

CHEVRAH TORAH 5778...Seeking ✨ Spirituality

Shabbat Sh'lach L'cha

NUMBERS 13:1-2,30-33...15:37-41

KEY KOSHI:

**HOW is the fulfillment of TSITSIT a spiritual guide for covenant living?
HOW can “seeing them”—TZITZIT, lead to “seeing God”...?**

P'SHAT—AWARENESS... The beginning of knowing about God is simply paying attention, being fully present where you are

<p>13:1] The Lord spoke to Moses, saying, 2] “Send men to scout the land of Canaan, which I am giving to the Israelite people; send one man from each of their ancestral tribes, each one a chieftain among them.”</p> <p>30] Caleb hushed the people before Moses and said, “Let us by all means go up, and we shall gain possession of it, for we shall surely overcome it.”</p> <p>31] But the men who had gone up with him said, “We cannot attack that people, for it is stronger than we.” 32] Thus they spread calumnies among the Israelites about the land they had scouted, saying, “The country that we traversed and scouted is one that devours its settlers. All the people that we saw in it are men of great size; 33] we saw the Nephilim^d there—the Anakites are part of the Nephilim—and we looked like grasshoppers to ourselves, and so we must have looked to them.”</p> <p>15:37] The Lord said to Moses as follows: 38] Speak to the Israelite people and instruct them to make for themselves fringes on the corners of their garments throughout the ages; let them attach a cord of blue to the fringe at each corner. 39] That shall be your fringe; look at it and recall all the commandments of the Lord and observe them, so that you do not follow your heart and eyes in your lustful urge. 40] Thus you shall be reminded to observe all My commandments and to be holy to your God. 41] I the Lord am your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt to be your God: I, the Lord your God.</p>	<p>¹ וַיִּדְבֶּר יְהוָה אֶל־מֹשֶׁה לֵאמֹר: ² שְׁלַח־לְךָ אֲנָשִׁים וַיִּתְּרוּ אֶת־אֶרֶץ כְּנָעַן אֲשֶׁר־אֲנִי נֹתֵן לְבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אִישׁ אֶחָד אִישׁ אֶחָד לְמִטְּהָ אֲבֹתָיו תִּשְׁלָחוּ כָּל גִּישָׁא בְהֵם:</p> <p>³⁰ וַיְהִי סָלַב אֶת־הָעָם אֶל־מֹשֶׁה וַיֹּאמֶר עֲלֵה נַעֲלֵה וַיִּרְשָׁנוּ אֲתָה כִּי־כֹל נֹכַח לָהּ: ³¹ וְהָאֲנָשִׁים אֲשֶׁר עָלוּ עִמּוֹ אָמְרוּ לֹא נֹכַח לַעֲלֹת אֶל־הָעָם כִּי־חֹזֶק הוּא מִמֶּנּוּ:</p> <p>³² וַיֹּצִיאוּ דְבַר הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר תָּרוּ אֲתָה אֶל בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לֵאמֹר הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר עָבְרָנוּ בָּהּ לְתוֹר אֲתָה אֶרֶץ אֲכָלֶת יוֹשְׁבֵיהָ הוּא וְכָל הָעָם אֲשֶׁר־רָאִינוּ בְּתוֹכָהּ אֲנָשִׁי מְדֹוֹת: ³³ וְשָׁם רָאִינוּ אֶת־הַנְּפִילִים בְּנֵי עֲנָק מִן הַנְּפִילִים וְנָהִי בְּעֵינֵינוּ כְּחַגְגָּבִים וְכֹן הָיִינוּ בְּעֵינֵיהֶם:</p> <p>³⁷ וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל־מֹשֶׁה לֵאמֹר: ³⁸ דַּבֵּר אֶל־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאָמַרְתָּ אֲלֵהֶם וַעֲשׂוּ לָהֶם צִיצִית עַל־כַּנְּפֵי בְּגָדֵיהֶם לְדֹרֹתָם וְנִתְּנוּ עַל צִיצִית הַכֶּנֶף פִּתִּיל תְּכֵלֶת: ³⁹ וְהָיָה לָכֶם לְצִיצִית וּרְאִיתֶם אֹתוֹ וּזְכַרְתֶּם אֶת־כָּל־מִצְוֹת יְהוָה וַעֲשִׂיתֶם אֹתָם וְלֹא תִתּוּרוּ אַחֲרַי לְבַבְכֶם וְאַחֲרַי עֵינֵיכֶם אֲשֶׁר־אֲתֶם זָנִים אַחֲרֵיהֶם: ⁴⁰ לִמְעַן תִּזְכְּרוּ וַעֲשִׂיתֶם אֶת־כָּל־מִצְוֹתַי וְהֵייתֶם קְדוֹשִׁים לֵאלֹהֵיכֶם: ⁴¹ אֲנִי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם אֲשֶׁר הוֹצֵאתִי אֶתְכֶם מִמִּצְרַיִם לְהִיּוֹת לָכֶם לֵאלֹהִים אֲנִי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם:</p>
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בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה, יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ, מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו וְצִוָּנוּ לְעֲסֹק בְּדַבְרֵי תוֹרָה.

Baruch atah, Adonai Eloheinu, Melech haolam, asher kid'shanu b'mitzvotav v'tzivanu laasok b'divrei Torah.

Blessed are you, Adonai our God, Sovereign of the universe, who hallows us with mitzvot, commanding us to engage with words of Torah.

REMEZ—UN-SELF-AWARENESS...

v. 38-9 *Speak to the Children of Israel, saying to them to make tsitsit on the corners of their garments throughout the generations. And they shall put upon the tsitsit corner a thread of blue. And it shall be to you as tsitsit, for seeing it, you will remember...*

RASHI... It is called *TziTzit*, literally “*fringe*” because of the strings which hang from it. It is like the same root in “*And He took me by the hair of my head.*” [Ezekiel 8:3] Or Alternately, it is called *TziTzit* because of the verse to which it applies, “*and you shall see it...*” [v. 39] Similar to “*My beloved is like a gazelle—a young stag, gazing through the window, peering through the lattice--maytzitz min haCharakim.*” [Song of Songs, 2:9]

IBN EZRA... It is in fact a commandment that anyone who has a four-cornered garment should wear it all day long in order to recall the mitzvot. Those who wear a prayer-shawl while praying do so because they recite v.37-41 as the third paragraph of the Shema, “*ur’etem otam—and looking at them you will see.*” In my opinion, however, it is more important to wear fringes during the rest of the day than it is even during prayer. One must observe the mitzvot all day, and yet we wear it during prayer, a time least likely for transgression.

RASHI... *they shall put upon the tsitsit corner a thread of blue...* This was the blue-ish dye of the *chilazon*, the sea creature which surfaced from the Kinneret... However, even though we can no longer obtain it—the *techelet*, as R’ Meir taught, “the mitzvah is not diminished.” [TALMUD, Menachot 38a]

v. 39 *They shall be for you TziTzit, you shall see it and recall all the commandments of the Lord and do them...*

TALMUD... “*you shall see it*” That is the thread of blue. And what distinguishes blue from all colors? Blue is like the sea which reflects what is above—the sky, which reveals what is yet above, God’s Throne of Glory.

TALMUD... “*you shall see it and recall*” You shall see this mitzvah and recall another. Which is that? The recitation of the Shema... Thus, “*oto—you shall see him.*” When may we recite the morning Shema? When we can see in daylight and recognize our neighbor’s face at a distance of four ells. So—“*you shall see him,*” the face of another. [Yer., BERACHOT 1:2]

TALMUD... “*you shall see it and recall*” What is the intent of “*oto—it*”? It was taught in the name of R’ Meir: It is not written see them but rather “*see it.*” This teaches us that fulfilling the mitzvah of Tzitzit is comparable to beholding the face of Shechinah—“*you shall see It!*” [Yer., MENACHOT 43b]

ALSHECH... Up to this point the Torah addresses “*them*”---people who have not yet accepted the yoke of Torah... But then we come to the people who accept, but still do not remember all of the mitzvot. It is a well-known fact that if we wish to remember something, tying a knot in our handkerchief or on our finger will jog our memory as soon as we look at it. Thus, it is now direct address: “*for you they shall be Tzitzit*” Tie a knot to make you remember the commandments.

RASHI... Understand the text: Make *TziTzit*... so that you will not “*TaTuru—go spying after your heart and not go whoring after your eyes.*” The word *Taturu*---here is the same as “*V’YaTuRu---Send men for yourself to spy out the land*” [13:2] ... For the heart and the eyes are spies of the body. The eye sees, the heart desires, and the body perpetrates the act. The mitzvah of *TziTzit* is placed here at the end of our portion as a warning, drawing a circle, as if the Holy One is teaching, ‘Keep this commandment and learn how not to be like the spies.’

v. 40-41 *Thus you shall remember and do all My commandments—being holy unto your God. For I, Adonai, am your God who brought you out of the Land of Egypt to be your God. I, Adonai, your God.*

S’FORNO... What is it that we “*remember?*” Looking at it, you are to remember that you are servants of the Almighty, from whom you received these commandments on oath. When you see the Tzitzit, you will remember that you are wearing the seal of the King.

R’J. MILGROM... The hem—*kanaf* of the cloak was an extension of the person himself... In ancient Mari, a professional Prophet would enclose with his report to the king a lock of hair and a piece of his hem, serving as identification. In clay documents, the impression of the hem replaced the signature... E.A. Speiser made the attractive suggestion that the practice in synagogue of pressing the edge of the tallit to the Torah Scroll is the survival of this ancient custom... an individual Jew impressing his signature on the scroll, pledging to live by its teaching.

D'RASH—READING BETWEEN THE WORDS...

Rabbi JULES HARLOW...

Tsitsit are attached to every tallit, and some observant Jews fulfill the command by always wearing a four-cornered undergarment—*arbah kanfot*... Just before we recite the Shema during the Morning Service, we gather together the four corners of fringes, holding them in our hand and putting them to our lips, kissing them each time *tsitsit* is said in our prayer. Just as tefillin and mezuzah of the first passage—the *v'ahavtah*, remind us of our Covenant with God, so looking upon the *tsitsit* reminds us of our commitment to fulfill God's *mitzvot*—to live out that Covenant, making ourselves holy. God commands Israel [Exod 19:6] to become a “Kingdom of Kohanim—a holy nation.” The *tsitsit* are then “the epitome of the democratic thrust within Judaism, equalizing not by leveling but by elevating.” All of Israel can become kohanim... Looking and remembering from whence we came, and all we can yet become, we can fulfill our hope for redemption.

Rabbi RANDY SHEINBERG...

This week's portion provides both a diagnosis and a prescription. The diagnosis: The Israelites suffer from imperfect vision. When their leaders go to scout the Land of Canaan, what they see is distorted in many ways. They see the enemy as if through a magnifying glass: everything the enemy does is larger than life. And they see themselves as if through the wrong end of a pair of binoculars—diminished and inconsequential as insects.

But the greatest failure of the Israelite scouts lies not in their ability to see the land accurately but rather in their inability to see beyond the reality that confronts them. Their world, like ours, gives them many reasons to fear, to despair, to want to return to the restrictive but familiar routine life they led in Egypt...

The scouts fail to look beyond the reality of “what is” that confronts them to the “what could be” that might inspire them... They fail to look with the inner eyes of faith and are instead led astray by eyes that see only the worst. They forget that God, the Source of hope, is at least as real as any giant...

And so, the prescription: to correct superficial vision, look at the *Tzitzit*—symbol of faith and steadfast spirit, “*l'ma'an tizk'ru—so you might remember.*” Remember that the present is pregnant with possibility even if we can't always see it with ordinary eyes... Confronting the giants of our own lives, may we train ourselves to see the world with eyes strengthened by faith, and may that vision inspire us to create a brighter tomorrow.

SOD—The SELF of the UNIVERSE... God's "I am" has the psycho-theological force not of dissolving individual selves but of reminding us that we were never individual selves in the first place...Our selfhood endures by virtue of its participation in some greater Self,

S'FAS EMES...

"You shall see it and remember..."

You shall see it—God's Presence, for

"whoever fulfills the mitzvah of Tzitzit merits greeting the Shechinah."

Thus we may perceive the glory of God's Kingdom, which exists in all things, as it says, "The whole earth is filled with God's glory," [Isaiah 6:3] But it is hidden, and only a truly wholehearted act of self-negation allows one to see God's shining Glory. Such is the meaning of tzitzit—wrapping oneself in the fringes to "see Him," meant in the purest sense, the desire to come to see—to know—the glory of God's Name...

That means there is a light locked away in each thing, every moment, hidden from us... Thus, another meaning of "*Ur'item OTO*"—you shall see his *OT, God's sign!* This refers to the sign within all things, bearing witness to a Presence... All creatures of Heaven and Earth are God's hosts, each one a sign of God's Kingdom, which in this world often remain hidden...

Rabbi ART GREEN...

True religious experience is the seeing of God within all things. It is for this purpose that we are to fulfill the commandments, which remain instruments toward this higher goal... Here, Hasidism is clearly distinguished from non-Hasidic Judaism, which does not know about seeing God in every facet of existence...

An intelligent secular person might see beyond the world's materialism, recognizing the need for some higher aim... But simply rejecting the vanities of the material world is not the same as seeing through those vanities to discover the Face of God looking back at us from within each of God's Creation.

[The Language of Truth, translated/interpreted by Arthur Green, pgs 239-240]