

Tefillah Focus Of The Week:

שמע

Our Memory Aid

MEANING: The simple translation of the prayer

And it shall constitute tzitzis for you, that you may see it and remember all the commandments of Hashem and perform them... so that you may remember and perform all My commandments... I am Hashem, your G-d--it is true.

והיה לכם לציצת וראיתם אתו וזכרתם את כל מצות ה' ועשיתם אתם... למען תזכרו ועשיתם את כל מצותי... אני ה' אלקיכם אמת.

WORD TO THE WISE: Meaning within the word



The Gemara (Menachos 43b) explains וראיתם אתו וזכרתם את 'מצות ה' 'that you may see it and remember all the commandments of Hashem', teaches that the observance of this mitzvah, tzitzis, is equivalent to the observance of all the mitzvos combined. This is implied by the reference to the words 'כל מצות ה' 'all the commandments of Hashem'. Rashi (ibid, s.v. 'She'kulah') explains that

the gematria (numeric value) of ציצת (when it is spelled with two [Hebrew letter] yuds, is 600, as follows: 400 = ת ; 10 = י ; 90 = צ ; 10 = י ; 90 = צ, total = 600. This, plus the eight strands of the tzitzis fringe = 608. Add the five knots tied in the fringe = 613, which is the number of mitzvos in the entire Torah. Meshech Chochmah (Bamidbar 15:39) explains that the gematria of 'כל מצות ה' = 612 with the mitzvah of tzitzis = 613.

THEME:

An essential concept of the prayer

Remember

The purpose of looking at the tzitzis is to remind the wearer of Hashem's commandments.

INSIGHT:

Deeper meanings of the theme

Do We Really Forget?

This section of Shema speaks of the sight of the tzitzis reminding us of G-d and His commandments, וראיתם אתו וזכרתם את כל 'מצות ה' 'that you may see it and remember all the commandments of Hashem'. Do we really need a reminder to perform Hashem's mitzvos? Ideally, within our own selves we should remember G-d's commandments and we should do them—even without gazing at the tzitzis. Yet, at times, the mitzvos are not on our minds, and that is when a reminder, such as tzitzis, is needed. The words 'מצות ה' 'the commandments of Hashem, are present in this paragraph to remind us that, although we may forget the Holy source of the commandments, the source is Hashem, and that fact is our primary motivation for performing them.

(Adapted from The Hirsch Chumash, Sefer Bamidbar 15: 39).

Imagine if every time we did a mitzvah, we could see the glow of our neshama grow brighter. Imagine if that glow spread a sense of warmth and joy throughout our beings. We would seek

out the experience of doing a mitzvah with more zeal than we seek out the most alluring of physical pleasures.

Generally, people do not feel the zeal to swing into action and do what is necessary to foster their spiritual growth. Although we may know about the merit of mitzvos, the knowledge remains mostly intellectual. Only when it enters our hearts — becomes a reality as clear as a light growing visibly brighter within us — do we feel the internal drive to act.

Concretizing the effect of spirituality helps a person grow. A visual image awakens the heart and strengthens it against its more earth-bound desires. By using the tzitzis as a 'reminder' we can hope to cultivate the emotions necessary to boost our motivation. In that way, we can make something real of our hope to improve our lives for the better and to fulfill 'כל מצות ה' 'all of Hashem's mitzvos, which is a great merit for blessings and success.

VISUALIZE:

Images that bring the prayer to life

Remembering Why

Miriam was a busy young mother with four small children, a part-time job and a long list of household demands. Carpools, shopping, laundry, cooking...sometimes, she felt like a wind-up toy that started up in the morning and stopped dead in its tracks at the end of the day.

On Miriam's left hand, she wore a gleaming gold band that her husband had slipped on



her finger under their chuppah. Along with it, she wore a brilliant diamond that he had given her upon their engagement. Once in a while, in the midst of her day's activities, the sparkle of those rings caught her eye. She remembered at those moments the commitment she made with her husband – a commitment to build a home just as they now

had, encompassing all that they both did each day. With that occasional reminder, she was inspired anew, and the chores and tasks that comprised her day were once again connected to their lofty purpose – building a bayis ne'eman.

Likewise, a glimpse of tzitzis reminds us of the commitment we made at Mount Sinai to perform Hashem's mitzvos and to become His partner in building a world in which His presence can dwell.

Try This!

▶ As you hold your tzitzis and recite the Shema, imagine that the strings are live connecting wires that transmit the Holy source of the commandments to you, which energizes and elevates you when performing Hashem's mitzvos.

Did You Know

▶ **On the Go**

One may read Krias Shema walking, standing, or sitting (Orach Chaim 63:1). If one is walking and wishes to recite Krias Shema, he must stay in one place for the first verse שמע ישראל ה' אלקינו ה' אחד (ibid:3) and for שם כבוד מלכותו לעולם ועד (Mishneh Berurah ibid:11). However, after the fact, if a person did not stay in one place, he is not required to recite it again as long as he satisfied the requirements for proper kavannah (ibid:9). If someone is a passenger in an automobile or in a moving airplane and he is able to apply his mind properly to the reading of Krias Shema, he has satisfied his obligation (see ibid:10).