

Parsha Plug: Parshat Shlach

<p>Bamidbar 15:37-41</p>	<p>במדבר יא:א"ז</p>
<p>37 God spoke to Moshe, saying: 38 Speak to the children of Israel and you shall say to them that they shall make for themselves fringes on the corners of their garments, throughout their generations, and they shall affix a thread of sky blue [wool] on the fringe of each corner. 39 This shall be fringes for you, and when you see it, you will remember all the commandments of the Lord to perform them, and you shall not wander after your hearts and after your eyes after which you are going astray. 40 So that you shall remember and perform all My commandments and you shall be holy to your God. 41 I am the Lord, your God, Who took you out of the land of Egypt to be your God; I am the Lord, your God.</p>	<p>(לז) וַיֹּאמֶר יְקֹנֵן אֶל־מֹשֶׁה לְאָמֹר: (לח) דִּבֶּר אֶל־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאָמַרְתָּ אֲלֵהֶם וַעֲשׂוּ לָהֶם צִיצִית עַל־כַּנְּפֵי בְּגָדֵיהֶם לְדֹרֹתָם וְנִתְּנוּ עַל־צִיצִית הַכַּנָּף פִּתִּיל תְּכֵלֶת: (לט) וְהָיָה לָכֶם לְצִיצִית וּרְאִיתֶם אֹתָּהּ וּזְכַרְתֶּם אֶת־כָּל־מִצְוֹת יְקֹנֵן וַעֲשִׂיתֶם אֹתָם וְלֹא־תִתּוּרוּ אַחֲרַי לְבַבְכֶם וְאַחֲרַי עֵינֵיכֶם אֲשֶׁר־אַתֶּם זֹנִים אַחֲרֵיהֶם: (מ) לְמַעַן תִּזְכְּרוּ וַעֲשִׂיתֶם אֶת־כָּל־מִצְוֹתַי וְהֵייתֶם קְדוֹשִׁים לְאֱלֹהֵיכֶם: (מא) אֲנִי יְקֹנֵן אֱלֹהֵיכֶם אֲשֶׁר הוֹצֵאתִי אֶתְכֶם מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם לְהוֹיֹת לָכֶם לְאֱלֹהִים אֲנִי יְקֹנֵן אֱלֹהֵיכֶם.</p>
<p>Rashi on Bamidbar 15:38, 39, 41</p>	<p>רש"י על במדבר לח, לט, מא</p>
<p>38: That they shall make for themselves fringes: Because of the threads suspended from it, as in, “he took me by a lock of בְּצִיצַת my hair”. Or, צִיצַת because “you shall see it”, as in, “peering מְצִיץ from the lattices”. 39: And you shall not wander after your hearts: Like “from scouting מְתוֹר the Land”. The heart and eyes are the spies for the body. They are its agents for sinning: the eye sees, the heart covets and the body commits the transgression. 41: <i>From the commentary of Rebbe Moshe Hadarshan:</i> Why is the passage of the wood gatherer juxtaposed with the passage addressing idolatry? To inform that one who desecrates Shabbat is regarded as one who worships idols, for Shabbat too is as important as the sum of all the commandments...Likewise, the passage of tzitzit; why is it juxtaposed with these? Since it too is equally important as the sum of all the commandments, as it states, “and perform all My commandments.” <i>On the corners of their garments:</i> Corresponding to “I carried you on the wings כַּנְּפֵי of eagles”. On the four corners, but not on a garment of three or five. It also corresponds to the four expressions of redemption that were said in Egypt: “I will bring you out, I will save you, I will redeem you, I will take you”. <i>A thread of sky-blue:</i> So called because of the bereavement of the Egyptians over the loss of their firstborn. The Aramaic translation of שְׂפוּל, bereavement, is תְּכֵלֶת, like תְּכֵלֶת. Moreover, the plague struck them at night, and the color of תְּכֵלֶת is similar to the color of the sky, which blackens at dusk; its eight threads symbolize the eight days that Israel waited from when they left Egypt until they sang the song at the Sea.</p>	<p>לח: ועשו להם ציצת: על שם הפתילים התלויים בה, כמו (יחזקאל ה, ג) ויקחני בציצית ראשי. דבר אחר ציצית על שם וראיתם אותו, כמו (שה"ש ב, ט) מציץ מן החרכים: לט: ולא תתורו אחרי לבבכם: כמו (לעיל יג כה) מתור הארץ. הלב והעינים הם מרגלים לגוף ומסרסים לו את העבירות, העין רואה והלב חומד והגוף עושה את העבירות: מא: ומיסודו של רבי משה הדרשן העתקתי למה נסמכה פרשת מקושש לפרשת עבודה זרה, לומר שהמחלל את השבת כעובד עבודה זרה, שאף היא שקולה ככל המצות...ואף פרשת ציצית לכך נסמכה לאלו לפי שאף היא שקולה כנגד כל המצות, שנאמר ועשיתם את כל מצותי: על כנפי בגדיהם - כנגד (שמות יט, ד) ואשא אתכם על כנפי נשרים. על ארבע כנפות ולא בעלת שלש ולא בעלת חמש, כנגד ארבע לשונות של גאולה שנאמר במצרים (שמות ו, ו-ז) והוצאתי והצלתי וגאלתי ולקחתי: פתיל תכלת - על שם שכול בכורות. תרגומו של שכול תכלא. ומכתם היתה בלילה וכן צבע התכלת דומה לצבע רקיע המשחיר לעת ערב. ושמונה חוטים שבה, כנגד שמונה ימים ששהו ישראל משיצאו מצרים עד שאמרו שירה על הים:</p>

Talmud Bavli Masechet Sotah 17a	תלמוד בבלי מסכת סוטה יז.
<p>Rava taught: As reward for Avraham saying to the king of Sdom: "I will not take a thread nor a shoe strap nor anything that is yours" (Genesis 14:23), his children merited two mitzvot: The thread of sky-blue wool and the strap of tefillin. This makes sense for the strap of the tefillin, as it is written: "And all the peoples of the earth shall see that the name of the Lord is called upon you; and they shall be afraid of you" (Deuteronomy 28:10). And it is taught that Rabbi Eliezer the Great says: This is a reference to the tefillin of the head. But what of the thread of sky-blue wool? As it is taught that Rabbi Meir would say: What is different about sky-blue from all other colors? It is because sky-blue dye is similar in its color to the sea, and the sea is similar to the sky, and the sky is similar to the Throne of Glory, as it is stated: "And they saw the God of Israel; and there was under His feet the like of a paved work of sapphire stone, and the like of the very heaven for clearness" (Exodus 24:10). This verse shows that the heavens are similar to sapphire, and it is written: "And above the firmament that was over their heads was the likeness of a throne, as the appearance of a sapphire stone" (Ezekiel 1:26).</p>	<p>דרש רבא: בשכר שאמר אברהם אבינו אם מחוט ועד שרוך נעל, זכו בניו לב' מצות: חוט של תכלת, ורצועה של תפלין. בשלמא רצועה של תפלין, דכתיב: וראו כל עמי הארץ כי שם ה' נקרא עליך, ותניא, ר"א הגדול אומר: אלו תפלין שבראש, אלא חוט של תכלת מאי היא? דתניא, היה ר"מ אומר: מה נשתנה תכלת מכל מיני צבעונין? מפני שהתכלת דומה לים, וים דומה לרקיע, ורקיע דומה לכסא הכבוד, שנאמר: ויראו את אלקי ישראל ותחת רגליו כמעשה לבנת הספיר וכעצם השמים לטהר, וכתיב: כמראה אבן ספיר דמות כסא.</p>

Rabbi Avraham Gordimer, <i>Parshas Shelach - Tzitzis and the Mekoshesh Eitzim</i>
<p>The Meraglim and their followers were suddenly and completely mindless of all that God had promised; it was as if they were stricken with amnesia...The unbelievable and inexcusable memory lapse which occurred to the Meraglim and their followers in the bizarre frenzy of despair is addressed by Mitzvas Tzitzis, the primary mitzvah of memory...A Yisroel is adjured to be a person of memory, to never forget and never lose perspective. When something transpires, the Jew recalls and relates it to the larger picture; nothing occurs in a vacuum. This is how the Jew relates to Hashem and Torah, and it is the essence of Parshas Shelach.</p>

Bamidbar Rabbah Korach 18:3	במדבר רבה (וילנא) קרח יח:ג
<p>Why is Korach juxtaposed to the mitzvah of tzitzit? Korach challenged Moshe: What is the law regarding a tallit that is all techeilet? Moshe answered: It is obligated in tzitzit. Korach replied: If the fact that the whole garment is techeilet does not suffice, will four threads do so?...You were not commanded regarding these matters-- you made them up yourself!...When Moshe relayed: "And they shall add a thread of techeilet to the corner fringes", Korach ordered two hundred and fifty techeilet tallitot. The same two hundred and fifty heads of synhedrons that rose against Moshe...Korach got up and made a feast and they wrapped themselves in the techeilet tallitot.</p>	<p>ויקח קרח מה כתיב למעלה מן הענין (במדבר טו) ועשו להם ציצית קפץ קרח ואמר למשה טלית שכולה תכלת מהו שתהא פטורה מן הציצית א"ל חייבת בציצית א"ל קרח טלית שכולה תכלת אין פוטרת עצמה ארבע חוטין פוטרות אותה...אמר לו דברים אלו לא נצטוית עליהן ומלבך... וכשאמר משה (שם / במדבר / טו) ונתנו על ציצת הכנף פתיל תכלת מיד צוה ועשו ר"ג טליתות תכלת ונתעטפו בהן אותן ר"ג ראשי סנהדראות שקמו על משה...עמד קרח ועשה להם משתה ונתעטפו בטליתות תכלת.</p>

Kedushat Levi Parshat Shlach, 17	קדושת לוי פרשת שלח, יז
Korach wanted to wrap himself in a tallit that was not his...he wanted to do a mitzvah by means of a transgression.	רוצה להתעטף בטלית שאינו שלו...שרצה לעשות מצוה הבא בעבירה.

Rav Elisha Ancselovits, *On Midrashic Sources on Hukkim*

Deuteronomy and the Tannaim expected Jewish citizen of all economic classes to wear the same expensive dyed stripes of status on their not too ostentatious cloaks – a merely woolen thread dyed with expensive Tyrian blue on each corner of one's tallit. Since these somewhat equalizing forms of dress that create a shared identity conflicted with Roman ideology, opponents not only ridiculed the Biblical obligation to wear wool fringes but also ridiculed this mass wearing of wool fringes dyed with expensive Tyrian blue...[Additionally] the injunction against wearing linen garments into which dyeable wool had been woven was ridiculed as inconsistent with the fact that Deuteronomy obligated Tyrian blue woolen fringes on all cloaks – including linen cloaks.

Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, *Parshat Shelach: Beyond the Fringe*

I once heard the following commentary from my teacher, Rabbi Dr Nahum Rabinovitch...There are two kinds of clothing. There are the clothes we wear to project an image. A king, a judge, a soldier, all wear clothing that conceals the individual and instead proclaims a role, an office, a rank...But there are other clothes we wear when we are alone, that may convey more powerfully than anything else the kind of person we really are: the artist in his studio, the writer at his desk, the gardener tending the roses...The two kinds of tsitsit represent these different forms of dress. When we engage in prayer, we sense in our heart how unworthy we may be of the high demands G-d has made of us. We feel the need to come before G-d as something more than just ourselves. We wrap ourselves in the robe, the tallit, the great symbol of the Jewish people at prayer. We conceal our individuality – in the language of the blessing over the tallit, we “wrap ourselves in a fringed garment.”...The tallit hides the person we are and represents the person we would like to be, because in prayer we ask G-d to judge us, not for what we are, but for what we wish to be. The deeper symbolism of tsitsit, however, is that it represents the commandments as a whole (“look at it and recall all the commandments of the Lord”) – and these become part of what and who we are only when we accept them without coercion, of our own free will. That is why the command of tsitsit is not categorical. We are not obligated to buy a four-cornered garment...That is why opting to wear tsitsit symbolises the free acceptance of all the duties of Jewish life. This is the most inward, intimate, intensely personal aspect of faith whereby in our innermost soul we dedicate ourselves to G-d and His commands...This is the command of tsitsit as undergarment, beneath, not on top of, our clothing. Over this we make a different blessing. We do not talk about “wrapping ourselves in a fringed garment” – because this form of fringes is not for outward show...Instead, we are expressing our innermost commitment to G-d's word and call to us. Over this we say the blessing, “who has commanded us concerning the precept of tsitsit” because what matters is not the mask but the reality, not what we wish to seem but what we really are. In this striking way tsitsit represent the dual nature of Judaism. On the one hand it is a way of life that is public, communal, shared with others across the world and through the ages...But there is also our inner life as people of faith. There are things we can say to G-d that we can say to no one else. He knows our thoughts, hopes, fears, better than we know them ourselves...The two types of fringed garment represent the two dimensions of the life of faith – the outer persona and the inner person, the image we present to the world and the face we show only to G-d.

