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אור ישראל

Living Life Deeper

PARSHAS
SHELACH

שבת

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OUR SPIRITUAL ARMOR

Towards the end of this week's *Parshah*, we read about the מקושת, someone who violated Shabbos by gathering wood.¹ This episode is immediately followed by the commandment of *Tzitzis*, raising the question - what is the connection between these two instances?

We find in *Tanna D'Bei Eliyahu Rabbah*² an interesting exchange between Hashem and Moshe *Rabbeinu* that sheds some light on this occurrence. Hashem asked Moshe why someone violated Shabbos. After Moshe responded that he does not know, Hashem explained that this man was not wearing *Tefillin*, as one doesn't wear *Tefillin* on Shabbos. Because he was missing a reminder of Hashem's presence, he sinned. What, then is the solution? *Tzitzis* - a *Mitzvah* that is worn on the weekday and Shabbos, and is a constant reminder of Hashem.

However, something in this story doesn't seem to add up. Why was the lack of *Tefillin* an excuse? Didn't the מקושת wear *Tefillin* the day before? In fact, didn't he wear them all week? He wore *Tefillin* six out of seven days, yet it wasn't enough to stop him from gathering wood on Shabbos. Why not? Was he unaware of Hashem's presence? Did he forget that he wore *Tefillin* the day before?

It would seem that despite his intellectual knowledge, his emotional attachment to the presence of Hashem was missing. How then does *Tzitzis* fill that void? Both the *Sefer HaChinuch*³ and the *Seforno*⁴ make the same point - *Tzitzis* is much greater than a simple reminder, a string around the finger, or a sticky note on the refrigerator. *Tzitzis* is the 'stamp of Hashem.' Much like an army officer has a uniform that specifically reminds him of his station, *Klal Yisrael* has a uniform that serves as a constant reminder of Who we serve.

However, one has to be aware of what the *Tzitzis* represent. Wearing *Tzitzis* by rote does not serve their purpose. If one were to wear an army uniform without the knowledge of what it represents, it would have no effect on the individual. However, if we are aware of what the *Tzitzis* represent when we put them on in the morning, we ready ourselves for whatever battles we will face that day.

When we put on our *Tzitzis* in the morning, we ready ourselves for whatever battles we will face that day.

Mind the Gap - Taking the Next Step

By their very nature, *Tzitzis* offer us many opportunities a day to reflect on Hashem's presence. Besides the moment when we put on our *Tzitzis*, and the times we kiss our *Tzitzis* during *Tefillah*, we generally see them throughout the day, constantly reminding us of our mission.

Yet, like many things, we can get use to their existence, thereby subduing their message. How do we combat this indifference?

A good rule to remember is that our thoughts create our feelings. The thought, "I'm putting on my uniform," when putting on *Tzitzis*, or thinking "I wear these because they help define who I am," throughout the day, can be an effective way of making the message of *Tzitzis* stick.

Additionally, create a challenge for yourself. See if you can think about your *Tzitzis* twice a day, for two days a week. As that becomes easier, raise the bar. Not only will the *Mitzvah* of *Tzitzis* become more meaningful, but it will impact your relationship with Hashem in all areas.

1 *Bamidbar* 15:32

2 26:19

3 *Mitzvah* 386

4 *Bamidbar* 15:39 s.v. וראיתם אתו

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WHAT WE TAKE FOR GRANTED

Tzvi Herman* would often travel for his business. Sometimes he'd be out of town for a week, other times it would just be a day or two. Navigating through airports, security, hotels, and rental cars had become second nature, and he was able to pack up for a stay with his eyes closed.

On this particular trip, Tzvi packed very lightly, as he would only be staying one night. He did not pack an extra pair of *Tzitzis*, as the one that he was wearing would suffice.

That evening, as Tzvi readied himself for bed, he pulled off his *Tzitzis* and to his dismay, the strings of one corner entangled themselves on some nearby furniture and tore themselves clean off the garment. Tzvi stared at the clothing left in his hand, then called his Rav. After some conversation, he concluded that there was nothing he could do, and he would spend the next day without *Tzitzis*.

Though the next day passed uneventfully, the episode of the torn *Tzitzis* is etched in Tzvi's mind. In his words, "When I went without *Tzitzis* that day, I realized how much I don't think about them. Although I started wearing *Tzitzis* later in life, at that point I'd been wearing *Tzitzis* for about fifteen years. I'd become so used to wearing them, it became a habit. Being forced to go a day without *Tzitzis* was a wakeup call, a reminder of something that has become part of my daily routine.

"It's so easy to forget something that was, at one point, inspirational. In a way, I'm glad I had that day, it brought me back to basics."

"When I went without *Tzitzis* that day, I realized how much I don't think about them."

**Based on a true story, name has been changed.*

DID YOU KNOW?

- Our *Tzitzis* are like a special gift from the Hashem on which His name is displayed.¹
- To show that he could have killed Shaul but didn't want to, and thereby cease the controversy between them, Dovid cut off a corner of Shaul's *Tzitzis*. Nevertheless, Dovid had dreadful remorse because Shaul was unable to fulfill the *Mitzvah* of *Tzitzis* in the interim.²
- Because he took the initiative in covering Noach, Shem's descendants were given the *Mitzvah* of *Tzitzis*.³ Later, Avraham secured that *Mitzvah* for his descendants when he declined to take any plunder from his war with the four kings.⁴

¹ *Mishnah Berurah* 8:26

² *Medrash Shocher Tov* 7:5

³ *Rashi Bereishis* 9:23 s.v. ויקח שם

⁴ *Sotah* 17a