

## "I am Hashem your G-d, Who has taken you out from the land of Egypt to be a G-d unto you." (15:4)

The *Torah* commands us to remember the exodus from Egypt everyday. The *Talmud* in *Bava Metzia 61b* explains the juxtaposition of *yetzias Mitzrayim* upon the *parsha* of *tzitzis* in the following manner. Hashem declared, "*I discerned between a drop that was a first born to that which was not. I will in the future punish he who places a kala ilan, thread dyed blue with a cheap dye called indigo, and claims it is techeles.*"

One of the four threads which are to be doubled over into eight should be colored *techeles*, a form of blue. This dye is prepared from the blood of the *chalazon*, a snail whose identity we no longer recognize. As its identity is disputed and its availability is at best scarce - it is no longer in use. One who dyes his *tzitzis* with a *kala ilan* and attempts to pass it off as *techeles* is a hypocrite and a deceiver. He will ultimately have to answer to Hashem. We may question the severity of this statement. The person who is guilty of this duplicity is harming none other than himself. Why then should his punishment be so harsh?

**Horav Asher Kalmen Baron, zl**, addressed these questions and came to a notable conclusion. The *mitzvah* of *tzitzis* is unique in its ability to motivate man to reach up to Heaven and grasp a perception of his spiritual significance. One looks at the *tzitzis* and is reminded of all the *mitzvos*! Seeing is the vehicle for inspiring one to remember. When one remembers and thinks about the importance of *mitzvos*, he will, in turn, perform them. When else do we find a *mitzvah* that serves as a ladder to span that space between Heaven and earth, between the mundane and the spiritual? *Tzitzis* brings one to *kedushah*! Now, if one manipulates such a precious *mitzvah*, using it as a means for deception in order to promote his own appearance of piety, does he not deserve severe punishment? Indeed, such a person is the antithesis of a *Torah Jew*! His action undermines the very foundation of integrity that should be the benchmark of a *Torah Jew*.

**Horav Eliyahu Mishkovski, zl**, observes that this individual might mistakenly have a self-righteous reason for using the color of blue- even if it is simulated. *Chazal* teach that the color *techeles* is supposed to remind one of the blue sea, which reminds us of the sky/Heaven. In turn, this brings the Holy Throne of Hashem to mind. The *techeles* stimulates one to reflect upon his mission in life and upon the Creator Who placed him on this earth to carry out that mission.

This individual thinks he can achieve this spiritual connection only by looking at "*kala ilan*," which is a *hiddur mitzvah*, beautification or adornment of a *mitzvah*. It is not actually part of the *mitzvah*, but rather an addendum to it. This person thinks that he must have *hiddurim*; he must augment the *halachah* in order to relate to Hashem. He is wrong in the sense that he must search for ways to augment the *mitzvah* in order to feel that he can focus on Hashem. He goes so far as to fabricate a dye so that he can fulfill the *hiddur* - even if it is a sham! To adorn a *mitzvah* is not only important, it changes the nature of the *mitzvah*. One who thinks, however, that without the *hiddur* there is no

*mitzvah* does not really understand the essence of *mitzvah* observance.