

תורת אביגדור
הגאון ר' אביגדור מיללער זצ"ל

Rav Avigdor Miller on the Parsha
Adapted from his Tapes, Sforim and Writings of Talmidim

פרשת שלח

Mishpachat Levy
Edition 

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Rav Avigdor Miller ztz"l on

פרשת שלח

SEEING THE ROYAL THRONE

At the end of this week's *parsha* we are commanded about the *mitzvah* of *tzitzis*. And we are told: וראיתם אותו וזכרתם את כל - מצות השם ועשיתם אותם - "And you will see the *tzitzis* and you will remember all the commandments of Hashem and you will do them" (Sh'lach 15:39). Now, most of us are familiar with what Chazal (Sotah 17a) tell us: היה רבי מאיר אומר - Rabbi Meir used to teach the following: ממה נשתנה תכלת מכל מיני צבעונין? - What is so unique about the color of *tcheilis* that it was selected for the *tzitzis* more than all other dyes? מפני שהתכלת דומה לים וים דומה לרקיע ורקיע - Because the color of *tcheilis* is similar to that of the sea, and the color of the sea is similar to that of the sky, and the color of the sky is similar to that of Hashem's Throne of Glory".

So when you see the *tcheilis*, the blue string, you will be reminded of that great big royal throne on which Hashem sits. Now pay attention to those words. You should remember not only Hashem, but the royal throne of Hashem. We'll come back to that. And Rashi (ibid. 15:38) tells us how the numbers of strings and knots in the *tzitzis* are supposed to help us constantly think of the 613 *mitzvos*. וזכרתם את כל מצוות השם - "You will remember all the commandments of Hashem" (ibid.) And how? Rashi says that

the *gematria* of the word ציצית is six hundred - when you get home later you can work out the details - and then there are eight strings and five knots, so that's another thirteen, that's six hundred and thirteen for the *taryag mitzvos*.

So the color of our *tzitzis* remind us of Hashem's royal throne, and the numerical computations remind us of the *taryag mitzvos*. Now, these are all beautiful ideas. And they're true. But it's *drush*, it's not the simple *pshat*. So what is the simple *pshat* of השם לציצית... וזכרתם את כל מצוות השם ? והיה לכם לציצית. How are the *tzitzis* supposed to remind us of the service of Hashem? In what way do the *tzitzis* remind us of the *mitzvos*?

Furthermore, the *possuk* tells us that when we wear the *tzitzis*, not only will we “remember the *mitzvos* to do them”, but ולא תתורו אחרי לבבכם ואחרי עיניכם, we won't search out after our heart and our eyes (ibid.). What it's saying here is that simply wearing this garment with some fringes hanging off the corners, is a great *segulah*, a preventive medicine against all sin. How does wearing a garment save you from sin?

A PEEK INTO THE ROYAL WEDDING

In order to answer these questions we'll start with an introduction. You know, in England when there is a public affair, like a big wedding at which the King and Queen are present, they invite all the plenipotentiaries from various countries. So the English nobility and dignitaries all come to take part in the honor. And of course they come dressed in their finest, with all their medals and decorations. The king himself has decorations from one shoulder to the other. Badges, and medals and ribbons. Every person is wearing his pride on his shoulders.

KNIGHT OF THE GARTER

And if you would be privileged to be there, and you would look around, you would see in this corner and that corner very important personages wearing an insignia of “The Knight of the Garter.” Which garter? What garter? That garter was the king's garter and it held up his royal stockings. And what does that

special badge of honor mean? What it means is that at one time in history - it doesn't mean that every day he had the honor of putting on the king's underwear, that's too much *kavod* for one man- but at one time in history, one of his ancestors had been informed by the heralds of the king's court that on this and this day, he would be privileged to come to the king's palace, and when the king would get up in the morning he would be *zoicheh* to tie a garter onto the king's stocking - not two, two would already be too much of a *kavod* for one man - so one garter he would be honored with.

Months ahead of time this nobleman was informed of this great honor he would have of dressing the king. And so, this *chashuveh* fellow prepared himself for this great occasion. He had new clothing sewed for him by the best tailors, and he bought the best coach and horses he could find in order to travel to London. And he made a big celebration banquet with all his family and friends on that special day.

And finally that great day came! He rehearsed beforehand for a long time. You just can't walk in and put a garter on a king's foot *stam-azoy*. He went through many rehearsals first. And finally that great moment came, and he walked gingerly into the king's chamber. And he followed all of the royal protocol. He knelt down on a knee, and the king stuck his foot out from the bed, and this nobleman, his hands shaking in awe, reverently took the garter and tied it onto the king's foot. And then the chamberlain gave him the signal, "Scram! That's enough. Enough *kavod* for one day." And the nobleman bowed his way out of the king's room - he was glowing, he was radiant. And from then on, he and his children forever were happy with this dignity. And they were privileged to wear a special ribbon on their garments, and also a big medal that said "Knight of the Garter".

THE KING'S ANNUAL BATH

Now there was another very important dignity that was conferred upon some people - not anybody, though. It was a privilege of the top earls, the dukes of the kingdom. They were

given the privilege of *bathing the king*. The king took a bath once a year - it's not a jest. I have a clipping at home. Queen Elizabeth took a bath *one time a year*. So when this king took a bath it was a grand ceremony. And at the time of his annual bath, these privileged persons were permitted to come into the royal bathroom and assist him in that ceremony. An earl was called in and he was given the privilege of soaping a square inch of the king's back - not more. He would be given the *zchus* to give a dab on the back of the king with a sponge, and the chamberlain, who was standing there with his list, would already be calling out the next honoree. "Only one dab," he said. And then the next man on the list came forward, and he walked with *אימה ורתת וייעה*, and he also gave a dab to the king's shoulder with the royal sponge. And from then on he belonged to this great fraternity of "The Knights of the Bath."

And don't think that this was a small privilege. It was a privilege that carried with it great honors. And these earls proudly wore a medal, with a ribbon that said "Knight of the Bath." And he was proud to display it at every opportunity. Among friends and strangers, at all events public and private, there was nothing more electrifying and thrilling for this man than to display his badge of honor. He would swagger around the ballroom with great hubris: "I work in the service of the Royal throne."

BRIBING FOR KAVOD

And they fought for this *kavod*! And they intrigued to get it. They bribed the ministers and the chamberlains! The chamberlain got rich from these knights. To have this honor of working in the service of a king was a dignity that was unequalled. After all, there was nobody more important, more powerful, than the king. And this knight was the chosen one; the one honored to stand in the service of the king. And to stand in his service meant that you were from the most important people in the entire kingdom.

I have pictures at home, pictures of the Order of the Garter, all of them, the *chashuvim*, the *nechodim*, walking in a procession to Windsor Palace. *Nebach, nebach* on that *kavod*. Long gowns and elaborate hats with large feathers protruding on all sides - by the way, when you see some people wearing feathers in their hats, it's all a faint imitation of the Order of the Garter, that's who they're imitating. And they're waking with conceit and *ga'avah*, with people lining the sides of the street, watching this great event, this honorable procession.

THE COCONUT KING

But between us, what is it really after all? It's nothing at all. I'll give you a *mashal l'mah hadavar domeh*. I told you this *mashal* once. A man was once shipwrecked and ended up on an island where he found a large tribe living. Now, you can understand that they weren't the most advanced people, . They walked around undressed except for a short piece of cloth hanging from their waists - similar to how many gentiles walk around today. That's how civilized they were. Except for their king. Ahh, the king! He was a special figure; he stood out from among all the others. Besides for his little cloth to cover himself, he also wore a cap on his head. Probably some sort of baseball cap that had washed up on the island years before. That was their king - a piece of cloth hanging, and an old baseball cap.

So when this shipwrecked man swam ashore, he had nothing with him. But he was still wearing his clothing. And the tribesmen, seeing that he was wearing some clothing, understood that he was an important person, and they therefore brought him to the king. And when the king saw this great personage, he immediately offered him the position of second in command to himself. The *mishneh l'melech*! But the king knew that to garner the proper respect, to join the royal palace, this man would need a cap like he had. And so, as a badge of honor, in order to cement the new *mishneh l'melech* in position, the king cracked open a coconut and put half of it on top of this man's head. Now, all the tribesmen would recognize the status of the visitor! That was his badge of honor! A coconut shell on his head to remind him and to remind

others of his status as a special servant of the king. Now, for these savages it was an impressive badge of an honor. A half of a coconut on his head.

THE SECRET OF ROYAL BLOOD

Now for us, that's not too impressive. A coconut and a Yankees cap! And as far as we're concerned, the King of England and his knights, earls, and their badges of honor are nothing more than that. Because when we consider the truth of the matter, who was the King of England really? The king was a *shikur* who had gained the throne by assassinating someone before him. The kings weren't elected; they weren't chosen because of their good *middos*. The king fought his way to the top. It was a conqueror, often an assassin. Who usually became king after all? It was somebody who was a tough brute, a buccaneer, a racketeer. And usually he waded to the throne through other people's blood.

I'll tell you how it started way back. Way back there was a brigand in the highlands of Scotland who was more vicious than his fellow cousins, and so he gained control of his clan. And after committing many deeds of mayhem, he finally succeeded in building himself a castle, and making himself a member of the Scottish nobility. After a while he was so rich that his family intermarried with the reigning family in England. The drunkards of Scotland were *m'shadeich* with the drunkards of England. It was *mamish invei hagefen b'invei hagefen*. And then, when a suitable situation arose, so this Scottish brigand hired someone to plunge a dagger into his *mechutan*, and he himself took over. That's how he became king!

And when this noble creature, a murderer and a drunk, stuck his foul foot out from the bed, and someone was privileged to put a garter on it, that someone was happy! It was a honor above all honors. Now finally, he was a somebody! He wasn't just like any other citizen of the world. He worked in the service of the king. And it was such an honor that the children of that man considered themselves privileged *l'dorosom*. Forever they took pride in being descendants of "the man who served the king."

TAKING A JOB IN THE WHITE HOUSE

Let's say you have a boss over you, the person you report to in your place of work. But the boss himself is an underling, a nobody, an unimportant man. So there's no pride in who you work for. What's there to be proud about? But let's say you have somebody else who is an assistant to the President of the United States. Now, if the President of the United States would choose you to be his second hand man that would be a bit more significant. To be chosen as the one to be working in the service of the President of the United States, is a great honor. You're reporting to the most powerful man in the world. And you were chosen by him, elevated from the rest of mankind, to be in his service and to accomplish his goals! So you feel important. You have real work to accomplish. Your decisions, your actions and your achievements mean something. The ramifications of your service to the President will ripple throughout the country, maybe even throughout the world. And the President gives you a special badge to wear on your suit jacket. It's a badge of honor to remind you always - and to remind others as well - that you are working for the President. You have been chosen for that special role and you have a lot to accomplish. Now that's an honor. It's a glory.

But between us, between friends like we are, we can talk the truth. Who is the President after all? A *minuvel*, a nothing. Of course even when we see *nivalah*, when we see wickedness in the government, we remain polite. We have a respect for authority, and an appreciation of the security and safety that government provides us. But in our hearts we have to know what they are. A *goy* remains a *goy*, even if he's been elected to be President. They are exactly what they're supposed to be. They are what they are. Even if he's the President. And so, even having the *zchus* of serving the most powerful man in the world, is not something that a Jew should be proud about.

WE ARE THE REAL DEAL

But our nation, the *bnei yisrael*, on the other hand, has been honored, we've been privileged, with something infinitely better. We've been chosen to be servants to the *Melech Malchei*

Hamelachim! Not to *stam* a king but to the real King of the world! And if we're assistants to Hakodosh Boruch Hu - if He chose us, if He considers us His beloved ones, and His entire interest is only in us - so we should be delirious with joy. We should be bursting with pride that we have such a Hashem, and that He chose us to be the ones privileged to serve Him.

It says להשתבח בתהילתך - "We, the *Am Yisroel*, praise ourselves with Your praises". That means that we take pride that we have such a perfect G-d, שאין כמוהו. That's our pride in this world. That's our happiness! He chose *us*. We're His people. And it's an unequalled pride. Now I know that most people don't think this way. Even the frum Jews, with long beards, don't think this way. They think like goyim. But what can I do? You have to attune your mind to *the truth of the Torah*. And all day long we should be משתבח בתהילתך - We should be boasting in this pride that Hashem, the Perfect One, is *our* G-d, nobody else's.

THANK YOU HASHEM FOR BEING THE BEST

And that's one of the most important reasons why we thank Hashem every day that He is הא-ל הקדוש. You know that in *shemonah esrei* all of our *brachos* are *thanking* Hashem. But did you ever stop to consider what you're thanking for in הא-ל הקדוש? You've said it thousands of times already and you never thought about it? Well, in my *sefer* on *tefillah* I have there three answers, but tonight, for our subject, I will mention one of them. We thank Him that *we* are the fortunate ones chosen to live our lives in the service of such a perfect Hashem. ברוך אתה השם הא-ל הקדוש - We thank You Hashem, that we have such a perfect G-d. We are the *Am Hashem* - nobody else. You have to always remember that! Don't say "Everybody is the people of Hashem". Don't be a democrat, a liberal. You have no right to give away what doesn't belong to you. You have no right to be handing out honors to the nations of the world. שלא עשנו כגויי הארצות ולא שמנו כמשפחות האדמה.

We have to thank Hakodosh Boruch Hu that we work לפני מלך מלכי המלכים הקדוש ברוך הוא. We stand in service of the King of

the King of Kings, the One who made the universe and rules the universe. He knows the furthestmost reaches of the most distant galaxies. **לכולם בשם יקרא** - He knows the name of every star among the trillions of stars in the remote distances (Tehillim 147:4). It's all His. And He's *our* G-d! **הוא השם אלוקינו** - He's our G-d! Only ours! And that's the great principle of the aristocracy of the *Am Yisroel*.

READING TORAS AVIGDOR FOR FORTY YEARS

Now, many people, even many of you sitting here, will nod your heads and say “Yes, yes, we know all about it.” But really you know nothing at all. At best, it's just words, some superficial terms that mean almost nothing. Because this concept, the concept of the aristocracy of the Jewish people, is a hard one for us to understand properly. You know why? Because we're democratic today. And besides that, we're assimilated, and therefore these ideas are very remote from our minds. But we have to hear it, however. If you hear it once, then maybe forty years from now, you'll understand it. Like the gemara says: **לא קאי - איניש אדעתיה דרביה עד ארבעין שנין** - “Until forty years pass by, a man doesn't understand what he heard from his Rebbi” (Avodah Zarah 5b). So if you start thinking about this now, then in forty years from now, you young fellahs will begin to understand these words. And those of you who don't hope for forty more years, should get busy trying to understand it more quickly.

THE KING FILES CHAPTER ELEVEN BANKRUPTCY

So let's study some words of *Chazal* that will help us understand, and more important than understand, it will help us *internalize* this concept of what it means to be chosen to stand in the service of Hashem. The *gemara* (Shabbos 128b) relates an incident about a man who had borrowed money and he was now unable to pay his creditors. But this man was seen to be wearing a remarkably expensive mantle, a coat that cost a tremendous sum of money. And so the creditors came before the *beis din* with a complaint that it's not right for this man to be dressed like a king when he can't pay his debts. And so they requested that this man

be forced to sell the cloak and pay his debt. And then from the proceeds that would remain from the sale he could buy himself a pretty decent coat, something that would be more befitting for his station in life - he was regular fellow after all, he wasn't of royal blood.

Now there were two opinions about what to do. One opinion was that they should do just that - they should confiscate his cloak, and sell it. But Rabbi Akiva said no. And here's what Rabbi Akiva said: "You are complaining that this poor man is wearing a cloak that is fit for a king. But that's not a good *tayna* because כל ישראל בני מלכים הם - "Every Jew is a king!" כל ישראל ראוין לאותה איצטלא. Which means that this royal cloak, that's really the cloak he *should* be wearing. You can't take a man's cloak off his back to pay a debt - a man is allowed to keep his own clothing before paying a debt. And Rabbi Akiva said that for this simple Jew, for *every* simple Jew, a royal cloak is fitting to be his regular dress.

Now it's important to understand that we're not talking *halacha* here. In practice, it could be that we don't follow Rabbi Akiva's decision. Because to be "a king," you have to pay your debts. A man who doesn't pay his debts is certainly not acting like a king. But it's *not* because we disagree with the principle involved. It's the theory of Rabbi Akiva that is important to us. Everyone agrees with Rabbi Akiva that yes, כל ישראל בני מלכים הם, Jews are royal princes, and every *Yisroel* deserves to have a royal garment. That's a teaching of the Torah! And who? *Kol Yisroel* - every Jew! The pushcart peddler, the man wearing ragged clothing, he's a prince in disguise. It just happens to be that he is deprived of his ermine cloak, of his royal raiment, but he's still a prince. Even if you clothe a prince in rags, he's still a prince.

THE QUEEN GOES INCOGNITO

I'll tell you another incident from the *gemara* (Bava Kama 90b). There was once a man who insulted a poor woman, a beggar woman, by pulling the covering off of her head. That was considered an insult in those days. In his anger he pulled off her

head-covering. So when she came before Rabbi Akiva to demand payment for the embarrassment caused to her, Rabbi Akiva *paskened* that this man had to pay out a big price, an exorbitant amount of money, because he had put to shame a royal princess. So this man protested: "For such a woman, I have to pay so much?! If she was a queen or a princess, OK, but a woman like her, of low social position, she wasn't embarrassed that much."

And so this man, in order to prove his point, staged the following incident. He took a small flask of oil, with only a few pennies worth of oil, and he passed by near where this woman was standing on the street. And he purposely dropped the flask and it broke. So this poor woman, when she saw some oil on the street, she wanted to mop it up. When does she get an opportunity for oil? Never. So she uncovered her hair, she let down her hair, and she began soaking up the oil with her hair.

Now this whole incident was a set up. This man had witnesses present, and he brought the witnesses to Rabbi Akiva and said, "Look, for a few pennies this woman uncovered her hair! And you want me to pay her four hundred *zuz* for putting her to shame?!" So Rabbi Akiva said, "What she does of her own accord, that's her business. But you put to shame a *bas melachim* - כל ישראל בני מלכים הם - and he made him pay.

LONG LIVE KING HIPPY

We're learning here the principle that we actually must consider *every Jew a prince*. Even the hippy with the long hair - even though he looks like something the cat dragged in - but we have to try to forget his makeup, his disguise. Because in reality, he's a prince - only that he's a prince lying in the dirty gutter where the cats spend the night.

This is an immense concept and we must rise to that - we must raise the level of our thoughts to appreciate that every Jew, even the poorest, even the lowest element, deserves to be dressed in the garments of a king. He deserves a crown. He deserves an ermine cloak. He deserves all the trappings of a monarch. Every

single Jew. That's the way to look at a Jew. And that's the way to look at yourself!

And since that's the case, we can begin to see what an obligation there is upon the *Am Yisroel* to be proud. *Ga'avah!* It's not merely that it's a good thing for a Jew to say that he's proud to be a Jew. No, you have *understand* what you're saying because Hakodosh Boruch Hu is the One who says it. I'm not saying "proud" the way the blacks say "We're proud to be black." Because they're not proud! They're doing their best not to be black. You see they go to beauty parlors, they spend millions of dollars on lotions in order to bleach their skins, and they put on wigs so you shouldn't see their kinky hair. They do everything to look like white. They'd give their souls to turn white. But what could they do, *nebach, nebach*, so instead they say "We're proud to be black".

TRUE PRIDE

And there's no pride in being white either. Every nation is proud to be what they are. Every Italian and every Irishman is proud. Alright, let them be proud; it's a *rachmanus* on them. And today you have even the lowest of the low, the *toi'eivah* of society who are proud! They want to parade about it! That's nothing, it means nothing at all. What's there to be proud about after all? Whatever it is they're referring to, it's not what *we* mean. When we say we're proud, that's the only real pride in the world. Because we're proud of the only thing that matters in the world, Hakodosh Boruch Hu, and we're the only thing that matters in His eyes as well.

And so outside of this door, they'll tell you that black is beautiful, and brown is beautiful, and Irish is beautiful, everything is beautiful. Everything is beautiful except for the *Am Yisroel*. So we have to hammer into our heads that nothing else is beautiful! Only the *Am Yisroel!* Like Hakodosh Boruch says אהבתי ואת עשוי שנאתי - I love Yaakov, ואת עשוי שנאתי - And I hate Eisav" (Malachi 1:3). Now, don't get all worked up, "Hatred against the nations?! How could we say such a thing?!" Hatred against the

nations is a relative thing. Hakodosh Boruch Hu loves even the birds in this world. What it means is that *compared to His chosen son Yaakov*, He hates Eisav.

THE GOYIM ARE LIKE A DROP IN THE BUCKET

The nations of the world are nothing compared to the *Am Yisroel*. Like we read in Yeshaya (40:15) *הן גוים כמר מדלי* - "All the nations are like a drop that drips on the outside of the bucket." When you draw a bucket of water from the well, and underneath the bucket is hanging a little drop, is that drop of water important compared to what's in the bucket? And *כשחק מאזניים נחשבו* - "Like the dust on the scales the nations are to Me". When you put merchandise on the scales to weigh it, and after you take it off, there's some dust left over on the scale from the merchandise, that's the nations of the world - the leftovers. And we are the merchandise that Hakodosh Boruch Hu cares about.

Now, this principle of *ga'avasan shel Yisroel*, of the pride that we must feel, is an *ikar ha'emunah*. And we have to understand that. To be proud that you are a Yisroel means that you believe in one of the two cardinals, one of the two chief principles, of the Torah. And it is such a great concept, it involves so much work to develop properly, that if we say it today even among Orthodox Jews, it's not well received. Because of the spirit of democracy, it's not easy to convince people about this great principle. And I'm not talking about making them actually feel it. Even just to convince them that it's a true principle is not easy.

THE WORLD WAS LAV DAVKA CREATED FOR THE JEWS

And that principle is that the world was created for the Jewish people. Now let that sink in. It's going to hurt, and you're going to rebel; you'll kick when you hear that. But take your time, pay attention, and let it sink in to your *goyishe* heads.

The truth is that this world was not created for the Jewish people. But it was created for a righteous people! When Hakodosh Boruch Hu made the world, it was not done for the purpose that sparrows should have trees where they could roost and chirp. Or

so that monkeys should have trees in which to climb. Or so that foxes should have where to make their burrows. The world wasn't created for animals and birds and fish. And it was not even created for human beings to walk around, and enjoy sunlight, drink water, eat bread and procreate. The world wasn't made for that either.

The world was created for *a nation that would be devoted completely to the service of Hashem*. A nation that would have no interest in their lives except to serve Hakodosh Boruch Hu. The Order of the Bath and the Order of the Garter *l'havdil* - every service imaginable - only for Hakodosh Boruch Hu. You never heard that before? Well, it's good you came here tonight. Because that's the true reason why the world was created.

THE KNIGHTS OF HASHEM

And at the beginning, any nation could have stepped forward to fill that role. Any nation could have volunteered, *but they didn't*. And when finally Avraham stepped forward, Hakodosh Boruch Hu said, "I confer upon you and your children forever and ever, the crown of royalty. You have been chosen now to work on My behalf, and to fulfill the purpose for which I created the world."

And from that point on, *we* became the purpose of the world. *Only us!* Too late, you nations of the world. We may be sorry for you. We may sympathize with you. You had your chance, however. Everybody had the opportunity, and you didn't utilize it, and now it's gone forever. You cannot undo history. דבר השם יקום לעולם - "The word of Hashem will stand strong forever," and He told Avraham בני ובין זרעך לעולם - "It's a covenant between Me and your seed forever". That's why we circumcise - we cut into our flesh a permanent treaty of being the nation that is bonded to Hashem forever and ever. It's irrevocable and it can never be rescinded.

THE WRONG ANIVUS COULD MAKE YOU A KOFER

Now, anyone who is proud of being a Jew, but doesn't understand this concept in its fullness, does not understand the

Torah. And actually, he's a *kofer b'ikar!* He is rebelling against the entire *tanach*. Because it's as open as can be that this is the chief function of all the stories and *dinim* in the Torah. The chief function of the Torah is to tell us that, first of all, there is a Creator, and secondly, that we are His chosen nation.

And therefore, *our* function in the world is to make our way through life with pride, the pride of being a Yisroel. Whatever it is that you're wearing because you're a Yisroel is a great demonstration that you know who you are. Your black hat and your big *yarmulke*. And even a little beanie is something - at least you're a *modeh b'miktzas*. Your *sheitelich* and your snood. And your long dress and long sleeves. Every one of these badges of honor is a demonstration that we're aware of our function in this world.

So as you walk in the street, you must realize you're a prince. Of course, you shouldn't despise anybody, and you shouldn't show contempt for anybody, but in your heart there's no question what you should think. And anybody who feels he wants to be an *anav*, he wants to be meek and humble, and not be superior to anybody else, then that person is a *kofer b'chol hatorah kulah*, he's rejecting all of the Torah, from *Bereishis* until *l'einei kol Yisroel*. Because the entire Torah talks only about one subject. Did you know that? Besides for Hashem Himself, what's the only subject that the Torah talks about all the time? The *Am Yisroel!* That's all; only us!

IS THERE A POLISHEH TORAH?

Now if there were a lot of Torahs in the world, let's say there would also be a Polish Torah that Hashem gave, alright then, in the Polish Torah He talks about the Polish. And if there was an African Torah then alright, He speaks there about the Africans. But there's only one Torah however. And even the Polish say that there's only one Torah. They agree that there's only one Torah. They don't claim to have a Polish Torah. All the Christians and Mohammedans say that there is only one Torah - that the *Am Yisroel* received the Torah from Hashem at *Har Sinai*.

Only that the *mamzer* and the *meshuganeh* - that's what the Rambam calls Mohammed by the way, the *meshuganeh* who came out of the desert - they came along and wrote some later additions; they added on some garbage.

And what does it say in this one Torah of the world? It's written that Hakodosh Boruch Hu chose Avraham and that He chose the *Am Yisroel* forever. ...הַן לַהֲשֵׁם אֱלֹקִים הַשְּׁמַיִם וְשְׁמֵי הַשְּׁמַיִם... רק באבותך חשק השם לאהבה אותם ויבחר בזרעם אחריהם... בכבבם מכל העמים. The entire Torah tells the history of the family of Avraham and the *Am Yisroel* - the history of the Am Yisrael and that's all. So it's the *kol hatorah kulah*. And therefore pride in being from the *Am Yisroel* is just as fundamental as believing in *kol hatorah kulah*!

A JEW IS NOT A HUMAN

Hakodosh Boruch Hu elevated us from among the nations, and that's our honor, our pride. But not merely that we are a good nation, and not even that we are the best nation. We are no longer one of the nations of the world! You hear that *chiddush*? Once we were chosen to be the ones who live in the service of Hashem, we were elevated to a status that's *far above* the status of Mankind.

Now do we have the nerve, the boldness, to be so conceited, and to praise ourselves like that? Absolutely! It's our duty, and if we don't, then we're backsliding. We'd be remiss, we wouldn't be living up to our duty as Jews.

SHELO BERCHU BATORAH TECHILA

When you get an aliyah to the Torah, and when you say *birchas Hatorah* every morning, you say אשר בחר בנו מכל העמים. What is it, just small formula to knock off and to be *yotzei*? No, it's our obligation to think that way! You have to live with that thought of "You chose *us* from among all the nations".

But we see that it's far from so. We see that even the best Jews fall short of internalizing this truth. Even the *frummeh* are very far from appreciating this principle as it actually was intended by the Torah and Hakodosh Boruch Hu. It takes work.

But it's worth the effort because it's a great principle we must remember always.

TZITZIS IS OUR BADGE OF HONOR!

And so now you know why we have *tzitzis*. Our *tzitzis* is a sign of royalty that was given to us by the Almighty, the King of the Universe, in recognition of who we are. Hashem says to us, "I am bestowing upon *you* this great privilege of wearing *tzitzis*" - a gentile is forbidden from donning the royal raiment because he's trespassing where he doesn't belong. It's our privilege to wear a sign that we are **כל ישראל בני מלכים הם**. It's a sign that we are the privileged ones, the ones chosen and elevated above all the billions of people in the world, to stand in the palace of Hakodosh Boruch Hu serving Him *all day long*. That's what the *tzitzis* are telling you - whether you put them on yourself or whether you're seeing the *tzitzis* of others. We are here in this world as servants of Hashem. And we wear badges of honor to prove it.

And that's why Hakodosh Boruch Hu says **והיה לכם לציצית** - "And these shall be for *you* fringes". Hashem says: "Others will wear their ribbons; they'll also have signs that are given to them. But they are given by people who are ex-murderers, brigands, people who finally become king by stepping on other people's bodies. But I, the King of the Universe, I confer upon you an eternal sign of true, authentic, royalty, the threads of the *tzitzis*. That's the true sign of distinction. And it is intended for the Jew to know for himself and to demonstrate to the world who he is.

WE DESERVE *TECHEILES*- THE ROYAL BLUE

We're learning here that the *pesukim* of *tzitzis* are not merely a command. **ויאמר השם אל משה לאמר דבר אל בני ישראל ואמרת אליהם ועשו להם ציצית תצית**. Certainly it's a command to wear *tzitzis*. Certainly. But it's also a charter from the king, that you are privileged to wear the badge of true royalty in this world.

Because on the *tzitzis* was placed a *psil tcheilis*, threads of blue wool. That was the mark of royalty. In ancient times, there was *tcheilis*, a certain kind of blue dye that was obtained from a

rare marine organism, that was forbidden to anybody except for members of the royal family. That's why it's called royal blue. In the olden days *tcheilis* was worn only by kings and princes.

And that's why after the command of *tzitzis* is given, it says **והיה לכם לציצית** - "And it should be for you for *tzitzis*". Now these words are superfluous; it already said a line earlier **ועשו להם וציצית...ונתנו על ציצית הכנף פתיל תכלת**. It says already that you should make *tzitzis*. It tells you what to do. So why does it repeat **והיה לכם לציצית** - "And it shall be for you for *tzitzis*"? Why are these words needed?

"WHY DO YOU WEAR THOSE FRINGES?"

Oh, those words are needed very much so. **והיה לכם לציצית** - It shall be for you a badge of honor. The King of all Kings has chosen you to be the ones chosen to serve Him. The great dignity of royalty, of being the ones who walk in His service, has been conferred only upon us. And therefore, besides for the performance of the *mitzvah*, it must always "be for you as *tzitzis*." You must always look at the *tzitzis* as a badge of honor.

And now we begin to understand what *tzitzis* are. That coconut king is a nothing. And the knights and earls and barons are nothing. We, the *Am Yisroel*, were chosen by the real King, the King of all Kings. And we were chosen to be his **ממלכת כהנים וגוי קדוש**. And as a badge of honor, a special badge of distinction, we, the servants of Hashem, are commanded to wear *tzitzis* on our garments.

You have to know, that when you see *tzitzis*, you are looking at garments of royalty. You should be thinking **אשרינו מה טוב חלקנו**. And if you don't think those thoughts, you are frustrating the plan of Hashem. And don't be in a rush about it. Once in a while take the time to become proud of who you are. When you put on your *tzitzis* or any time during the day, spend one minute - one full minute on the clock - looking at your *tzitzis*, or the *tzitzis* of your husband or son, and hammer it into your head, "We are *the* royalty!" Every time you see *tzitzis*, you should be reminded of that glory - that you are in the service of the *Ribono*

Shel Olam. The King of all Kings has conferred upon you the honor of being one of his distinguished officers and you should be wild with happiness. It's an honor and a glory that is immeasurable.

WEARING TZITZIS TO CHURCH

Up till recently all Jews wore their *tzitzis* in public display. I remember when I was in Lithuania, so I went for a walk, and I passed by a church. There was a new church being built and they were putting in windows. There was a Jewish glazier hanging off the sides of the church putting in windows. I still remember this Jew, with a big beard, standing on a ladder, putting in windows in the new church. And his *tzitzis* were flowing in the wind. His beard and his *tzitzis* were flowing in the wind. It was a sight to see. A Jew was proud of his insignia.

But what do we find today. Our people are so ingrained in self-shame! It's a tragedy of tragedies. Your *tzitzis*, your *yarmulke*, your hat, your snood, your *sheitel*, your long skirt and long sleeves - that's your crown of glory! That's why you thank Hashem every morning **עוֹטֵר יִשְׂרָאֵל בַּתְּפָאֵרָה**. You, Hashem, have crowned your people with glory. It's an actual crown of glory!

LET THEIR EYES POP OUT

You're ashamed of a crown?! Suppose a king gave you a badge, would you be ashamed of that medal? Instead of pinning it on your coat here, you'd pin it on your underwear?! So what is it that you're sticking your *tzitzis* inside your pants?! Wear them out! It's our pride and joy! And when you see others wearing them out, your heart should swell with pride!

You know, when I ride on the bus, sometimes my *tzitzis* are sticking out of my coat. And the Jewish matrons are looking at me with their eyes popping out! They're so embarrassed! Instead of pride, they feel shame. So what do I do? I pull them out like this, all the way. Let their eyes pop out entirely!

SEEING LEADS TO DOING

But that thought, that pride that you feel, is only the first step. It's a very important step, but it's only the beginning. When

you begin to regard the *tzitzis* with the emotion of pride and as a mark of royalty, if you actually train your thoughts and your emotions to think and feel this way, then you have created from yourself a new person. Now you know, you feel, you understand what it means to be part of the *Am Hashem*. And slowly but surely there will awaken within you a desire to conduct yourself like the child of the King. You will feel the responsibility to live your life according to the dictates of the King. You will want to always act according to the King's commands and wishes, because only then does one deserve to be called a member of the palace.

And now we understand what it means, "You will see the *tzitzis*, and you will remember all the commandments of Hashem." The desire to be a member of the palace will stir your thoughts to always be seeking additional medals and badges of distinction. And you will always strive towards acquiring the manners and traits of the upper nobility. Recognition of who you are - royalty - will cause you to do whatever you can to find favor in the eyes of Hashem. Because you will always see be thinking of that Great Throne of Royalty, the great *kisei ha'kavod*. And that will lead to *וזכרתם את כל מצות ה'* - you will seek and search for every one, every opportunity, every mitzvah; so that not one should be lacking - just as the palace dwellers vie with each other to come closer to the king, and to cause pleasure to him and to find more favor in his eyes. If used properly, the *tzitzis* will be the catalyst so that your sole desire will always be to endeavor that not one of the means of coming close to Hashem should be overlooked. And you will be eternally grateful to anyone who reveals to you any of the means of attaining this closeness to Hashem.

And that's why we say that the mitzvah of *tzitzis* is equal to all the other *mitzvos*. *שקולה מצוה זו כנגד כל המצוות כולן*. Because if used properly, seeing the *tzitzis* is a reminder of the great privilege of membership in the palace of the King of Kings. Hashem has chosen to elevate us from among all of the families of Mankind and that means that we live our lives for one purpose only - and that is the great glory of serving Hashem.

WOMEN CAN MAKE BETTER USE OF TZITZIS THAN MEN

Now you have to know that I'm speaking to the women as much as to the men. And, believe me, there are women who have become greater than men from the mitzvah of *tzitzis*. The fact that women are not obligated to wear *tzitzis* is a technicality. For technical reasons they don't wear *tzitzis*. But they're not exempt from the greatness that is available from the mitzvah. *Nashim* are no less distinguished with the honor of being part of the ממלכת כהנים וגוי קדוש than the men. And they also have the opportunity to become great with these thoughts that we are discussing here. Even without wearing *tzitzis*, they see *tzitzis* wherever they go, and they should make use of that opportunity.

How do I know this? The Gemara tells us that a blind man is obligated in *tzitzis*. "But he can't see them?" the Gemara asks. And the Gemara answers יש לו בראייה אצל אחרים. Other people can see the *tzitzis*. If others can see the *tzitzis* that's enough. The blind man will do the work, he'll sweat on the hot summer days, and the women who see the *tzitzis* are growing prouder and prouder. And that means they're growing greater and greater.

And so *anybody* can gain from these badges of distinction that the men are wearing. The greatness that lies in the mitzvah of *tzitzis* is available even to those not wearing them. So don't think that women are any less responsible to gain perfection from this *mitzvah*.

TZITZIS: A NATIONAL MITZVAH

And therefore, the *mitzvah* of *tzitzis* is a *mitzvah* for the Nation as a whole. The achievement of perfection, above which there is no greater good and success, should be stimulated for everyone by the constant sight of the *tzitzis*. Whether it is your own, your husband's, your brother's or your son's, or even the *tzitzis* of your neighbor flying in the wind as he rides his bike - it is a wonderful opportunity for engraving into your mind and soul your purpose in this world. And that is, that we are here as Hashem's chosen people, who have been elevated to serve Him and be close to Him. Anytime you see *tzitzis* you should be

thinking, "That's our badge of royalty. How lucky we are! We are Hashem's chosen people."

Now we can answer the question we asked earlier about the *segulah* of תתורו. ולא תסורו, which would mean "You should not turn aside" but ולא תתורו, "You should not spy out; you should not look elsewhere". Because the intention here is not to warn against actually turning away from Hashem's commandments. What Hashem speaks of here is that which comes before the actual turning away, the emotions and thoughts that are the introduction to turning away from Hashem.

Because when one understands that כל ישראל בני מלכים הם, and that the *tzitzis* that the *Am Yisroel* wear are actually garments of royalty, then what is there to look at by the others already? You're serving the *Melech Malchei Hamilachim*, and you're going to look at the Knights of the Garter and the Knights of the Bath?! When one wears *tzitzis* the way *tzitzis* are meant to be worn, when one looks at the *tzitzis* of others the way they're meant to be looked at, then of course it's ולא תתורו. Absolutely!

WE HAVE IT ALL!

When one is happy and proud with what he possesses, when he understands the superiority of the *Am Yisroel*, then this לא יראה גאווה של ישראל does not allow him to even *look* elsewhere. What's there in the customs of the nations that could be better than what we have? What's in the culture and entertainment of the nations that could match the *true royalty* that we possess? When a person is wearing *tzitzis* he knows that there is *nothing* to spy out elsewhere. ולא תתורו אחרי לבבכם ואחרי עיניכם. There is nothing to see in the Coconut King or even the King of England, when you are privileged to be a servant of the true king!

And this constant reminder will keep you far away from all the useless desires and empty ideals that you may encounter in your life. ולא תתורו. There's nothing important out there to search after. You're too busy with important things. You're wearing the badge of Hashem and the superior do not imitate the inferior. Whenever you see *tzitzis*, be it yours or those of others, you

should automatically think, "We are Hashem's servants! We are the superior ones!" And therefore, this *mitzvoah* is the foundation for all of the *mitzvos* and the service of Hashem.

HOLINESS AND PERFECTION IN PARSHAS SH'LACH

And those thoughts, the knowledge of our special status in this world, will be the catalyst that will act as the dynamo towards fulfilling all of His mitzvos. למען תזכרו ועשיתם את כל מצותי. And by means of the *tzitzis*, when utilized in this manner, והייתם קדושים לאלהיכם, you will become holy to Hashem. "Holy" denotes perfection, whereby one acquires a reflection of the Perfection of Hashem.

And this perfection that you acquire brings you closer לאלהיכם - "to your God." The word לאלהיכם, "to your God," at the end of this פסוק is an expression of especial nearness, an especial closeness. It is "to *your* God", And this closeness to "your" God is the greatest success possible. קרבת אלוקים לי טוב - "To me, closeness to G-d is (the highest) good" (Tehillim 73:28).

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Q&A With Rav Avigdor Miller Ztz"l

Q:

How can one motivate a child in a classroom who shows no interest in his studies?

A:

A child who shows no interest in his studies, after the class is over the Rebbe calls him over and gives him a *glett* on the cheek. He pats him on the cheek and says, "Chaim'l, you're a nice boy I see. You have a good *neshama*, Chaim'l, and I think you can make something great out of yourself. So here's one line in the gemara, I'm going to learn with you now, just one line. And say it over to me."

So Chaim says one line over. He knows one line in the gemara. Now you tell him, "Chaim'l, when you go home tonight review that line - just that line - fifteen times."

The boy comes back tomorrow, he said the line fifteen times and he knows it. And he feels good that he knows it. So now you give him another line. And in fifteen days he knows fifteen lines of gemara. You know what that means?! You're putting him on his feet! You can save that boy - but you have to do it though. A line a day is not much work and the pat on the cheek is also not much work. Sometimes you'll give him something too. Give him something. Give him half a dollar each time. דבר תורה מעות קונות. Money helps. And so you can change a boy if you use diplomacy. Diplomacy works.

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