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PARSHAS SHELACH

WITH

RAV AVIGDOR MILLER ZT"L

BASED ON HIS BOOKS, TAPES & WRITINGS OF TALMIDIM

WEAPONS OF THE TORAH

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Part I. The Battle and The Weapons

Measure of Success

In the beginning of his sefer, the Mesillas Yesharim tells us a fundamental principle that should remain in the front of our minds always. He says there that *hatov ha'amiti*, the true good that a person can achieve in this world, *hu hadveikus bo Yisborach*, is when he is joined to Hakodosh Boruch Hu. And so, if you were ever wondering what is good, what is *the* genuine good, then wonder no further – it's to cling to Hashem.

Now, if you're looking for ways to be joined with Hashem, there are many possibilities, but most of all, *dveikus* means that your *mind* should be connected to Hakodosh Boruch Hu. And therefore, says the Mesillas Yesharim, *ha'adam hashalem*, the perfect man is the one, *asher yizkeh*, who is worthy, *lehidavek bo*, to remain joined always in his thoughts to Hakodosh

Boruch Hu. It means that whatever you're accomplishing in life, your true success will be measured by how much you train yourself to think about Hakodosh Boruch Hu.

And that's why you'll find people who do everything in life except that. Good people are willing to do a lot of good things but when it comes to this subject of thinking about the Borei Yisborach, it's not done. And we can't readily blame them because the truth is that it's the most difficult of all battles. Those are the words of the Mesillas Yesharim; he tells us that we are fighting a *milchamah chazakah*, a mighty war that is *panim veachor* – it's facing us from the front and also creeping up from behind.

The Mighty War

You know, in a battle when a soldier finds himself facing an enemy and he's able to overcome him – he shoots the enemy down or causes him to flee – so the soldier knows that he can't sit and take a rest now. Because what's happening behind him? Immediately, he has to turn around and confront a different foe.

That's what life is. On all sides you're being attacked by ordeals that are pulling you away from your purpose – thousands of different tests are crowding in on you from all sides and therefore you can never let your guard down if you want to be victorious in this strong battle.

The truth is that there's no such thing as a battle that's *not* strong; you'll never find a battle that's comfortable. Ask any soldier and he'll tell you that when bullets are whistling, it's *very* uncomfortable. Like once a soldier was dodging bullets and he said, "I wish I could be back in the good old American desert; lost in a desert, far away from civilization without anything to eat or drink. It would be a picnic compared to being here." And that's because every battle is difficult.

But if the Mesillas Yesharim says it's a *strong* battle, it means that not only are bullets whistling but they're coming like hail and it's very difficult to dodge them. The tests are constant — there's always something knocking you out and keeping your mind occupied so that you're distracted from the great problem of life: הִשָּׁמֶר לְךָ פֶּן תִּשְׁכַּח אֶת הַשֵּׁם אֱלֹקֶיךָ – *Guard yourself lest you forget Hashem.*

Thinking While Talking

I'll prove it to you right away. Make an experiment — say, "I want to remember Hashem," and walk over to your friend and start talking to him. You'll see! That second you already forget Hashem.

Rav Naftoli Amsterdam used to relate about his *rebbe*, Reb Yisroel Salanter *zichrono livracha*, that "he didn't remove his mind from the service of Hashem, even when he was talking to people". Now, if Rav Naftoli chose that as a way of describing the greatness of his rebbi, you can be sure that it was a very great *madreigah* what this *tzaddik* achieved – and you can be just as certain that it didn't come easy. Rav Yisroel had to steel himself for winning that battle every time he opened his mouth because even just to speak to your fellow man is already a distraction from your purpose in this world.

And so we learn now in general the picture of this great battle: Will you forget the purpose of life? Or will you overcome all the disturbances and hectic activities and continue to think always about Hakodosh Boruch Hu, no matter what?

That's the victory; that's the *tov ha'amiti*, the real success – to keep your head on what's important. And what is important? Hakodosh Boruch Hu! *Avodas Hashem!* A person who wants to live successfully knows that whatever difficulties he encounters, his success will be that despite everything, he was able to keep his mind on the real business of life.

Mitzvah Weapons

Now, we must know that Hakodosh Boruch Hu didn't let us out into this world to face such a difficult war without arming us with powerful weapons. And because He is the one who created the war, you can be certain that He knows exactly how to deal with all the exigencies of that war; and so when He provided weapons you can rest assured there couldn't be any better ones — no manufacturer of military supplies, not even Lockheed Martin, could provide such capable weaponry.

What are these 'made to order' weapons we're talking about? You might be surprised at first when you hear this, but it's the *mitzvos*, the commandments of Hashem. Those are the sophisticated weapons that Hashem has armed us with.

Now, the non-observant, I'm not even talking about now – it's a pity on them because without *mitzvos* they are completely lost. They are like soldiers who go out to battle without any weapons. The 'I am a Jew in my heart' Jew who expresses his Judaism by eating knishes or giving money to the UJA is a *rachmanus* – he has no chance on the battlefield. Nobody is capable of fighting off the enemy with bagels and lox!

But even the observant who possess the weapons, the *shomrei torah u'mitzvos* who keep everything, but if they don't know how to use them, they're also in danger. Most Orthodox Jews are like soldiers who have been

given effective weapons to fight the battle, only that they never learned how to use them. Imagine a soldier goes out. He's armed with the most modern rifle, with a Bazooka. He's armed with hand grenades. He has every kind of sophisticated weapons, and they're all draped over his body, hanging from his belt and he gets into the midst of the battle and he neglects to use even one of them. That's exactly what's taking place with most observant Jews. What good is a bazooka that could finish off a whole squad of enemies with one volley if you never pull the trigger?!

Military Training

That happens often in underdeveloped countries. Let's say the tribal leaders in central Africa buy Russian weapons – they pay good money for them and they quickly outfit some of the savages with modern weapons. The local villager who up until now was adept only with a spear is suddenly suited up for battle with a bazooka. And what happens? He runs into battle and tries to clobber the enemy over the head with that bazooka. That's what happens when people who are supplied with good weapons are not trained in how to make use of them.

Now, you shouldn't laugh because we are in exactly the same situation. We were given excellent means of self-defense; we've been supplied with very capable weapons *only that we never learned to employ them properly.* Most of us have never learned how to handle our weapons, and that means that it's an important subject that deserves our utmost attention. How do we best make use of these weapons of war – the *mitzvos* – that are being provided to us by the best Manufacturer of military supplies that the world ever saw?

The Testimonial Weapons

If you recall, at the Pesach Seder when the *chochom* asks his father about the laws and practices of the Torah, he says like this: *Mah ha'Eidos – What are these testimonies, v'haChukim– and the statutes, v'haMishpatim— and the judgments that Hashem commanded?*

So we see right away that there are three categories of Torah practice – *Eidos*, *Chukim* and *Mishpatim.* Of course all three are important but we're going to talk now about the first one mentioned there, *eidos;* it's number one in the list which means that it's very important.

What does it mean *eidos?* So some of the *haggadahs* translate it as 'testimonies' and that's true, but we have to understand, what does it mean by 'testimonies'? It's important for us to clarify – in what way are these Torah practices 'testimonies'?

The answer is that many of the *mitzvos* were given to us to make us constantly aware of our purpose here by means of testifying to ideals that we are expected to keep in mind. The truth is, if you study the *mitzvos* properly, you'll find that almost everything has some open purpose which is almost always clearly stated in the Torah. And that means if you'll learn how to make use of them you'll be prepared to use them as weapons in this great battle.

Psychology of Mitzvos

We'll take some examples soon but first let's understand the general principle of what we're describing now: The *mitzvos* are not intended to be carried out! Of course they *are* but that's only the first step – the *mitzvos* are primarily given for the purpose of working on your psychology; they're intended to be used in a way that will shape the minds of the Am Yisroel.

The *mitzvos* are *eiduyos*; they're testifying to great and important ideals, and our job is not to just do the *mitzvos* but to make use of them to stimulate our minds. And when you become adept at handling these weapons, so every *mitzvah* becomes a valuable tool for achieving tremendous success. On the other hand, if you don't utilize the *mitzvos* in their most effective manner, you're going into the great battle without the weapons of war you need to achieve victory.

How great would be the effect upon the Jewish nation if once more they awoke and would understand the treasures that lie in these *eiduyos*! It would be glorious because when a person undertakes to utilize the testimonials of the Torah, that's how he becomes prepared to face the world. He's suited up now for the battle that is *eilav panim v'achor* and he's ready and able because he knows now how to make the best use of the weapons that Hakodosh Boruch Hu has provided him. That's how the Jew is able to live a full life and to complete the purpose for which he was created.

Part II. Weapons Training

Spirit of The Law

I'll mention one example just as an illustration. In the Torah there's a requirement that on the doorways in a Jewish house there must be a *mezuzah* – a Jewish homeowner is obligated *min hatorah* to inscribe on a piece of parchment two *parshiyos* of the Torah and place it on his doorpost.

Now, it's true that when a person puts up a *mezuzah* and then forgets all about it, he's fulfilled the requirement of the Torah – he has discharged

his obligation and the *beis din* cannot step in and chastise him or even criticize him. The Torah was given to a multitude, to all types of Jews, and not everybody has the intelligence; not everybody is capable of more than the basic requirement and so as long as someone is willing to keep the laws of the Torah, we can't demand much more of him.

But the truth is that putting up the *mezuzah* is a very minor achievement in comparison to what the *mezuzah* actually must do. And if a man sinks to the lowest level and is satisfied with a mechanical observance, then even though he might be fulfilling the *mitzvah*, he is certainly transgressing the *purpose* of the Torah. He's forgetting that the purpose of the *mitzvah* is to be a testimony – to make us think of the contents of the *mezuzah*.

Mezuzah Meanings

Because the Torah says, וְשַׂמְתֶּם אֶת דְּבָרַי אֵלֶּה – *you should put these words of Mine*, עַל לְבַבְכֶם – *upon your hearts*, וְעַל נַפְשְׁכֶם – *and upon your souls ...* וּכְתַבְתָּם עַל מְזוּזוֹת בֵּיתֶךָ – *and you should write them on the doorposts of your homes* (Devarim 11:20). It means that's why we put *mezuzahs* on our doorways – in order to put these principles on our hearts and on our souls. So we see that the *mezuzah* is given for a purpose – what Hakodosh Boruch Hu wants is that we should put these ideas into our minds.

The *mezuzah* reminds us at all times, every time we go in and out, that we should never forget who we are. As a Jew walks into his house, he's not walking into an Irish house. He's walking into a holy house and his behavior has to be different than an Irishman. And when he walks out, the *mezuzah* is reminding him, "On the street you're still a Jew. You're carrying the Torah of Hashem in your heart wherever you go."

Spouses Armed for Battle

Here's a man coming back from work; he's walking up to the door of his home and his nerves are ragged. Inside the house his wife has been dealing with little children all day long and her nerves are more jangled than his. And in one minute they're going to have an encounter. And so he stops at the *mezuzah* for a moment and thinks, "*Hashem echad.*" Oh! That's a man who knows how to use a *mitzvah*! He walks inside with the *mezuzah* in his mind and he saves the evening.

His wife too; as she is going to open the door for him she passes by the *mezuzah* – there's a *mezuzah* in the kitchen and she looks at it and reminds herself of its purpose. And so both of them are armed now. They have weapons for this great battle, the *milchamah chazakah*, of remembering their function in the world at all times.

Isn't it a remarkable thing that people can live their entire lives without realizing what the *mezuzah* is saying? Isn't it a waste when we go in and out, in and out all day long and we ignore that great expedient? Even if you're sitting in your house, you can make use of that weapon. From time to time, look at the *mezuzah* and arm yourself. When you're eating, look at the *mezuzah* for a minute. You're sitting on the couch, take a look at the *mezuzah*. The *mezuzah* is not for the doorpost – it's for you! And the more you take it from the door and put it into your head, the more successful you are.

Testimonies of Shabbos

We'll take another example – it's not our subject yet, but it will illustrate more clearly what the purpose of the *mitzvos eiduyos* are and how they're expected to be used.

Shabbos! Ahh! Shabbos is full of testimonies. Every *melacha* you can't do, that's a testimony. Every time you pass a light switch and you don't turn it on, you're reminding yourself that on Shabbos, Hashem rested from Creation. *Bigdei Shabbos* is a testimony. The *neiros*, the *kos shel kiddush*, it's all testimonies. Isn't it a pity that they're not being used?

As you come to the Shabbos table and you see the two *challos* – there's a white cloth on top of the challos and a white tablecloth underneath the challos, exactly like the *mann* which rested between two layers of pure white dew. Don't do it *mitzvas anashim melumadah*, out of habit. They're there for a purpose; so you should think about the *mann*.

Don't just go into the table without thinking of this symbolism. Remind yourself, it's two *challos*; *lechem mishneh*, the double portion that fell down on *erev shabbos*. There are so many great lessons that the *mann* teaches us – we'll talk about them one day – and that's why we make sure that every meal we eat on Shabbos has double bread. You sit down to the *seudah* with two breads because it's supposed to be putting lessons into your head always.

Tefillin Testimonies

Now, we're just beginning the subject because the testimonies of the Torah are endless. I'll take out a minute to add a few more to give you a hint of what's in store for those who are able to look and discover.

Tefillin! The *pessukim* tell us clearly that tefillin are intended to remind us that Hashem took us out of Mitzrayim and that we are His from now on. From that day onwards, we have to keep the words of His Torah in our mouths constantly out of gratitude to Him. At least the moment that you put it on, think of this lesson. Of course, there's no harm in thinking of the *tefillin* later on too, especially when you are saying *kriyas shema*.

But it's not limited to those few minutes a day. Whenever you see a pair of *tefillin*, a *tefillin* bag, you will always be reminded of what the *tefillin* is supposed to tell you. Not only men – women too. You see your husband or your son taking his *tefillin* and rushing out to shul, remind yourself what it's all about.

Pesach and Sukkos

The *matzah*, the *marror*, the *pesachdige* dishes – there's so much to think about. The *matzah* has to be utilized. Very good, that the *matzah* is baked with such carefulness, with *hashgocha*, with such *dikdukei mitzvah.* Wonderful! But now that it's all done, what's the *matzah* all about? The *matzah* is lying on the table, as an *eidus*, to remind us to think about certain principles.

When you go in the *sukkah*, it's reminding you of something. Aaah, what a beautiful *sukkah*! You put a lot of work into the *sukkah* and you asked *shailos* of your local *rov*; is this *schach* kosher? Is that wall kosher? Everything was good and now you and your family are sitting around the table in the *sukkah* and you even have beautiful ornaments hanging. It's beautiful! But what's it all about? What's the *sukkah* all about? It says it straight out in the Torah – the *sukkah* is to remind us of the *nissim* that Hakodosh Boruch Hu did for us in the *midbar*. כִּי בַסֻּכּוֹת הוֹשַׁבְתִּי אֶת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּהוֹצִיאִי אוֹתָם מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרָיִם.

You never thought about that? Ooh, that's a pity. Make sure next Sukkos you think about that. Every time you go into the *sukkah* your mind is becoming a different mind altogether. That's the purpose of the *mitzvah*; that's how the *mitzvah* becomes a weapon in the hands of a Jew – by changing your personality, by transforming your mind.

The Hidden Torah

We're talking now about a specific *chelek* of the Torah – we are going to call it the *pnimiyus haTorah*, the inside of the Torah. I know there are others elsewhere who would say that something else is *pnimiyus haTorah* but that's not going to be a subject of discussion here; for our purposes we're going to speak about the inner realm of the Torah as expressed in the *mitzvos eiduyos.*

There was once a big tendency in our nation to ponder the reasons for the mitzvos. Of course the ones whose reasons are apparent or seem easy to surmise were studied at length but even other *mitzvos* which we call *chukim* because they seem to be cryptic commandments with no purpose behind them, even they were studied. Just to cite one instance, if you study the Rambam's seforim you'll see that he made plenty of attempts to take the

mystery out of the *chukim* – he tried to understand their significance in a most practical way.

But when it comes to the *mitzvos eiduyos*, there's no question they were studied for their significance – throughout our history there were always people in our nation who wanted to benefit not only by doing the *mitzvos*, but they wanted to get the inner lessons of the Torah, the hidden realm. "It's not enough to do the *mitzvos* superficially," they said. And therefore, they spent time studying all of these lessons.

Overdoing It

And make no mistake about it – it's a very very important subject; it's what Hakodosh Boruch Hu wants most from the *mitzvos*. Only what happened? Some people overdid it. There were philosophers, thinkers, who were so intent in preaching this lesson to the multitude that sometimes because of their enthusiasm, they overstressed the *pnimiyus*, the inside of the *mitzvah*, and some of their listeners began to think that if the purpose of the *mitzvah* was to teach a certain attitude, a certain ideal, then we could dispense with the outward acts of the commandment. Some people began to say, "Why should we buy parchment and hire a scribe to write the *parshiyos* – it can be quite expensive after all – the main thing is the *pnimiyus*."

It was an argument that some people made, and therefore, there were those who began to neglect the *mitzvah* – there arose a certain tendency among a small number of people that the act is not so important and that we could dispense with the *mitzvah* itself.

Neglecting the Hidden Torah

Let's say *mezuzah* for example. They said that if the purpose is stated openly in the Torah, to remember Hashem, so as long as we give every day a half hour of thinking about the lesson that *Hashem echad* and that He's watching, that's better than having a *mezuzah* and never once thinking about Hashem. Why suffice with the shell, the outer layer, when the real purpose is the fruit? That was their argument.

The truth is, it's a very big error. It's an error for many reasons but one of the most important ones is that it's the system of the Torah to provide certain physical objects to act as reminders; to testify to certain great principles. And Hakodosh Boruch Hu wants us to utilize those objects because when you train yourself to attach certain ideals to an object, He knows that's how you best inscribe the principles into your personality – like I said earlier, the one who made the battle knows best how to be victorious.

But because of the *to'im*, because of those who made the mistake of thinking that the *pnimiyus* was enough, as a result there arose a counter effect and our nation began to say, "Forget about philosophizing. You see what happens when you philosophize; when you think only about the message of the *mitzvos*, the *mitzvos* themselves become neglected. And so, let's concentrate just on the deeds. Let's emphasize the importance of doing the *mitzvah* and that's all."

And that's why it became a practice in our nation not to philosophize – the Am Yisroel put all of its abilities into studying the technicalities of the *mitzvos*; exactly how to perform them with all the externalities became the interest of the nation – a holy nation of *medakdekim b'mitzvos*. It's a pleasure to see!

Substance Use and Abuse

However, we're learning now that there's a great loss in neglecting the principle of the *pnimiyus* of the *mitzvos*. You know, despite the fact that some people overdo the practice of breathing fresh air — some people are fresh air addicts and even in mid winter, they'll open windows when they sleep and during the night they contract colds. They get up in the morning and they're sick.

But just because some people overdo it doesn't therefore mean that we should avoid fresh air; it doesn't mean that fresh air is bad. You just have to know, like they say in Yiddish, *vu ein vu ois* — you have to know how to apply it.

And so it's necessary for us to return to this study – actually the *practice* of *pnimiyus haTorah*. That's how the *kadmonim*, the ancients, did a *mitzvah*. They understood that our lives are meant to be revolutionized by the *mezuzah* and the *tefillin* and the *sukkah* and the *matzah* and by all the other *mitzvos* and they utilized them for that purpose. And it's a pity that we should take *mitzvos* that are intended to transform our personalities and instead we're just doing them as just mechanical motions; they're still *mitzvos* but they don't fulfill the ultimate intention of the One who gave them to us.

Part III. The Ultimate Weapon

Speaking and Saying

Now, of all the *mitzvos eiduyos*, of all the weapons we've been given, one of the most all encompassing is found in our *parsha*. Hakodosh Boruch

Hu told Moshe Rabeinu, דַּבֵּר – *Speak*, אֶל בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל *to the Bnei Yisroel*, וְאָמַרְתָּ אֲלֵיהֶם וְעָשׂוּ לָהֶם צִיצִית, *and say to them the commandment of tzitzis* (Shelach 15:38). It's an interesting form of speech – "speak to them and say to them" – and it means something important.

We'll explain it like this. *Dabber*, speak, denotes the function of proclaiming. V'*amarta*, on the other hand, denotes the speaker's intention; his thoughts and emotions – the *pnimiyus*.

Hakodosh Boruch Hu sent Moshe to the people not only to *dabber*, to speak about the *mitzvah* in general, but also, *v'amarta* – to say to them; it means to explain to them His intentions; to explain the purpose of *tzitzis* and the method of gaining the benefit of this mitzvah. It's not enough that the nation should wear *tzitzis*; the lessons of the *tzitzis* have to be brought close to the people's thoughts and emotions because that, after all, is the prime purpose of *tzitzis*: וּרְאִיתֶם אֹתוֹ וּזְכַרְתֶּם אֶת כָּל מִצְוֹת הַשֵּׁם – *You will see it and remember all of Hashem's mitzvos*.

Learning New Things

I was walking on King's Highway once and they were doing construction work. As I passed by, the Italian foreman pointed to my *tzitzis* and asked, "What's that for?" So I said, "It's to remind us," and I pointed to the sky. "Oooh," he said. He understood that. An Italian foreman understands that we're wearing *tzitzis* to remind us of the One in the sky.

It's a pity that what the gentile understands is ignored by us. You know, if I were talking to a group of college boys and girls, way out let's say in Tulsa, Oklahoma and they would be hearing about *tzitzis* for the first time, I'd take out *tzitzis* and show it to them and they'd be amazed. It would be an interesting thing to them – they never saw it before – and it would have an effect on them.

But when you talk to people who are all wearing *tzitzis* it's very difficult for them to learn what it really means because they think they know all about it – they know in the wrong way; they know it *mitzvas anashim melumadah*, as habit, but they think they know it all already.

Using the Weapons

But it can't be helped! We must learn what the *mitzvos* mean, otherwise we're like people going into battle without weapons. Certainly, we wear them every day! But if a person doesn't use them – if he never once in his life looked at the *tzitzis* and thought about Hashem – then he shouldn't be surprised that they don't have any effect.

It's like hanging a bazooka around the naked loins of that savage in Africa; it's almost worthless because he doesn't know what to do with it. And the same is hanging *tzitzis* on someone whose head is empty. Here's a boy wearing *tzitzis*. Wonderful! Very nice! But he knows as much about the purpose of *tzitzis* as a *beheima* wearing *tzitzis*. He's like a little calf wearing *arba kanfos* and when he grows up he becomes a big old ox that wears *tzitzis*.

Of course a *mitzvah* he gains, but he doesn't gain what the *mitzvah* is intended for. Now it could be that *bederech segulah*, in some mysterious way, it does something, I wouldn't know. It could be that even without understanding how a *tzitzis* works it accomplishes something. But the true effectiveness only comes with learning how to make use of the weapons.

Seeing and Remembering

Chazal tell us (Menachos 43b) that *shekulah mitzvas tzitzis keneged kol hamitzvos* – wearing *tzitzis* is as weighty as all the *mitzvos*. The question is, is it really? Is *tzitzis* as important as all the *mitzvos*? How can you say that? What about *talmud Torah k'neged kulam*?

The answer is that it's *shekulah* because *tzitzis* can remind you of everything. *Tzitzis* is the means of remembering: *U'reisem oso*, if you look at it, *uzechartem*, you'll remember.

Now it doesn't mean that it's a *mitzvas asei* to look. There is one *rishon* who says that, but we follow those who hold that there's no obligation to look at the *tzitzis* (see Tur O.C. 24). When the Torah says *ure'isem oso*, the Torah is telling us as follows: *Ure'isem oso* – when you will see the fringes, *uzechartem* – you're going to remember. *Tzitzis* can bring you to remembering everything.

Our *kadmonim* did that – they tied the *tzitzis* up with certain ideas. In ancient times if you were a Jew you learned how to handle this weapon. Every day when they put on the *tzitzis*, they thought about a different commandment of the Torah and the *tzitzis* began to fulfill its function of reminding them. When you connect the *tzitzis* with certain ideas it becomes an effective weapon.

Female Tzitzis

Let's say tomorrow morning you put on the *tzitzis* and you look at them and you're thinking, "I won't get angry today. Anger is a sin, and so today whenever I look at the *tzitzis* – not only mine; anybody's – it's going to remind me not to get angry." That's already a very great accomplishment. If

you practice it up, so from now on you might remember when you look at the *tzitzis* not to get angry.

Now ladies, don't be impatient. The Torah is speaking to you too — the *tzitzis* are not just for men. *Ure'isem oso* means *everybody* should see the *tzitzis*. The Gemara (Menachos 43a) says that a blind person is obligated in *tzitzis* because *other people can see it*. It means other people can become great from seeing a man's *tzitzis*.

So here's a mother with a lot of little boys in the house and she's constantly seeing the children's *tzitzis*; if she understands that it's for her too so she's getting greater and greater each time she sees them. Sometimes her husband and her children might be thinking nothing at all but she's thinking about His *mitzvos* every time she sees the *tzitzis* and she's gaining more than they are because that's what the *eidus* of *tzitzis* are for.

One Mitzvah At a Time

I was once passing through a place where Jewish glaziers were installing windows in a church — this was when I was in Europe. They were on top of a church putting in the glass panes and their long beards and *tzitzis* were flowing in the wind. I was walking by, watching their *tzitzis* and I was thinking, "Those *tzitzis* remind us that we went out of Egypt." You should try that once – next time you put on *tzitzis* or see someone's *tzitzis*, think that they're supposed to remind you to remember that the Almighty took us out of Mitzrayim.

Little by little you're practicing identifying *tzitzis* with *Yetzias Mitzrayim*. Then, after you are well grounded in that, so you'll take another *mitzvah* and associate it with the *tzitzis*. Let's say I look at my *tzitzis* and I remind myself that Hakodosh Boruch Hu said we should watch out for *shaatnez*; if you have a woolen suit make sure you don't have any linen stiffening inside it because it's *shaatnez*. After a while you get in the habit of reminding yourself of *shaatnez* when you look at your *tzitzis*.

Next, think about וְאָהַבְתָּ לְרֵעֲךָ כָּמוֹךָ, that you have to love your fellow Jew. A Jew who keeps *mitzvos*, he's your brother and you have to love him. If he doesn't keep *mitzvos* then he's not your brother but as long as he's *achicha bamitzvos*, who cares if he's Hungarian or Lithuanian or Syrian; who cares where he came from, or even if he's a rough fellow, you have to love him. And by looking at the *tzitzis*, you can train yourself in that ideal.

The Tzitzis Become Heavier

Now suppose you live in Boro Park or Meah Shearim; you'll have endless opportunities because they have good Jews there and you'll see *tzitzis*

wherever you go. From time to time when you see *tzitzis* floating behind somebody's garments, remind yourself of your purpose here. Think, "וִהְיִיתֶם קְדוֹשִׁים לֵאלֹקֵיכֶם – We are a holy people! We're not a people that sanctions immorality." The Jewish people hate anything that smacks of obscenity; anything that's not nice, that's not decent, is foreign to our nature. And if there are Jews who are proponents of wicked things, like gay rights and things like that, it's only because they're victims of the gentiles. A Jew by nature hates immorality!

You see *tzitzis*? It reminds you – never visit a house unless the husband is present at the same time. Never allow a man into your home if your husband is not around. Believe me it's worthwhile if a Jew will think when he sees *tzitzis* that he can never be alone with a woman unless somebody else is present.

Keep on doing it and after a while *tzitzis* reminds you of the issur of *yichud* and about *Yetzias Mitzrayim* and *shaatnez* and they remind you to love your brother and to promote decency. Little by little, you attach more and more significance to the *tzitzis* until it's *shekula k'neged kol hamitzvos.*

Keep Fighting

Of course don't try and do everything at once when you leave here tonight but it's homework for you — you have to make an effort to associate the mitzvos with the *tzitzis* because it won't happen by itself. But once you make up your mind that's what you want to do then *haba letaher mesayin lo.* You practice up every day and little by little you finally get to such a stage that when you see somebody wearing *tzitzis* – and everybody is – so *ure'isem oso*, you'll see them, *uzechartem*, and you'll remember, *es kol mitzvos Hashem*, all the commandments of Hashem.

Now, I understand that life is busy and that once you leave here you forget about the things I'm telling you. The *milchama chazaka she'nimtzeis eilav panim v'achor* is overwhelming and your thoughts are crowded with everything except for the important things. But that's precisely why we need these weapons of war – they are our salvation, our path to victory.

And so, no matter how much ground you already yielded on the battlefield, you're equipped now to regain that territory. And even if the battle continues to rain down a hail of bullets, no matter! A soldier who enters the battle and he received a wound does he say, "On well, there's no use. I might as well get a bullet in the head and finished." Oh no! He tries his best to continue fighting because as long as he's alive, as long as he's still breathing he still has the opportunity to be healed and fight to the victorious end.

The truth is nobody remains unwounded in this battle. אֵין צַדִּיק בָּאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר יַעֲשֶׂה טוֹב וְלֹא יֶחֱטָא – *there's nobody who doesn't make mistakes* (Koheles 7:20). But there's no *mitzvah* to go around collecting wounds. You pick yourself up and keep fighting.

Be A Hero

And just like in this world when a soldier comes back from war, he wants to display his wounds to his friends; he wants to show that he's a battle-scarred veteran, that he's fought the battle and survived, it's the same thing here. It's all very good as long as you're using the weapons that were given to you. As long as we recognize the weapons of war that Hashem has given us and we use them to the utmost, we'll remain alive — we'll remain alive in both worlds.

And therefore we should consider how great a function in our lives these *mitzvos eiduyos* have and begin applying ourselves *bli neder* to a career of little by little making the *mitzvos* more meaningful.

Because that's the system of the Torah. The 'testimonies' are a big part of the Torah and every one of the *eiduyos* becomes alive if you utilize it properly. And because our daily lives are full of such opportunities, that's one of the secrets to achieving success in serving Hakodosh Boruch Hu – by utilizing the weapons of war the way He intended, that's the path to victory.

Have A Wonderful Shabbos

Let's Get Practical

Training for Battle with Advanced Weaponry

Every day this week I will begin my practice of bringing the *mitzvos eiduyos* to life. Each morning, when I see *tzitzis* - whether mine, or of someone else - I will *bli neder* think of one of the *taryag mitzvos*, and I will try to associate that *mitzvah* with the strings of the *tzitzis*. When I am successful, I will move on to another *mitzvah*. In this way, seeing the testimonials of Hashem will bring their great principles to my mind.

This week's booklet is based on tapes:
123 – Torah of Heart | **201 –** The Battle and The Weapons
449 – Hashem's Two Testimonials | **735 –** The Pesach Seder 3

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מנוחה ושמחה אור ליהודים

Shabbos Inspired

לע"נ שרה נטשה בת דבורה שהין • דינה ברכה בת שרה נטשה • דבורה מזל בת שרה נטשה

The Power of Forgiveness

When we sing *Dayeinu* in the Pesach Haggadah, we recount a series of great gifts that Hashem gave us: "He took us out of Mitzrayim, He gave us Shabbos, He gave us the Torah..." And what is the pinnacle of it all? "And He built for us the temple to atone for all our sins," that is the goal of everything - to be completely free of sin.

But why is that the ultimate goal? The answer is, **"For your sins have separated between you and your God."** (Yeshayahu 59:2) There is a partition created by our sins that separate us from Hashem, and we would like to remove it. We all have sins of various kinds, involving our thoughts, speech and actions.

The most beautiful aspect of the Beis HaMikdash was its atonement for sin. It cleansed and purified us. It was the place where the sins of Yisrael are expiated through the offering of *korbanos*. Anyone who went into the Beis HaMikdash walked out purified of sin. And so it is with *Shabbos Kodesh*.

Said R' Chisda, in the name of Mar Ukba: [regarding] anyone who prays on Shabbos evening and says *Va'yechulu*, the two ministering angels, who escort a person will place their hands on his head, and say to him, *"Your inequity has departed, and your sin is purged"* (Yeshayahu 6:7).

When a Jew comes home on Shabbos evening, he raises a Kiddush cup and says, "*Va'yechulu ha'shamayim v'ha'aretz v'chol tzva'am...*" he is declaring Hashem as Creator of everything, and thus he merits atonement for his sins as if he had offered *korbonos* in the Beis HaMikdash. Thus, **one of the first things that happen to a Jew on Shabbos is that his sins are erased.**

How can this be? Sins are committed only when a person feels the world belongs to him, and he can do what he pleases. But when a person stands up and declares over a cup of wine that the world has a Creator and Ruler, he understands that it is out of the question to act contrary to God's will. The fact that Hashem created the world is just as much of a reality to him as the wine he drinks. The moment we realize we are in Hashem's hands, there's no more sin. We're in Hashem's house, in His embrace.

This coming Shabbos let's remember that our Kiddush is a declaration that Hashem is the Creator and Ruler of everything!

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QUESTION

Should I buy a house in Eretz Yisroel?

ANSWER

And the answer is that you should buy a house in the place where you're making a living. To go to Eretz Yisroel and become a *schnorrer* doesn't pay. No, no. It doesn't pay. You must make a living. And therefore, whether you buy a house or rent a house, make sure that you're in a place where you can make a living.

And you should always make sure to find a frum neighborhood. It's very important. *Sevivah*, environment, is everything. Not only for your children but for you as well. People who live around a Yeshiva are different than people who live someplace else. You see tzitzis out. Everyone is wearing a black hat. Shabbos is a different kind of Shabbos. It's a different kind of life. It's very important to live in a frum neighborhood. And even though sometimes it may be more expensive to live there, it's worth it. I cannot overemphasize that. A frum neighborhood is most important.

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