Hearts and Minds….and Eyes

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Introduction.

The phrase “winning hearts and minds” has been used in connection with gaining the loyalty of individuals or groups engaged in a conflict not via threat or use of force, but rather by means of persuasion and intellectual argument.\(^1\) To the extent that God Wishes to convince the Jewish people to exercise their free will and throw in their lot with Him and His Program of Commandments, He also Engages in a wide-ranging attempt to influence Jewish hearts and minds. This week’s Parasha discusses a particular Mitzva whose overt purpose is such an aim.

The Mitzva of Tzitzit.

One of the most well-known Commandments in the Tora appears in the third paragraph of the Shema prayer which is also part of this week’s Parasha, Shelach:

**BaMidbar** 15:37-41

37 And the Lord Spoke unto Moshe, saying: 38 “Speak unto the children of Israel, and bid them that they make them throughout their generations ‘Tzitzit’ (Fringes) in the corners of their garments, and that they put with the ‘Tzitzit’ of each corner a thread of blue. 39 And it shall be unto you for ‘Tzitzit’, that ye may look upon it, and a) remember all the Commandments of the Lord, and b) do them; and that c) ye go not about after your own heart and your own eyes, after which ye use to go astray; 40 that ye may remember and do all My Commandments, and d) be Holy unto your God. 41 I Am the Lord your God, Who Brought you out of the land of Egypt, to Be your God: I Am the Lord your God.”

The Tora’s own reasons for this Mitzva.

Although it is atypical for the Tora to offer reasons for the Commandments,\(^2\) with regard to Tzitzit, a number of rationales and aims are delineated among the verses above, i.e., looking\(^3\) at the Tzitziyot will remind the person wearing them:


\(^2\) Sanhedrin 21b

R. Isaac also said: Why were the reasons of Biblical laws (for the most part) not revealed? — Because in two verses reasons were revealed, and they caused the greatest in the world (Solomon) to stumble. Thus it is written: (Devarim 17:17) “He shall not multiply wives to himself,” whereon Solomon said, “I will multiply wives yet not let my heart be perverted.” Yet we read, When Solomon was old, his wives turned away his heart. Again it is written: (Ibid.) “He shall not multiply to himself horses;” concerning which Solomon said, “I will multiply them, but will not cause (Israel) to return (to Egypt).” Yet we read: (I Melachim 10:29) “And a chariot came up and went out of Egypt for six (hundred Shekels of silver).”

\(^3\) The phrase in BaMidbar 15:39 “…that ye may look upon it…” strongly suggests that the proper manner in which to wear Tzitziyot is by having them protrude so that they will be readily visible to the wearer. If the Tzitziyot are concealed under one’s outer garments, then the only time that you will look upon them is when you are either...
a) to remember the Commandments,
b) to perform them,
c) avoid being unduly influenced by what one naturally might think and see,
and d) strive to achieve Godly holiness.

One of the four reasons offered by the Tora for the Mitzva of Tzitzit is unique, when compared to rationales associated with other Mitzvot.

While the remembering and carrying out of the Commandments in order to follow in “God’s Footsteps” and therefore be holy, i.e., a), b) and d), are themes that are mentioned throughout the Tora,⁴ the idea c) that we are to take steps to counter the desires commonly associated with our hearts and sight, is a unique idea. The Tora, by directly associating drawing attention to the dangers of following one’s heart and eyes with the Mitzva of Tzitzit is implying not only that our natural tendencies and desires do not align from the outset with the Tora’s dressing or undressing, and the temptations of the heart and the eyes abound at other times as well. Shulchan Aruch, Orech Chayim 8:11 bears this out:

The essence of the Mitzva of wearing a Tallit Katan (in contrast to a Tallit Gadol that is generally only donned during prayer) is to place it atop his clothing in order that he will always see it and remember the Mitzvot.

Mishna Berura #25 d.h. Al Begadav, notes one exception:

In some writings it is noted that the Tallit Katan is beneath one’s clothing. Nevertheless Magen Avraham writes that at the very least that the Tzitziyot should be outside, and not like those who insert the Tzitziyot into pockets in the corners of the garment. However, people who walk among non-Jews fulfill the Commandment in this manner. Nevertheless, when they recite the blessing over the Tallit Katan, the Tzitziyot should be exposed.

Ibid. 26 d.h. Yireihu

As it is written, “...that you may look upon it and remember...” And those people who place their Tzitziyot inside their trousers, not only are they ignoring the Tora’s Commandments, “that you may look upon it”, but they are also disparaging God’s Commandments and in the future they will have to answer for this. And when they claim that they are walking among non-Jews, it would have been sufficient for them to put the Tzitziyot into the pockets (of the garment). And if they had a gift received from a flesh-and-blood king upon which was emblazoned the name of the king, they would constantly show it off before others. All the more so this should be true regarding Tzitziyot, which hint at the Name of the King of Kings, the Holy One, Blessed Be He...

⁴ VaYikra 11:44

For I Am the Lord your God; sanctify yourselves therefore, and be ye holy; for I Am holy; neither shall ye defile yourselves with any manner of swarming thing that moveth upon the earth

Ibid. 19:2

Speak unto all the congregation of the children of Israel, and say unto them: “Ye shall be holy; for I the LORD your God Am Holy.

Ibid. 22:31

And ye shall keep My Commandments, and do them: I Am the Lord.

Ibid. 26:3

If ye walk in My Statutes, and keep My Commandments, and do them.
directives, but that one goal of the system of Commandments, as exemplified by Tzitziyyot, is to either combat destructive tendencies (Milchemet HaYetzer) as well as symbolized by Tzitziyyot, is to either combat destructive tendencies (Milchemet HaYetzer) as well as symbolized by Tzitziyyot.

5 The redundancy at the end of the verse makes this point on its own:
“...after which ye use to go astray,“
a human being naturally and typically follows his thoughts and what he sees, without necessarily considering the moral dimensions or possible consequences of his actions. This theme is established early on in Beraishit:
Beraishit 8:21
And the Lord Smelled the sweet savour (of Noach’s sacrifices); and the Lord Said in His Heart: “I will not again Curse the ground any more for man’s sake; for the imagination of man’s heart is evil from his youth; neither will I again Smite any more everything living, as I have Done (by Bringing the massive Flood upon the earth).

6 Tzitzit is simultaneously a Mitzva in its own right as well as a symbol of all other Mitzvot, including, I suppose, itself!
A similar duality pertains to the Mitzva of Tora study which is simultaneously a means for attaining knowledge of the entire corpus of Commandments, even as it is a fulfillment of a religious precept in its own right.

In turn, the derivation of the number 613 is attributed to R. Hamnuna, who is quoted in Makkat 23b-24a:
Said R. Hamnuna: What is the text for this? It is, (Devarim 33:4) “Moshe commanded us Tora, an inheritance of the congregation of Yaakov,” “Tora” being in letter-value, equal to six hundred and eleven (ן = 400; ו = 6; י = 200; ש = 5; י = 611), (Shemot 20:2, 3; Devarim 5:6-7) “I am...” and “Thou shalt have no (other Gods before Me),” (not being reckoned, because) we heard (these Commandments directly from the Mouth of God (rather than by way of Moshe, since they are stated in first person rather than third person, as are all of the other of the Ten Commandments, e.g., Shemot 20:7; Devarim 5:11 “Thou shalt not take the Name of the Lord thy God (as opposed to “My Name”) in vain; for the Lord will not Hold him guiltless that taketh His Name [as opposed to “My Name”] in vain.).

7 Examples of Rabbinic texts describing this ongoing conflict within every individual are:
1. Avot 4:1
Ben Zoma says: ... “Who is mighty? The one who conquers/vanquishes his Yetzer, as it says, (Mishlei 16:32) ‘He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city’...
2. Sukka 52b
R. Shimon b. Lakish stated: The Evil Inclination of a man grows in strength from day to day and seeks to kill him, as it is said, (Tehillim 37:32) ‘The wicked watcheth the righteous and seeketh to slay him.’ And were it not that the Holy One, Blessed Be He, Is his Help, he would not be able to withstand it, as it is said, (Ibid. 33) “The Lord will not Leave him in his hand, nor Suffer him to be condemned when he is judged.”

8 The Talmud suggests that the basis for men’s head covering (women’s head covering involves the extra dimension of personal modesty) derives from a similar consideration:
Shabbat 156b
the battle against the Inclination; fig. mitigating the steady stream of temptations to which the Yetzer HaRa calls attention]], or, perhaps even better,10 harness and sublimate those desires and inner drives into constructive activities of Avodat HaShem (the service of God).11

From R. Nachman b. Yitzchak too (we learn that) Israel is free from planetary influence (that actions cannot be attributed to how the planets were arrayed at the time of his birth, but rather are deemed a reflection of the individual's exercising free choice and self-discipline). For R. Nachman b. Yitzchak's mother was told by astrologers, "Your son will be a thief." (So) she did not let him (be) bareheaded, saying to him, "Cover your head so that the fear of Heaven may be upon you, and pray (for mercy, since one requires Divine Assistance in order to resist temptation)." Now, he did not know why she spoke that to him (perhaps she only told him to cover his head, without the explicating how this was associated with consciously having a sense of the fear of Heaven). One day he was sitting and studying under a palm tree (that did not belong to him); his head-covering fell off from his head (resulting in temptation suddenly seizing him), he climbed up and bit off a cluster (of dates) with his teeth. It would appear that Tefillin, by virtue of having one Tefilla opposite one's heart (for most people who are right-handed)—Shemot 13:9 "And it shall be for a sign unto thee upon thy hand..."—and one over and above one's eyes—(Ibid.) "...and for a memorial between thine eyes"—also draw attention to the need for vigilance and sanctification of one's emotions and passions, as well as what one sees.

Sefer HaChinuch #421, as part of his discussion of the Tefilla Shel Yad, ties these Mitzvot together with one another:

...Among the bases of this Commandment, is because a person's body is comprised of matter, it is inevitable that he will be drawn after lusts and passions, for that is the nature of matter, to pursue everything that is pleasant and pleasurable. (Tehillim 32:9) "Be ye not as the horse, or as the mule, which have no understanding," were it not for the soul with which we were Favored by God, that attempts in accordance with its ability to prevent sins from being committed. And because it (the soul) resides within the natural setting of the body, i.e., the earth, and is far from its own territory, i.e., Heaven, it is unable to totally dominate the body, and the body's strength can overcome it at any time. For this reason, the soul requires numerous "guards" to guard it from its evil "neighbor", lest the body rise up against the soul and destroy it since the soul is in the body's territory and under the body's control. God Wished to Give merit to us, the Holy Nation, and Commanded us to array mighty guards to surround the soul, and for this reason, we are Commanded that a) words of Tora should never depart from our mouths neither day nor night, b) that we place four Tzitziyot on the four corners of our garments, c) a Mezuza on our doorways, and d) Tefillin on our hands and heads, and all of this is to cause us to remember not to engage in oppression via our hands, and that we should not leave the path in order to follow our eyes and the thoughts of our hearts...

10 The perspective that it is preferred that the Yetzer HaRa be reconfigured rather than destroyed, parallels an interchange between R. Meir and Beruria in the Talmud:

Berachot 10a

There were once some highwaymen in the neighborhood of R. Meir who caused him a great deal of trouble. R. Meir accordingly prayed that they should die. His wife Beruria said to him: "How do you make out (that such a prayer should be permitted)? Because it is written: (Tehillim 104:35) 'Let 'Chatat'im' (sins) cease.' Is it written 'Chatat'im' (sins)? It is written 'Chata'im'! (In other words, if the sinners sin no more, the same aim is achieved as when the sinners themselves are destroyed, i.e., sins will no longer be committed.) Further, look at the end of the verse: (Ibid.) '...and let the wicked men be no more'. Since the sins will cease, there will be no more wicked men! Rather pray for them that they should repent, and there will be no more wicked. He did pray for them, and they repented.

Just as the sinners need to be "reconfigured" the same is true regarding the Yetzer HaRa.

11 An example of such sublimation is inherent in Rashi's interpretation of one of the words at the beginning of the Shema prayer:

Devarim 6:5

And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all "Levavcha" (thy heart), and with all thy soul, and with all thy might.
The specific fundamental transgressions that Rabbinic tradition associates with the unbridled influence of the heart and eye.

The Babylonian Talmud associates the “heart” and the “eyes” in the context of BaMidbar 15:31 with three very specific and formative transgressions:

**Berachot 12b**
Why did they include the section of Tzitziyot (BaMidbar 15:37-41) as part of the recitation of the Shema in the evening and morning? — R. Yehuda b. Chaviva said: “Because it makes reference to five things — a) the precept of Tzitziyot, b) the exodus from Egypt, c) the yoke of the Commandments, d) (a warning against) the opinions of the heretics, and e) the hankering after i) sexual immorality and ii) idolatry.” 12 The first three we grant you are obvious: the yoke of the Commandments, as it is written: (Ibid. 39) “That ye may look upon it and remember all the Commandments of the Lord”; the Tzitziyot, as it is written: (Ibid. 38) “That they make for themselves Tzitziyot”; the exodus from Egypt, as it is written: (Ibid. 41) “Who Brought you out of the land of Egypt.” But where do we find d) (warnings against familiarizing oneself with) the opinions of the heretics, and e) (warning against following) the hankering after i) immorality and ii) idolatry? —

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**RaShi d.h. BeChol Levavcha**
With both of your inclinations... (since the Tora uses the word “Levavcha” (that is comprised of two “Veit” consonants) rather than the more typical “Libcha” (made up of a single “Veit” consonant), the commentator presumes that plural “hearts”, i.e., inclinations, are implied. The Rabbis traditionally speak of the Yetzer Tov and the Yetzer Ra, which when applied to this comment means that one should love God not only with his “Good Inclination”, which would appear to be obvious, but also with his “Evil Inclination”, something less intuitive. Only if we assume that one is able to take even the power associated with this basically negative tendency and proceed to direct it in order to do good, will RaShi’s comment become understandable. For example, if a person finds that he craves attention, instead of engaging in reprehensible behavior, he could become a Rav or Chazan and thereby engage in Avodat HaShem even as he carries out this potentially negative personal tendency.)

12 Because according to R. Yehuda b. Chaviva’s interpretation, both immorality and idolatry are considered as one of the five things to which the third paragraph of the Shema refers, the Talmud appears to view being attracted to sexual immorality and idolatry as subcategories of the same temptation stemming from the “eyes”. This seems to assume that idolatry is an outgrowth of a sensual attraction rather than an intellectual one. A graphic example of this interrelationship is what transpired at Ba’al Pe’or:

**BaMidbar 25:1-3**
1 And Israel abode in Shittim, and the people began to commit harlotry with the daughters of Moav. 2 And they called the people unto the sacrifices of their gods; and the people did eat, and bowed down to their gods. 3 And Israel joined himself unto the Ba’al of Pe’or; and the Anger of the Lord was Kindled against Israel.

However, while it is true that even the basic desire to have a physical representation of the Divine has to do with the senses of sight and touch, and many forms of idolatry included sensual, orgiastic activity that involved drunkenness, sexual immorality, and blood lust, nevertheless, idolatry would also appear to encompass, at least for some, a dimension of cognitive and metaphysical belief, that would seem to be more associated with not the “heart” in terms of the “mind”, than the “eyes”.
It has been taught: (Ibid. 39) “After your own heart”: this refers to heresy; and so it says, (Tehillim 14:1) “The fool (Naval)\textsuperscript{13} hath said in his heart, ‘There is no God’.”

(Ibid.) “After your own eyes”: this refers to the hankering after immorality; and so it says, (Shoftim 14:3) “And Shimshon said to his father, ‘Get her for me, for she is pleasing in my eyes’”.\textsuperscript{14}

(Ibid.) “After which ye use to go astray”: this refers to the hankering after idolatry; and so it says, (Shoftim 8:33) “And they went astray after the Ba’alim”.

These three sins represent two out of the three transgressions (belief in God and not worshipping idolatry are “two sides of the same coin”) for which a Jew is expected to give up his life, rather than transgress:

Sanhedrin 74a
R. Yochanan said in the name of R. Shimon b. Yehotzadak: “By a majority vote, it was resolved in the upper chambers of the house of Nitza in Lydda that in every law of the Tora, if a man is commanded: ‘Transgress and suffer not death,’ he may transgress and not suffer death, excepting idolatry, sexual immorality and murder”…

If the logic behind deferring the fulfillment of a Mitzva in a life-and-death situation is, that even if a particular Commandment can’t be fulfilled at this point in time, by surviving or being helped to survive, the person being helped will have opportunities to fulfill so many more Mitzvot going forward,\textsuperscript{15} then in these three cases, the transgressions are considered so existentially fundamental, that even a future of life-long Mitzva observance is not considered sufficient justification for a one-time violation of these prohibitions. Furthermore, any particular transgression is very likely, according to the Rabbis, rather than remaining a singular, isolated event, will instead precipitate a progression of additional non-compliance with Halacha,\textsuperscript{16} and therefore violations of any of the three transgressions listed in Berachot 12b might very well constitute only the beginning of an entire slew of sins, resulting in an increasing accumulation of significant spiritual corruption on the part of the sinner.

\textit{The earliest of biblical evidence that we better be truly circumspect regarding the potential negative influence of the “heart” and the “eyes.”}

Substantiation for the quality of innate, natural, human wantonness assumed in BaMidbar 15:39 can be brought from the account of the first sin committed by man in the Garden of Eden. After a

\textsuperscript{13} Kohelet Rabba 7 associates the word “Naval” with the story of the character by the same name in I Shmuel 25, with R. Yehuda arguing there that anyone who deliberately refuses the opportunity to engage in acts of Chesed is tantamount to being “Kofer BaIkar” (denying the Fundamental Postulate of Judaism, i.e., belief in God.)

\textsuperscript{14} Shimshon ignored the fact that the woman was a Philistine and was only interested in her physical attraction for him.

\textsuperscript{15} Yoma 85b
R. Shimon b. Menasia said: (Shemot 31:16) “And the children of Israel shall keep the Sabbath.” The Tora said: Profane for his sake one Sabbath, so that he may keep many Sabbaths.

\textsuperscript{16} Avot 4:2
Ben Azai says: “… One transgression leads to another...”
discussion with the primordial Nachash (serpent) regarding the propriety and consequences of eating from the Divinely Forbidden Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil (Beraishit 3:4-5), the Tora recounts what went through Chava’s mind when she reflected upon the sight of the Tree and its fruit that stood before her:

Ibid. 3:6
And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food (gastronomic consideration), and that it was a delight to the eyes (aesthetic attraction), and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise (intellectual temptation), she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat; and she gave also unto her husband with her, and he did eat.

Apparently the thoughts and emotions experienced by first Chava and then Adam with respect to ignoring God’s Directive and follow the dictates, not so much of the Nachash, but rather of their own desires and thoughts, sets the tone not only for their exile from the Garden of Eden, but for all subsequent such tensions throughout human history, a negative paradigm of Ma’asei Avot Siman LaBanim (the deeds of the forefathers are precursors for the offspring!)

The theological question that arises as the result of such speculation.

Once we accept the primary role attributed to the natural workings of the heart and the eyes with regard to how extremely basic Jewish beliefs and behaviors such as the belief in God and the avoidance of sexual immorality can come to be negated and violated because of what a person may feel and/or see, we might wonder why Did God Create us with such an inherent, fundamental, potential weakness? Put another way, by Endowing us with not only Tzelem Elokim (the Image of God), but also the Yetzer HaRa (the Evil Inclination), by establishing for all time the dialectic of body and soul, has God deliberately “Set up” the majority of humanity to fail?

Two interpretations that would appear only to sharpen this question.

a. The Yerushalmi.

With regard to the role played by a person’s heart and eyes, a number of Rabbinic commentators quote a bon-mot from the Jerusalem Talmud, that obviously keys on BaMidbar 15:39:

Yerushalmi Berachot 1:5
Said R. Levi: “The heart and the eye(s) are two ‘Sirsurei D’Aveira’ (mediators/ ‘middlemen’ for sin)...”

17 It is possible to equate the Nachash as a manifestation of human beings’ own desires, in the light of Rabbinic comments like:

Bava Batra 16a
Resh Lakish said: Satan, the Evil Inclination, and the Angel of Death are all one. He is called Satan, as it is written, (Iyov 2:7) “And Satan went forth from the presence of the Lord.” He is called the Evil Inclination: (we know this because) it is written in another place, (Beraishit 6:5) “(Every imagination of the thoughts of his heart) was only evil continually,” and it is written here (in connection with Satan) (Iyov 1:12) “Only upon himself put not forth thine hand.” The same is also the Angel of Death, since it says, (Iyov 2:6) “Only spare his life,” which shows that Iyov’s life belonged to him.
A “middleman” is typically an individual who is engaged in bringing together different parties in the interest of facilitating contact between them, leading to eventually to some form of arrangement between them. In a positive context, a “Shadchan” (one who arranges for men and women to meet one another in the interests of potential marriage) is an example of an exemplary “middleman”.

In all transactions where such an individual is involved, it would appear that the “deal” is of greater importance to the “middleman” than whether it constitutes a reprehensible action or one that is commendable and idealistic. When challenged regarding the propriety of a certain arrangement, a “Middleman” typically amorally responds, “Business is business.” Within the context of applying this terminology to the role of the heart and eyes, the Talmud qualifies the term “Sirsur” by adding “D’Aveira” suggesting that rather than functioning neutrally, for good as well as for bad, in this instance there is a singular purpose pursued by these aspects of the human being, i.e., in order to make possible sinning.

The continuation of R. Levi’s observation, where he offers a textual derivation for, as well as an interpretation of, his initial statement supports such an essentially negative evaluation of the formative role of the heart and the eyes:

Ibid.

“...As it is written, (Mishlei 23:26) ‘My son, give Me thy heart, and let thine eyes observe My Ways.’ The Holy One, Blessed Be He, Says: ‘If you give Me your heart and your eyes, I Know that you will be Mine.’”

It would appear that R. Levi is of the opinion that God Awaits a person’s seeking Him out by means of the same “middlemen” that have played key roles in his development and behavior from his birth and who have regularly led him astray in the past. The heart and eyes of a person are key aspects of how the individual relates to the world; the content of that individual’s thoughts and the manner in which he perceives that which is around him is a function of his Archimedean point, i.e., whether he is interested primarily in serving himself or God. He will have to ultimately decide if the “deals” being advanced by his “Middlemen” are the most appropriate and beneficial for him. However, it would

18 There are a number of sources that view the experience of the Tora being Given at Sinai as a “wedding” between God and the Jewish people, with Moshe serving as the officiant or “middleman” facilitating the arrangement. See for e.g., Ta’anit 26b that interprets Shir HaShirim 6:11.

19 While man always has a choice to do what is good or evil, as in Devarim 11:26-8

26 Behold, I set before you this day a blessing and a curse: 27 the blessing, if ye shall hearken unto the Commandments of the Lord your God, which I Command you this day; 28 and the curse, if ye shall not hearken unto the Commandments of the Lord your God, but turn aside out of the way which I Command you this day, to go after other gods, which ye have not known.

and Ibid. 30:19

I call heaven and earth to witness against you this day, that I have set before thee life and death, the blessing and the curse; therefore choose life, that thou mayest live, thou and thy seed, the choice is ultimately his alone, and his heart and eyes have often not led him in the most positive direction.

20 An Archimedean point (or “Punctum Archimedis”) is a hypothetical vantage point from which an observer can objectively perceive the subject of inquiry, with a view of totality. The ideal of “removing oneself” from the object of study so that one can see it in relation to all other things, but remain independent of them, is described by a view from an Archimedean point... http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Archimedean_point
appear that the heart and the eyes, at least initially, are predisposed to direct a person to sinful behavior. While we can admire the freedom that God has Given man by Endowing him with free choice, “anxiously” Awaiting his commitment to carrying out (Devarim 6:18) “…that which is right and good in the Sight of the Lord…”, by virtue of the many who never come around to choosing “life” and “blessing” (see fn. 19), whether such an approach can ever be reasonably expected to succeed remains a significant question.

b. RaShi

RaShi, in light of a “Gezeira Shava” (the hermeneutic interpretation whereby a similar word appearing in two different contexts serves as the basis of finding a common denominator between the ostensibly different themes being connected) between BaMidbar 15:39 and an earlier verse in Parashat Shelach, advances what seems to me to be an even more nefarious metaphor for the standard role played by the human heart and eyes:

RaShi on BaMidbar 15:39 d.h. VeLo Taturu Acharei Levavchem
Like (Ibid 13:25) “And they returned ‘MiTur’ (from spying out) the land at the end of forty days.” The heart and the eyes are spies for the body and draw its attention to potential transgressions; the eyes see, the heart lusts, and the body carries out the transgression.

The Yerushalmi’s choice of “Middlemen” does not carry with it the pejorative connotation of the term “spy.” A “spy” surreptitiously and cunningly uncovers information that might otherwise remain hidden or secret, perhaps for good reason. While there can be “spies” for good and bad causes, by the Tora pointedly defining the Mitzva of Tzitzit as a means for mitigating the typical activities of the heart and mind, it would appear that these “spies” are advancing the cause of evil and corruption.

Furthermore, defining the roles of the heart and mind as “spying” engenders another basic difficulty. As opposed to “middlemen” who could be understood to work mainly on behalf of themselves, usually spies have been given a mandate by an entity’s leadership to seek out information for a certain purpose. Therefore RaShi’s interpretation would seem to necessitate our asking, “What is the mission for which the heart and eyes are spying? Who authorized it? Who devised the ‘battle plan’ for which the spies are seeking to gather information in preparation for what exact action?”

Perhaps it would then logically follow that the heart and eyes operate, at least initially and instinctively, at the behest of or in conjunction with the Yetzer HaRa (the Evil Inclination), which constantly promotes self-serving and pleasurable activities on the part of the person as manifested in his physical incarnation.22 It would then be necessary to posit that God’s Plan for man is that ultimately, via

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21 In contradistinction from what the “eyes” of man direct man to do?
22 Another comment appearing in the same Talmudic discussion cited above in fn. 17, that is devoted to interpreting the events at the outset of the book of Iyov, suggests a long-term strategy on the part of these antinomian elements that attempt to dominate an individual’s judgment and behavior:

_Bava Batra_ 16a

...A Tanna taught: (Satan) comes down to earth (in the form of the Evil Inclination) and seduces, then ascends to heaven and awakens wrath; permission is granted to him and he takes away the soul.
maturation, reflection, *Tora* study and fulfilling the *Mitzvot*, Judaism will “turn” these spies, in the best spirit of Machiavelli and John le Carré, in order to have them ultimately serve a different master, i.e., God and the Yetzer Tov. Perhaps that is the connotation of the famous statement in *Avot*:

*Pirkei Avot* 2:4

He (R. Gamliel, son of R. Yehuda HaNasi) said: Make His Will (the *Mitzvot*) like your will (i.e., rather than there being a “disconnect” between what your heart and eyes desire naturally and initially, and what God Prefers you to do; strive so that the two wills align), so that He will Make your will like His Will...

But once again, we can ask, “How likely is this going to occur?”

c.  **R. S.R. Hirsch.**

R. Hirsch’s approach to a human being’s heart and eyes appears to be the least prejudicial, compared to the *Yerushlami* and *RaShl*, regarding the goals of the initial influence of these components of one’s makeup on how he thinks and what he does:

R. S.R. Hirsch on *BaMidbar* 15:39 d.h. *VeLo Taturu* pp. 262-4

On *BaMidbar* 13:2, we have already shown that “Tur” used with a subjective purpose designates an effort to get to know things as to how they can be of use and help to us. The mental activity designated by “Tur” seeks to find out what is good or not good for us. “Levav,” one’s innermost heart, forms wishes. “Einayim,” the eyes, seek the means to satisfy these wishes. And indeed, left to itself, it is only one’s ego, with all its requirements, urges and desires, which forms the motive of this “wishing heart” and the

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23 When R. Simlai in *Makkot* 23b says that the 248 negative Commandments correspond to “the number of the organs and limbs of man’s body,” the heart and the eyes are obviously being included, suggesting that there are specific *Mitzvot* specifically directed at these, as well as other aspects of man’s physical being.

24 R. S.R. Hirsch on *BaMidbar* 13:2 d.h. *Shelach Lecha*

...But Tur...designates not only searching in general, a purely objective searching of things in general by joining together all the human peculiarities of a thing to get an idea of what it really is...; but where it occurs with a subjective purpose, it seems to mean searching out the good points suitable for some extended purpose... So also quite specially the choice of the Promised Land as the best and most suited for Israel’s calling...By the order *VaYaturu Et HaAretz*, the mission received a somewhat different and extended task. It was no longer just to spy out the most suitable way to conquer the land. That purpose was to be in the background, and the task was set to learn to know the land itself as a base for national development, and the significant indication was given to consider it from two points of view, as *Eretz Canaan Asher Ani Notein LeVnai Yisrael*, it is at the present *Eretz Canaan*, the land of a most degenerate nation, and it is the land that is Given by God to the children of Israel for them to develop in it a national life according to His Revealed will, the *Tora*.

25 It would be interesting to determine how R. Hirsch exactly understood “ego” within this context. (Not only would the original German have to be investigated, but also the historical context which informed Hirsch’s comment.) Freudian psychology would posit that the ego is the dialectical result of the interaction between one’s superego (easily corresponding to the Yetzer HaTov) and id (the Yetzer HaRa aspect of a person). While Freud lived after Hirsch, whether the biblical commentator, either consciously or perhaps even intuitively, understood that there was no malevolence inherent within the directives of the heart and eyes, this would be a significant break from the positions suggested by the *Yerushalmi* and *RaShl*. And even if R. Hirsch did not think in these terms, there is no reason why we cannot!
eyes only recognize the material relationships of the material world. In the service of this “wishing heart” and “recognizing eye” the judgment of one’s mind, “HaTarahAcharei HaLev VeHaAyin,” will call everything “good” which is in accordance with one’s own sensuous nature; will call everything “bad” which does not offer satisfaction to it, or which even stands in the way of offering such satisfaction. And also to achieve what is desirable and to avoid what stands in the way of being so, the mind which only investigates and finds out, “LaTur,” things through the spectacles of the heart and eyes would only measure and value things according to their relationship to its own sphere, and fear or hope according to the result of that verdict. But where what is wished for and what is avoided, fear and hope are only formed by the dictates of a mind which forms its judgment from what the heart and eyes direct, there no place is left for God and His Law, no room for thoughts of God as Director of our actions and of our fate, no room for God to Have influence on what we desire or what we avoid, on our fears and hopes. (This is not due to a conscious decision to heretically exclude God, but rather because God Isn’t in the “Parasha,” so to speak.) Serving heart and eye does not agree with serving God “Acharei Levavchem VeAcharei Eineichem Asher Atem Zonim,” following the dictates of your heart and eye you break with faith with God. (?)26

But it is quite a different matter if God and His Tora form the fundamental basis of all our acts, the starting point of all our considerations, thought and judgments. If we look on our whole being, with heart and eye in the service of a Higher One, subordinate the wishes and dislikes of our own heart to His wishes and dislikes, then we feel at one with God, and we no longer feel that power and greatness lie in satisfying our senses of the dictates of our minds, but in the exertion of our moral will, which will we have absorbed into the Will of God. And with God we feel our own strength and power over our own world. While without Him the most gigantic force in our world shrinks to pygmy-like nothingness. And just as our wishes and dislikes, so also are our fears and hopes completely transformed when in place of being in the service of our heart and eyes we enter the service of God.

Our verse is also thus explained in Berachot 12b:

It has been taught: (Ibid. 39) “After your own heart”: this refers to heresy; and so it says, (Tehillim 14:1) “The fool (Naval)27 hath said in his heart, ‘There is no God’. ” (Ibid.) “After your own eyes”: this refers to the hankering after immorality; and so it says, (Shoftim 14:3) “And Shimshon said to his father, ‘Get

26 This particular line could be interpreted as a deliberate decision to exclude God. In my view, such an approach contradicts what R. Hirsch has just stated, i.e., that the heart and the eyes are simply following the dictates of the body of which they are a part, and are indifferent or insensitive to God’s Demands and Commandments.

I think that the underlined statement in R. Hirsch’s commentary about which I am wondering regarding its consistency with what he wrote immediately before, is unduly influenced by the Talmudic passage from Berachot 12b that he proceeds to quote below, and which we cited earlier in this essay, pp. 5-6. Ultimately the question is whether we are bound by the perspective of that Baraita, which parallels the Yerushalmi and RaShI, or can we think about a different manner in which the heart and eyes function, at least initially?)

27 Kohelet Rabba 7 associates the word “Naval” with the story of the character by the same name in I Shmuel 25, with R. Yehuda arguing there that anyone who deliberately refuses the opportunity to engage in acts of Chesed is tantamount to being “Kofer BaIkar” (denying the Fundamental Postulate of Judaism, i.e., belief in God.)
her for me, for she is pleasing in my eyes”.28 (Ibid.) “After which ye use to go astray”: this refers to the hankering after idolatry; and so it says, (Shoftim 8:33) “And they went astray after the Ba’alim”.

And that lays down the profound truth that “Minut,” the denial of God, is not, as it ostensibly boasts to be, the father of a heart wishing to be free from the laws of morality, but is the child thereof. (Here R. Hirsch is alluding to the crux of the matter. This is a “chicken and egg” issue, i.e., what comes first—the desire to be free of structure and discipline, or the pursuit of pleasure because this comes naturally to all living organisms. Does one have to resist the temptation to throw off the strictures of God and His Commandments, or does one have to transcend his material nature and impose spiritual discipline and belief in the Divine upon himself? Is our only alternative to accept the Rabbinic view, as manifested in the sources cited above, or can there be an alternative perspective that is informed by contemporary understanding of the nature of man?) The “Naval,” “the morally faded, withered one,” tries to quiet his conscience by denying the existence of God. And “Minut,” denying God, degenerates into Avoda Zora, polytheism. Only the consciousness of God makes us spiritually free. He, who in order to escape the mastery of One Power, in a trice denies Its existence, only throws himself under the yoke of Ba’alim, a host of blind forces of nature forcing him hither and thither without reason like a toy balloon in the wind.

We make one further remark. We have frequently commented on the fact that (the) Olah (whole burnt offering sacrifice) is Mechaper (atonement) for an Aseh (the failure to perform a positive Commandment) and at the same time for Hirhur HaLev (inappropriate thoughts, that even if not acted upon, nevertheless are considered spiritual shortcomings), and we took it that having sinful and empty vain thoughts was not so much a positive active giving oneself up to sin and evil and illusion, as neglect of occupying the mind with thoughts of goodness and truth. Where the mental energy fails to be directed to thoughts of goodness and truth, thought of sin and vain imaginations start by themselves. Here too the “Lo Taturu Acharei Levavchem” is only the effect of the “Reiya” (seeing, via the eyes) and “Zechira” (remembering, via the heart) directed to the “Asita Kol Mitzvot HaShem” (the performance of the Commandments of God).

Conclusion.

The process by which an individual grows and matures, deciding at some point that his life potentially means much more than a series of opportunities to seek pleasure and enjoyment, but rather provides opportunities for meaningful acts of spiritual idealism, genuine kindness, is fascinating to reflect upon, although reaching an absolute conclusion as to why God Deemed it necessary to Make man in this manner by definition will always be beyond our capacities. Understanding this process is also important in terms of determining approaches for religious education and Jewish outreach. How indeed can one win “hearts and minds” so that instead of leading us astray, they point us in the direction of Tora and Mitzvot? I fear that the question is better than any answer might be.

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28 Shimshon ignored the fact that the woman was a Philistine and was only interested in her physical attraction for him.