

Maamarei Mordechai

הסבר לפי ממש פשוט

Parshas Shlach 5786

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The Torah provides a great solution to a big problem.

וְהָיָה לָכֶם לְצִיצִית וּרְאִיתֶם אֹתוֹ וּזְכַרְתֶּם אֶת-כָּל-מִצְוֹת ה' וַעֲשִׂיתֶם אֹתָם וְלֹא-תִתּוּרוּ
אַחֲרֵי לְבַבְכֶּם וְאַחֲרֵי עֵינֵיכֶם אֲשֶׁר-אַתֶּם זֹנִים אַחֲרֵיהֶם:

“And it will be for you for tzitzis, and you shall see it, and you shall recall all of the commandments of Hashem and perform them, and you shall not wander after your hearts and after your eyes, that you shall be unfaithful after them.” (Bamidbar 15:39).

The mitzvah of tzitzis is presented now in the Torah and it came at a perfect time. There are two important literary analogies in the pasuk that show it is the perfect solution to a larger problem. The pasuk says you shall *see* the tzitzis. There is a portion of the command to look at the tzitzis. It is not enough to tie and wear them, they are meant to be seen. This reflects the second literary reference to sight, *wandering after*. The word for wander is תָּתוּרוּ. This word's root is תָּוַר to tour or sightsee. The wording is specific to reference how tzitzis is the solution to the problem of the Scouts, and all sin.

The Torah is very careful to structure of the parsha (portion) of tzitzis. At first glance, the Torah appears simply to command the placing of these special fringes on the corners of one's garments. The text reveals a tightly organized chiasmic (mirrored) arrangement that teaches its central lesson.

The order is: Bnei Yisroel is commanded to place tzitzis on the corners of their garments. (Ibid 15:38). Thread(s) of techeiles is to be placed among them. (Ibid). "You shall see it and remember all the commandments of Hashem" (Ibid 15:39). "And you shall not wander astray after your heart and after your eyes" (Ibid). "So that you shall remember and perform all My commandments" (Ibid 15:40). "And you shall be holy unto your Lord." (Ibid 15:40). Finally, "I am Hashem, your Lord, who brought you out of the Land of Egypt" (15:41).

Now, see how the first pasuk (command of tzitzis) links to the last (Hashem took the nation out Mitzrayim). The second pasuk (techeiles) links to penultimate (be holy). Third (see and recall) links to third to last (remember to perform all the mitzvos). And the middle is the most important (do not wander astray after your heart or eyes). Tzitzis reminds one of geulas Mitzrayim; techeiles reminds one of being holy; remembering the commands; and at its core is not to wander. With this chiasm, the focal point of the passage is not the garment, the fringes, or even techeiles. Rather, it is, “Do not wander astray after your heart and after your eyes” (Ibid 15:39). The surrounding pesukim point to how to accomplish this main tenant.

The lesson becomes stronger when reading its broader context. The Torah places the mitzvah of tzitzis, after and near the account of the Scouts. The command was for Moshe to send scouts, not spies. (Ibid 13:2). The Torah says they shall *tour* תָּתוּרוּ the Land. The root תָּוַר appears repeatedly throughout the narrative. (Ibid 13:16,17,21,25). Their

mission was simply to observe the land. Upon their return, though, they did not focus on what they saw, but on how they personally processed what they saw.

Their sin was focusing on what they *felt*. "We were in our own eyes like grasshoppers, and surely in theirs." (Ibid 13:33). This pessimistic projection was their downfall. That is what the Torah means by "wandering astray" after your eyes. One can see. However, when one puts significance to what one is seeing then what is actually there, that is wandering astray. The Scouts accurately described the strength of the Canaanite population. However, that was not their task and Canaanite strength is no match for Hashem. Was Pharaoh's strength a match for Hashem?

The mitzvah of tzitzis precisely addresses this failure. "You shall see it and remember all the commandments of Hashem." (Ibid 15:39). See it for what it is. A garment of mitzvah. Recall all the commandments. Recall the reality that Hashem is everywhere and controlling everything. Tzitzis surround the person, four corners. They keep the person from wandering. *Do not wander (sur) astray*. The Torah could have used many different verbs meaning "follow" or "go astray." Instead, it deliberately returns to the exact word that dominated the story of the Scouts. Do not wander off. Stay within your actual reality.

The implication is profound. The real problem was not the scouting of Canaan. The real problem was allowing one's eyes and emotions to become the ultimate authority. The scouts physically explored the land. However, they came back with a report, not a photo album. They provided an opinion hit piece instead of objective journalism.

Tzitzis is the solution. It serves as a permanent corrective. Whenever one sees the tzitzis fringes, he is reminded not to repeat the mistake of the Scouts. He is reminded that Hashem's commandments not only are required performing, but they actually should help shape the interpretation of reality. The symbolism of techeiles further strengthens this idea. The Gemara connects techeiles to the sea, the sky, and ultimately the Divine Throne. (Menachos 43b). Tzitzis specifically, have four corners to remind a person to guard himself from wandering, and blue strings to focus a person on what he is seeing.

Viewing Parshas Shlach as a whole reveals a remarkable literary structure. The parshah begins with the command to send scouts into the Land. (Ibid 13:1-3). The scouts fail to properly observe the Land, but bring back their report, instead. (Ibid 13:17-33). The nation accepts the report over the evidence of Hashem's might. (Ibid 14:1-10). Divine judgment follows, condemning the generation to wander for forty years. (Ibid 14:26-35). After providing commandments about hakaros hatov, (gifts that accompany korbanos and challah), the parshah then concludes with the mitzvah of tzitzis. (Ibid 15:37-41). It is a solution to how Bnei Yisroel are to use their eyes.

In this sense, the entire section forms a coherent theological unit. The Scouts represent sight detached from faith. Tzitzis represent sight linked to increases faith. The Scouts saw giants and forgot Yetzias Mitzrayim and the Revelation at Har Sinai. The wearer of tzitzis sees the sign and remembers the commandments and the Lord who redeemed Yisroel from Mitzrayim. Thus, the mitzvah of tzitzis is far more than a command regarding clothing. It is the Torah's tutelage of seeing what matters in reality.