

Study Guide for Shelach : Gazers and Seers

First the spies see:

I. Numbers 13:25

וישבו מתור הארץ מקץ ארבעים יום:

At the end of forty days they returned from **scouting** the land.

II. Numbers 13:30-33

ויהס כלב את־העם אל־מִשָּׁה ויאמר עלה נעלה וירשנו אתה כי־יכול נוכל לה: והאנשים אשר־עלו עמו אמרו לא נוכל לעלות אל־העם כי־חזק הוא ממנו: ויצִיאו דבת הארץ אשר תרו אתה אל־בני ישראל לאמר הארץ אשר עברנו בה לתור אתה ארץ אכֶלֶת יושביה הוא וכל־העם אשר־ראינו בתוכה אנשי־מדות: והאנשים אשר־עלו עמו אמרו לא נוכל לעלות אל־העם כי־חזק הוא ממנו: שם ראינו את־הנפילים ונהי **בעינינו כחגבים** וכן היינו **בעיניהם**:

Caleb hushed the people before Moses and said, “Let us by all means go up, and we shall gain possession of it, for we shall surely overcome it.”

But the other men who had gone up with him said, “We cannot attack that people, for it is stronger than we.”

Thus they spread calumnies among the Israelites about the land they had scouted, saying, “The country that we traversed and scouted is one that devours its settlers. All the people that **we saw** in it are of great size;

ו we saw the Nephilim the Anakites are part of the Nephilim—and **we looked like** grasshoppers to ourselves, and so we must have **looked to them.**”

III. Rashi on Numbers 13:33

וכן היינו בעיניהם. שמענו אומרים זה לזה, נמלים יש בכרמים באנשים (סוטה ל"ה) (לג)

SO WE MUST HAVE BEEN IN THEIR EYES—We heard them say one to another; “There are ants in the vineyards that **look like** human beings” (Sota 35a).

IV. Rashbam on Numbers 13:33

כחגבים - הנמוך נראה לגבוה ממנו הרבה כחגבים, שהם נמוכים מאד. וזה מוכיח: היושב (לג) על חוג הארץ ויושביה כחגבים.

כחגבים, anything low considers itself as like a grasshopper when compared to something much taller. We find proof of this in Is. 40:22, “compared to the One Who is enthroned above the vault of the earth views its inhabitants as if they were grasshopper.”

Then the fringes are seen / we become seers:

V. Numbers 15: 38 -39

דַּבֵּר אֶל־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאָמַרְתָּ אֲלֵהֶם וְעָשׂוּ לָהֶם צִיצִית עַל־כַּנְפֵי בְּגָדֵיהֶם לְדֹרֹתָם וְנָתְנוּ עַל־צִיצִית הַכָּנָף פִּתִּיל תְּכֵלֶת:

וְהָיָה לָכֶם לְצִיצִית וּרְאִיתֶם אֹתוֹ וּזְכַרְתֶּם אֶת־כָּל־מִצְוֹת יְהוָה וְעָשִׂיתֶם אֹתָם וְלֹא־תִתְּרוּ אַחֲרָי (לט) לַבְּבִקְכֶם וְאַחֲרָי עֵינֵיכֶם אֲשֶׁר־אֲתֶם זָנִים אַחֲרֵיהֶם:

Speak to the children of Israel, telling them that they shall make **themselves** fringes on the corners of their garments throughout the generations; let them attach a cord of blue to the fringe at each corner. That shall be your fringe; **look at it** and recall all the commandments of the LORD and observe them, so that you do not follow your heart and **eyes** in your lustful urge.

VI. Rashi on Numbers 15:39

רש"י על במדבר ט"ו:ל"ט:ב'

ולא תתורו אחרי לבבכם. כמו "מתור הארץ" (במדבר י"ג); הלב והעינים הם מרגלים לגוף, (לט) מסרסרים לו את העברות, העין רואה והלב חומד והגוף עושה את העברה (תנחומא):

The verb תתרו has the same meaning as in (Num. 13:25), “and they returned from **searching** (מתור) the land”. (The translation therefore is: AND YOU SHALL NOT **SEARCH** AFTER YOUR OWN HEART). The heart and the eyes are the “spies” of the body — they act as its

agents for sinning: the eye sees, the heart covets and the body commits the sin (cf. Berakhot 1:8; Tanchuma).

VII. Sforno on Numbers 15:39

וראיתם אותו וזכרתם את כל מצות ה' תזכרו שאתם עבדים לאל יתברך (לט)
ושקבלתם מצותיו באלה ובשבועה וזה בראותם הציצית שהוא כחותם המלך
בעבדיו ובזה תחדלו מתור אחרי לבבכם להשיג שרירות לבכם כעושר וכבוד אפילו
בגזל:

ואחרי עיניכם להשיג תאוות שנתתס עיניכם בהן (מ)

אשר אתם זונים אחריהם מטים נפשכם השכלית בהן מדרכי חיי עולם לדרכי אבדון ומות (מא)

ה' ,וראיתם אותו וזכרתם את כל מצות ה' ,you will be reminded that you are God's servants whose commandments you have accepted....This reminder will be due to your **looking at** the "fringes." This in turn will lead to your ceasing to follow the inclination of your hearts and eyes to indulge your diverse urges, originating in your bodies. Without these fringes as a constant reminder of your purpose on earth, you would be likely to fall prey to these urges inspired by the evil urge.

VIII. Tsemach Hashem Li- Tsevi II (c. 1800)

Why is the word **themselves** needed in this verse? "They shall make fringes" would have sufficed. This hints that they should make *themselves* into a way to see God. Thus Rashi interpreted the word *tsitsit* (fringes) ציצית as related to "gazing" מציץ as in "Behold he stands behind a wall , gazing (*metsits*) through the latticework." (Song of Songs 2:9), this brings about the fear (yir'ah יראה of God since fear (יראה) and "seeing" (ראיה) are made up of the same letters. Therefore if you lay a garment down in a box , it does not require fringes (Menahot 14a) , for the essence of the mitzvah lies in "themselves"...

First it says they shall make themselves fringes (= gazers) meaning **they shall seek ways of seeing for themselves**. But then it turns into they shall be fringes (= gazers) for you . This can be read to mean that you yourselves shall **become ways of seeing**....

In the physical realm the eye does not really see. Light shines into the eye and one sees by means of that light. That is why, scientists tell us, we do not see the air, since it is everywhere and lies directly upon the eye...the shekhina too fills all the earth, and that is why we are unable to see it. The physical person has no light in the eye but sees by virtue of this external light. But if we had essential light , from within the eye , we would see the air as well...

Thus scripture says “ They will see eye to eye as Y-H-V-H returns to Zion (Isaiah. 52:8). Even though the eyes of God are everywhere, lying directly upon the human eye we will be able to see them because we will have light in our eyes’ own essence. This is seeing “eye to eye”.

First fear alone: They shall make themselves gazing - drawing forth light so they may look upon God. This can only be done from a distance, as in “from afar Y-H-V-H appears to me” (Jeremiah 31:2). They could not see closer up having no essential light within their eyes. But when they come to the level of love it says,” They shall be (gazing, tsitsit) for you, meaning that you make yourselves into seeing, the light coming from within you, so that you may see close up.

Speaking Torah, Art Green ,Volume 2 pp.27-28

IX. Alan Cook *Voices of Torah* page 402-403)

Sh'lach L'cha contains two key ideas: the sending of the spies to Canaan and their subsequent report to the people, and the mitzvah of *tzitzit*, "fringes." What connection can be found in the juxtaposition of these two concepts?....

It seems that this sidrah is all about seeing--what we choose to see, and what we ignore. Caleb and Joshua saw the beauty of the land. The remaining spies could see only obstacles that stood in the way of the Israelites taking possession of the land. And the Israelites themselves, who heard the spies' reports, were blinded by their fear of the unknown, rather than being open to the opportunities that would be afforded to them as they enjoyed freedom in the land that had been promised to their ancestors.

By contrast, the *tzitzit* require us to have our eyes open to appreciate them, and in so doing we are reminded of God's mitzvot and of the kindness that God showed to us in redeeming us from Egypt.

We can go through our lives with blinders before our eyes, refusing to bear witness to God's graciousness toward us. Or, we can open eyes that have previously been blind and proclaim, Ashreinu, "How greatly have we been blessed!"

(by Alan Cook, 2006, in *Voices of Torah* page 402-403)

