



DVAR TORAH SHELACH



By: Rabbi Chaim
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The Jewish Wedding Ring

I am often stopped by non-Jews who ask, "What are those strings sticking out of your pants?"

What is the proper response?

Let us analyze the pesukim about tzitzis found in this week's parsha to gain a better understanding of the mitzvah. The pasuk states (Bamidbar 15:39), "וּרְאִיתֶם אֹתוֹ וּזְכַרְתֶּם אֶת כָּל מִצְוֹת ה'" - "You shall see it and remember all the mitzvos of Hashem." The Torah clearly tells us that looking at the tzitzis will lead us to remember Hashem's mitzvos. But how?

Rashi explains that the gematria of the word tzitzis is 600. Adding the five knots and eight strings totals 613. The Ramban is bothered by the fact that the word ציצית in the Torah is spelled without a second yud and therefore does not equal 600. He explains that the *techeiles* string serves as the reminder. Its blue color resembles the sea, the sea resembles the sky, and the sky resembles the כסא הכבוד.

On a simpler level, many meforshim explain that tzitzis function as a constant reminder of Hashem similar to a wedding ring which serves as a reminder of an important relationship.

Based on this, we can formulate a meaningful response when people ask us about the strings. Ask them, "Have you ever heard of a wedding ring? Why do people wear one?" They will typically answer that it reminds them they are in a committed relationship. Then explain that these strings serve a similar purpose. They remind us that we are in a committed relationship with Hashem.

This leads to another question: When is the most important time to wear tzitzis?

The Ibn Ezra writes that it is especially important to wear tzitzis when one is outside the Beis Medrash and exposed to the many challenges of the world. The Rambam (Hilchos Tzitzis 3:11), however, writes that one should strive to wear tzitzis at all times but especially during tefillah. He concludes that it is disgraceful to daven without tzitzis. The Shulchan Aruch (O.C. 24:1) likewise rules that one should at least wear tzitzis during tefillah.

At first glance, it would seem more important to wear tzitzis outside of tefillah. Why then do the Rambam and Shulchan Aruch place such emphasis on wearing them during davening?

Returning to the analogy of the wedding ring, where is it more important to wear it? At a business convention surrounded by strangers or at home with one's spouse? Seemingly, the need is greater when one is out in the world. So why wear a wedding ring at home?

Perhaps the answer is that even when we are in an environment that should naturally cause us to think or behave a certain way, that is not always the reality. How often do people sit across from their spouses while their minds are occupied with everything except the person in front of them? The wedding ring does more than remind us that we are married. It helps us focus on the relationship itself and appreciate the bond we already have.

The same idea applies to tzitzis. Wearing them outside reminds us that we have a relationship with Hashem. Wearing them in Hashem's house helps us focus on that relationship and deepen it. That is why there is a special emphasis on wearing tzitzis during tefillah.

Tefillah is not merely a time to show up, recite a few words, and leave. It is an opportunity to connect with Hashem, to speak to Him as our loving Father in Heaven, and to recognize that He is there for all of our needs. May our tzitzis continually remind us of our relationship with Hashem and help us grow ever closer in our connection to Him.



By: Rabbi Aryeh Gitlin

SUMMERTIME HALACHOS

KIBBUD AV VA'EIM



The Chazon Ish emphasizes that when children are home from school or yeshiva, such as during the summer, it is especially important to learn and review the laws of *Kibbud Av Va'Eim*.

It is a mitzvah from the Torah (Vayikra 19:3) to honor and revere one's parents. It is one of the few mitzvos in the Torah where a specific reward is stated, long life (Shemos 20:12). The Gemara (Kiddushin 30b-31b) also teaches that one who fulfills this mitzvah properly merits the *Shechinah* resting among them.

There is also a well-known tradition that this mitzvah offers protection to Klal Yisroel from the influence of Eisav, who excelled in honoring his father Yitzchak Avinu. The proof is that Esther HaMalka was able to fight Haman, who was from Amalek and a descendant of Eisav, because she was an orphan from birth and therefore never was negligent in this mitzvah. HaRav Aharon Leib Shteinman zt"l was once quoted as saying that the reason our generation has medicine to live longer is in order to be able to take care of our elderly parents, fulfilling the mitzvah of *Kibbud Av Va'Eim*, and thus empowering Klal Yisroel against the forces of Eisav so we can merit to receive Moshiach.

The Meiri (ibid.) writes that there is no maximum to the mitzvah of *Kibbud Av Va'Eim*. The Gemara (ibid.) illustrates this through Rabbi Tarfon, who would allow his mother to use him as a step-stool to climb into and out of her bed.

The Yesod v'Shoresh HaAvodah (Shaar HaNitzutz 2) writes that since this mitzvah is common and central, it is essential to be well versed in its halachos.

The Sefer HaChinuch (mitzvah 33) explains that its root is to cultivate a constant gratitude toward one's parents and ultimately toward Hashem for all His constant kindness.

Many people find this mitzvah more difficult than others because of its constant and personal nature. A helpful approach is to focus on the fact that this is a mitzvah of Hashem, like shaking a lulav or keeping kosher. The Gemara (ibid.) relates that Rabbi Asi would occasionally distance himself from his mother when the obligation became too difficult to properly fulfill.

The Gemara (ibid.) defines *Kibbud*/honor as assisting parents with food, drink, clothing, covering, and physical assistance. The Aruch HaShulchan (Y.D. 240:17) adds that these acts should be done cheerfully and not appear burdensome.

The Gemara (ibid.) defines *Morah*/revere as not contradicting a parent and not sitting in their designated place.

These halachos will be expanded upon further in upcoming weeks, b'ezras Hashem.

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