

# THE COMMUNITY PARSHA SHEET



PARSHAT SHELACH LECHA

London's Leading Young Professionals Platform and Jewish Communal Centre



**RABBI JONATHAN TAWIL**  
TAL Founder & Director

## CONFIDENCE!

The spies returned from their 40 day tour of the land of Israel. As they are relating to the Bnei Yisrael what they saw, they exclaim, "We saw the... sons of the giant... and we were like grasshoppers in our eyes... and so we were in their eyes!"

Our sages ask why this double expression. Why did the spies go out of their way to explain how they themselves felt, and how they were looked upon, surely they could have kept to the point and just said we were so small we were like grasshoppers?

The Baal Yesod HaAvoda brings a story that is told in the times of Napoleon war. The French were advancing onto Russia, and the Russian defence was deteriorating. The head command office was situated well behind the front lines. There were a group of Russian captains supervised by a Russian General coordinating the defence. Messengers would arrive from the battle fields and relate to the captains team, the state of affairs.

As the battle raged on, the first messenger arrived, relating the bad news that one of the strongest battalions on the front line had been wiped out.

Six hours later, other messengers arrived stating that three more battalions had been defeated, and the remnants of the Russian army were fleeing.

A few more hours passed and further messengers arrived. The captains' face was already depressed and his face showed it all.

"What good news do you have for me?"  
"Unfortunately no good news, the Russians are now in full retreat, fleeing the mighty French army, they should be arriving at this base shortly."

The General who had not been present this whole time, came into the office and seeing the sad look on his captains asked if he had heard the latest and most serious news?  
"What now, what could possibly be worse than the situation we are already in" asked the captain?

The latest news is that the commander in control has lost all faith! (If the captain in control of the whole war effort were to lose faith then that would be tantamount to real surrender).

The captain understood what his General was implying, and infused extra strength and courage in order not to give up hope. They revitalised the army and from that point on the war took a different angle.

There is an old joke about the Chassidic Jew with long Payot, Tzitzit hanging out, long beard and long black coat, who has just arrived home on the train.

"How was the journey" his wife asks him  
"Oy Yenta was I sitting opposite some anti-Semites. They were cursing and complaining about Jews the whole way home"

"Nu Yankel so vat did you do?"  
"What could I do? I pretended I wasn't Jewish"

Being Jewish is something we should be proud of, yet at times we seem to shy away from the realities.

The spies toured the land of Israel. They saw giants, it might have been scary, but these spies had experienced Hashem's

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Hand through the plagues and at the Kriat Yam Suf. Nothing should be impossible for Hashem. Yet they showed a lack of faith in Hashem, by being frightened and incited by the sight of these giants.

What led them to this was their low self esteem. They viewed themselves as inferior from the outset.

The Torah could have simply said "We were like grasshoppers in THEIR eyes..." but it chose to first tell us about

the spies perception of themselves - OUR eyes.

It is only because they themselves felt like tiny and insignificant grasshoppers, that the giants perceived them as that. In order to succeed in life, we must know our true value. Am Yisrael might be small in number, but our historical achievements far outmatch many nations.

We might be downtrodden, we might

experience abuse for being Jewish but at the end of the day if we know our true value then it doesn't matter what the others say. Every Jew has that special connection with Hashem – an infinite spark that connects us directly to the Almighty.

May Hashem grant us the opportunity to always feel that connection, and help us show it to all those around us.

Shabbat Shalom



**RABBI DAVID BAADANI**  
*Director - TAL Chazanut Program*

**PARSHAT SHELACH LECHA**

In this week Parashah, the spies sent by Moshe to scout the land of Canaan return with a troubling report. Among their words is a verse that reveals the core of their tragic error:

"We saw the Nephilim there... and we looked like grasshoppers to ourselves, and so we must have looked to them." (13:33)

This verse is more than a description of physical inferiority. It is a window into the mindset of a generation that, despite witnessing G-d's miracles firsthand, leaving Egypt, receiving the Torah, and being sustained daily in the wilderness, lacked the inner confidence and faith to claim the Promised Land.

The spies, leaders among the tribes of Israel, saw themselves as grasshoppers, small, insignificant, and incapable. "And we looked like grasshoppers to ourselves" reflects a deep internal crisis of identity. And from this came the natural conclusion: "So we must have looked to them." The way they perceived themselves shaped the way others viewed them.

This psychological truth resonates deeply. When a person sees themselves as weak, unworthy, or incapable, they project that image outwardly. Others sense it. This lack of self-worth becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy. The spies' report demoralized the nation, who then wept and rebelled against G-d's plan.

Though G-d ultimately forgave the sin, He decreed that this generation would not enter the land. Why? Because even if forgiven, a generation that does not

believe in its own mission and ability cannot fulfill its divine purpose. They were not punished with immediate destruction but were allowed to live out their days with dignity, slowly passing away over 40 years in the wilderness.

From this, we learn a timeless lesson: Personal redemption begins with faith not only in G-d, but in ourselves. Every individual is created with a divine spark, endowed with strength and purpose. Challenges will arise, but with belief in our inner worth—granted by the Creator—we can overcome even the greatest of giants.

The spies' downfall was not military strategy—it was a crisis of self-image. Let us learn from them. Let us never see ourselves as grasshoppers. For when we believe in our power, others will too—and then the gates of our own Promised Land will open.



**RABBI DANNY FISHER**  
*Director - TAL Boys After School Programs*

**PARSHAT SHELACH LECHA**

In this week's parsha, we read the story of the Mekoshesh Eitzim – the man who desecrated Shabbos in the midbor

and was put to death. Immediately after this episode, the Torah introduces the mitzvah of Tzitzis.

The Tanna D'vei Eliyahu Rabbah explains the connection: Hashem asked Moshe, "Why did this

man desecrate Shabbos?" Moshe replied, "I do not know." Hashem answered, "During the week, Bnei Yisroel wear tefillin, which remind them to stay away from sin. But on Shabbos, without tefillin, this man lost that reminder and desecrated the day."

So Hashem said to Moshe: "Establish a mitzvah that will serve as a constant reminder – even on Shabbos and Yom Tov."

This was the mitzvah of Tzitzis, of which the Torah says: "You shall see it and remember all the commandments of Hashem."

We see how powerful the mitzvah of Tzitzis is – it can literally save a person from sin and even from death.

Rabbeinu Bechaye adds deeper meaning:

- The word Tzitzis relates to "looking" – seeing them reminds us that Hashem is watching us.

- The tekhelet resembles the sky and reminds us of Hashem's Throne of Glory.
- The garment is called a tallit, from the word "elevation" – symbolizing Hashem's exalted presence.
- The Midrash teaches that Hashem wrapped Himself in a tallis like a chazan and showed Moshe the order of mercy and forgiveness.
- The white tallis represents atonement, just as white symbolizes purity and forgiveness.

He also connects the Tzitzis to the human body:

- 8 threads = the 8th day (bris milah)

- 5 knots = the five senses
- 20 knots (on four corners) = 20 fingers and toes

The structure of the Tzitzis mirrors the human form, reminding us to sanctify our entire being in the Avodah of Hashem.

May we merit to wear our Tzitzis with kavannah, and be uplifted by this beautiful mitzvah – one that protects us, guides us, and brings us closer to Hashem.

Good Shabbos!



## HALACHOT BY RABBI ELI MANSOUR

Should One Place Tefillin While Sitting or Standing—And What If the Community Follows a Different Custom?

The Sephardic custom, rooted in the rulings of Maran in the Shulhan Aruch (O.H. 25:5), is to don the **Tefillin Shel Yad** while **sitting**, and the **Tefillin Shel Rosh** while **standing**. This is not simply a question of posture but reflects a deeper understanding of the nature of each Tefillin and its associated Misva.

The Tefillin Shel Yad is considered a **private and personal obligation**. It is hidden, placed on the weaker part of the body, and not seen by others during prayer. In contrast, the Tefillin Shel Rosh sits openly on the head, between the eyes, and represents a **public declaration** of our bond with Hashem. Because of its visibility and its connection to communal holiness, the Tefillin Shel Rosh is given more formality, which includes the standing position when placing it.

The Ben Ish Hai (Parashat Vayera) emphasizes this distinction, explaining that the **Shel Yad is associated with the heart**, representing internal service of Hashem (Avodat HaLev), while the **Shel Rosh is associated with the mind**, representing Torah and public sanctity. Therefore, sitting for the Shel Yad reflects modesty and inwardness, while standing for the Shel Rosh expresses reverence and honor.

### What If One Is in an Ashkenazi Minyan That Stands for Both?

In Ashkenazi practice, it is common to stand for both the Shel Yad and Shel Rosh. This can present a challenge for a Sephardi who finds himself in such a minyan. Should he follow his custom to sit for the Shel Yad, or should he stand to avoid standing out?

Hacham Ovadia Yosef (in Yabia Omer, vol. 1, O.H. 4 and Halichot Olam) rules clearly that one should **not deviate from the Sephardic custom**, even when praying in an Ashkenazi congregation. The halachic principle of "Al Titosh Torat Imecha"—do not abandon the tradition of your fathers—applies here. A person should not feel pressured to change his practice in order to "fit in," especially in a matter that has solid halachic and kabbalistic support.

Moreover, this practice is not offensive to others. In most cases, no one pays much attention to who is standing or sitting during Tefillin. But even if someone notices, preserving one's mesora (halachic tradition) takes precedence over conforming for the sake of appearance.

In the reverse case—an Ashkenazi praying in a Sephardic minyan—it is likewise appropriate for him to stand for both

Tefillin, according to his custom.

### Kabbalistic Reasoning

The Mekubalim, particularly the Hida and the Ben Ish Hai, stress the spiritual distinctions between the two Tefillin. According to the Zohar HaKadosh, the Tefillin Shel Yad corresponds to the sefirah of Gevurah and is internal, while the Tefillin Shel Rosh corresponds to the sefirah of Hokhmah and projects spiritual light outward. These ideas are only heightened when the Tefillin are placed with proper kavana (intent), posture, and awareness of their function.

In short, sitting for the Shel Yad enhances the quality of its intent as a private covenant with Hashem.

### Summary:

- **Sephardim should place the Tefillin Shel Yad while sitting**, and the Tefillin Shel Rosh while standing.
- This custom follows Maran in Shulhan Aruch and is further supported by the Ben Ish Hai and Mekubalim.
- Even in an Ashkenazi minyan, **Sephardim should not deviate** from their custom.
- This posture reflects both halachic rulings and the inner meaning of each Tefillin.



# WEEKLY PARSHA OVERVIEW

## Parshat Shelach Lecha

At the insistence of the Bnei Yisrael, and with G-d's permission, Moshe sends 12 scouts, one from each tribe, to investigate Canaan. Anticipating trouble, Moshe changes Hoshea's name to Yehoshua, expressing a prayer that G-d not let him fail in his mission. They return 40 days later, carrying unusually large fruit. When 10 of the 12 state that the people in Canaan are as formidable as the fruit, the men are discouraged. Calev and Yehoshua, the only two scouts still in favor of the invasion, try to bolster the people's spirit. The nation, however, decides that the Land is not

worth the potentially fatal risks, and instead demands a return to Egypt. Moshe's fervent prayers save the nation from Heavenly annihilation. However, G-d declares that they must remain in the desert for 40 years until the men who wept at the scouts' false report pass away. A remorseful group rashly begins an invasion of the Land, based on G-d's original command. Moshe warns them not to proceed, but they ignore this and are massacred by the Amalekites and Canaanites. G-d instructs Moshe concerning the offerings to be made when the Bnei Yisrael will finally enter the Land. The

people are commanded to remove challah, a gift for the kohanim, from their dough. The laws for an offering after an inadvertent sin, for an individual or a group, are explained. However, should someone blaspheme against G-d and be unrepentant, he will be cut off spiritually from his people. One man is found gathering wood on public property in violation of the laws of Shabbat and he is executed. The laws of tzitzit are taught. We recite the section about the tzitzit twice a day to remind ourselves of the Exodus.

**Rabbi Sinclair,**  
Seasonsofthemoon.com

**Q**

1. Why is the portion about the meraglim written immediately after the portion about Miriam's tzara'at?
2. To what was Moshe referring when he asked the meraglim "Are there trees in the land"?
3. Who built Hebron?
4. Which fruits did the meraglim bring back?
5. How many people carried the grape cluster?

**A**

1. 13:2 - To show the evil of the meraglim (spies), that they saw Miriam punished for lashon hara (negative speech) yet failed to take a lesson from it.
2. 13:20 - Were there any righteous people in the land whose merit would "shade" the Canaanites from attack?
3. 13:22 - Cham.
4. 13:23 - A cluster of grapes, a pomegranate and a fig.
5. 13:23 - Eight.

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