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by Rabbi Yaakov Finestone

JUST IMAGINE...!

PARSHAS SHELACH

A poor person was invited to a meal at a wealthy man's house. When all the guests were finished with their first course, the rich man rang a bell. Almost at once, waiters came in to remove the dishes and bring in the next course. The poor man was amazed. He had never seen anything like that before. After the second course was completed, the host again rang the bell, and again the waiters removed the plates and brought yet more food. The poor man was so impressed that he purchased a similar bell for his own house. He returned home very excited! He told his wife. "We are going to have unlimited food and waiters. Wait until you see what I brought home!" He immediately placed the bell on the table and told his family and friends to take their regular seats. He then rang the bell with confidence. He waited for a waiter to walk in—but nothing happened! "I don't understand it! When the rich man rang the bell, all the food was served!" The next day he returned the bell to the store that he purchased

*it in. "The bell you sold me is useless. I did not get a response when I rang it." The obvious reason nothing happened, says the **Dubno Maggid**, is because there was neither a waiter nor food prepared in the next room. Preparation was necessary for the bell to accomplish anything.*

In some ways many of us are like

this man, continues the Dubno Maggid. For example, the Torah says if we look at our tzitzis, we will be reminded to perform all of Hashem's mitzvos. There are many people, though, who can look at a pair of tzitzis and not be reminded of anything. Only if one studies and understands how the tzitzis represent the 613 mitzvos, and studies what the 613 mitzvos are, can one appreciate what his viewing of the tzitzis should accomplish. Merely to look them without any preparation is like ringing a bell without having arranged for anyone to respond.

Rav Chaim Pinchas Scheinberg zt"l was known to wear as many as 175 pairs of tzitzis at the same time. Once, when Rav Sheinberg was fundraising in

*"And it will be to you for fringes, and you will look upon it and you will remember all of Hashem's commandments, and you will perform them; and you will not search after [the desire of] your hearts and after your eyes which cause you to go astray."
(Bamidbar 15:39)*

Florida, a woman approached him. Her son was not on the correct Jewish path. She thought that if her son wore a pair of Rav Scheinberg's tzitzis, perhaps it would reignite the spark of Yiddishkeit within her son. Rav Scheinberg's son, who was assisting him, told the woman that she could have a pair of

tzitzis if she would donate one thousand dollars to the yeshivah. [He had a very good reason to ask for that, as we will soon see]. Rav Chaim Pinchas Scheinberg told the woman that he also wanted to see her son personally. He told the son, "Your mother just gave a thousand dollars because she cares about you so much, and I don't want your tzitzis to be sitting in a drawer. I want you to promise me that you will wear these tzitzis for one minute a day—that's it." The son could not say no. He ended up wearing the tzitzis for more than a minute a day. The tzitzis had such an effect on him that after six months of wearing them, he went to learn Torah in

Yeshiva Ohr Somayach. This all came about from one minute of wearing tzitzis.

When you visualize a certain situation in your mind and then imagine how you would react to it, it helps to prepare you, should that situation occur. **Visual imagery is a very beneficial tool in strengthening ourselves to perform mitzvos and to stave off the yetzer hara.**

There is a fascinating story in **Sefer Shmuel I** (Shmuel 1 17:33-37). Before King Dovid became king, as a young lad, he volunteered to King Shaul that he would represent the Jewish People to fight against the Plishtim's giant, Goliath. King Shaul was skeptical since Dovid was untrained while Goliath was a seasoned warrior. Dovid replied that Hashem had shown him previously, that he was capable. Dovid was a shepherd. Once, a lion and a bear appeared simultaneously. One of them carried off a lamb from the flock that Dovid was watching. Dovid then killed both the bear and lion with his bare hands. Dovid felt that this was a sign from Hashem that he would also be capable of fighting against Goliath. King Shaul agreed and let Dovid go to battle. Dovid beat Goliath. The **Vilna Gaon** says that Dovid realized that a miracle had occurred through this sheep. Therefore, he slaughtered the sheep and made a garment of its skin. He always wore that garment to remember the miracle that Hashem had performed for him. **Dovid used this imagery to constantly remember Hashem's kindness to him.**

The **Torah** says (Bamidbar 15:39) that you should look at the tzitzis that you are wearing. This will in turn help you remember the mitzvos and then you will be able to fulfill them.

HaKsav VeHaKabalah explains that the pasuk doesn't literally mean that looking at the tzitzis will help you remember the mitzvos. Rather, it means thinking about the tzitzis intently and with intensity.

Rebbe said in **Pirkei Avos** (2:1) that if we contemplate and visualize three things in our minds then we will not sin. We should envision what is above us — a seeing eye and a hearing ear and that all our deeds are recorded. **Rabbeinu Yona** says that these three things are the same one idea. If we have an awareness that Hashem knows and remembers all that we do, then we won't sin. If it is all one idea, why did Rebbe mention all three? The answer is that if we visualize each one separately, it will have a stronger impact on our actions and help protect us from sin.

Rabbeinu Bachya, the **Or HaChaim**, and others say that the pasuk does mean that you should have an actual visual reminder. You should look at your tzitzis. The visual impact of seeing tzitzis triggers your memory which, in turn, leads to the performance of the commandments. It is also a reminder that you are Hashem's servant and that you should not allow your eyes and heart to bring you to sin.

Fulfilling the mitzvah of tzitzis only costs a few dollars, yet its impact is priceless!

One can use both visual imagery as well as actual sight of an object to strengthen oneself to perform mitzvos and come closer to Hashem.

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Rabbi Yaakov Finestone is the director of JEP Queens. For almost 50 years JEP Queens has been in the forefront of kiruv. JEP has changed the lives of thousands of Jewish children enrolled in public schools and kiruv schools. Many are shomrei Torah and mitzvos today because of JEP.

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