

“You shall place these words of Mine upon your heart... you shall bind them for a sign upon your arm... And you shall teach them to your children... And you shall write them upon the doorposts of your house.” (11:18-20)

Three *mitzvos* follow in close succession after Hashem's threat of exile. Is there a relationship between these *mitzvos* and the exile? *Rashi* cites the *Sifri* that connects the juxtaposition in the following manner. We are enjoined to observe these commandments even in exile, so that when the redemption occurs, these *mitzvos* will not be foreign to us. There is a danger that when the Jewish People are in exile living in a non-Jewish environment, speaking the language of the host nation, adopting its customs and lifestyle, there is a real threat of assimilation. It is for this reason that we are to distinguish ourselves as a separate nation by performing *mitzvos* while we are in exile. *Rashi* cites the *pasuk* in *Yirmiyahu* 31:20, “Set up signposts for yourself.” Surprisingly, the reason given here for continuing to perform the *mitzvos* of *Tefillin*, *limud haTorah* and *Mezuzah* in exile is to prevent them from being forgotten. In our journey throughout *galus*, exile, these *mitzvos* will serve as signposts, markers, to insure that we find our way back to *Eretz Yisrael*.

The question is obvious: are these *mitzvos* functional only in *Eretz Yisrael* and to be practiced in *galus* only so that they are not forgotten? What relationship is there between these *mitzvos* and *Eretz Yisrael*? While the *Ramban* says that, indeed, these *mitzvos* apply equally everywhere, they have greater significance in *Eretz Yisrael* because of its greater sanctity. The *Ramban* concludes by saying, “This *Midrash* contains a deep secret.” What is the *Sifri* teaching us?

Horav Shimon Schwab, z.l., explains that while these three *mitzvos* have no specific connection to *Eretz Yisrael*, they are not practiced in their ideal way when we are in *galus*. We practice them meanwhile as *tziyunim*, road markers, keeping us on course, until that special day when we will return to *Eretz Yisrael* with the advent of *Moshiach*.

The way we learn *Torah sheh'b'al Peh*, Oral Law, today is not the optimal way of doing so. Oral Law is supposed to be transmitted orally from teacher to student in the manner it was taught before *Rabbeinu Hakadosh* codified the *Mishnah*. He saw a crisis about to occur, and he did something about it. Ever since then, however, we have been studying Torah through the medium of *seforim*, written volumes. When *Moshiach* arrives, we will revert to the “old” system of studying from a *rebbe*. For now, Torah study from printed books is only a temporary measure, a marker to keep us on course for the day when the correct manner of learning *Torah sheh'b'al Peh* will be reintroduced.

Rav Schwab makes a noteworthy observation. The printing press, upon which the propagation of *Torah* among our people has depended heavily for the past 500 years, was invented by a German non-Jew named Gutenberg. This invention was truly a simple idea that had already been invented

1,000 years earlier in China, but had not reached Europe. It impacted Judaism in a manner that is indescribable, for without it Torah scholarship would practically have come to a standstill. Why did Hashem give this unparalleled *zechus*, merit, to a gentile? Why could not a Jew have been the father of the printing press?

The reason is that learning *Torah sheh'b'al Peh* from a written book is an emergency measure that was necessitated by the long *galus* in order to insure that Torah would not be forgotten. For the present, learning from a printed book is only a “road marker” which we are compelled to employ. This is not the ultimate destiny of the Oral Law. One day it will revert to the original. The gentile’s *zechus* will suffice for a “road marker.”

The *mitzvah* of *Tefillin* is also not practiced in the original designated manner. Originally, *Tefillin* were to be worn all day, at home as well as in our place of business. As a consequence of our *galus* environment, this devotion to *Tefillin* is no longer practical. Yet, we continue wearing the *Tefillin* for *Shacharis*, so that we maintain our “road marker” for that glorious day when we will once again wear our *Tefillin* all day long.

Mezuzah is also not practiced optimally. According to *Halachah*, a *Mezuzah* should be placed even on our city gates. *B’shea’recha*, your city gates, applies to a Jewish city in which every entranceway to the city, a street, a neighborhood should have a *Mezuzah*. For example, the Jaffa Gate in *Yerushalayim* needs a *Mezuzah*. Rav Schwab remembered seeing a *Mezuzah* on the gate to the old city of Rottenberg, Germany, where the *Maharal* lived. The *mitzvah* of *Mezuzah* was to be a public affair for the community – not just relegated to one’s private home. Accordingly, when *Moshiach* arrives, we will perform this *mitzvah* in the most advantageous manner. It, as well as the other *mitzvos*, will then appear to us as the natural progression of the *mitzvah* from its minimum observance, as observed in *galus*, to its fulfillment in the most optimum form.