

# Fascinating INSIGHTS

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## Identify

We are comprised of a body and soul. The question is what do we identify with? Here is the litmus test to know if we are listening to the voice of the soul or body. Following the lower self always feels good for the moment and rotten after the fact, while listening to the soul can be challenging for the moment but ultimately will be uplifting.

One way R' Noach Weinberg advised to identify with the soul and not the body is to speak of the body in

the third person. For example, instead of saying, “I’m hungry,” say “my body wants some food.” Instead of saying “I’m tired” say “my body wants to sleep.”

If one identifies himself with the body, the separation of body and soul will be hard. This is just as a widow who lived with her husband for 50 years and will now live alone. However, if one identifies himself with his soul, then the death experience isn’t difficult since the separation of body and soul will be like changing clothes.<sup>1</sup>

R' Noach Weinberg was once sitting with a secular Jew attempting to convince him to come to Aish Hatorah. R' Noach asked if he thinks he has a soul. After pondering the question for a few minutes, the secular Jew replied that most likely he does have a soul. R' Noach retorted, “You are making a mistake. You are a soul and you have a body!”

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## Women Wearing Tzitzis

Although women don’t wear Tzitzis,<sup>2</sup> there were a few that did.

The Gemara<sup>3</sup> tells us that R' Yehuda would affix Techales (Tzitzis) to the four-cornered cloak of his wife. R' Amram Chasida also placed Tzitzis on his wife’s cloak.<sup>4</sup>

The Levush<sup>5</sup> writes even though by other מצות עשה הזמן גרמא, positive commandment governed by time like Succa and Lulav women are accustomed to performing and saying a Bracha..., by Tzitzis they are not accustomed to except by one out of a thousand like Michal Bas Shaul and the like. Therefore they shouldn’t wear Tzitzis.

It is said that the first Rebbitzin of the Ohr Hachaim (1696-1743) wore Tallis and Tefillin like Michal Bas Shaul.<sup>6</sup> It is also related that the second wife of the Ohr Hachaim as well did this.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>1</sup> 1:1. דע את עצמך.

<sup>2</sup> See Orach Chaim 17:2.

<sup>3</sup> Menachos 43a.

<sup>4</sup> Succa 11a. R' Yehuda and R' Amram Chasida held that Tzitzis is a מצות עשה שלא הזמן גרמא, positive commandment not governed by time, and as such, women are also obligated in it (See Rashi s.v. לדבר עמרם and Tosafos to Succa 11a, s.v. עמרם).

<sup>5</sup> Hilchos Tzitzis 17:2.

<sup>6</sup> Sefer Maaseh Tzadikim 1:2, authored by R' Avraham Halevi Ibn Shushan. Also see the Sefer Ner HaMaarav p 217 authored by R' Yaakov Moshe Toledano (1880-1960), Av Beis Din of Cairo and Alexandria, Egypt.

<sup>7</sup> See, however, שו"ת, מאמר סדר יום שני הערה 11, מסעות ירושלים 40, authored by R' Yaakov Moshe Toledano, who writes that he is puzzled concerning the Ohr Hachaim’s wife wearing Tefillin, as it goes against what it says in Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim 38:3 that we protest against a woman who wants to wear Tefillin... So, how could the Ohr Hachaim not protest against his wife doing this? (see פלאות התורה, Bamidbar, p. 554)

The Maharil<sup>8</sup> (1365-1427) writes ...although I saw women who wear Tzitzis and one of them live in our neighborhood,<sup>9</sup> it seems that it is strange, it is considered Gaava and they are called הדיוטות.

Let us conclude with the comments of Targum Yonasan on אשה על גבר כל ידיו לא יגבר, <sup>10</sup> male garb shall not be worn on a woman—דציצית ותפילין, a woman shouldn't wear Tzitzis and Tefillin.

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#### Banish and Vanish

One of the Birchas Hashachar is עוזר ישראל בגבורה, Hashem gave the strength to Klal Yisrael to overcome the Yetzer Hara as in איזהו גבור הכובש את יצרו, who is strong, he who subdues his inclination.<sup>11</sup> Shlomo Hamelech tells us ומותר האדם מן הבהמה אין, <sup>12</sup> man has no superiority over an animal. A deeper explanation given is that man possesses more than an animal, אין, the ability to say no.<sup>13</sup> Examples of this include not looking at the improper, wasting time and the like.

This gives us an appreciation of why we are called ישראל as it is composed of the letters ישר, the straight ones who have the ability to say no. In fact, the letters א and ל mean mighty as we say מי כמותך באלים ה', who is like You among the Heavenly powers.<sup>14</sup> א and ל also spell אל and לא which both mean no. To be mighty is to say no—איזהו גבור הכובש את יצרו.

Additionally, both of these letters mean to learn. The letter א, as in אלף בינה<sup>15</sup>, learn Torah, and ל represents למד, the root of the word לימוד. Moreover, Osiyos Drebi Akiva tells us, למד are the initials of לב מביין בעת, a heart that understands wisdom. So the two letters that when put together mean “no” also means Torah. This alludes to the way to overcome the Yetzer Hara is through Torah<sup>16</sup> as we are taught יצר בראתי יצר הרע בראתי תורה תבלין.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Siman 7. Incidentally, the Maharil was a professional Shadchan.

<sup>9</sup> This was Rebbitzen Bruna and he didn't protest since she may not listen and on something like this Chazal said מוטב שיהיו שוגגין ואל יהיו מזידין (Beitza 30a) it is preferable that they be unintentional violators and not be deliberate violators (Maharil, Minhagim Hilchos Tefilin, 4).

<sup>10</sup> Devarim 22:5.

<sup>11</sup> Avos 4:1. In a similar vein, this explains why the title גבור is given to Hashem as in האל הגדול הגבור והנורא in Shemone Esrei. The Midrash (Breishis, 1:1, Rashi) says, Hashem considered creating the world with Din but Hashem saw that the world wouldn't be able to exist that way, so He combined it with Rachamim. Since Hashem “overcame His original desire,” He is therefore called גבור.

<sup>12</sup> Koheles 3:19.

<sup>13</sup> This is because we have בחירה. In fact, the word בחירה rearranged spells בחר יי. With his בחירה, man should choose Hashem. Therefore, בחר is comprised of the same letters as חבר, attachment, as we have the ability to connect to Hashem through Bechira, if used properly. Is it any wonder that אין are the first letters of אדם יש נשמה?

<sup>14</sup> Shemos 15:11. Also see Breishis 31:29, Rashi.

<sup>15</sup> Shabbos 104a, Rashi.

<sup>16</sup> This is also shown to us by Esav and Yaakov since Esav represents the Yetzer Hara and his nemesis Yaakov possesses the trait of Torah as he was an אהלים תם. R' Yonasan Eibishitz says women also defeat their Yetzer Hara through their connection to Torah. This is how he interprets (Brachos 17a) וכיון בשמים במאי וכיון, how do women have the ability to

The more we say no to the Yetzer Hara, the more we become one with Hashem. This is hinted to in the name of our month, אלול, as it forms two words—לא לו. The more we say לא, no, the more we become לו, part of Hashem.

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#### The Cause of Crime

One reason offered why Shaatnez is forbidden is because through צמר ופשתים, wool and linen, Kayin killed Hevel.<sup>18</sup>

In explaining why there are so many murders (as well as robberies and plunder) in the world, R' Yudel Rosenberg<sup>19</sup> (1859-1935) writes killing and robbery have increased (רצה המס ושוד נתרבה). This is because of the impurity of Shaatnez that has spread in recent years, as we know that the killing of Kayin to Hevel came from the impurity of Shaatnez, as Hevel brought a Karbon from wool whereas Kayin offered from linen. The Shulchan Aruch even hints to this as Hilchos Shaatnez begins in Siman רצה (Yoreh Deah 298). A רצה is a killer.<sup>20</sup> Where does it finish? In Siman ש"ד, the first letters of שפיכות דמים, murder.

Rabbi Alt merited to learn under the tutelage of R' Mordechai Friedlander ztz"l for close to five years. He received semicha from R' Zalman Nechemia Goldberg ztz"l. Rabbi Alt has written on numerous topics for various websites and publications and is the author of the books, Fascinating Insights and Incredible Insights in addition to being the host of The Fascinating Insights Podcast. His writings, some of which have been translated into Hebrew, German and French, inspire people across the spectrum of Jewish observance to live with the vibrancy and beauty of Torah. He lives with his wife and family in Kiryat Yearim (where the Aron was for 20 years [Shmuel 1, 7:1,2]) where he studies, writes and teaches. The author is passionate about teaching Jews of all levels of observance.

and they בראתי יצר הרע בראתי תורה תבלין overcome the Yetzer Hora, since they don't have this Mitzva? The answer given is through their connection to Torah: through bringing their children to learn Chumash and sending their husbands to learn and waiting for them until they come home from the Beis Medrash (The simple meaning of this Gemara is, with what do women earn Olam Haba as they have no obligation of לימוד. The Gemara answers when they through bringing their children to learn Chumash... and waiting for their husbands to come home from the Beis Medrash. R' Yonasan Eibishitz finds this problematic since women have other Mitzvos to get them to Olam Haba such as גדה, הלה and the like?).

<sup>17</sup> Kidushin 30b. Also Derech Eretz Zuta (chapter 4) says אין גבורה אלא תורה which can be understood in the same light.

<sup>18</sup> Breishis 4. See Pirkei Drebi Eliezer, chapter 21.

<sup>19</sup> Hakdama to his Sefer צמר ופשתים. At age 17, he married Chaya Chava, the granddaughter of R' Liebish Zucker and great-grandchild of the Ostrovtz Rebbe. In 1913, he moved to Canada, where he became the spiritual leader of Toronto's Beth Jacob Congregation, which was founded in 1899 by a group of Polish-born Jews. During that time, he founded the Eitz Chaim Talmud Torah, in a building which once was an Italian club. Eitz Chaim Schools which still function today, recently celebrated its 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary. In 1919, he moved to Montreal where he became the Chief Rabbi of the United Hebrew Orthodox Congregations, a group of shuls serving immigrant Ashkenazi communities, and vice-chairman of the Jewish Community's Rabbinic Council, which he served until his death. R' Rosenberg was a prolific author. His writings ranged from an anthology of the sciences, which was a source of scientific knowledge for Jews unfamiliar with European languages, to a Hebrew translation of the Zohar to numerous Halachic works.

<sup>20</sup> As in Devarim 19:3.