



## A Phenomenal Insight from Rabbi Elimelech of Lizhensk

# The Purpose of the Four Corners of the Tzitzis Is to Restore the Four Wings Missing from the Malachim in Galus

In this week's parsha, parshas Shelach, it is fitting that we explore the mitzvah of Tzitzis. It possesses a unique quality that is not associated with any of the other taryag mitzvos mentioned in the Torah. Gazing and focusing upon them reminds us to observe all of the mitzvos. This is conveyed by the following passuk (Bamidbar 15, 38): **“וראיתם אותו וזכרתם: את כל מצוות ה' ועשיתם אותם, ולא תתורו אחרי לבבכם ואחרי עיניכם אשר אתם זונים אחריהם, למען תזכרו ועשיתם את כל מצוותי והייתם קדושים. לאלקיכם.”** **And you shall see it, and you shall remember all of Hashem's mitzvos and perform them; and you shall not follow after your heart and after your eyes, after which you stray. So that you may remember and perform all My mitzvos and be holy to your G-d.**

Now, Yisrael's preeminent teacher, Rashi, who usually prefers to provide the simple meaning of pesukim—the “pshat”—chooses, on this occasion, to provide an interpretation based on “remez”—allusion: **“And you shall remember all of Hashem's mitzvos.”** For the gematria of the word **ציצית** is 600. Add the eight strings and the five knots, and the result is 613. This, in fact, is consistent with the elucidation in the Gemara (Menachos 43b): **“וראיתם: אותו וזכרתם ועשיתם, ראה מביאה לידי זכירה, זכירה מביאה לידי עשיה”**—**“and you will see it,” and you will remember and you will perform; seeing leads to remembering; remembering leads to performing.** There Rashi comments: **Seeing the Tzitzis leads to remembering the mitzvos.** We must endeavor to explain the logical connection between the mitzvah of Tzitzis and the fulfillment of all the mitzvos.

### The Mitzvah of Tzitzis Proves that We Are Considered both Children and Servants

It is also worthwhile exploring an apparent contradiction related to the mitzvah of Tzitzis. Let us refer to the Midrash Shochar Tov related to the passuk (Tehillim 90, 16): **“יראה”—אל עבדיך פעליך והדרך על בניהם—may Your works be visible to Your servants, and Your majesty upon Your children.** Expounding on this passuk, the Midrash draws a connection to the mitzvah of Tzitzis: **“Your majesty” refers to the “techeiles” of the Tzitzis, with which Yisrael, who are called children of the Makom (Omnipresent), cover themselves.** The implication is that we are called G-d's children in the merit of wearing Tzitzis. Yet, on the other hand, we find that in the merit of the mitzvah of Tzitzis we are called G-d's servants. Here is the pertinent passage from the Gemara (ibid. 43b):

**“תניא היה רבי מאיר אומר, גדול עונשו של לבן יותר מעונשו של תכלת, משל למה הדבר דומה, למלך בשר ודם שאמר לשני עבדיו, לאחד אמר הבא לי חותם של טיט, ולאחד אמר הבא לי חותם של זהב, ופשעו שניהם ולא הביאו, איזה מהן עונשו מרובה, הוי אומר זה שאמר לו הבא לי חותם של טיט ולא הביא.”**

It was taught in a Baraisa: Rabbi Meir used to say: **The punishment for neglecting the mitzvah of the white threads is greater than the punishment for neglecting the mitzvah of the “techeiles” threads. By way of analogy, to what may this be compared? To a king of flesh and blood who gave instructions to his two servants. To one he said, “Bring me a clay seal” (which is easy to find); and to the**

other he said, “Bring me a gold seal (which is difficult to find).” Both of them were negligent and failed to bring what had been demanded of them. Who deserves the greater punishment? You would say that it is the one whom the king told, “Bring me a clay seal,” and who did not bring it.

Rashi explains: **They made a signet to brand an animal or slave when they purchased them to signify servitude.** Tosafos write: **A clay seal is compared to Tzitzis, since that is what is made for slaves; and the Tzitzis attest that Yisrael are servants of HKB”H . . .** In other words, it is a sign on the servant’s clothes identifying him as a servant to the entire world.

This is consistent with the comment of the Ohr HaChaim hakadosh on this week’s parsha (Bamidbar 15, 39): That the Tzitzis shall be a sign of servitude for you. He adds that **when they gaze upon the sign of their servitude, they will recall that they are not free men able to do as they please with regards to their food, their dress, their speech and all of their deeds. It is like a slave who fears his master, stands when the master commands him to stand, and does every chore that Hashem commands him to do.**

### **“And you shall be holy to your G-d” like Malachim Who Serve HKB”H**

We will begin to shed some light on the matter based on a tremendous chiddush found in the Targum Yonatan. He interprets the passuk (ibid. 40): **“So that you may remember and perform all My mitzvos and be holy to your G-d”--** “ותהוון קדישין הי כמלאכיא דמשמשין קדם ה’ אלקכון” In other words, you should be holy like malachim serving Hashem, your G-d. Where does the Tanna, Yonatan ben Uziel, learn this from?

Let us begin with the “pshat”—the simple, straightforward interpretation. He was bothered by the redundancy of the passuk regarding the fact that looking at the Tzitzis is a segulah for remembering all of Hashem’s mitzvos. First the passuk states: **“And you shall see it, and you shall remember all of Hashem’s mitzvos and perform them.”** Then the Torah seems to repeat itself: **“So that you may remember and perform all My mitzvos and be holy to your G-d.”** Furthermore, initially, in the first passuk, there is

no mention of kedushah. Yet, the second passuk emphasizes being **“holy to your G-d.”** Therefore, the Tanna concludes from the second passuk that the Torah is encouraging us to be holy like the malachim that serve HKB”H.

Notwithstanding, why doesn’t the Torah urge us to be holy from the outset in the first passuk? It would have then been crystal clear that the purpose of performing the mitzvos is to emulate the holy malachim who serve HKB”H; then, the second passuk would have been superfluous and unnecessary.

Additionally, it behooves us to analyze the way HKB”H arranged the pesukim. We have three pesukim here: **“זראיתם אותם וזכרתם את כל מצוות ה’ ועשיתם אותם, ולא תתורו אחרי לבבכם ואחרי עיניכם אשר אתם זונים אחריהם, למען תזכרו ועשיתם את כל מצוותי והייתם קדושים לאלקיכם.”** In between the two pesukim that urge us to remember all of Hashem’s mitzvos, HKB”H interjects the passuk: **“And you shall not follow after your heart and after your eyes, after which you stray.”**

### **The Three-Ply Cord: The Sea the Heavens the Kisei HaKavod**

I would like to propose a wonderful explanation for the Targum Yonatan introduced above based on what we have learned in the Gemara (ibid.): **“תניא היה רבי מאיר אומר, מה נשתנה מזה נשתנה תכלת מכל מיני צבעונין, מפני שהתכלת דומה לים, וים דומה לרקיע, ורקיע דומה לכהן.”** It was taught in a Baraisa: **Rabbi Meir used to say: What distinguished “techeiles” from all other type of dyes? It is because the color of “techeiles” is similar to that of the sea, and that of the sea is similar to that of the sky, and that of the sky is similar to that of the Kisei HaKavod.** Rashi comments: **The “techeiles” inspires us to remember the One Who sits on the Kisei.** We must endeavor to explain why it is necessary to first remember the sea and the sky prior to remembering HKB”H sitting atop the Kisei HaKavod.

We find a fantastic explanation in the incredible teachings of Rabbi Elimelech of Lizhensk, zy”a, in the Noam Elimelech on this week’s parsha. We will elaborate on his sacred words that are based on a passage in the Midrash Yalkut Shimoni (Ha’azinu 942) related to the passuk (Devarim 32, 1): **“האזינו השמים ואדברה: ותשמע הארץ אמרי פי”** **and may the earth hear the words of my mouth.**

HKB”H said to Moshe: Tell Yisrael to look at the heavens, which I created to serve you. Have they altered their nature? Or, perhaps, has the orb of the sun risen from the west? . . . Furthermore, it is happy to abide by My will, as it states (Tehillim 19, 6): “It is like a groom emerging from his bridal chamber” . . .

The same applies to the sea. He says, “Will you not fear Me?—the word of Hashem—Will you not tremble before Me? For I have set sand as boundary against the sea (as a permanent law that cannot be broken).” From the moment I imposed My decree upon it, did it alter its nature and say, “I will rise and flood the world”? No, as it says (Iyov 38, 10): “And then I broke my limit upon it . . . And I said, ‘You may come up to here and no further.’” Furthermore, it agonizes but cannot do anything about it, as it says (Yirmiyah ibid.): “Its waves rage forth but cannot succeed.”

All the more so! These were not created for gain or loss. If they are meritorious, they are not rewarded; if they transgress, they are not punished. They do not worry about their sons and daughters. Yet, they did not alter their ways. You, who are rewarded if you are meritorious, and are punished if you transgress, and you worry about your sons and daughters, all the more so that you should not alter your ways.

Rabbi Elimelech learns a vital principle from this Midrash: The celestial bodies, led by the sun, serve Hashem out of ahavah. In the words of the Midrash: “It is happy to abide by My will, as it states, ‘It is like a groom emerging from his bridal chamber.’” The sea, on the other hand, serves Hashem out of yirah, as implied by the passuk: “Will you not fear Me?—the word of Hashem—Will you not tremble before Me? For I have set sand as boundary against the sea.” And, as the Midrash points out, the sea **agonizes, but cannot do anything about it.**

With this in mind, he explains Rabbi Meir’s statement that HKB”H commanded us to place a strand of “techeiles” on the Tzitzis, “**because the (color of) techeiles is similar to that of the sea.**” Thus, we learn from the sea to serve Hashem out of yirah—not to violate the mitzvos of Hashem, just as the sea does not trespass the boundary set for it by HKB”H.

Additionally, “**the sea resembles the sky**”—reminding us that we must also serve Hashem out of ahavah—just like all the celestial bodies led by the sun do; for, they are happy to fulfill the will of their Creator.

### Through the Mitzvah of Tzitzis We Restore the Four Wings that Are Absent in Galus

In this manner, the Noam Elimelech proceeds to explain the third part of Rabbi Meir’s progression regarding “techeiles”: “ורקיע דומה לכסא הכבוד”—**the sky resembles the Kisei HaKavod.** He refers to that which is written in the Navi (Yeshayah 6, 1): “בשנת מות המלך עוזיהו ואראה את אדני יושב על כסא רם: ונשא ושוליו מלאים את ההיכל, שרפים עומדים ממעל לו שש כנפים שש כנפים לאחד, בשתים יכסה פניו, ובשתים יכסה רגליו, ובשתים יעופו.” In the year of King Uziyahu’s death, I saw the Lord sitting upon a high and lofty throne, and its legs filled the Heichal. Seraphim were standing above, at His service. Each one had six wings—with two it would cover its face, with two it would cover its legs, and with two it would fly.

The Gemara (Chagigah 13b) presents a contradiction between this passuk and a passuk in Yechezkel (1, 6): “וארבעה כנפים לאחת להם”. In Yeshayah’s vision, the malachim surrounding the Kisei HaKavod have six wings; whereas in Yechezkel’s vision, they only have four wings. The Gemara reconciles the discrepancy as follows: “לא קשיא כאן בזמן שבית המקדש קיים, כאן בזמן שאין בית המקדש כביכול שנתמעטו כנפי החיות—this is not difficult; here (in Yeshayah) is when the Beis HaMikdash was still extant; here (in Yechezkel) is when there was no Beis HaMikdash; seemingly, the number of wings of the Chayos were reduced. This prompts the question: “הי מינייהו אימעוט?”—**which of them were reduced?** In other words, which two wings are absent in galus? This is the subject of controversy:

“אמר רב חננאל אמר רב, אותן שאומרות שירה בהן, כתיב הכא ובשתים יעופו וקרא זה אל זה ואמר, וכתיב התעף עיניך בו ואיננו, ורבנן אמרי אותן שמכסות בהן רגליהם, שנאמר ורגליהם רגל ישרה ואי לאו דאימעוט מנא הוה ידע.”

Rav Chananel said in the name of Rav: Those with which they utter song. It is written here (in Yeshayah): “And with two it would fly, and one would call to another and say, ‘Kadosh, kadosh, kadosh . . .’” (this implies that they sing with the two wings used to fly), and it is written

(Mishlei 23, 5): **“You cast your eyes upon it and it is gone** (because these are the wings missing in galus).” [Translator’s note: This deduction is based on the similarity between the word “יעופף” --“fly”—in the first passuk and the word “התעף” --“cast”—in the second passuk.]

**But the Rabbis say: Those with which they cover their legs** were the ones that were absent, **as it says** (Yechezkel 1, 7): **“Their legs were a straight leg.”** Now, if it was not those that were reduced, how would he (Yechezkel) have known what their legs looked like, since they kept them covered with those wings?

The Noam Elimelech contends that both opinions represent the divine truth—“divrei Elokim chain”—and must be regarded. The two wings the malachim employ to sing the praises of HKB”H represent service characterized by ahavah; whereas the two wings with which they cover their legs, out of reverence, represent service characterized by yirah. Therefore, in galus, when the Beis HaMikdash is no longer extant, the malachim lack these wings; for, they can no longer serve Hashem with ahavah and yirah as they did previously. (To reconcile both opinions, we must propose that two of the wings are completely absent, while the two others remain but are somewhat defective. After all, the passuk states that Yechezkel saw four wings.)

Based on this introduction, Rabbi Elimelech, zy”a, asserts that HKB”H commanded us to place Tzitzis with a strand of “techeiles” on the four corners of our garments to restore/reinforce the four wings the malachim are missing in galus. This enables them to serve Hashem with ahavah and yirah just as they did when the Beis HaMikdash still stood.

In this manner, Rabbi Elimelech connects the three aspects of “techeiles” described by Rabbi Meir. **“The techeiles resembles the sea”** to emphasize the need to serve Hashem with yirah; **“the sea resembles the sky”** to emphasize the need to serve Hashem with ahavah; **“and the sky evokes the Kisei HaKavod”**—because we are able to restore the avodah of the malachim surrounding HKB”H to its original state, comprised of both ahavah and yirah—which was compromised during galus due to the missing four wings. This is the gist of his sacred insight.

## The Dispute between Rabbi Elimelech and His Pupil the Esteemed Rabbi of Apta

I would now like to present to our royal audience a tremendous chiddush we learn from the Noam Elimelech. In Ohev Yisrael (Vayeishev), his pupil, the esteemed Rabbi of Apta, zy”a, presents a point of contention regarding the two wings that are absent in galus:

“והנה איתא בכתבי האר”י זללה”ה, ברוך שם כבוד מלכותו לעולם ועד, איגון שית תיבין נגד שית גדפין. נמצא בזמן הזה שחסר ב’ גדפים כנ”ל חסר גם כן ב’ תיבין מאלו ששה תיבות ברוך שם כבוד מלכותו לעולם ועד הנ”ל.”

ואמר מורי הרב הקדוש כו’ מ’ אלימלך זללה”ה, ששני תיבות החסרים הם כבוד מלכותו. ולזה אנחנו מבקשים ומתפללים להשי”ת כתפלת מוספים של ימים טובים גלה ‘כבוד מלכותך’ עלינו עד כאן דברי קדשו. ואני אומר שהשני תיבות אשר הם חסרים מזמן החורבן בית המקדש הם לעולם ועד.”

In the writings of the Arizal, it states that the words ברוך שם כבוד מלכותו לעולם ועד correspond to the six wings of the Chayos. It stands to reason, therefore, that in our times, when two of the wings are absent, two words are also absent from the six words of “ברוך שם כבוד מלכותו לעולם ועד”.

Now, my teacher, the holy Rabbi Elimelech, z”l, said that the two absent words are “כבוד מלכותו”; hence, in the Mussaf davenings on the Yamim Tovim, we beseech Hashem to **“reveal the glory of Your Kingship (‘כבוד מלכותך’) upon us”**—“גלה ‘כבוד מלכותך’ עלינו”. I, however, say that the two words that have been absent from the time of the churban of the Beis HaMikdash are “לעולם ועד”.

Now, upon closer scrutiny, it appears that the dispute between Rabbi Elimelech and his pupil, the esteemed Rabbi of Apta, zy”a, is precisely the same dispute we found in the Gemara between Rav and the Rabbis. According to Rav’s opinion, the two wings that are absent in galus are the middle wings with which the malachim fly and sing. This coincides with the viewpoint of Rabbi Elimelech that the two words missing from the six words of “ברוך שם” are the middle two words: “כבוד מלכותו”. On the other hand, according to the Rabbis’ opinion, the two wings the malachim lack in galus are the last two, the ones with which they cover their legs. This coincides with the viewpoint of the Rabbi of Apta that the two missing words are the last two words: “לעולם ועד”.

Now, Rabbi Elimelech himself teaches us that both opinions in the Gemara represent “divrei Elokim chaim”—divine truth. In fact, it was for this reason that he asserts that HKB”H commanded us to place Tzitzis on all four corners of our garments—to thereby restore all four of the wings of the malachim that have been diminished in galus. Thus, we must conclude that even Rabbi Elimelech, who contends that the two missing words are “כבוד מלכותו”, concedes to the Rabbi of Apta that in galus, the two words “לעולם ועד” are also missing.

However, it appears that in Rabbi Elimelech’s opinion, the primary element lacking in galus is “כבוד מלכותו”—corresponding to the malachim’s middle wings, representing service of Hashem motivated by ahavah. The esteemed Rabbi of Apta, on the other hand, is of the opinion that the primary element lacking in galus is “לעולם ועד”—corresponding to the malachim’s last two wings, representing service of Hashem motivated by yirah. Nevertheless, in actuality, both are correct.

Let us add a pleasant idea related to the words we utter in our tefilos on Rosh HaShanah: “מלוך על כל העולם כולו בכבודך”—**reign over the entire world with Your glory.** With this utterance, we pray that HKB”H will reign as King over the entire world with all six words of: “ברוך שם כבוד מלכותו לעולם ועד”—even the four that are absent in galus. Therefore, we specifically employ the term מל”ך, which is an acronym for כבוד מלכותו לעולם ועד.

### “And you shall be holy to your G-d” to Restore the Avodah of the Malachim

Following this line of reasoning, we will proceed to explain the words of the Targum Yonatan. Recall that he interpreted the passuk: “למען תזכרו ועשיתם את כל מצוותי והייתם קדושים לאלקיכם” as **“and you shall be holy like that malachim that serve Hashem, your G-d.”** As we explained above, he wanted to explain the apparent redundancy in the pesukim; the Torah tells us twice to **“remember all the mitzvos of Hashem and perform them.”** Therefore, he explains that the second time, the Torah adds: “והייתם קדושים לאלקיכם”—to urge us to strive to be kadosh like the malachim that serve HKB”H.

Now, we will refer to the commentary of the Ramban in parshas Yisro. He writes that the passuk (Shemos 20, 8): “זכור את יום השבת לקדשו”—**remember the Shabbas day to**

**sanctify it**—which appeared on the first luchos—is a mitzvas aseh—a positive commandment—indicated by the word “זכור”. Whereas, the passuk that appeared on the second luchos (Devarim 5, 12): “שמור את יום השבת לקדשו”—**safeguard the Shabbas day to sanctify it**—is a mitzvas lo ta’aseh—a prohibition—as indicated by the word “שמור”. For, we learn from the Gemara (Eiruvim 96a): “כל מקום שנאמר השמר פן ואל אינו” —the terms “השמר”, “פן”, and “אל” are invariably associated with a mitzvas lo ta’aseh. Then, the Ramban explains that a mitzvas aseh takes priority over a mitzvas lo ta’aseh, since the former is characteristic of serving Hashem with ahavah, while the latter is characteristic of serving Hashem with yirah. Here is a translation of an excerpt from his sacred commentary:

**The attribute of “zachor” (“remembering”) is alluded to in a mitzvas aseh, and it emanates from the attribute of ahavah to the attribute of rachamim. For, one who fulfills his master’s command is beloved to him and his master shows him mercy. Whereas the attribute of “shamor” (“safeguarding”) is alluded to in a mitzvas lo ta’aseh, which goes to the attribute of “din,” which emanates from the attribute of yirah. For, one who guards himself from doing something that is evil in the eyes of his master does so, because he fears him. Therefore, a mitzvas aseh is greater than a mitzvas lo ta’aseh, just as ahavah is greater than yirah. For, one who fulfills and observes the will of his master with his body and his possessions is greater than one who guards himself from doing that which is evil in his eyes. This is why the Rabbis have said that an aseh overrides a lo ta’aseh.**

We can now appreciate the order of the pesukim regarding the remembering of Hashem’s mitzvos associated with the Tzitzis. As we have learned from the Noam Elimelech, it is necessary to restore the four wings of the holy malachim that transport the Kisei HaKavod by serving Hashem with ahavah as per the initial passuk: “וראייתם אותו וזכרתם את כל מצוות” —“ה’ ועשיתם אותם”. First, we fulfill all of the mitzvos aseh, which demonstrate our ahavah for Hashem, which is a greater midah than yirah.

However, since we must also serve Hashem with yirah, it states immediately afterwards: “ולא תתורו אחרי לבבכם ואחרי”

"ענייכם אשר אתם זונים אחריהם". As Rashi explains: **The heart and the eyes are the spies of the body, procuring aveirot for it. The eye sees, the heart desires, and the body commits the aveirah.** Thus, this is a warning that applies to all prohibitions—all mitzvos lo ta'aseh.

This now enlightens us as to why the Torah immediately repeats itself: "למען תזכרו ועשיתם את כל מצוותי והייתם קדושים לאלקיכם". As we learned from the Targum Yonatan, this passuk urges us to emulate the malachim that serve Hashem. For, the goal of the wonderful combination of service motivated by ahavah—mitzvos aseh—and service motivated by yirah—mitzvos lo ta'aseh—is to restore the four wings of the malachim that are absent or lacking during galus. If we accomplish this lofty goal, then we will truly be like the malachim who surround the Kisei HaKavod and serve HKB"H with ahavah and yirah.

At this point, we can reconcile the contradiction inherent in the mitzvah of Tzitzis. On the one hand, we found that in the merit of fulfilling the mitzvah, we are considered children of the Makom. On the other hand, in the same merit, we are considered servants of the Makom. Now, our sacred sefarim teach us that in the merit of avodah motivated by yirah, we

are called His servants—like a servant who serves his master, because he fears him. Whereas, in the merit of service motivated by ahavah, we are called His children—like a son who tends to his father, because he loves him.

This is the message conveyed by HKB"H in the passuk (Malachi 1, 6): "ואם אבד אדוני, ואם אב אני איה כבודי, ואם אדונים אני: **"a son will honor his father and a slave his master. If I am a Father, where is My honor? And if I am a Master, where is My fear?** Now, seeing as the purpose of the mitzvah of Tzitzis—of placing fringes on the four corners of our garments—is to restore the four wings of the malachim, who serve Hashem with both ahavah and yirah; therefore, in the merit of Tzitzis, we merit being both like children and like servants.

So, in the merit of the mitzvah of wearing Tzitzis on the four corners of our garments—thereby compensating for wings that are absent from the malachim during galus—we pray to Hashem that HKB"H will redeem us. We will merit the complete geulah, and the heavenly malachim will once again serve Hashem with all six wings corresponding to the six words: "ברוך שם כבוד מלכותו לעולם ועד".

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