

## They shall make Tzitzis on the corners of their garments, throughout their generations...that you may see it and remember all the commandments of Hashem. (15:38,39)

The *Eliyahu Rabbah* (*Ohr HaChaim* 24:3) quotes, "It is found in the *Rishonim* that, whoever passes the *Tzitzis* over his eyes during the recital of *Krias Shema*, is ensured that he will not become blind. **Horav Yitzchak Zilberstein, Shlita**, writes that he was questioned by an ophthalmologist concerning this *segulah*, talisman, that protects from blindness. How does it work? What reason is there? Rav Zilberstein explained, quoting the *Chida*, who explains why Egypt was struck with the plague of *Choshech*, darkness. The Egyptians "closed their eyes," made themselves forget the good fortune which they experienced with the arrival of Yaakov *Avinu*. Therefore, they were plagued with an inability to see. He supports this thesis, explaining that the word *choshech*, darkness, has the same letters as *shochach*, forget. Because they forgot (Yaakov's favors), they were plagued with darkness. Also, adds Rav Zilberstein, darkness has the same letters as *kicheish*, deny. The Egyptians denied that they were in debt to Yaakov and, by extension, his descendants. Therefore, when a Jew passes the *Tzitzis* over his eyes, in order to remember and to underscore that, unlike the Egyptians who forgot, we choose to remember the exodus from Egypt. We are not like our oppressors.

The *Tallis Gadol* which one wears for prayer has another significance to it, in that "it" attests to the character of its wearer during his encounter with Hashem during *Tefillah*. **Horav Aharon, zl, m'Belz**, would encourage the boys who became *bar mitzvah* (and begin wearing *Tefillin* daily) to accept upon themselves not to speak other than words of Torah while wearing the *Tefillin*. One of the boys kept his word, adhering to his promise throughout his teenage years until he became a *chassan*, engaged to be married. At this point, the *Rebbe* summoned him into his office and asked him, "Are you prepared to extend your acceptance not to speak idle talk even when wearing the *Tallis Gadol*?" (This refers to *Shabbos* and *Yom Tov*.) The young man agreed, "Yes, I accept not to speak *devarim bitailim*, idle talk, when I am wearing my *Tallis*."

The *Rebbe* then shared with the young man a frightening scenario: "When you will leave this world and stand before the Heavenly Tribunal, you will be overcome with fear. This is the moment of Truth when all is revealed and everyone is judged. You will be able to say the following: 'As all Jewish deceased, I am standing before the Tribunal wrapped in the *Tallis*, which I wore during *davening* throughout my life. Since, during my lifetime, I refused to speak idle talk, speaking only words of Torah, I would like to do the same right now! I ask that the Tribunal only speak words of Torah with me – not to discuss my past, the indiscretions that I(might have) committed in my life.'"

It is related that when the *Tallis* belonging to the **Taz** became old and unacceptable (at least in the eyes of his members) to wear, the Jewish community of Lvov (where he was *Rav*) purchased a new *Tallis* for him. He absolutely refused to wear it. He said, "My old *Tallis* can testify before the Heavenly Tribunal that I had no stray thoughts during (the prayer of) *Shemoneh Esrai*."

When we next don our *Tallis*, we should pause for a moment and think that (possibly) this *Tallis* might accompany us to the moment of truth. It can serve in our defense – or prosecution, depending upon our demeanor when wearing it.