

The Secret of The Tzitz

Growing up involves learning new things as well as reevaluating and deepening our understanding of what we thought we already knew.

This week, I read a bit of 'Mind to Matter' by Dawson Church and found the introduction by Dr. Joseph Dispenza really interesting. He says:

'When you learn something new, you start to see more opportunities that you didn't know about before. This changes you. Learning new things makes your brain create new connections. This means you don't just see things as they are, but as you are after learning. Learning more leads to more changes in your brain.'

This idea fits well with the thought that growing up is about learning new stuff and also thinking again about what we know already. It's like we're waking up potential that lies dormant inside us.

As we change and grow, it's not just about getting more knowledge or skills. It's also about waking up talents and wisdom from our past. Growing up means aligning with the natural and good principles that have always been there. It's about showing the best of what's inside us. So, growing up is two things: learning new information and skills, and also developing the potential and wisdom we already have inside. This journey changes not just what we know, but also who we are. We start to see the world not just as it is, but also through our own new understanding from learning and finding out more about ourselves.

The Gemara^{1]} relates that Rav Kahana accompanied Rav Shimi bar Ashi from the town of Pum Nahara to the palm grove in Bavel. When he arrived there, Rav Kahana said to Rav Shimi bar Ashi: Master, what is meant by that which people say: These palm trees of Babylonia have been in this place from the time of Adam the first man until now?

Rav Shimi bar Ashi said to him: You reminded me of something that Rabbi Yosei bar Canina, said: What is the meaning of that which is written:

בארץ אשר לא עבר בה איש ולא ישב אדם שם

"In a land through which no man has passed and where no person [adam] has settled" ^{2]}

This pasuk is difficult; since it is a land through which no person has passed, how could anyone have settled there permanently? The statement that "no person has settled there" is redundant. Rather, this pasuk comes to teach that every land through which Adam Harishon passed and decreed that it would be settled was settled, and every land through which Adam passed and decreed that it would not be settled was not settled. Based on this, what people say is true, and the palm trees of Bavel are from the time of Adam, meaning that from the time of Adam this land was decreed to be suitable for growing palm trees.

Rav Kook^{3]} explains that everything was created with the potential of Adam Harishon, and he was created with these talents, so that his descendants could bring from potential to actuality even greater ways of perfect development. Anything not prepared by Adam Harishon cannot be actualized by man. Therefore, any use and perfection found in the world through the spirit of man, we reliably know was already prepared by Hashem in the potential of Adam Harishon.

1] Berachos 31

2] Yirmiyahu 2:6

3] Ein Ayeh

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With this in mind, I would like to explore the function and role of the Tzitz as described in our parashah.

Parashas Tezaveh predominantly discusses the clothing of the Kohanim and the Kohen Gadol. This unique set of clothing was reminiscent of the clothing of Adam Harishon before he sinned and aimed to bring us back to that level. Furthermore, Chazal teach us that each of the articles of clothing brought about an atonement for a different sin for all of Klal Yisrael. For example, the Tzitz was an atonement for Azus Panim, haughtiness or to be boldfaced.^{4]}

Of all the different articles of clothing described in our Parashah, the Tzitz in fact is the most intriguing. It is mentioned only in a few pesukim, so let's delve into them and see what we can learn from it.

The Torah tells us:

ועשית ציץ זהב טהור ופתחת עליו פתוחי חתם קדש לה: ושמת אתו על פתיל תכלת והיה על המצנפת אל מול פני המצנפת יהיה: והיה על מצח אהרן ונשא אהרן את עון הקדשים אשר יקדישו בני ישראל לכל מתנת קדשיהם והיה על מצחו תמיד לרצון להם לפני ה

You shall make a frontlet of pure gold and engrave on it the seal inscription: "Holy to Hashem." Suspend it on a cord of blue, so that it may remain on the headdress; it shall remain on the front of the headdress. It shall be on Aaron's forehead, that Aaron may take away any sin arising from the holy things that the Israelites consecrate, from any of their sacred donations; it shall be on his forehead at all times, to win acceptance for them before Hashem.

What does the word 'Tzitz' signify?

The term Tzitz is used by Aharon in Parashas Korach, when Aharon's stick sprouted and almonds blossomed, the passuk says

והנה פרח מטה אהרן לבית לוי ויצא פרח ויצץ ציץ ויגמל שקדים

[The next day Moshe entered the Ohel Moed,] and there the staff of Aaron of the house of Levi had sprouted: it had brought forth sprouts, produced blossoms, and borne almonds.

Similarly we find this term in Shir Hashirim,

דומה דודי לצבי או לעפר האילים הנה זה עומר אחר בתלנו משגיה מן החלנות מציץ מן החרבים

My beloved is like a gazelle or like a young stag. There he stands behind our wall, gazing through the window, peering through the lattice.

Rashi in Shelach uses this pasuk to explain the term Tzitz signifying something that emerges from the corners of a garment and becomes visible. Tzitz, therefore, implies that it is coming out and it is seen.

Further in our Parasha, the pasuk says **ושמת המצנפת על ראשו ונתת את נזר הקדש על המצנפת** - the Tzitz is now called a Nezer, a crown.

4] Arachin 16a, Zevachim 88b

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We find these two terms together by Dovid HaMelech - ועליו יציץ נזרו - while on him his crown shall sparkle”^{5]}

We see the essence of a Tzitz is that it should be a crown. It represented Keser Kehuna for the Kohen Gadol, akin to Keser Malchus for Dovid HaMelech. This crown was a visible testament to his role as the Kohen Gadol.

How did the Tzitz Look?

The essence of a crown lies in its front, not the rear. This is where a king would display his jewels, expressing his prestige and grandeur. Thus, ‘Kodesh L’Hashem’ was prominently inscribed at the forefront. This phrase signifies the Kohen’s total dedication to Avodas Hashem. This crown served a dual purpose: it was a symbol of his prestige, yet it simultaneously declared his status as a servant of Hashem.

The Tzitz was made from pure gold and put on a Ptil Tcheilet. The PtilHaTcheilet was a blue string meant to secure the Tzitz to the head. We find that other Begadim were also tied with this blue string. Techeleit, regarded as Bigdei Melachim, was a luxurious, rare material favored by royalty, symbolizing nobility and prestige. Likewise, the use of gold, a material associated with majesty, underscores the Tzitz’s significance and the Kohen Gadol’s esteemed position.

The Purpose of the Tzitz

The Tzitz served as a kapara, an atonement for Bnei Yisrael. When one brings a korban, the kohen makes sure that there is no blemish in the animal. Yet, there are times that the Kohen cannot check, like if there was not enough time. Therefore in the event that there was indeed a blemish or something was Tamei, they would go to the Kohen Gadol who had the Tzitz. Through the power of the Tzitz, it would bring an atonement for the Aveiros involved in bringing korbanos wrongly.^{6]}

The pasuk emphasizes that the Tzitz should constantly be on Aaron’s forehead to gain favor before Hashem. Why this repetition, and how does it differ from the Tzitz’s role in atoning for sins? The key lies in understanding that the Tzitz was worn specifically during the Avoda. During these moments, there was a profound ratzon (will or desire) before Hashem, as the Kohen Gadol represented all of Bnei Yisrael, acknowledging Hashem’s supreme authority

Each individual possesses the potential to be ‘Kodesh L’Hashem’, albeit this requires a measure of chutzpah – audacity. The Tzitz serves to atone for the chutzpah utilized in pursuit of holiness. This concept resonates in the context of a Nazir, where the term ‘Nezer’ is mentioned nine times. Like the Kohen, a Nazir avoids Tumah and is consecrated as ‘Kodesh L’Hashem’.

Although achieving such sanctity is challenging, we can emulate this through wearing tzitzit, which often include a Ptil Techeilet. These tzitzit symbolize our aspiration to embody the Kohen Gadol’s alignment with Hashem, keeping us focused on our ultimate spiritual goals and commitment to being ‘Kodesh L’Hashem’. Just as the Tzitz keeps the Kohen Gadol fully aligned with Hashem, so do our Tzitzits. They keep us focused on the main goal and we wear it to be Kodesh L’Hashem

5] Tehillim 132:18

6] Menachos 25b

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We put on Tefillin in the same place of the Tzitz. The Gemara^{7]} says that one should put on tefillin everyday and it learns it from the Tzitz. The Tefillin act just as the Tzitz to bring forth the Ratzon Hashem and to align ourselves with Hashem.

Deeper Understanding

Rav Reuven Sasson and Rav Moshe Shapiro both explain the significance of the forehead in this context. Unlike other facial features like the eyes, ears, nose, and mouth, the forehead lacks expressive capabilities. It's the uppermost part of the face, covering the brain and where emotions are registered, representing the will (Ratzon) which transcends intellectual and emotional faculties.

Medically, the frontal lobes located behind the forehead coordinate and modulate cognitive and emotional processes. Thus, the forehead represents our innermost Ratzon, our deepest yearning to do what is right. The Tzitz, placed on the forehead, symbolically brings this aspect to the forefront, prompting introspection about our alignment with the Ratzon Hashem.

Rav Sasson explains further that this is why the words Kodesh LHashem were embossed on the Tzitz. It was as if the ratzon that everything was from Hashem was expressing itself from the forehead.

This may also explain why the Tzitz was crafted from pure gold. Such material choice wasn't just for aesthetic or material value; it was to ensure an unadulterated expression of Ratzon Hashem. Pure gold symbolizes a purity of purpose and intent, mirroring the purity of the Kohen Gadol's spiritual alignment.

From the Tefillin Shel Rosh on the head or the brain, to the Tefillin Shel Yad, next to the heart, it then meets up with the Tzitzis which reaches to our lower body, thus giving us a full body experience of alignment with Hashem, in all important areas, the head, heart and makom HaBris. Notably, both the Tzitz and Tzitzit incorporate Techeiles, serving as a constant reminder of our connection to Hashem.

It's important to note a key distinction: unlike the Tzitz, which rests on the forehead, the Tefillin are positioned on the head. Consequently, the name of Hashem on the Tefillin is not embossed as it is on the Tzitz; rather, it's debossed, implying a more concealed manifestation.

Aharon Hakohen was meant to mirror Adam Harishon before the Chet, the clothing of the Kohen Gadol was similar to the clothing of Adam. Through the Kohen Gadol, we were able to bring out our deepest innermost dormant potential which was set in place already by Adam Harishon.

When we access this Ratzon, we can literally change the world.

Rav Kook writes^{8]} that if even one person has a deep yearning and Ratzon to live in Eretz Yisrael, he can change the course of history. Rav Uri Sherki comments on this and gives us an example.

A person like the Vilna Gaon, who spent all day in his room studying. One day, the Gaon said: "The time has come to ascend to the Land of Israel." This longing made him attempt to go to the land. However, he failed. Of course, he called his students to go to the land, and they

7] Shabbos 12a

8] Orot: Eretz Yisrael Perek 6

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succeeded and established the Ashkenazi Yishuv in Jerusalem, which strengthened the old Yishuv. Montefiore arrived in the land and found a community to strengthen. Thus, the Yishuv in the Land of Israel led to the establishment of “Chovevei Tzion” in Russia, who set up several more settlements there. This led to the situation where, when Herzl came and thought about establishing the World Zionist Organization, there was already a basis for discussion because there were already Jews in the land. This justifies the subsequent waves of immigration, which justified the establishment of the British Mandate over the Land of Israel. This eventually led to the establishment of the state. All this started from a person who longed for the Land of Israel and sat in his room in Vilna.

Rav Sherki explains: How can a person who has never been to the Land of Israel have such a great longing for it? He answers that it is possible because the impression left on him by previous generations was strong enough to make him long for a land he had never seen.^{9]}

Utilizing the Power of the Tzitz Nowadays

The Zohar teaches us that anyone who came before the Tzitz had a spiritual x-ray like experience. If the person was a tzaddik would the letters reflect on the person's forehead; if not, they would remain invisible. When the Kohen Gadol would see this, he would then daven on behalf of this person that he should have a Kapara. The Zohar elaborates that witnessing the kedusha emanating from the Tzitz often led to a profound, heart-rending moment of Teshuva for those who came before it.

The Tzitz served to bring out the hidden kedusha in the recesses of a person's mind. It served to bring a person to be aware of who he really is. We are not our sins and we are not who we think we are. Each of us is someone who wants to do the Ratzon Hashem and wants to be a Kohen Gadol. By focusing on that, we can revert our chutzpah to holy chutzpah and focus our life on doing the right thing.

When an individual comes to understand the preciousness of their neshama and their potential for greatness, they elevate themselves to a level akin to that of a Kohen Gadol. I would like to suggest that when Aharon HaKohen was famed for making peace among people, it involved him showing them the Tzitz. This act likely served as a powerful reminder that their true essence was not rooted in negativity or conflict. Once people realigned with the ratzon Hashem, naturally, harmony and peace prevailed.

Interestingly, the word חֲצִפָּה shares the same gematria (numerical value) as חֶסֶד. It is said that in the era of the Mashiach, the world will abound in Chutzpah. Based on our discussion, it is conceivable that in those times, the spiritual essence of the Tzitz will transform the prevalent chutzpah into a 'holy chutzpah'. This transformation would align humanity with the will of Hashem, culminating in a state of universal peace. May we be worthy to witness such a day soon.

9] https://ravsherki.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=3346:33463346-3346&catid=289