

### Solutions in the Sidrah:

## Dress to Impress – The Jewish Way

by Rabbi Yoni Birnbaum, Hadley Wood Jewish Community

*This article begins a new series, exploring solutions in the weekly sidrah to common dilemmas in modern life. The series 'Journeys with the Prophets' now appears on p4.*

The world famous Cannes Film Festival recently received significant negative publicity. According to reports, women were turned away from a red carpet screening for wearing flat shoes instead of high heels. Some of the women were older, with medical conditions. An understandable outcry ensued.

Although the directors of the Festival denied that there was such a rule and insisted that it was actually the fault of 'over-zealous' security guards, it is certainly true that dress matters at high profile events worldwide.

The final passage of this week's sidrah, which we read twice daily as the third paragraph of the Shema, is focused on clothing. There is an unmistakable overture that what we wear matters.

"They shall make for themselves tzitzit on the corners of their garments **throughout their generations**" (Bemidbar 15:38)

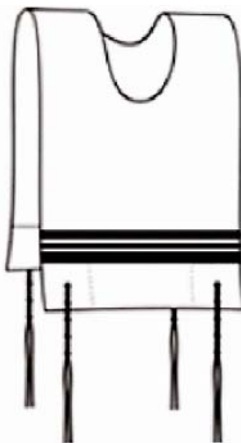
Rabbi Eliyahu Eliezer Dessler (d. 1953) in his classic work *Michtav Me'Eliyahu*, sees a

powerful educational message in this unusual wording "throughout their generations". Many parents are challenged with the question of how they can inspire the next generation. How can they hope to imbue children with an inherent feeling for Jewish tradition?

The mitzvah of tzitzit teaches us all a general lesson that if every facet of our behaviour, even our clothes, indicate our dedication to Judaism, then the effect rubs off on those closest to us, "throughout the generations".

Theodore Roosevelt once insightfully remarked, "Great thoughts speak only to the thoughtful mind, but great actions speak to all mankind." The most enduring messages that we pass on to those within our sphere of influence are often the ones that are not articulated at all; instead they are conveyed through personal example.

The mitzvah of tzitzit therefore provides us with a lesson in how best to pass on the torch of our heritage. Through reading these words twice a day, we are inspired to always be proud of our Judaism, to literally wear it on our sleeves. By doing so we hope to inspire both ourselves and the 'thoughtful minds' of the next generation.



# Synthesising Two Worlds

by Rabbi Zvi Cohen  
Kingsbury United Synagogue

The image of the spies returning from their reconnaissance of the Land of Israel, bearing fruit to back up their bad report is well known. It is the motif of the Israeli Ministry of Tourism and also appears on bottles of Palwin wine. It is clear from the verses that the spies came back with a negative report, with devastating results. However, their motive needs some explanation. How could such great individuals, who had seen unbelievable miracles with their own eyes when leaving Egypt and at Mount Sinai, get it so wrong?

Two of the spies stood up to the test and returned with a positive report. Both were aided in different ways. Yehoshua (Joshua) had his name changed by Moshe from Hoshea to Yehoshua, meaning 'G-d should save you from the spies' plans' (Bemidbar 13:16 with Rashi). Calev, on the other hand, went by himself to Chevron, to the burial place of the Patriarchs, to pray that he should not be ensnared by the spies' plan (13:22 with Rashi). Perhaps these facts can shed some light on the nature of the spies' mistake.

Additionally, the Midrash describes the nation's experience in the desert with the following parable:

While a hen has chicks, she shelters them under her wings and digs in the ground to provide them with food. As they grow, if they come too close to her, she pecks them on the head as if to say, "go fend for yourselves". So too in the desert, every need was provided for. There was water from a rock, manna that fell daily from heaven and clouds of glory which protected and led the nation. However, when they entered the Land, it would be time to fend for themselves

as these miracles would cease.

The Zohar (the central work of Jewish Mysticism, written, according to one historical view, in the 2nd century CE) states that the spies were concerned that they would lose their leadership positions when they entered the Land. Different situations require different leaders. The spies had been leaders in a totally spiritual existence, where every corporeal need was provided for; they only



needed to focus on the Divine. Living in the Land would necessitate planting, reaping and gathering. How would they retain their emphasis on

serving G-d if they were so involved in the physical? Therefore they came up with a plan to maintain their positions and thereby cling on to their connection with G-d.

However, a Jew is meant to live in this physical world while remaining spiritually attached to G-d. This explains Moshe's prayer for Yehoshua. The world to come was created with the letter *yud* and this world with the letter *hey* (Talmud Menachot 29b). The correct path is to synthesise these two worlds; to engage with this world in order to serve G-d. Moshe added the letter *yud* – Yehoshua's realisation that one can straddle both worlds could save him from the spies' plan.

This also explains why Calev went to Chevron. It is a place of connection between this world and the next, the burial place of the Patriarchs and Matriarchs. These couples excelled in fusing the two worlds. They were prime examples of how we should have our feet firmly on the ground, with our heads directed heavenward.



# Working as Chaplain to Heathrow Airport

## Part 3: Immigration

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by Rabbi Hershi Vogel, Ealing United Synagogue

Immigration is a huge operation in Heathrow; thousands of individuals work in this department alone.

People assume that if there is nothing to hide, one can sail right through customs. However, this is not always the case. I have been called many times by unsuspecting travellers who have not been allowed entry into Britain and were being held in immigration. Sometimes this is simply due to a misunderstanding, a language barrier or saying something trivial which caused the officer at customs to become suspicious.

Other detainees have been held because they did not have the correct visa. This often occurs with students and newly-weds, who are unaware of what visa they need. I often first hear of the problem when worried families call me, with no idea where their relative is.

If an officer suspects that a passenger will overstay his/her welcome, they can also be detained. An officer will try to detect inconsistencies or will check the history of the person's travels. If they are not satisfied, they will detain the passenger for further questioning and may sometimes send the passenger back to where they came from. This can be scary and stressful and can take hours until it is all processed. I try to offer the passenger care and to fulfil some of their needs, such as ensuring they have kosher food and can contact family. If English is not their first language, I am able to act as interpreter where feasible, either in person or over the phone.



A recent case involved an Australian man who flew into Heathrow to get married a couple of days later. In reply to the officer's question as to the purpose of his visit, he confirmed he was getting married. However, his passport was lacking a marriage visa, so they did not believe him. He was held, whilst they made arrangements to send him back. When I received a call, I raced to the airport and managed to convince the immigration officer to allow him into the country.

Another story involved a speaker who was coming to London for a charity event. The gentleman seemed suspicious to the customs officer, as he had no information about where he was staying and who was picking him up. He was detained and plans were made for his return back. The charity organisers called me up frantically; their event was that night and they had no idea where their guest was. This was a genuine case of misunderstanding. Once I could prove this, he was allowed to enter.

Before travelling, people should ensure they have the correct documents and be familiar with what is allowed and what is not allowed. This will save time, aggravation and stress for everyone involved.

There are times when I have tried to advocate for passengers, but to no avail. Sometimes the detainee has ended up in a detention centre, like Harmondsworth or Colenbrook. Sometimes this can even be over a Shabbat. What does one do then?

Next week's article will explore the challenges that Shabbat poses for travellers.

## The Book of Shmuel (Samuel I) Chapter 18

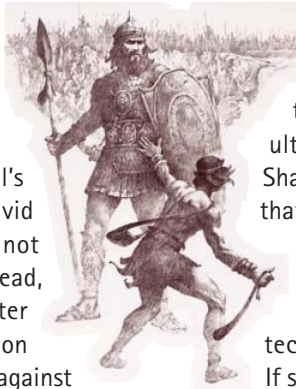
by Rabbi Dr Moshe Freedman, New West End United Synagogue

**Summary:** Following the victory over Goliath and the Philistines, David and Jonathan became close friends and King Shaul (Saul) appointed David as commander over all the soldiers. When David came back from successive victories, the women sang praises to him. This disparaged Shaul's more modest success. Shaul became jealous of David and plotted his demise. Yet his plans failed and David eventually married Shaul's daughter, Michal. After further success on the battlefield, David's reputation grew, while Shaul's jealousy and anger burned.

**A Deeper Look:** Although Shaul's jealousy and hatred towards David burned inside him, he could not personally take David's life. Instead, Shaul offered his eldest daughter Merav to David as a wife, on condition that David would fight for Shaul against the Philistines. This was a pretext to put David in harm's way, in the hope that the Philistines would eventually overcome him (Shmuel I 18:17).

David immediately queried his own suitability to become the king's son-in-law (ibid. 18). Rabbi David Kimche (known as the Radak, d. 1235) notes that David was genuinely concerned. He saw his earlier victory against Goliath as an act of G-d's might, not as a personal triumph worthy of some special reward.

Events then took an interesting turn. The Talmud (Sanhedrin 19b) reports that there was a problem in the *kiddushin* (process of betrothal) of David and Merav. Therefore Merav was ultimately married off to a man called Adriel the Mecholatite (ibid. 19). We are later told that Michal, Shaul's younger daughter, loved David and that Shaul arranged her marriage to him (ibid. 20).



Shaul thought that at least by being married to Michal and pledging to fight the Philistines, David would ultimately die in battle. Rabbi Shabbatai Sheftil Weiss explains that Shaul was of the opinion that the original *kiddushin* with Merav had actually been valid and that David was already technically married to Merav. If so, it would have been forbidden

for David to marry Michal, for there is a Torah prohibition against marrying two sisters (Vayikra 18:18). Shaul hoped that this sin would be enough for accusations to be levied against David in the Heavenly court, causing him to fall at the hands of the Philistines.

Shaul's mistake was in thinking that the original *kiddushin* with Merav had worked. In truth, it had never been valid. Therefore David was well within his rights to marry Michal, who would play a critical role in protecting David and guiding him on a straight path.

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