

GREAT FOR SHARING
AT THE SHABBOS TABLE!

בשבת



אור ישראל

Self Inspired

PARSHAS
TETZAVEH

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WHO WOULD HAVE THOUGHT?

Parshas Tetzaveh is filled with descriptions of the magnificent clothing worn by the Kohanim and Kohein Gadol. In particular, the Kohein Gadol wore a garment called the Tzitz. The Tzitz was a shining golden plate with Hashem's name on it, worn on the Kohein Gadol's forehead, tied there by beautiful blue thread.¹ One would think that while the Kohein Gadol was wearing the exceptional clothing of his office, there was no way that his mind would wander. Of course he would remember, at every moment, what he was wearing, and what it meant.

Yet, we find a curious Gemara² that is quite informative about human nature. The Gemara states that much like the Kohein Gadol must never forget the Tzitz that he was wearing, so too must a person not let their mind wander from the tefillin that they are wearing. How does one make sure they keep their mind on their tefillin? The Gemara explains that one should touch one's tefillin often, doing so will reinforce one's focus on the tefillin.³

Rashi⁴ explains that this is true for the Tzitz as well; the Kohein Gadol would often touch the Tzitz in order to reinforce his focus on the Tzitz. Though at first this makes sense, when one thinks about it, this is quite astounding.

The Kohein Gadol was one of the greatest Kohanim alive. He was surrounded by the grandeur of the Beis HaMikdash, and the constant miracles that took place there every day. Furthermore, he was obviously aware of the clothing that he put on earlier that day, with all the implications thereof. How is it possible that his mind would wander and he would focus on anything else?

Nevertheless, it is clear that our impressive and extraordinary minds are simply not that easy to control. We are sometimes forgetful, unaware, or simply daydreaming. We might think we are in control of our thoughts, but it is clear that this is not an easy battle, and one in which we must constantly engage.

However, knowing our strengths and weaknesses is the first step of growth. And once we are aware of any particular weakness, we can use the tools at our disposal to overcome those weaknesses and strengthen our avodas Hashem.

1 Shemos 28:36-38

2 Yoma 7b-8a

3 Tosfos on Sukkah 46a, s.v. דכל אימת, implies that the touching helped one focus.

4 Shemos 28:38, s.v. והיה על

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Mind the Gap - Taking the Next Step

The reality is that we get used to pretty much anything, and it is hard to focus and concentrate on any task, especially one that we may be used to or repetitive.

Are there any practical suggestions that can help a person keep that focus?

The source quoted in the Dvar Torah gives a very clear suggestion — tie your thoughts to an action.¹ Like the Kohein Gadol touching the Tzitz, we, too, can find a physical action to help us keep focus.

However, it is important to realize that for many of us, the physical action will also become rote and meaningless over time. At that point, one must search for an alternative, in order to keep up one's concentration.

A common example of this is Krias Shema. We cover our eyes to enhance our concentration,² but it can become so routine that this action no longer has the desired effect. Though one should continue to cover his eyes, it is always a good idea to find another reminder to augment one's concentration.

1 Tosfos on Sukkah 46a, s.v. דכל אימת

2 Orech Chaim, 61:5



**Mussar is the foundation of the
Jewish soul... - Kovetz Igros Chazon Ish,
Letter 154**

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LIKE A LASER

Ben was a typical ten-year-old child, he did alright at school, got along with his siblings (most of the time) and liked to spend time with his friends. However, he seemed to have a terrible time focusing on whatever task he was involved in. Though it was not a medical issue, and wasn't really cause for alarm, it did create friction and frustration in the house.

Spills are typical in a bustling household like Ben's, but with five siblings, Ben's share should have only been twenty percent. The fact that he was the cause of about eighty percent of the spills was telling.

And what about his homework? The problem wasn't doing it, the problem was remembering what it was! And even when that hurdle was cleared, were the requisite workbooks or *sefarim* brought home? It was a rare occurrence in the Metz house that Ben was working on homework when he was supposed to be.

Yet, there was one time when Ben was the most attentive and observant — when he was involved in a book. No, he was not attentive or observant of his surroundings, but he was lost in the pages of whatever novel, history book, or even text book that he was reading. Whether it was a story of the sages of yesteryear, or a discussion on the tide patterns of the Baltic Sea, if it was in print, Ben was focused like a laser, soaking in every word.

Mrs. Metz didn't realize how far this went until one day the toaster lit on fire. One of the children had placed a slice of bread smothered in peanut butter in the toaster, and pushed down the lever. Well, instead of a toasted slice of bread popping out, flames were shooting out of the top, and then the bottom!

Mrs. Metz quickly unplugged the toaster, and ordered her children out of the house. The fire was manageable, but Mrs. Metz wasn't taking any chances. She ran to the nearby utility room to get the fire extinguisher when she saw Ben, engrossed in a book, oblivious to the shouting, the smoke, and the high pitched screech of the fire alarm. "Ben!" Mrs. Metz yelled, "Ben!" she repeated, as she grabbed the book from his hands, "out!"

Stirred from his reverie, Ben quickly came to his senses, and fled the house, joining his siblings. Mrs. Metz calmly put out the fire, and when she was sure it was out, told her children they were able to come back in.

Ben made a beeline to the couch. "Ben, before I lose you to the book, can you explain something to me?" asked Mrs. Metz, as she sat on the couch next to her son. "I don't understand it, how is it that the same boy who leaves his homework at school could be so focused that he doesn't even realize there's a fire in the house?!"

Ben looked back at his mother incredulously. "Mommy, I don't like homework. But I like books!"

"How is it that the same boy who leaves his homework at school could be so focused that he doesn't even realize there's a fire in the house?!"

DID YOU KNOW?

- Even the minds of the great *Tannaim* and *Amoraim* would sometimes wander into improper thoughts!¹
- It is possible to get so caught up in doing something that you forget why you are doing it in the first place.²

¹ *Kesser Rosh*, 136

² *Bamidbar Rabbah*, 5:1