



“You shall be holy to your G-d”

In the Merit of the Mitzvah of the Four Fringes of the Tzitzis We Merit the Kedushah of the Four Holy Bearers of the Throne of Glory

In this week’s parsha, parshas Shelach, we will explore the mitzvah of Tzitzis, which portends the fulfillment of all the mitzvos. Here are the pertinent pesukim (Bamidbar 15, 37):

“וַיֹּאמֶר ה' אֶל מֹשֶׁה לֵאמֹר, דַּבֵּר אֶל בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאָמַרְתָּ אֲלֵיהֶם וַעֲשׂוּ לָהֶם צִיצִית עַל כִּנְפֵי בְגָדֵיהֶם לְדִוְרוֹתָם, וְנִתְּנוּ עַל צִיצִית הַכֹּנֵף פִּתִּיל תְּכֵלֶת וְהָיָה לָכֶם לְצִיצִית, וְרֵאִיתֶם אוֹתוֹ וְזָכַרְתֶּם אֶת כָּל מִצְוֹת ה' וַעֲשִׂיתֶם אוֹתָם, וְלֹא תִתְּרוּ אַחֲרַי לְבַבְכֶם וְאַחֲרַי עֵינֵיכֶם אֲשֶׁר אִתְּם זִנְיִים אַחֲרֵיהֶם, לִמְעַן תִּזְכְּרוּ וַעֲשִׂיתֶם אֶת כָּל מִצְוֹתַי וְהֵייתֶם קְדוֹשִׁים לֵאלֹהֵיכֶם.”

Hashem spoke to Moshe, saying, “Speak to Bnei Yisrael and tell them that they shall make themselves Tzitzis on the corners of their garments, throughout their generations. And they shall place upon the Tzitzis of each corner a thread of ‘techeiles.’ It shall constitute Tzitzis for you, and you shall see it and you shall remember all the mitzvos of Hashem and perform them; and you shall not follow after your heart and after your eyes after which you stray. So that you may remember and perform all My mitzvos and be holy to your G-d.”

At the beginning of the parsha, the Torah informs us that gazing upon the Tzitzis is a wonderful “segulah” for fulfilling all of the mitzvos: “And you shall see it and you shall remember all the mitzvos of Hashem and perform them.” Slightly further on, the Torah repeats this fact: “So that you may remember and perform all My mitzvos and be holy to your G-d.” We will endeavor to explain the significance of this repetition. Additionally, there is an addendum when it is

repeated: “וְהֵייתֶם קְדוֹשִׁים לֵאלֹהֵיכֶם”—and be holy to your G-d. What is the significance and reason for this addendum?

The Four Fringes Symbolize the Four Holy Creatures that Carry the Kisei HaKavod

We will begin to shed some light on these issues by introducing the comments of the Targum YoNasan (ibid. 40): “So that you may remember and perform all My mitzvos and be holy to your G-d”—you should be holy like the malachim that serve in the presence of Hashem, your G-d. Where does the holy Tanna, YoNasan ben Uziel, learn this from—that the passuk is suggesting that we should be holy like the malachim that serve HKB”H?

I had a wonderful inspiration. To explain the profound intent of the Targum YoNasan, let us refer to a fantastic chiddush concerning the mitzvah of Tzitzis found in the sefer Meorei Ohr (4, 27), authored by the divine kabbalist Rabbi Meir Papirash, ztz”l. He contends that HKB”H commanded us to wear four-cornered garments with fringes of Tzitzis tied to each corner to correspond to the four holy creatures, heavenly seraphim, that bear the Kisei HaKavod that HKB”H sits upon, so to speak.

I would like to suggest a source for his contention from his namesake in the revealed, non-mystical Torah. In the Gemara (Menachos 43b), the holy Tanna **Rabbi Meir**, expounds on the rationale for the mitzvah of “techeiles”: “תְּנִינָא הֵיךָ רַבִּי מֵאִיר:

אומר, מה נשתנה תכלת מכל מיני צבעונין, מפני שהתכלת דומה לים, וים דומה לרקיע, ורקיע לכסא הכבוד. **It was taught in a Baraisa: Rabbi Meir used to say: What distinguished “techeiles” from all other type of dyes? It is because the color of “techeiles” is similar to that of the sea, and that of the sea is similar to that of the sky, and that of the sky is similar to that of the Kisei HaKavod.** Rashi comments: **The “techeiles” inspires us to remember the One Who sits on the Kisei.**

Thus, it states explicitly that we were commanded to add a fringe of “techeiles” to each of the four sets of Tzitzis, because this color resembles the Kisei HaKavod. As a result, we will have HKB”H in mind, the Giver of the Torah, Who sits upon the Throne of Glory. This concurs magnificently with the assertion that the four sets of Tzitzis tied to the four corners of our garments represent the four holy creatures that carry the Kisei HaKavod. Hence, it is imperative to add a string of “techeiles” to each set to evoke the image in our minds of the Kisei HaKavod.

Now, this illuminates for us the comment of the holy Tanna, YoNasan ben Uziel—that by wearing the Tzitzis, we emulate the holy malachim who serve Hashem. For, as we have just learned, the four sets of fringes correspond to the four holy creatures. So, by wearing them, we resemble them, as if we, too, bear the Kisei HaKavod with HKB”H sitting upon it.

The Neshamos of Yisrael Are Chiseled out of the Kisei HaKavod

It is with great pleasure that we will now delve into this subject in greater depth. How indeed by fulfilling the mitzvah of attaching Tzitzis to the four corners of our garments do we emulate the kedushah of the malachim that bear the Kisei HaKavod, as implied by the words: **“והייתם קדושים לאלקיכם”**? Now, we know that the image of Yaakov Avinu is engraved on the Kisei HaKavod. This is taught in the Midrash (B.R. 68, 12) in relation to the passuk (Yeshayah 49, 3): **“ישראל אשר בך אתפאר, אתה הוא שאיקונין שלך חקוקה למעלה”**—**“Yisrael, in whom I take glory,” you are the one whose image is engraved above.**

I believe that we can explain why Yaakov Avinu merited this privilege based on a concept taught in our sacred sefarim. They teach us that the neshamos of Yisrael are hewn from beneath the Kisei HaKavod. The source for this idea is found

in the Zohar hakadosh (Tzav 29b): **“כל הנשמות גזורות מתחת כסא הכבוד.”** Let us explain. We know that the Jewish people are called **Yisrael**, which is one of the names of Yaakov Avinu, the father of the twelve holy shevatim, the forebearers of the Jewish people. Therefore, HKB”H saw fit to etch the image of Yaakov Avinu on the Kisei HaKavod. Hence, his offshoots, namely all of the neshamos of **Yisrael**, are also hewn from the Kisei HaKavod.

To obtain a clearer understanding of the subject, let us first explain the significance of HKB”H sitting on His Kisei HaKavod, as it is written (Yeshayah 6, 1): **“ויראה את ה' יושב על כסא רם ונשא”**—**I saw the Lord sitting upon a high and lofty throne.** Without a doubt, this cannot be taken at face value. For, as we know, one of the thirteen principles of emunah states explicitly: **The Creator, blessed is His name, is not a physical entity, and no physical attributes can apply to Him, and there is nothing whatsoever comparable to Him.** That being the case, it does not really make sense to say that HKB”H sits on His Throne of Glory. So, what does this imply?

To explain this paradox, we will rely on a fundamental concept presented in our sacred sefarim. For example, the author of the Tanya writes in Sha’ar HaYichud V’HaEmunah (Chapter 7): **“הנה הוא ידוע לכל, כי תכלית בריאת העולם הוא בשביל”** **It is known to all that the purpose of the creation of the world is the revelation of His (G-d’s) blessed sovereignty; for there is no king without a nation.** In other words, the purpose of creation is that we relate to HKB”H as the **“מלך, the King.** Clearly, there cannot be a king without a people serving him and honoring him. Thus, in a sense, only by Yisrael accepting upon themselves **“ohl malchus shamayim”** does HKB”H actually become the King and Master of the entire Universe.

We can now begin to comprehend the notion of HKB”H sitting upon the Kisei HaKavod. Let us refer to a passuk in the Megillah (Esther 1, 2): **“בנימים ההם כשבת המלך אחשורוש על כסא”**—**in those days, when Achashveirosh sat on his royal throne, which was in the capital city of Shushan.** According to Rashi, this refers to when he actually became king. In similar fashion, when HKB”H reveals His kingship over the entire world, He is likened to a king sitting atop his royal throne. This is the image depicted by the

following pesukim (Tehillim 145, 13): "מלכותך מלכות כל עולמים—Your kingdom is a kingdom spanning all eternities, and Your dominion is throughout every generation. Also (ibid. 29, 10): "וישב ה' מלך לעולם—Hashem sits enthroned as King forever. Similarly, we recite in the tefilah Nishmat: "המלך היושב על כסא רם ונשא"—the King, Who sits on a high and lofty throne.

As mentioned, HKB”H sits atop His Kisei HaKavod, ruling over all of creation, solely on account of Yaakov Avinu and all the neshamos of Yisrael who accepted the Torah at Har Sinai. By observing the precepts of the Torah and performing its mitzvos, we coronate HKB”H as King of the Universe. This explains why the neshamos of Yisrael are hewn from beneath the Kisei HaKavod. The Throne of Glory upon which HKB”H sits and rules the entire universe is founded on the neshamos of Yisrael, who coronate Him by fulfilling the precepts of the Torah.

We can now better appreciate the comment of the Targum YoNasan that the mitzvah of Tzitzis is a segulah to attaining the kedushah of the malachim who carry the Kisei HaKavod. It is because gazing upon the Tzitzis portends the fulfillment of all the mitzvos of the Torah, as it is written: "וראיתם אותו וזכרתם את—**and you shall see it, and you shall remember all the mitzvos of Hashem and perform them.** Thus, by fulfilling the mitzvah of Tzitzis, we instate HKB”H as King of the entire universe, Who rules from atop the Kisei HaKavod. Therefore, "midah k'neged midah"—measure for measure—in the merit of the mitzvah of Tzitzis, Yisrael merit the sanctity of the malachim that bear the Kisei HaKavod. For, we also bear the Kisei HaKavod on our shoulders, so to speak, by accepting upon ourselves "ohl malchus shamayim," by observing the mitzvos of the Torah.

The Mitzvah of Tzitzis Proves that We Are Both Children and Servants

Following this line of reasoning, we can now proceed to explain why the Torah repeats the fact that gazing upon the Tzitzis is a segulah for fulfilling all of the mitzvos and why it adds "והייתם קרושים לאלקיכם" only when mentioning this fact the second time. Recall that according to the Targum YoNasan, this implies that we should emulate the malachim who transport the Kisei HaKavod.

We will begin by addressing an apparent contradiction concerning the mitzvah of Tzitzis. In the Midrash Shochar Tov on Tehillim, they expound on the passuk (Tehillim 90, 16): "יראה אל—עבדיך פעליך והדרך על בניהם—**may Your works be visible to Your servants, and Your majesty upon Your children.** According to the Midrash, this passuk extols the virtue of the mitzvah of Tzitzis: "Your majesty" refers to the "techeiles" of the Tzitzis, with which Yisrael, who are called children of the Makom (Omnipresent), cover themselves. The implication is that we are called G-d's children in the merit of wearing Tzitzis. Yet, on the other hand, we find elsewhere that in the merit of the mitzvah of Tzitzis we are called G-d's servants. Wearing the Tzitzis is akin to bearing the emblem of the king. In fact, according to the Gemara, the punishment for neglecting to bear the emblem of the king on one's garment is severe. Here is the pertinent passage from the Gemara (ibid. 43b):

"תניא היה רבי מאיר אומר, גדול עונשו של לבן יותר מעונשו של תכלת, משל למה הדבר דומה, למלך בשר ודם שאמר לשני עבדיו, לאחד אמר הבא לי חותם של טיט, ולאחד אמר הבא לי חותם של זהב, ופשעו שניהם ולא הביאו, איזה מהן עונשו מרובה, הוי אומר זה שאמר לו הבא לי חותם של טיט ולא הביא."

It was taught in a Baraisa: Rabbi Meir used to say: The punishment for neglecting the mitzvah of the white threads is greater than the punishment for neglecting the mitzvah of the "techeiles" threads. By way of analogy, to what may this be compared? To a king of flesh and blood who gave instructions to his two servants. To one he said, "Bring me a clay seal" (which is easy to find); and to the other he said, "Bring me a gold seal (which is difficult to find)." Both of them were negligent and failed to bring what had been demanded of them. Who deserves the greater punishment? You would say that it is the one whom the king told, "Bring me a clay seal," and who did not bring it.

Rashi explains: They made a signet to brand an animal or slave when they purchased them to signify servitude. Tosafos write: A clay seal is compared to Tzitzis, since that is what is made for slaves; and the Tzitzis attest that Yisrael are servants of HKB”H... In other words, it is a sign on the servant's clothes identifying him to the entire world as a servant.

In the wonderful commentary of the Ohr HaChaim hakadosh on this week's parsha, he cites the aforementioned Tosafos and interprets the following passuk accordingly

(Bamidbar 15, 39): "וזהיה לכם לציצית"—that the Tzitzis shall be a sign of servitude "לכם"—for you. Along these lines, he interprets: "וראיתם אותו וזכרתם את כל מצוות ה'"—when they gaze upon the sign of their servitude, they will recognize that they are not free men able to do as they please with regards to their food, their dress, their speech, and all of their deeds. It is like a slave who fears his master, who stands when the master commands him to stand, and does every chore that Hashem commands him to do.

So, now it is incumbent upon us to resolve the contradiction. According to the elucidation of the Midrash, in the merit of the mitzvah of Tzitzis, Yisrael are considered children of the Omnipresent. Whereas Rabbi Meir asserts that the purpose of the mitzvah of Tzitzis is to display the King's emblem on our garments certifying that that we are His servants. Additionally, we will endeavor to explain Rabbi Meir's analogy, comparing the thread of "techeiles" to a gold seal and the white thread to a clay seal.

We Wind the Thread of Techeiles Alluding to the Neshamah around the White Threads Alluding to the Body

To resolve this contradiction, we will refer to the Chinuch (Mitzvah 386). He provides a wonderful explanation for the reason HKB"H commanded us to wind the thread of "techeiles" around the white threads of the Tzitzis. Here is what he writes:

Moreover, my heart tells me that in it lies an allusion and a reminder that a man's body and soul (spirit, being) are all for the sake of Hashem, blessed is He. For the white alludes to the body, which is of the earth, which was created from the snow . . . The "techeiles," whose appearance resembles the firmament, alludes to the soul, which comes from the upper realms. They (our sages) alluded to this by saying (Menachos 43b), "Why was "techeiles" singled out from all the other dyes? Because the color of "techeiles" resembles the sea, the sea resembles the sky, and the sky resembles the Kisei HaKavod . . . Now, beneath the Kisei HaKavod is the place where the souls of the tzaddikim are stored. For this reason, they said that a thread of "techeiles" should be wound around the white (threads). For the soul is superior (in origin), and the body is inferior.

As a loyal servant in the presence of his master, I would like to embellish this sacred insight. I would like to explain why there are seven white threads, in contrast to a single thread of "techeiles." The Rambam (Hilchos Tzitzis 1, 6) records this fact as follows: "ויהיה אחד משמונה החוטים חוט תכלת והשבעה לבנים"—one of the eight fringes should be a thread of "techeiles" and the other seven should be white. To explain the matter, we will introduce a concept found in the Zohar hakadosh (Lech Lecha 79a). It teaches us that man's yetzer tov is actually the neshamah located in his brain, which is a divine portion from above, which HKB"H dispatched to Olam HaZeh to combat the nachash, which is the yetzer hara.

This, in fact, is the source for what the Ohr HaChaim hakadosh writes in parshas Bereishis (Interpretation 20 of the passuk Bereishis): "ויאמר אלהים יהי אור, שולח אל האדם עזר נגד יצרו, וזה יהיה בהגיעו ליד שנה יופיע עליו ממועון קדשו רוח אלהין קדישין נשמה קדושה וטהורה... והוא אומרו ויאמר אלקים יהי אור, שהיא הנשמה שאורה רב, להיותה הצובה מתחת כסא כבודו יתברך חלק אלוך ממועל, שלחה ה' להאיר על האדם לכל יטבע בטיט היצר הרע." The Almighty's declaration, "Let there be light" is a reference to the neshamah. Upon entering the fourteenth year of life, it appears from its heavenly abode to assist man in his travails and struggles against the yetzer hara. It is holy and pure and possesses an intense light, since it is hewn from beneath the Throne of Glory; it is a portion of G-d from above. Hashem sends it to man to prevent him from drowning in the mire and succumbing to the yetzer hara.

In similar fashion, the author of the Tanya explains at length in Likutei Amarim (Chapters 9-16) that the difficult battle waged between the yetzer hara and the yetzer tov is in fact the battle waged between the neshamah in man's brain and the animal soul in his heart. Hence, it is man's task in Olam HaZeh to ensure that the brain reigns over the heart. Thus, the neshamah in the brain will illuminate and enlighten the heart to subjugate the yetzer hara within him.

Winding a Single Thread of "Techeiles" around Seven White Threads Is an Example of "One Above and Seven Below"

Following this sublime path, we will proceed to explain why the Tzitzis contain seven white threads and a single thread of "techeiles," which is wound around the white threads. We learn in the Mishnah (Yoma 53b) that on Yom HaKippurim,

the Kohen Gadol followed a unique protocol when sprinkling the blood of his Chatas-bull and the Chatas-he-goat of Yisrael: **“אחת למעלה ושבע למטה”**—**one above and seven below**. These were the only instances that this protocol was followed. Furthermore, we learn (ibid.): **“וכך היה מונה אחת, אחת ואחת, אחת ושש, אחת ושבע”**—**and he would count like this: One, one and one, one and two, one and three, one and four, one and five, one and six, one and seven**. In other words, the Kohen Gadol counted **“one”** with each of the subsequent seven sprinklings below.

The renowned possek, the Rama, Rabbi Moshe Isserles, zt”a, explains the matter in Toras HaOlah (Part 2, Chapter 26). The **“one above”** alludes to the yetzer hatov that helps a person elevate himself higher spiritually to serve Hashem exclusively. Whereas the **“seven below”** allude to the yetzer hara that strives to drag a person downwards with its seven forces of evil. As we learn in the Gemara (Succah 52a): **“שבעה”**—**the yetzer hara has seven names**.

With this understanding, he explains the rationale for having the Kohen Gadol add the **“one”** above when counting each of the seven sprinklings below. By doing so, he elevated the seven forces of the yetzer hara to join the yetzer hatov. This is consistent with the teaching in the Mishnah (Berachos 54a) related to the passuk in Krias Shema (Devarim 6, 5): **“ואהבת את ה' אלהיך בכל לבבך וגו', בכל לבבך, בשני יצריך ביצר טוב וביצר הרע.”** **“And you shall love Hashem, your G-d, with all your heart, etc.”** **“With all your heart”** means **with both of your yetzers—with the yetzer tov and the yetzer hara**.

We now have cause to rejoice! For this enlightens us as to why HKB”H commanded us to bring seven white strings and one string of **“techeiles”** for the mitzvah of Tzitzis. The seven white strings correspond to the body which contains and is influenced by the seven forces of the yetzer hara; they are in a sense the **“seven below.”** In contrast, the single string of **“techeiles”** corresponds to the neshamah, which is the yetzer tov; it is in a sense the **“one above.”** Hence, we are instructed to wind the string of **“techeiles”** around the seven white strings as a symbolic gesture indicating that the neshamah—the yetzer hatov—should control the seven forces of the yetzer hara in the body and transform them into good forces.

“Children of the Makom” from the Aspect of the Neshamah “Servants of the Makom” from the Aspect of the Body

Continuing our journey, we can now address the contradiction between the elucidation in the Midrash and the elucidation of Rabbi Meir. Do the Tzitzis demonstrate that we are the children of the Almighty or His slaves? We find in the Zohar hakadosh (Behar 111b) that Yisrael are referred to as His slaves, as per the passuk (Vayikra 25, 55): **“כי לי בני ישראל”**—**for the Children of Yisrael are slaves to Me**—and they are also referred to as His children, as per the passuk (Devarim 14, 1): **“בנים אתם לה' אלקיכם”**—**you are children to Hashem, your G-d**.

The Sefas Emes explains in several places that we are actually both. From the aspect of the neshamah—the divine portion within us from above—we are referred to as the children of the Omnipresent; whereas from the aspect of the body from our human parents, we are referred to as slaves of the Omnipresent. Then, if a person is virtuous and illuminates the neshamah inside his body and purifies his material being, his corporeal self becomes subservient to the neshamah, and he truly becomes a child of the Almighty.

This enables us to reconcile the contradiction with regards to the mitzvah of Tzitzis. Let us focus on the specific language employed by the Midrash Shochar Tov. It specifies that on account of the mitzvah of **“techeiles,”** we are called the children of the Makom: **“May Your works be visible to Your servants, and Your majesty upon Your children.”** **“Your majesty”** refers to the **“techeiles”** of the Tzitzis, **with which Yisrael, who are called children of the Makom (Omnipresent), cover themselves**.

Here is the explanation. As Rabbi Meir teaches us, the reason for the mitzvah of **“techeiles”** is **because the color of “techeiles” is similar to that of the sea, and that of the sea is similar to that of the sky, and that of the sky is similar to that of the Kisei HaKavod**. Rashi comments: **The “techeiles” inspires us to remember the One Who sits on the Kisei**. Thus, we see that the **“techeiles”** alludes to a material human being’s higher purpose—to emulate the heavenly malachim. This only happens if the **“techeiles,”** alluding to the neshamah, illuminates the corporeal body, purifying it and transforming

it into a vessel for good. Whoever achieves this lofty, enviable goal is indeed a child of the Omnipresent.

On the other hand, Rabbi Meir—who taught that the mitzvah of Tzitzis is to demonstrate that we are the slaves of the Makom—he was referring primarily to the white strings that represent the physical body. For, as we have explained, we were commanded to take seven white strings to represent the seven forces of the yetzer hara that influence the body in a negative way. So, when a person withstands this negative influence, even though he has yet to transform the yetzer hara into a yetzer tov, he is viewed as a loyal servant of HKB”H.

We can now understand why the Torah repeats the fact that the mitzvah of Tzitzis is a segulah for fulfilling all of Hashem’s mitzvos. Initially, the Torah is discussing a lower “madreigah”—when the mitzvah of Tzitzis portends withstanding the yetzer hara that has not yet been transformed into a force for good.

In this regard, it says: **“And you shall see it and you shall remember all the mitzvos of Hashem and perform them.”**

As we pointed out, here the Torah does not add: **“And be holy to your G-d.”** Seeing as he has not yet transformed the yetzer hara into a yetzer tov, he is not yet worthy to be sanctified with the kedushah of the malachim, who lack a yetzer hara.

Subsequently, however, the Torah comes to teach us that the ultimate goal is to place the “techeiles”—representing the neshamah—in control of the white fringes—representing the physical body. Hence, it adds: **“So that you may remember and perform all My mitzvos and be holy to your G-d.”** For, in the merit of transforming the yetzer hara into a yetzer tov, one is worthy of the kedushah of the malachim who carry the Kisei HaKavod—who do not have a yetzer hara. Thus, we become like holy creatures who are devoid of evil and are entirely good.



Our thanks and blessings are given to those who donated for the publication of our weekly dvar Torah for the merit of אהינו בני ישראל

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