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המאור

Light reading
HaMaor

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Growing Through Life's Challenges

TIFERES SHLOMO ON THE PARSHA

Is it not enough for you (המעט מכם) that the G-d of Israel has separated you from the assembly of Israel to draw you close to Him, to do the service of the Mishkan of Hashem.

The opening words of this verse, **המעט מכם** translates literally as the small amongst you. This alludes to the unique quality of the Jewish people who are described as **המעט מכל העמים**, the smallest of the nations.

Our greatness as a people and the reason that Hashem chose us is because of our humility, because we make ourselves "small". Hashem desires to dwell amongst those who are humble.

Before we approach Hashem, in prayer we are supposed to humble ourselves. This was the path of Avraham, who before approaching Hashem in prayer declared "I am but dust and ashes". When we approach Hashem with humility, our prayers are more accepted on High.

This is the inner meaning of why we are likened to the dust of the earth and the stars in the sky. When we humble ourselves like the dust, we merit to be elevated to the greatest heights of connection to Hashem.

When Korach and his supporters from the tribe of Levi came before Moshe seeking the greatness and honour of being the Kohen Gadol, this was the antithesis of humility.

In this verse, Moshe was reminding them that the very reason that they merited to be separated and elevated from amongst Bnei Yisrael to serve before Hashem in the Mishkan was because "המעט מכם" - because of the Middah being "small" i.e. humility.

But now that you have deviated from this Middah and sought honour and greatness, what will become of you?

Six months ago, my employment as the Head of Kollel Menachem in Melbourne was ended. After 13 years of dedication to the Kollel and community, it came as an unexpected shock. If I am to be honest, it has been a really challenging period with ups and downs as I find my feet, try to look after my family, stay positive and move onwards.

I am certainly not unique. Whilst we Daven each day that we not have to experience challenges, inevitably each one of us faces some form of challenge or difficulty in our personal lives; in work, family, health or the like. While we are going through these challenges, it is not easy to remain positive. It is very easy to be overwhelmed and brought down as we ask "why me?".

This week's Parsha describes the rebellion of Korach against the leadership of Moshe and the priesthood of Aharon. It was a challenging time for Bnei Yisrael in general and Moshe in particular. After everything that he had done, sacrificed and given to Bnei Yisrael, to have a large segment of the people turn against him, could not have been easy.

But ultimately this challenge, like all challenges, served a greater purpose. As a result of having his leadership publicly challenged, instead of eroding his standing, it brought about an even greater solidification and strengthening of Moshe and Aharon in their leadership roles, in a way that could not have been otherwise realised. Through the ensuing miracles, Hashem authenticated their leadership in the eyes of the people.

The commentaries liken the affect of Korach's challenge, to a loan document that has had its authenticity and integrity challenged in Beis Din. A loan document has a weakness that it can be denied or claimed to be falsified. But once the challenge has been disproved and refuted, the document gains an even greater degree of force and standing, in that it can no longer be challenged again.

Every challenge that Hashem sends our way is a blessing; an opportunity to grow and achieve things that we could not otherwise have done. We can emerge from our challenges stronger and better off. Embracing and facing our challenges with this perspective and with full trust in Hashem, make them easier to face and allow us to remain positive.

This message was reflected in the specific miracle that took place in the wake of Korach's challenge. As

a sign that Aharon had been chosen by Hashem, the staffs of the heads of the tribes were gathered and placed in the Holy of Holies. Miraculously, the staff of Aharon, a dry, dead and stagnant piece of wood, came to life, growing, blossoming and giving forth ripened almonds.

Why almonds? Our sages explain that in its initial stages of formation, the almond is bitter. But as it ripens, it becomes sweet. In the same way, challenges are bitter to face, but as we grow through them, the challenge becomes an opportunity and the opportunity becomes a benefit.

In facing my personal challenge, I have received a tremendous outpouring of support from family and friends, Chavrusas and the amazing people that I have been able to learn with and develop relationships with, from across the different parts of the Melbourne community.

My family and I came to Melbourne with a Shlichus, to spread the teachings of Torah and Chassidus. It is an amazing community with a thirst and esteem for Torah knowledge. We remain dedicated to our mission and to our community, with the establishment of MAOR, an organisation focused on spreading the light and wisdom of Torah to all members of the community, irrespective of their Shule affiliation.

Our activities include a weekly Avos Ubanim program that now attracts 40+ boys each week, a new weekly Torah publication "Hamaor", regular social media video-shorts with inspiring Torah messages and lessons and weekly Shiurim and Chavrusas. I have also had the opportunity to give Shiurim and speak in many of Melbourne's Shules.

This past week we launched the MAOR website that is filled with Torah content, including short inspiring videos, full length Shiurim, archives of our publications and more. Future initiatives will include holiday learning programs, lunch n learns, increased Shiurim

After the miracle, Aharon's staff was returned to the Holy of Holies where it remained as an eternal reminder of its message.

We all have Korach moments in our lives, which may leave us feeling dry and stagnant as we taste their bitterness. But with a positive mindset and trust in Hashem, these moments can reawaken within us new life and strength, to grow and become a source of sweet nourishing fruits to enrich our own lives and the lives of those around us.

The Weekly Halacha Analysis

Tying Tzitzis with Techeiles

Rabbi Yonason Johnson

At the end of Shelach¹ we read about the Mitzvah of Tzitzis and the requirement of having a Techeiles coloured wool string (פתיל תכלת).

Parshas Korach begins with the words ויקח קרח "and Korach took". Based on the juxtaposition to the Parsha of Tzitzis, the Gemara² teaches that Korach "took" a Tallis made entirely of Techeiles wool and asked Moshe whether it too required the Techeiles string. His intention was to ridicule Moshe. Moshe answered that such a Tallis still requires the Techeiles string.

The Techeiles was a turquoise dye made from the Chilazon³. At some point in time after the Talmudic era, the Techeiles became lost and our Tzitzis are made with only white strings. For hundreds of years this has been the status quo. In the last 150 years, various attempts to rediscover the Techeiles were made by a different Rabbis, based on the criteria of the Chilazon described in the Gemara and Midrash. Following their differing conclusions, it is common to see blue strings on Tzitzis re-emerging⁴.

Below we will explore some Halachic aspects of tying Tzitzis with Techeiles.

Can the Mitzvah be fulfilled without Techeiles

The Mishna⁵ teaches that the absence of the Techeiles does not prevent one from fulfilling the Mitzvah with the white strings and the absence of the white strings does not prevent one from fulfilling the Mitzvah with the Techeiles⁶.

The white strings need not be white. They are called white only because we are not obligated to dye them. Unlike the other Tzitzis strings that could be made of linen, the Techeiles string must be of wool⁷.

This Mishna reflects the view of the Chachamim. However, according to Rebbi, the Mitzvah of Tzitzis can only be Biblically fulfilled with Techeiles. Some Rishonim⁸ follow the view of Rebbi. According to them, our Tzitzis nowadays is only Rabbinic. Most of the Rishonim⁹ rule like the Chachamim in the Mishna that the Biblical Mitzvah can be fulfilled without Techeiles.

How many Techeiles strings

The Halacha follows Beis Shammai who rule that the Tzitzis are to be made up of 4 strings. This is in contrast to Beis Hillel who rule that Tzitzis should be made with 3 strings¹⁰. The 4 strings are inserted into the garment and folded in half, giving rise to a total of 8 strings.

According to Rashi¹¹, Tosfos¹² and the Rosh¹³, when Techeiles is used, 2 of the 4 full strings should be Techeiles and 2 white, giving rise to 4 Techeiles strings and 4 white strings. The Raavad and other Rishonim rule that only 1 of the 4 full strings should be Techeiles, so that 2 out of

8 strings will be Techeiles¹⁴. The Sema"g¹⁵ writes that one may follow either of these 2 approaches.

The Rambam¹⁶ has a unique opinion whereby only 1 of the 8 strings is Techeiles. This is achieved by dyeing only half a string Techeiles.

Chulios

The Gemara teaches that the windings of the Tzitzis should be made in Chulios. A Chulia is a group of 3 windings¹⁷. The Tzitzis should not have less than 7 Chulios, corresponding to the 7 heavens. There should not be more than 13 Chulios, corresponding to the 7 heavens and the voids between them. There should be a knot after each Chulia.

Whilst some have the custom to tie the Tzitzis with Chulios even in the absence of Techeiles, they are only mandatory when one has Techeiles¹⁸.

The Gemara teaches that the first winding should be with a white string. This is because it should be like the colour of the garment. The last winding should also be white because מַעֲלִין בְּקוּדֵשׁ וְאֵין מְוֵרִידִין. The Rambam understands that all of the windings should be with the Techeiles string, with the exception of the very first and very last winding. This is also the opinion of the Ariza"l.

According to Rashi, the first 3 windings (Chulia) should be white as should the last Chulia. The rest of the Chulios are of Techeiles. According to Rav Amram Gaon, the Chulios should be alternated from white to Techeiles, beginning and ending with a white Chulia.

The Raavad has an interesting opinion that the 7 Chulios refer to the windings in each group between the knots. In his view, the single windings should alternate from white to Techeiles, starting and ending with the white string.

Five Knots

Aside from the first knot that connects the Tzitzis to the garment, the Gemara does not mention the need for any other knots. Nonetheless, there is an ancient custom going back to the time of the Geonim to make 5 double-knots in the Tzitzis¹⁹. This is brought by Rav Natrunai Gaon, Rashi, Tosfos and Raavad.

Most Poskim are of the view that these knots are only made nowadays in the absence of Techeiles. When using Techeiles, these knots are not tied and the main focus is on the Chulios. According to some Rishonim, including the Raavad, the 5 knots are still tied when using Techeiles. This is also the opinion of the Ariza"l according to Kabbalah.

A Tallis made entirely of Techeiles

A Tallis garment that is made entirely of Techeiles certainly requires the Techeiles string as well, as Moshe answered Korach's challenge. However, there is a question about how many Techeiles strings are required in this scenario.

According to many authorities²⁰, the "white strings" should be dyed the same colour as the garment itself. This is derived from the verse צִיצִית הַכֹּנֶךְ "the Tzitzis of the corner", meaning that the Tzitzis should be like the corner. The Shulchan Aruch²¹ rules that those who are careful with Mitzvos do this. But what about where the garment is Techeiles coloured? Should the white strings be dyed Techeiles as well?

The Gemara²² rules that the Tzitzis strings of an entirely Techeiles garment can be dyed any colour except for Kela Ilan (an indigo dye that resembles Techeiles and is made from a plant extract). Based on this, the Rambam, as explained by the Beis Yosef, rules that even though the Tzitzis strings should be of the same colour as the garment, in this scenario, the white strings should not be dyed Techeiles. They should also not be dyed a colour that is similar to Techeiles, such as black. This is so that we don't add to, or appear to be adding to the obligatory number of Techeiles strings.

1. Bamidbar 15:38-41. This is the third passage of the Shema
2. Sanhedrin 110a. See also Midrash Tanchuma Parshas Korach.
3. Tosefta Menachos 9:6
4. The conclusions of these Rabbis and the general pursuit of reinstating Techeiles has been subject to great debate and dispute. This fascinating topic is beyond the scope of this work.
5. Menachos 38a
6. Consensus is that the white strings and the Techeiles are counted a 1 Mitzvah rather than 2 separate Mitzvos.
7. Biblically, even a linen garment requires the wool Techeiles. The sages learn from the juxtaposition of the Mitzvah of Tzitzis and Shaatnez in Devarim 22, that Tzitzis with Techeiles do not violate Shaatnez.
8. Rabbi Zerachia Halevi – Maor Hakatan Shabbos 11.
9. Rashi Menachos 38a, Rosh Hilchos Tzitzis, Ramban, Rambam Hilchos Tzitzis 1:4
10. Menachos 41b. There is a dispute whether this number of strings is Biblically required or only Rabbinic.
11. Menachos 38a
12. Menachos 38a ד"ה התכלת
13. Piskei Harosh
14. This is also the opinion of the Vilna Gaon
15. Hilchos Tzitzis
16. Hilchos Tzitzis 1:6. Teshuvos Harambam. Some learn that this is also the opinion of the Ramban and Sefer Hachinuch.
17. Menachos 39a
18. Rambam Hilchos Tzitzis 1:7-9, Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim 11:14, Mishna Berura and Shulchan Aruch Harav
19. Rashi explains the connection between Tzitzis and remembering all of the Mitzvos of the Torah is because Gematria of צִיצִית has the Gematria of 600. Adding the 5 knots and 8 strings adds up to 613.
20. Rambam 2:8 and Rashi. Tosfos disputes Rashi's understanding of the Gemara.
21. Orach Chaim 9:5. The Ram"o writes that he did not see people dye the white strings to match the garment and that it should not be done. To be Yotzai according to all opinions, it is customary for the Tallis to be white, so that it matches the white strings.
22. Menachos 41b