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## A VORT FROM THE ROSH YESHIVA מורינו הרה"ג ר' אברהם גורביץ שליט"א

### פרשת שלח לך

דַּבֵּר אֶל בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאָמַרְתָּ אֲלֵהֶם, וְעָשׂוּ לָהֶם צִיצִית עַל כַּנְּפֵי בְּגְדֵיהֶם לְדֹרֹתָם, וְנָתַנּוּ עַל צִיצִית הַכֶּנֶף פֶּתִיל תְּכֵלֶת. וְהָיָה לָכֶם לְצִיצִית, וּרְאִיתֶם אֹתוֹ, וְזָכַרְתֶּם אֶת כָּל מִצְוֹת ה' וְעָשִׂיתֶם אֹתָם, וְלֹא תִתְּוּרוּ אַחֲרַי לְבַבְכֶם וְאַחֲרַי עֵינֵיכֶם אֲשֶׁר אַתֶּם זֹנִים אַחֲרֵיהֶם. לְמַעַן תִּזְכְּרוּ וְעָשִׂיתֶם אֶת כָּל מִצְוֹתַי וְהֵייתֶם קְדוֹשִׁים לְאֱלֹקֵיכֶם: (במדבר טו, לח-מ)

*Speak to the Bnei Yisroel and say to 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 turquoise wool. It shall constitute tzitzis for you, that you may see it and remember all the commandments of Hashem and perform them; and not explore after your heart and your eyes after which you stray. So that you may remember and perform all My commandments and be holy to your G-d. (Bamidbar 15:38-40)*

This week's *Sidrah* concludes with the commandment of *tzitzis*, which serves as an obligation to remember and perform all the *mitzvos*. The *techeiles* thread helps the wearer focus on their duty to Hashem because, as Chazal put it: *Techeiles* is similar to the colour of the sea, the sea to the sky, and the sky to Hashem's *Kisei HaKavod*.

In these *pesukim*, there is a double reference to the idea that seeing *tzitzis* will lead to remembering and performing the *mitzvos*. However, there is a noticeable difference between them. The first time the *possuk* simply says: וְהָיָה לָכֶם לְצִיצִית, וּרְאִיתֶם אֹתוֹ, וְזָכַרְתֶּם אֶת כָּל מִצְוֹת ה' וְעָשִׂיתֶם אֹתָם, *It shall constitute tzitzis for you, that you may see it and remember all the commandments of Hashem and perform them*. The second time, it mentions more: - לְמַעַן תִּזְכְּרוּ וְעָשִׂיתֶם אֶת כָּל מִצְוֹתַי וְהֵייתֶם קְדוֹשִׁים לְאֱלֹקֵיכֶם, *So that you may remember and perform all My commandments and be holy to Hashem*. Why do we only find in the second *possuk* a guarantee that through fulfilling *mitzvos*, one will be "holy to Hashem"?

The Rosh Yeshiva *shlita* brings a penetrating lesson from the Chofetz Chaim to explain this difference. Before the second time, there is a condition of וְלֹא תִתְּוּרוּ אַחֲרַי לְבַבְכֶם וְאַחֲרַי עֵינֵיכֶם אֲשֶׁר אַתֶּם זֹנִים, *and not explore after your heart and your eyes after which you stray*, not found earlier, and this element is crucial to obtaining this level of *kedushah*. The Chofetz Chaim explains that even if someone does not sin if he does not fulfil this directive, he is sorely lacking. What the eye sees causes the heart to desire, which leads to spiritual downfall. If a person ruminates on sin, even if in practice he does not commit any transgression, he has fallen and *kedushah* cannot be found by him. For this reason, only after the order to not explore after your eyes and heart does the Torah mention the *madreigah* of holiness.

We find further reference to the pivotal role of man's thoughts in Mishlei (4:23): מִכָּל מִשְׁמַר נֹצֵר לִבָּךְ, *More than you guard anything, safeguard your heart, for from it are the sources of life*. The Meforshim explain the *possuk* to be conveying the above message: the heart leads to man's decisions in life, therefore, one has to be extra vigilant to focus thoughts and desires away from the negative and towards the positive.

R' Elyah *zatzal* explains that by nature, all *Yidden* possess in their hearts the necessary knowledge and feelings of *emunah* to recognise Hashem's supremacy and *hashgachah*. If so, why do so many stumble in these areas? He illustrates his answer using real-life accounts which occurred in Europe shortly after the First World War.

After Russia was devastated by the war, it was hit by a terrible famine, causing many deaths due to hunger. Additionally, because of a lack of nutrition, many people suffered from dulled senses and memory loss. People would leave their houses and upon returning, not remember where they lived or recognise their homes. However, with prompting and directions, they would at least recognise their home and family. Sadly, some suffered from even more severe malnutrition and couldn't even identify their family members when told who they were.

R' Elyah further recounts an incident in which his child became ill, causing his memory to decline. Initially, the child had trouble recognising his friends, but as his condition worsened, he even failed to recognise his own parents and siblings. R' Elyah tried to reassure his child by saying, "I am your father standing by your side," but the child weakly responded, "I have heard them telling me that you are my father, but I am unable to comprehend this."

From here, concluded R' Elyah, we see that two ways can cause a person to lose their mental facilities resulting in a lack of recognition and memory loss: starvation and illness. He explains that just as this is true for physical ailments, it is also true for spiritual abilities. Just as the body requires sustenance to survive, the *neshamah* requires spiritual nourishment in the form of Torah, *tefillah* and *mitzvos*. Someone who lacks *mitzvos* or doesn't perform them correctly deprives their soul of its natural feelings of closeness to Hashem and creates doubts and reservations regarding *emunah* in Hashem and His Torah.

Furthermore, just as physical illness can deprive man of his faculties, spiritual illnesses such as sins can lead to a loss of one's spiritual connection to Hashem. One sin can lead to another, akin to being afflicted with multiple illnesses, resulting in rapid deterioration and ultimately spiritual death.

We see from here the following lesson: although we are all created with innate *kedushah* and positive inclinations towards *ruchniyus*, we can lose it due to committing *aveiros* and not properly fulfilling *mitzvos*. Additionally, even thoughts of *aveiros* can lead us astray and lessen our ability to be *kadosh* and connected to Hashem. Therefore, only when we are not led astray by our hearts and eyes can we merit to be "holy to Hashem."

Let us remember this message: we should not allow ourselves to be distracted by the enticements and temptations of this world. Instead, we should focus solely on performing *mitzvos*. By doing so, we will be able to connect with the inherent levels of *kedushah* and closeness to Hashem that we are capable of achieving.

This Devar Torah is adapted from ספר וענפיה ארזי אל עה"ת and is presented by the Gateshead Yeshiva Alumni Association. To receive by email, please register your interest by sending an email to [parshasheet@gyalumni.org](mailto:parshasheet@gyalumni.org).