

## Parshat Shelach: Dual Relationship With Hashem

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Rabbi Hershel Reichman

In Parshat Shelach the Torah commands us to attach white strings and a blue purple techeilet string to our tzitzit garments. Why are there two different colors? The Gemara in Sotah notes that the mitzvah of tzitzit stems from an episode in Sefer Bereishit. After Avraham won the battle with the four and five kings, the king of Sedom begged him to take some of the spoils of war. Avraham responded, "I will not even take a thread or a shoelace, nor anything else that is yours." Chazal point out that in the merit of Avraham's refusal, the Jewish people were given the mitzvot of tefilin and tzitzit. What is the connection?

The Shem Mishmuel posits that Avraham would not touch the booty of Sedom because it was spiritually contaminated. The people of Sedom were so wicked that everything they owned was impure. Avraham refused to benefit from wealth acquired through evil doings, although he was rightfully entitled to it, and it was halachically permitted. Similarly Yaakov ordered that the idols of Shechem be destroyed after his children acquired with the spoils of war. Although they could have been purified through a process of nullification, they

were spiritually contaminated and Yaakov wanted nothing to do with them.

At times, we too may face such temptations. For example, it is legally and halachically permitted to purchase a stolen item if the original owner has despaired of ever finding it again. However following in the footsteps of Avraham would require us to keep away from it because it is spiritually contaminated. Likewise wicked people pollute their environment. Therefore it is crucial for our own spiritual wellbeing and for our children's chinuch to make every effort to live in a strong Jewish community. Being sensitive to spiritual influences also means being careful about what comes into our homes. Books, tapes, and CD's that do not reflect Jewish values should be banned from our mikdash me'at.

Because Avraham was so sensitive to yirat Hashem, he refused the treasures of Sedom. This requires purity of spirit. Likewise, the mitzvot of tefilin and the techeilet of tzitzit necessitate sanctity and signify fear of Hashem. In fact the halacha requires that a person wearing tefilin think only pure thoughts. Similarly the blue-green color of techeilet

represents the sea and the sky. It is meant to arouse us to think about Hashem's throne in heaven. This in turn will engender yirat Hashem within us.

The halacha stipulates that the white strings should be attached first and then the blue strings. There are seven white strings and one blue string. The techeilet blue string must be wrapped around the white strings similar to a shoelace which keeps a shoe intact. White symbolizes chesed and ahavat Hashem while blue represents din and yirat Hashem. Just as Avraham who signified chesed, preceded Yitzchak who embodied gevurah, we too must raise our children with an abundance of love and some discipline. Hashem's chesed and kindness fills the world. When we shower our children with love we are following in His ways. Yet yirat Hashem plays a central role in acquiring Torah too. Just as we must serve Hashem with both ahavah and yirah, children need love sandwiched with discipline. If we are careful to keep our homes and hearts pure and we work hard to create an atmosphere of love and restraint we will raise happy, healthy, children who will grow to be staunch and proud Jews.

## Bitachon: The Meaning of Trust The Value of Spiritual Joy #4

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Rebbetzin Tziporah Heller-Gottlieb

Having bitachon means trusting Hashem to give us the abilities to attain our spiritual goals. The fact that Hashem gives us new life every day is His way of telling us that we still have new doors to open. As Jews, we have the potential to experience a different sort of joy, which comes from closeness to Hashem. We should not expect a peaceful life in the merit of our good deeds. Rather, we should perform mitzvot with simcha in gratitude to Hashem for all He has given us.

The most unhappy people are those who destroy their own lives through jealousy, desire, and honor. No matter what they have, they are not satisfied. We have an enormous amount to be grateful for and we must let it take us higher. There is no moment in all of a

person's life that Hashem's goodness isn't upon him. Hitbonenut (contemplation) is very important for us to our place and purpose. The Mesilat Yesharim says one has to set aside time to think, what am I accomplishing in life and how am I doing it? Is it getting me where I want to go? If we fail to do this, we can easily get lost in the maze of life. Hitbonenut should lead us to love Hashem. The more we see how much He's given us, the more we see His love and caring. The more we see the intricacy and the enormous compassion Hashem has for nature, the more recognition we have of Hashem's goodness, and the more we trust Him. We should see ourselves as a part of the unending continuum of Hashem's giving and realize that Hashem has more to compassion for us than

for nature. He can guard us from tragedy just as well as He can confront us with it, if it's for our benefit.

Mashiach can come at any moment but it depends on our readiness and willingness. The Rambam tells us that we don't have to be perfect. Readiness can be even on the most rudimentary level. We have to be open to the possibility of teshuva. We should not think that Mashiach's coming will give us sudden access to material prosperity. Rather, Hashem will take away all the obstacles that keep us from being who we are meant to be. In Parshat Chayei Sarah the Torah says, "V'Hashem beirach et avraham bakol." Ramban explains that Hashem blessed Avraham with a certain level of consciousness where he recognized

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that Hashem is involved at all levels of creation. On the second day of creation, Hashem separated the higher waters from the lower waters, the spiritual source of nature from its physical consequence. The result was a vast empty space that could be filled with trust or doubt. If we live the kind of life where we do battle with our desires and ego, where our emotional agendas don't get in our way, we can learn to see Hashem's involvement in everything.

On a symbolic level the Gemara explains that bakol means a daughter. The man's role in a marriage is to provide, and the woman's role

is to build using what he provides. Hashem blessed Avraham bakol, as a daughter so to speak. He empowered him to take the middah of seeing Hashem's involvement in all things and to act upon it. There are obstacles on the outside and even bigger ones on the inside that keep us from seeing Hashem. We don't see the whole picture. Mashiach will throw open the curtains so that we can see the light that was there all along. All of the prosperity discussed in the books of prophecy is related to discerning Hashem in the physical world without being challenged by evil. Hashem will take away the yetzer hara from the hearts of His people. Our inner obstacles will disintegrate and every one of us will come to know

Him.

The beauty and splendor of this world is coarse and vulgar compared to the unending pleasure of the next world. The same way a king would never want to switch roles with a beggar, we should never want to have the pleasures of this world instead of the next. Yet, given our spiritual immaturity, we'll sometimes trade olam habah for the transient joy of olam hazeh. A small revelation of Hashem's presence in this world gives us a sense of what will be in the next world. As the verse in Tehillim says, "How great is the goodness you've hidden for those who fear you."

## The Words of Shlomo Hamelech

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Rabbi Yitzchak Cohen

Shlomo Hamelech tells us in Kohelet, "In the morning, sow your seeds, and at night, do not rest your hand, for you do not know which will succeed, this one or that one, or whether both of them will be equally good." The Metzudas David explains, we cannot know which direction the wind will go, whether or not one particular season will be good for the crops or not. Kohelet is telling us, plant in the seasons that are good for growth. But don't rest during other times, for it could be both times are good and perhaps only one crop will succeed. Don't take a chance on one. Be ready to work even during a bad season, because at the end it may turn out to be the most successful. This is the simple meaning. However, the Mishna tells us more.

The sixth Mishna in Avot d'Rav Nosson tells us, "If you learned Torah when you were young, learn Torah even when you are old." In fact, learning Torah when one is old may garner even more reward. Hashem doesn't look for end results. He wants our efforts. The more the exertion, the greater the reward. Likewise, Chazal say, "If you learned Torah when you were wealthy, learn Torah even when you are poor." The reward for learning despite difficulties is greater than learning when one has it easy.

The Gemara in Chagiga says, if a person travels six months to learn Torah, then learns for a day and travels back another six months,

he gets reward as if he learned for a whole year. Most mitzvot are not that way. If I travel three days to get to a wedding, I don't get credit for the days I traveled. Yet the Mishna tells us, if a student travels during Sukkot to learn Torah from his Rebbe, he is exempt on the way from the mitzva of sukka. This is based on the principle, "Ha'osek b'mitzva patur min ha'mitzva-One is engaged in a mitzva is exempt from another mitzva." If one is traveling to learn Torah, the act of getting there is also part of the mitzva. Learning Torah is not an end result. The mitzva is lasok b'Torah, to busy with Torah. Becoming a talmid chacham may or may not happen. There's no halacha that one must become one. Even if you don't remember what you learned, you still get reward for your efforts. Chazal say, don't rest, plant the seeds. It may not be the best time to do it. But do it anyway. Study Torah in all circumstances, whether you are rich, poor, old, or young. "Ki heim chayeinu-For the Torah is our life."

Rabbi Meir gives another explanation. If you learned by one Torah teacher, don't consider it enough. Go and learn from others. He quotes a verse in Mishlei, "Drink the blessed water..." The commentators explain, when it comes to learning the text of the Gemara, an approach in learning, limit yourself to one teacher. However, when it comes to sevaros (analysis) of the text, learn from multiple teachers. Rabbi Yehoshua gives another explanation. "If

you married when you were young and became widowed, marry again when you are older..." Even if you are old and cannot have any children, don't rest..." And if you can still have children, have more. Each child is a blessing from heaven. Don't worry about financial burdens. Hashem provides.

Another way to understand the verse in Kohelet is-if you gave charity in the morning, give again in the evening. Perhaps one or the other may not have been necessary or perhaps they were both needed. Tzedakah is compared to planting, because when you plant you take a chance. You don't know if the seeds will grow. When a person says he needs your help, perhaps he really doesn't. Still we have to take the chance and help him. We have to be, oseh tzedakot, busy with good deeds. We learn this from Hashem who constantly gives us life, health, financial resources, children, and numerous other blessings unconditionally. Hashem too takes a chance and plants. He gives us unlimited potential, kochot hanefesh, and there are times when a person wastes it or never uses it. Still Hashem does not stop giving. So too, the Mishna tells us, if you are able to give, give. Don't say, "I already gave. I'm exempt."

May we continue to keep growing, moving forward, constantly planting, in our quest to reach tikkun (rectification) and sheleimut (perfection) in serving Hashem.