



CANDLE LIGHTING 8:14 PM | 26 SIVAN 5782 | JUNE 25, 2022 | HAVDALA 9:17 PM

## שבת פרשת שלח SHABBAT PARSHAT SHLACH

Haftorah is from Joshua 2:1-24. We bless the month of Tamuz. We don't say הרחמים אב. We say צדקת צדק. Pirkei Avot Chapter 3.

### FRIDAY EVENING

MINCHA	6:47 PM
EARLIEST CANDLES	6:58 PM
TZAIT HAKOCHAVIM	9:12 PM

### SHABBAT

HASHKAMA	8:15 AM
MAIN	9:00 AM
LAST KRIAT SHEMA	9:12 AM
MINCHA	8:05 PM
MAARIV	9:17 PM



Molad for Tamuz is Wednesday, June 29, 6:48 AM and 3 Chalokim.

ראש חדש תמוז יהיה ביום רביעי  
ויום חמישי הבא עלינו ועל כל  
ישראל לטובה.

## GRADUATION KIDDUSH

This Shabbat we are celebrating these graduates: **Bez Bernstein** (Fair Lawn High School), **Dov Borsuk** (Ben Porat Yosef Kindergarten), **Helene Brenenson** (William Paterson University, M.F.A), **Julia Brenenson** (Yavneh Academy), **Simon Brooks** (University of Hartford, College of Engineering, Technology and Architecture, BS Civil Engineering), **Lia Cohen** (Gan Iris Nursery School), **Sahar Farajun** (University of Maryland, B.S. with Honors, Electrical Engineering, with a certificate in Machine Learning), **Coby Finkelstein** (Yeshivat He'atid), **Josh Finkelstein** (John Jay Graduate School, M.A. Forensic Psychology), **Leora Finkelstein** (Rutgers School of Engineering, B.S. Biomedical Engineering), **Josef Goldberg** (SUNY Binghamton, B.S. Computer Science), **Noah Greenbaum** (Frisch), **Ariella Jacob** (Ben Porat Yosef), **Samuel Jacob** (Ben Porat Yosef Kindergarten), **Perri Mayer** (Golda Och Lower School), **Adam Nudelman** (Worcester Polytechnic Institute, M.S. Robotics Engineering), **Sara Malka Pizem** (Chabad Early Learning Center Pre-K), **William Plotnick** (New York University Tisch School of the Arts, M.A. Moving Image Archiving and Preservation), **Deborah Riskin** (Hunter College, B.A. Psychology), **Eden Riskin** (Yavneh Academy), **Michael Riskin** (TABC), **Alexis Schwitzer** (Moriah Nursery School), **Debra Schwitzer** (University of Pennsylvania, Wharton School of Business, M.B.A.), **Ben Shanblatt** (The New School - School of Jazz and Contemporary Music, B.F.A., Summa Cum Laude), **Nava Shestack** (Kol Chaverim Preschool), and **Dena Winchester** (Icahn School of Medicine and Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences at Mount Sinai, M.S. Genetic Counseling).



## STAY & PLAY



Shabbat Stay and Play is at 4:00 PM at Rebecca & Jay Herman's home, 16 Harlow Cres. Hudi Assouline will lead a special program at this event.

## BARUCH DAYAN HA'EMET

We regret to inform you of the passing of our long-time Associate Member/Member Gideon Adler.

המקום ינחם אתכם בתוך שאר אבלי ציון וירושלים



SUNDAY  
6/26

MONDAY  
6/27

TUESDAY  
6/28

WEDNESDAY  
6/29

THURSDAY  
6/30

FRIDAY  
7/1

### WEEKDAY MINYANIM AT AHAVAT ACHIM

	SUNDAY 6/26	MONDAY 6/27	TUESDAY 6/28	WEDNESDAY 6/29	THURSDAY 6/30	FRIDAY 7/1
SHACHARIT	8:00 AM	6:15 AM	6:25 AM	6:00 AM	6:00 AM	6:25 AM
MINCHA/MAARIV	8:21 PM	8:21 PM	8:21 PM	8:20 PM	8:20 PM	6:47 PM
<b>ZMANIM</b>						
Earliest Talit	4:16 AM	4:16 AM	4:17 AM	4:17 AM	4:18 AM	4:18 AM
Gedolah	1:37 PM	1:37 PM	1:37 PM	1:38 PM	1:38 PM	1:38 PM
Shkia	8:33 PM	8:33 PM	8:33 PM	8:32 PM	8:32 PM	
Tzait Hakochovim	9:13 PM	9:13 PM	9:13 PM	9:12 PM	9:12 PM	

## IN OUR FUTURE

**June 28** - Annual General Membership meeting, at 9:00 PM on Zoom

**July 2** - Seudah Shlishit is sponsored by the Goreliks to commemorate the yahrzeit of David's grandmother, Fanya Yeruhovich ז"ל (Chana Feiga Bat Hirsh), and the Winchesters to commemorate the yahrzeit of Steve's father, מאיר דוד בן שמואל גרשון, הלוי, David Winchester ז"ל.

**July 9** - Seudah Shlishit is sponsored in honor of the siyum on Mesechet Yevamot.

**October 29** - Seudah Shlishit is sponsored in honor of the siyum on Mesechet Ketuvot.

## KIDDUSH INFORMATION



- To sponsor a Kiddush (\$1000/\$613/\$318, plus a bottle of scotch) email [dmgarfunkel@gmail.com](mailto:dmgarfunkel@gmail.com). Larger kiddushes may require a price adjustment based on expected crowd sizes, requested menus, etc.
- If you are around when the Rabbi says "על המחיה", your assistance in clean up would be appreciated.

## SEUDAH SHLISHIT INFO



To sponsor for \$136 Seudah Shlishit to commemorate Yahrzeits, for a Siyum, or for another occasion, email David at [dmgarfunkel@gmail.com](mailto:dmgarfunkel@gmail.com).

## BULLETIN DEDICATIONS, ANNOUNCEMENTS, AND SHUL CALENDAR

Email [seplotnick@gmail.com](mailto:seplotnick@gmail.com) to request an announcement of a simcha, refuah or life cycle event in the bulletin or to dedicate a bulletin for \$36 (\$54 w/Photo). To add events to the shul calendar email Joan at [communications@ahavatachim.org](mailto:communications@ahavatachim.org).

## SHIURIM



- TALMUD 4 ALL CLASS - Meets Monday nights, 8:15 PM, on Zoom: <https://zoom.us/j/7291311899>, Password: 112233
- TORAH FOR YOUR COMMUTE, via a Whatsapp group, with 3-minute daily halacha insights and a weekly 5-minute parsha elucidation. To join email Rabbi Shestack at [rabbishestack@gmail.com](mailto:rabbishestack@gmail.com).
- MONTHLY SHABBAT AFTERNOON SHIUR with Rabbi & Chana Shestack
- MESORAH-IN-REVERSE lecture series at Suedah Shlishit on Shabbat.



## FROM THE RABBI



Rabbi Shestack will be out of town from June 17 to June 27 with limited mobile phone service. Please contact Rabbi Shua Katz with any halachic questions.

## COMMUNITY SECURITY

To volunteer and become part of our community security service, please email Margo at [security@ahavatachim.org](mailto:security@ahavatachim.org).



## GITA COOPERWASSER ז"ל YOUTH PROGRAM

- Shabbat Youth groups start at 10:15 AM. Children ages 3-12 years old can earn tickets for coming to minyan (Friday night and/or Shabbat day), asking the rabbi questions or attending parent-child learning programs! Tickets can be redeemed for exciting prizes over time!
- Children under age 4 meet in the youth room to the left upon entry to the social hall. This will be a parent led group.
- Children ages 4-7 meet in the youth room to the right upon entry to the social hall. This group will be run by our wonderful youth leaders. Parents are encouraged to drop their children off.
- Older elementary aged children and pre-teens meet in the Beit Midrash.

## GITA COOPERWASSER ז"ל YOUTH EVENTS

**July 1** - Pre-Shabbat Ruach, enjoying songs led by Jay Herman, stories and special treats, from 5:00 - 5:45 PM.

**July 9** - Young Couples Mix & Match Lunch at 12:30 PM, followed by a collective Stay & Play with dessert at 3:30 PM! Email [nbnadler@gmail.com](mailto:nbnadler@gmail.com) to be paired up with another family for lunch or with any questions you may have, or click here to register: [MIX & MATCH](#).

## SUMMER COMMUNITY DAY

On July 10, 4:00 PM, at the shul, there will be a BBQ, card making for military members, temporary tattoos, games, and more. RSVP by July 3 for early bird pricing of \$36 per family by clicking here: <https://forms.gle/1adGNKwPFRf9VUH59>, or email [events@ahavatachim.org](mailto:events@ahavatachim.org)!

18-25 Saddle River Road  
Fair Lawn, NJ 07410  
201.797.0502  
<http://www.ahavatachim.org>



NAME	HEBREW DATE	CANDLE EVENING OF	DEDICATOR	RELATIONSHIP
Harry Kirchenbaum	1	June 29	Hyman Kirchenbaum	Father
Ida Wigod	7	July 5	Seymour Wigod	Grandmother
David Winchester	7	July 5	Steve Winchester	Father
Harry Shimoff	17	July 15	Melanie Kwestel	Father
Gladys Kustanowitz	18	July 16	Al Kustanowitz	Mother
Cheryl Wigod	19	July 17	Seymour Wigod	Wife
Cheryl Wigod	19	July 17	Ron Sokoloff	Sister
Kiva Wigodsky	25	July 23	Seymour Wigod	Uncle
Sylvia Latkin	27	July 25	Eita Latkin	Mother-In-Law
Max Bickel	28	July 26	Jack Bickel	Grandfather
Jacob Kustanowitz	28	July 26	Al Kustanowitz	Father
Betty Lee Schechter	28	July 26	Joyce Heller	Sister
Jason H. Schechter	29	July 27	Joyce Heller	Nephew

**DAVID SCHWITZER<sup>ט"ו</sup> SOCIAL HALL**

Please contact Lori Garfunkel at [garfmom@gmail.com](mailto:garfmom@gmail.com) to book the David Schwitzer<sup>ט"ו</sup> Social Hall for an event or special occasion. \$250 per simcha (members)/\$325 for Associates/\$400 paid in advance for non-members, plus the cost of any additional clean up (plus a \$150 security/cleaning deposit refunded when the social hall is returned in the condition it started in). Private caterers must be approved in advance by the Rabbi.

**DONATE A SEFER, ETC.**

Siddurim & Machzorim (\$36), and Chumashim (\$54), are available to be donated to the shul. Please contact Jeff Safier at [jeff.Safier@gmail.com](mailto:jeff.Safier@gmail.com) for details.

**HONORARIA**

The available Honoraria list will be provided upon request by contacting Steven Plotnick at [seplotnick@gmail.com](mailto:seplotnick@gmail.com).

**SCRIP**

Scrip is available from Men's Club. Email David at [dmgarfunkel@gmail.com](mailto:dmgarfunkel@gmail.com) for details.

**MISHEBAYRACH**

With a Mishebayrach you've pledged to give Tzedakah on behalf of those for whom you asked Hashem's blessing. Contributions to the shul can be made using Paypal's Giving Fund (with 100% of the proceeds going to the Shul), by clicking here: [Ahavat Achim Donations](#). If by check, please indicate on its face "Aliyah Donation."

**Yahrzeit Plaques**

Memorialize a loved one with a plaque, \$300 for members/\$450 for nonmembers. We will strive to send you written notice of upcoming yahrzeit and announce name during public Yizkor. Email Amy at [Yahrzeit@ahavatachim.org](mailto:Yahrzeit@ahavatachim.org) to arrange.

**MEN'S CLUB**

Please contact Elliot Greene at [MensClub@AhavatAchim.Org](mailto:MensClub@AhavatAchim.Org) to join the Men's Club.

**SPONSORSHIPS**

Sponsorships opportunities for Yahrzeits, Refuahs, and Hodahs (thanks), are available for regular shiurim, youth events and comparable activities (but not for established honorariums or where sponsorships fund the event). The cost of sponsorship (shiur or youth event) is \$100 per sponsor. Multiple sponsors for an event will be accepted.

All sponsorships will be listed in the bulletin and announced upon commencement of the event (and, if possible, a placard with the sponsorship will be prepared and displayed at the event).

Sponsorships do not include any extra amenities (such as food). Please contact either Stephen Agress or Steve Plotnick for questions or clarifications.

## תמוז TAMMUZ (ADAPTED FROM OU.ORG)

"And He brought me to the entrance at the Gate of the House of the L-rd which was at the north; and there were there women sitting, bewailing the Tammuz". (Yechezkel 8:14)

"Tammuz" is the Babylonian name of this month, as are all of the "official" names of the months in the Hebrew Calendar. In the Bible, however, the month is referred to as "the Fourth Month," with reference to Nisan, the First Month.

As mentioned above, the name which "came up" from Babylon with the Jewish People was Tammuz. In this case, consideration of the use of the name in Yechezkel would make it appropriate to say that the name "Tammuz" brought down the Jewish People. The verse in Yechezkel cited above speaks of the worship of a Babylonian idol, known as "Tammuz." And it seems most odd, at first glance, that this name would be chosen as the name of a Hebrew month.

However, in the context of the month that we are dealing with, a month of tragedies which would lead to still greater tragedies, the appropriateness of the name becomes clear. The Prophet Yechezkel was being shown by G-d the reasons for His great Anger against the Jewish People, namely, the various forms of idol worship that had been adopted by them to replace the Divine Service. This behavior would result, if the Jewish People would not repent, in the Destruction of the Once-Holy, but now desecrated, Temple.

We read in the Book of Yehoshua (10:11-14) of the Battle of Yehoshua and the People of Israel against the five kings of the Emorite Nation. In the Biblical account, we find mention of "great stones" thrown, as it were, by G-d, upon the Emorites. This could refer to hail, as the verse itself mentions (Yehoshua 10:11).

But in light of the great astronomical miracle detailed in the following verses (12-14), in which the sun and the moon are pictured as having not advanced, until the People of Israel had achieved complete victory, there is here the suggestion of a tremendous suspension of the paths in Heaven, perhaps caused by a contact of the Solar System with an intense meteor, or asteroid, shower. Whatever the case, according to Jewish tradition, this great miracle is supposed to have occurred on the third of Tammuz.

The "sign" of the month is "Sartan," "Cancer," or "The Crab," because a constellation which is observed at this time of year has the appearance of a crab. Also, the season is summer, and the hot weather of summer causes crabs to multiply in the water. Crabs pinch and hurt, and this month was basically a time in which the Jewish people were hurt.

Chodesh Tammuz – In Relation to the Other Months of the Year: 1. Nisan, 2. Iyar, 3. Sivan (30 days), 4. Tammuz (29 days), 5. Av (30 days), 6. Elul, 7. Tishrei, 8. Cheshvan, 9. Kislev, 10. Tevet, 11. Shevat, and 12 Adar.

## AHAVAT ACHIM MEMBERSHIP/ HOSPITALITY

For membership details or Shabbat hospitality email Sara Santacruz at [membership@ahavatachim.org](mailto:membership@ahavatachim.org).

## PERSONAL ANNOUNCEMENTS

Various life cycle events related to members are announced in the bulletin (e.g., births and weddings of children/grandchildren, bar/bat mitzvahs of children, deaths requiring shiva observance, as well as travel to/from Israel to study). Other personal announcements are not appropriate except as part of the bulletin's dedication (\$36 cost - \$54 with photo).

## NUMBERS & INFO

**ERUV:** To subscribe for updates, email [fairlawneruv@groups.io](mailto:fairlawneruv@groups.io). Check status at <https://groups.io/g/fairlawneruv> or call 201-254-9190.

**MIKVAH:** 201-796-0350. At Shomrei Torah. Go to <http://www.fairlawnmikvah.org/> for online booking.

**TWITTER:** AhavatAchimFL

**FACEBOOK:** [facebook.com/groups/ahavat.achim/](https://www.facebook.com/groups/ahavat.achim/)

**INSTAGRAM:** [instagram.com/ahavatachimfl/?hl=en](https://www.instagram.com/ahavatachimfl/?hl=en)

**FLICKR:** [flickr.com/photos/ahavatachim/albums](https://www.flickr.com/photos/ahavatachim/albums)

## AMAZON SMILE

You can help Ahavat Achim and it won't cost you a cent! Just make regular Amazon purchases at <https://smile.amazon.com/>. After

a one-time set up designating your preferred charity as Congregation Ahavat Achim of Fair Lawn, just make your regular Amazon purchases. Amazon donates 0.5% of the price of your eligible AmazonSmile purchases to Ahavat Achim.



*Ahavat Achim Young Couples Stay & Play Luncheon*

*Mix & Munch*

# SHABBAT LUNCH

**JULY 9TH @ 12:30**

**FOLLOWED BY A COLLECTIVE STAY & PLAY AND DESSERT @ 3:30!**

**SIGN UP TO BE PAIRED WITH ANOTHER FAMILY FOR  
LUNCH USING THE LINK IN THE EMAIL.**

**E-MAIL [NBNADLER@GMAIL.COM](mailto:NBNADLER@GMAIL.COM) WITH ANY QUESTIONS.**



**AHAVAT ACHIM**  
קהלת אהבת אחים  
THE FAMILY DRUG

Ahavat Achim Youth  
Department Presents

# Pre-Shabbat Ruach

Join us for songs & stories

Led by Jay Herman

Friday, July 1 @ 5-5:45 PM

RSVP to [youth@ahavatachim.org](mailto:youth@ahavatachim.org) by 6/30



AHAVAT ACHIM

קהלת אהבת אחים

THE FAMILY SHUL

PARENTS AND ME

# STAY & PLAY

Congregation Ahavat Achim



Featuring a special interactive program  
led by Hudi Assouline!

June 25th  
@ 4 PM

*The Herman Home*  
*16 Harlow Crescent*



Questions? Email Natasha at [nbnadler@gmail.com](mailto:nbnadler@gmail.com)



AHAVAT ACHIM  
קהלת אהבת אחים  
THE FAMILY SHUL

**\$36**  
per family  
Early Bird  
Rate!

**JULY 10**  
4PM

# SUMMER COMMUNITY DAY



**LET'S KICK OFF SUMMER WITH A COMMUNITY DAY!**

**Between BBQ, card making for military members, temporary tattoos, games, and more, there will be something for everyone at our summer community day!**

.....  
**RSVP TO [EVENTS@AHAVATACHIM.ORG](mailto:EVENTS@AHAVATACHIM.ORG)**

***Let us know if you are coming by July 3rd for early bird pricing!***

**18-25 Saddle River Road, Fair Lawn, NJ 07410**

[www.ahavatachim.org](http://www.ahavatachim.org)



# COVENANT & CONVERSATION

ד"ר



## ESSAYS ON ETHICS

WITH RABBI LORD JONATHAN SACKS ל"צ

ORIGINALLY WRITTEN AND DISTRIBUTED IN 5775 / 2015



With thanks to **Wohl Legacy** for their generous sponsorship of *Covenant & Conversation*. Maurice was a visionary philanthropist. Vivienne was a woman of the deepest humility. Together, they were a unique partnership of dedication and grace, for whom living was giving.

## Assembling Reminders

### Shelach Lecha

Imagine the following: You are driving ever so slightly above the speed limit. You see a police car in your rear-view mirror. You slow down. You know perfectly well that it is wrong to exceed the speed limit whether anyone is watching or not but, being human, the likelihood of being found out and penalised makes a difference.

Recently a series of experiments has been conducted by psychologists to test the impact of the sense of being observed on pro-social behaviour. Chenbo Zhong, Vanessa Bohns and Francesca Gino constructed a test to see whether a feeling of anonymity made a difference. They randomly assigned to a group of students either sunglasses or clear glasses, telling them that they were testing reactions to a new product line. They were also, in an apparently unrelated task, given six dollars and chance of sharing any of it with a stranger. Those wearing clear glasses gave on average \$2.71, while those wearing sunglasses gave an average of \$1.81. The mere fact of wearing dark glasses, and thus feeling unrecognised and unrecognisable, reduced generosity. In another experiment, they found that students given the opportunity to cheat in a test were more likely to do so in a dimly lit room than in a brightly lit one.<sup>1</sup> The more we think we may be observed, the more moral and generous we become.

Kevin Haley and Dan Fessler tested students on the so-called Dictator Game, in which you are given, say, ten dollars, together with the opportunity of sharing any or none of it with an anonymous stranger. Beforehand, and without realising it was part of the experiment, some of the students were briefly shown a pair of eyes as a computer screen saver, while others saw a different image. Those

<sup>1</sup> Chen-Bo Zhong, Vanessa K. Bohns, and Francesca Gino, *Good Lamps Are the Best Police: Darkness Increases Dishonesty and Self-Interested Behavior*, *Psychological Science* 21 (2009), pp. 311–314.

exposed to the eyes gave 55 per cent more to the stranger than the others. In another study researchers placed a coffee maker in a university hallway. Passers-by could take coffee and leave money in the box. On some weeks a poster with watchful eyes was hanging on the wall nearby, on others a picture of flowers. On the weeks where the eyes were displayed, people left on average 2.76 times as much money as at other times.<sup>2</sup>

Ara Norenzayan, author of the book *Big Gods*, from which these studies are taken, concludes that “watched people are nice people.”<sup>3</sup> That is part of what makes religion a force for honest and altruistic behaviour: the belief that God sees what we do. It is no coincidence that, as belief in a personal God has waned in the West, surveillance by CCTV and other means has had to be increased. Voltaire once said that, whatever his personal views on the matter, he wanted his butler and other servants to believe in God because then he would be cheated less.<sup>4</sup>

Less obvious is the experimental finding that what makes the difference to the way we behave is not simply what we believe, but rather the fact of being *reminded* of it. In one test, conducted by Brandon Randolph-Seng and Michael Nielsen, participants were exposed to words flashed for less than 100 milliseconds, that is, long enough to be detected by the brain but not long enough for conscious awareness. They were then given a test in which they had the opportunity to cheat. Those who had been shown words relating to God were significantly less likely to do so than people who had been shown neutral words. The same result was yielded by another test in which, beforehand, some of the participants were asked to recall the Ten Commandments while others were asked to remember the last ten books they had read. Merely being reminded of the Ten Commandments reduced the tendency to cheat.

**“What makes the difference to the way we behave is not simply what we believe, but rather the fact of being reminded of it.”**

Another researcher, Deepak Malhotra, surveyed the willingness of Christians to give to online charitable appeals. The response was 300 per cent greater if the appeal was made on a Sunday than on any other day of the week. Clearly the participants did not change their minds about religious belief or the importance of charitable giving between weekdays and Sundays. It was simply that on Sundays they were more likely to have thought about God. A similar test was carried out among Muslims in Morocco, where it was found that people were more likely to give generously to charity if they lived in a place where they could hear the call to prayer from a local minaret.

Nazorayan’s conclusion is that ‘religion is more in the situation than in the person,’<sup>5</sup> or to put it another way, what makes the difference to our behaviour is less what we believe than the phenomenon of being *reminded*, even subconsciously, of what we believe.

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<sup>2</sup> This and the following paragraphs are based on Ara Norenzayan, *Big Gods: How Religion Transformed Cooperation and Conflict*, Princeton University Press, 2013, pp. 13-54.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 19.

<sup>4</sup> Voltaire, *Political Writings*, ed. David Williams (Cambridge, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p. 190.

<sup>5</sup> Norenzayan, *Big Gods*, p. 39.

That is precisely the psychology behind the mitzvah of *tzitzit* in this week's parsha of Shelach Lecha:

This shall be your *tzitzit*: seeing it, you shall remember all the Lord's commands and keep them. You will not then go astray, following the lusts of your heart or of your eyes, following your own sinful desires. This is to remind you to keep all My commands, to remain holy to your God. (*Num. 15:39-40*)

The Talmud (Menachot 44a) tells the story of a man who, in a moment of moral weakness, decided to pay a visit to a certain courtesan. He was in the course of removing his clothes when he saw his *tzitzit* and immediately froze. The courtesan asked him what the matter was, and he told her about the *tzitzit*, saying that the four fringes had become accusing witnesses against him for the sin he was about to commit. The woman was so impressed by the power of this simple command that she converted to Judaism.

We sometimes fail to understand the connection between religion and morality. Dostoevsky is reputed to have said to have said that if God did not exist, all would be permitted.<sup>6</sup> This is not the mainstream Jewish view. According to Rabbi Nissim Gaon, the moral imperatives accessible to reason have been binding since the dawn of humanity.<sup>7</sup> We have a moral sense. We know that certain things are wrong. But we also have conflicting desires. We are drawn to do what we know we should not do, and often we yield to temptation. Anyone who has ever tried to lose weight knows exactly what that means. In the moral domain, it is what the Torah means when it speaks of “straying after your heart and after your eyes, following your own sinful desires.” (Numbers 15:39)

**“We have a moral sense. We know that certain things are wrong. But we also have conflicting desires.”**

The moral sense, wrote James Q. Wilson, “is not a strong beacon light radiating outward to illuminate in sharp outline all that it touches.” It is, rather, “a small candle flame, casting vague and multiple shadows, flickering and sputtering in the strong winds of power and passion, greed and ideology.” He added: “But brought close to the heart” it “dispels the darkness and warms the soul.”<sup>8</sup>

Wittgenstein once said that “the work of the philosopher consists in assembling reminders.”<sup>9</sup> In the case of Judaism the purpose of the outward signs – *tzitzit*, *mezuzah*, and *tefillin* – is precisely that: to assemble reminders, on our clothes, our homes, our arms and head, that certain things are wrong, and that even if no other human being sees us, God sees us and will call us to account. As a result of recent research, now have the empirical evidence that reminders make a significant difference to the way we act.

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<sup>6</sup> He did not say these precise words, but said something similar in *The Brothers Karamazov* (1880).

<sup>7</sup> *Commentary to Brachot*, introduction.

<sup>8</sup> James Q. Wilson, *The Moral Sense*, Free Press, 1993, p. 251.

<sup>9</sup> *Philosophical Investigations*, §127.

“The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked; who shall know it?” said Jeremiah. (17:9)

One of the blessings and curses of human nature is that we use our power of reason not always and only to act rationally, but also to rationalise and make excuses for the things we do, even when we know we should not have done them. That, perhaps is one of the lessons the Torah wishes us to draw from the story of the spies. Had they recalled what God had done to Egypt, the mightiest empire of the ancient world, they would not have said: “We cannot go up against those people, for they are stronger than us.” (Num. 13:31) But they were gripped by fear. Strong emotion - fear especially - distorts our perception. It activates the amygdala, the source of our most primal reactions, causing it to override the prefrontal cortex that allows us to think rationally about the consequences of our decisions.

*Tzitzit*, with their thread of blue, remind us of heaven, and that is what we most need if we are consistently to act in accordance with the better angels of our nature.



1. Do all people need reminders of what is right and wrong, even good people?
2. Do we need religion to teach us how to be moral? Can atheists also be moral?
3. What does religion add to our lives as moral people, and moral communities?