (15)] G-d is "angered" by the people and "suggests" to Moshe that He will destroy them and build a new nation from him (Moshe). Moshe argues on behalf of the people. His argument (this time, he only uses this argument) is that other nations will say that G-d did not have the ability to bring Bnei Yisrael into K'na'an, so He killed them in the wilderness. This would be a Chilul HaShem. Moshe then invokes a modified version of the Divine Attributes and pleads for forgiveness for the people. (Part of Moshe's words at this point have been incorporated into our davening.) G-d agrees to Moshe's pleas. (G-d's response to Moshe also becomes part of the Yom Kippur davening.) G-d

declares that this is the tenth time that the People have "tested" His patience (so to speak). He promises that the men of this generation will not enter the Land - except Kalev (& Yehoshua).

The People are told that Amalek and the Canaanites occupy the valley and that they (the People of Israel) will have to divert towards the Midbar.

Compare & Learn - Towards the end of last week's sedra, we have the episode of Miriam's talking about Moshe and her punishment for her relatively mild transgression of LASHON HARA. Commentaries point out the juxtaposition of the episode of the spies.

There is more to this than "simply" two examples of Lashon HaRa, one about a person and one about Eretz Yisrael. There are important elements and details to be learned one from the other.

For example, it is not just the speaker of Lashon HaRa that transgresses. Those who listen to LH passively, without objecting, those who accept the LH as truth - they too transgress. The Sin of the Spies was not restricted to 10 people. Thousands of those who heard what was said and accepted it, and panicked because of it, they too were guilty. And they were punished, as we know.

Translate this into our time. It is not enough for one to refrain from bad-mouthing Eretz Yisrael, one

cannot stand by idly when others do it. Kalev jumped up as soon as he heard what the Meraglim said. He did his best to repudiate the words of the Meraglim and then made his own impassioned pitch for Aliya.

We must not "put down" Israel, its people, life here, etc. We must object when others do. And one should avoid saying something negative even in a joke. (Just as, "I was only joking" does not mitigate Lashon HaRa about another person.)

R'vi'i - Fourth Aliya - 27 p'sukim - 14:26-15:7

[P> 14:26 (20)] The Torah elaborates upon the devastating pronouncement by G-d. The People shall roam in the Midbar for a number of years equal to the number of days of the spies' trip.

Clarification: The Sin of the Spies occurred on Tish'a b'Av 2449, more than a year out of Egypt. Total time in the Midbar from Exodus to entry into the Eretz Yisrael is 40 years, less five days. So the punishment is really for less than 39 years. But look at things this way: The Sin of the Spies was the culmination of the "angering" of G-d. We can say that it began back at the Sin of the Golden Calf (or even before that - we "complained" when we were hardly out of Egypt). We might say that the 40-year punishment is retro-active to include Cheit HaEigel (or even earlier).

The people deeply regret their behavior and NOW decide to enter the Land immediately. Moshe warns them not to, because G-d no longer wants them to do so (at this point). Some of the people went anyway - without the protection of the Aron, so to speak - and are defeated and repelled by Amalek and K'na'an.

[P> 15:1 (16)] The Torah next sets down the details of the flour and oil offering (MENACHOT) and libation of wine (NESECH) that are to accompany most korbanot.

It is important to note the context of these laws. Right after being told that the older generation (males) will not enter the Land, G-d comforts the people by teaching procedures that will apply in Eretz Yisrael, specifically mitzvot that are to be "pleasing to G-d" (and even though they are commanded elsewhere). It is as if G-d says, "Don't be too dismayed; your children will live in Eretz Yisrael and will serve Me in the Beit HaMikdash" in this special way.

Note also that the Aliya-break comes in mid-topic, leaving us, at the break, to ponder and savor the fact that we will yet bring about REI'ACH NICH'O'ACH LASH'EM. G-d's taking the next generation into Eretz Yisrael is not proof of G-d's forgiveness, per se. It could have been a 'reluctant' keeping of His promises to the Avot, and not much else. But His command concerning the Menachot and

Nesachim, on the other hand, do show His great love for His People. And the placement here is a loud message - especially, because the topic is repeated here and technically unnecessary to be found here.

Chamishi - 5th Aliya - 9 p'sukim - 15:8-16

The details of the MINCHA & NESECH are completed in this portion, finishing with a reiteration and emphasis on the equality of Torah law for all Jews.

To reiterate: It seems obvious that this area of mitzva was purposely put here in the aftermath of the Sin of the Spies. There are at least two other places in the Torah where the topic is presented, where the mitzva is counted, and where it fits well in the context. It seems superfluous here except as a message in the context of the Meraglim fiasco. Note also, that it is not merely a mitzva that will apply in Eretz Yisrael, but one that is part of the Beit HaMikdash service.

Shishi - Sixth Aliya - 10 p'sukim - 15:17-26

[P> 15:17 (5)] Mitzva of Challa is presented [385, A133 15:20].

MITZVAnotes

Two major aspects of this precious mitzva are:

It is performed with THE essential food of humans - as in, Bread is the staff of life. This elevates the physical necessity of food to a spiritual level.

Which, by the way, fits the idea of "Man does not live by bread alone." This idea, presented in the beginning of Parshat Eikev, referred to the Manna as that which indicated to the People that it is "by the mouth of G-d, that man lives". That being so during the years of wandering in the Midbar, the concept continues in perpetuity via the mitzva of CHALLA and the other mitzvot associated with bringing bread to our tables, as well as washing for bread, HaMotzi, Birkat HaMazon... and more.

Secondly, the fact that we are to give Challa to a Kohen - specifically after most of the work has been done, meaning that we give Challa from ready-to-pop-into-the-oven dough and not only the raw produce, as with other gifts to the Kohen - indicates that it is not merely the gift that is significant, but the service to the Kohen that we perform that is important as well.

Challa is one of the mitzvot that our Sages have kept active by rabbinic decree since the destruction of the Beit HaMikdash, so that its practice and lessons should not be lost to us. Furthermore, Challa is rabbinically required in Chutz LaAretz, although the Torah introduces the mitzva with,

"with your coming to the Land". This too helps keep TORAT CHALLA alive among the Jewish People and show us how very special this mitzva is.

[S> 15:22 (5)] Next the Torah presents the details of the Chatat (sin offering) of the community (in cases where the leaders of the community inadvertently misled the people (in Avoda Zara related matters.) Here again, it seems obvious that this topic is brought up here because of the Sin of the Spies. This mitzva is not counted here, but it certainly conveys G-d's attitude (so to speak) about Cheit HaMeraglim. We recognize that sometimes our leaders must bear the responsibility of leading us astray (but not always - often we must be accountable and not claim that we were just following orders). The ideas (and text) here are part of Yom Kippur davening.

Sh'VII - Seventh Aliya - 15 p'sukim - 15:27-41

[S> 15:27 (5)] On the other hand, many times each individual must be accountable for his own actions; we cannot always blame our leaders. [This fits, as we mentioned before, the culpability - albeit different - of the population in addition to the Meraglim themselves.] The Torah in this portion discusses the Chatat of the individual. These offerings are appropriate only for inadvertent violation; intentional violation (idolatry is implied) is punishable by

KAREIT (excision, being cut off...), and is atoneable by other methods.

Following Cheit HaMeraglim and preceding the episode of the wood-gatherer, the Torah presents us with both types of Chata'ot - communal and individual. These topics are dealt with (and counted among Taryag) elsewhere. Again, we are seeing (probably) an example of repeating something in a specific context or juxtaposition to a story in order to make a point and deliver an important message to us.

[P> 15:32 (3)] The Torah next tells us of the wood-gatherer (Tradition identifies him as Tz'lofchad) who was locked up pending details from G-d as to how a public desecrator of Shabbat is to be executed. (That it is a capital offense was already known.)

Even though what the M'kosheish Eitzim did is not subject to a Chatat, we should at least see it as a reminder of an individual's sinning - and what that conveys to us about the sin of the spies not being just a sin of the tribal leaders but for each and every individual (male 20 yrs and up).

[S> 15:35 (2)] G-d's command was to stone the violator. And so it was done.

[P> 15:37 (5)] The final portion of the sedra is the third passage of the Sh'ma - the portion of Tzitzit. It contains the mitzva to put Tzitzit on the corners of

a four-corner garment [386, A14 15:38] and that one of the strings of each corner should be dyed t'cheilet, the special blue dye. (Some say half a string, which becomes one of 8; some say one string, which becomes 2 of 8; and some say 2 of the 4 strings, which become 4 of 8 when tied.)

Our Sages went out of their way to involve us in the mitzva of Tzitzit - with Talit Gadol and Talit Katan - although we could technically not be required to fulfill this mitzva because our regular clothing (today) does not usually have four corners. Perhaps they did so because Tzitzit is not merely a mitzva that we "perform", it is a mitzva that we wear. It is an integral part of our everyday lives. It is part of our Jewish uniform (for males). What a shame to be without this inspirational mitzva because the style of clothing has changed and we no longer wear 4-cornered garments. Enter our Sages...

To clarify: If a man wears a four-cornered garment, he is required by Torah law to tie tzitzit on the corners - however, the Sages require us to wear a four-cornered garment in order to be obligated to fulfill the mitzva of Tzitzit. In other words, "officially", TZITZIT is a MITZVA KIYUMIT from the Torah's perspective. Our Sages, by rabbinic decree, changed it into a MITZVA CHIYUVIT.

Furthermore, the Torah links the mitzva of tzitzit with all the mitzvot of

the Torah; tzitzit (and/or the P'til T'cheilet) serve as a reminder of the Jew's all-encompassing commitment to G-d. This is followed by the warning not to follow the evil temptation of the eye (mind) or heart (emotion) [387, L47 15:39]. The Torah then reiterates the importance of belief in G-d in general, and in His having redeemed us from Egypt, in particular. Thus, the twice daily recitation of the Sh'ma constitutes the fulfillment of the mitzva to remember the Exodus "all the days of your life", in addition to its own mitzva, the saying of Sh'ma. It follows that when one recites the Sh'ma, one should have specific KAVANA at the end of the third passage to fulfill the mitzva to remember the Exodus all the days of our lives (which, if you remember the Mishna borrowed by the Hagada - or vice versa - KOL Y'MEI CHAYECHA teaches us that the mitzva applies in the daytime and at nighttime. The Hagada uses this Mishna to explain the fact that the mitzva of Hagada is at night. But the Mishna was discussing the third passage of Sh'ma and justifying its being recited at night too, even though Tzitzit is a day mitzva.) Parshat Tzitzit is reread as Maftir.

Haftara - 24 p'sukim - Yehoshua 2:1-24

Paralleling and contrasting with the sedra, the Haftara tells us of two other spies (Kalev and Pinchas, according to Tradition - they are not named in the

text) who were sent by Yehoshua into Yericho. Rachav, who had heard of the wonders that happened to the People of Israel, protects the spies from the men who are searching for them. In exchange for her protection, Rachav receives a promise that she and her family will be spared when the Israelite army attacks the city. Tradition tells us that Rachav subsequently became a sincere convert and the wife of Yehoshua. In one case, Spies were our undoing. In the other, they served a very positive function. How ironic.