

“Shem and Yefes took the cloak and placed it on both their shoulders.” (9:23)

Rashi notes that the Torah uses the word *vayikach*, and he took, in the singular, as opposed to *vayikchu*, and they took. This teaches us that Shem actually exerted himself more than Yefes for this noble deed. Consequently, Shem’s descendants were privileged to receive the *mitzvah* of *Tzitzis*, while Yefes merited to receive respectful burial for his descendants. *Rashi* clearly teaches us that the difference between the rewards received by Shem and Yefes are directly linked with their relative actions on behalf of Noach. Shem received a “covering” of *Tzitzis* for the manner in which he covered his father. Yefes received burial for his descendants in a manner corresponding to the way he covered Noach. *Horav Yitzchak Goldwasser, Shlita*, points out four differences between the reward received by Shem to that received by Yefes, each one a direct result of the way each son performed his act of respect for his father.

He cites *Horav Gedaliah Schorr, z.l.*, who distinguishes between *Tzitzis*, which is a covering for the living, and burial, which is a covering for the dead. Shem exerted himself when he performed the *mitzvah*. He put his life into it. Therefore, his reward is a covering for the living. Yefes was not proactive in his performance. He simply followed along with Shem. There was no life to his act. His reward was a covering – for the dead, which corresponds with his behavior.

Second, it did not take long for Shem’s reward to take effect. The Torah was given at *Har Sinai* to Shem’s descendants, *Klal Yisrael*, and the *mitzvah* of *Tzitzis* became a reality. Yefes’ reward will be fulfilled in the End of Days, after the war of Gog and Magog is fought. Measure for measure, the rewards coincide with the action. Shem wasted no time in performing the *mitzvah*. He moved forward with alacrity and covered his father. Thus, his reward was soon forthcoming. Yefes dragged; he was slothful in performing his good deed. His reward will arrive in a manner similar to his deed – at the End of Days, when the world as we know it is about to transform forever.

A *Tallis* – and every garment for that matter – performs a vital function in covering its wearer. Hence, the *Tallis*, or garment, becomes part and parcel with the person. It is like a part of his extended body. Indeed, a person’s image, his outward appearance, changes with the clothes he wears. The grave, on the other hand, is not a part of a person. He is placed into it. The body does not change its appearance as a result of being placed in the ground. It deteriorates, because there is no life left in it. Once again, this reverts back to the way each one performed the *mitzvah*. When one executes a *mitzvah* with *hislahavus*, fiery passion and excitement, he becomes one entity with the *mitzvah*. He is elevated and sanctified by it and becomes a new person by virtue of its holiness. Conversely, when one performs a *mitzvah* without feeling, without interest, without enthusiasm, he does not become affected in such a manner. One takes from a *mitzvah* exactly what he puts into it.

Last, *Tzitzis* is a *mitzvah*, a reward that bears fruit, that catalyzes the performance of other *mitzvos*.

Chazal teach us in *Pirkei Avos* that *s'char mitzvah – mitzvah*; the reward for observing a *mitzvah* is the opportunity to carry out yet another *mitzvah*. As we don the *Tallis* everyday, we say, “Just as I cover myself with a *Tallis* in this world, so may I merit the *chiluka d'Rabbanan*, Rabbinical garb, and a beautiful cloak in the World to Come, in *Gan Eden*.”

In contrast, burial is the final reward. It does not generate any other fruits. A *mitzvah* performed with zeal and enthusiasm engenders other *mitzvos* and good deeds. It is like a wellspring, a veritable fountain of ever-flowing waters. On the other hand, a *mitzvah* performed lackadaisically, without fervor or desire, is sterile. While one certainly will be awarded for his endeavor, the spiritual quality of the *mitzvah* is deficient. A strong, positive attitude produces the “next generation” of *mitzvos*, while a languid demeanor in *mitzvah* performance hardly has the strength to give this *mitzvah* viability.