

שלח ends on a very positive note with the מצוה of ציצית. A number of questions surround the מצוה of ציצית, and I'd like to discuss two of them.

R' Chaim Kanievsky asks a question on the pasuk (15:38), - על כנפי בגדיהם לדורתם, on the corners of your garments, for all your generations. R' Chaim asks, why does the תורה specify that this מצוה will apply throughout all of their generations? A second, related question, brought down by R' Mordechai Becher, discussing the קבלת התורה which we recently celebrated on שבועות, is why is it that the vast majority of תורה is oral and not written? The written תורה consists of only 320,000 words. But the תורה besides those 320,000 words is vast. Why wasn't the entire תורה written down from the start? If the תורה is a legal, ethical, and spiritual covenant given to millions over generations, wouldn't it have made more sense to have it written in a fully documented form?

To answer the second question first, the בית הלווי has a powerful idea. Had the תורה been given exclusively in written form, the Jewish people would have been similar to the ארון in the משכן. We would be a כלי carrying the תורה, which is what the ארון is. What is in the ארון in the קדש הקדשים? The לוחות. However, because the תורה was given primarily in an oral form, we are not just the bearers of the תורה, we are the parchment itself. We are the קלף. The Jewish people are the living manuscript upon which the תורה is inscribed. This is an even higher level of קדושה. The מנהגים, מפרשים, פירושים, and the הבנה of our חכמים and our people are not merely a commentary on the תורה, but a part of the תורה itself. The תורה is not something we carry, it is who we are.

Rav Chaim explains ציצית in a similar fashion. The purpose of ציצית is למען תזכרו ועשיתם את כל מצותי - that you will remember and perform all of my מצוות. However, at the time of משיח, there will no longer be any שכחה. As the נביא ירמיהו says (31:33) - נתי את תורתך בקרבם - when משיח will come, I will put the תורה inside of them; ועל לבם אכתבנה - I will write it on their hearts. So if there will no longer be שכחה, and we will be part of the תורה itself, as the בית הלווי explained, would we still need the מצוה of ציצית to remind us, למען, to remember? You would think that in ימות המשיח, the מצוה would no longer be required. To prevent this mistaken assumption, the תורה specifically said לדורתם, to tell us that we will continue to have ציצית as a מצוה that הוא הקדוש ברוך הוא cherishes, and that we cherish as well.

Yes, we are part of תורה. And ציצית is one of the physical, גשמיותדיקע, ways that we have to remind us that we are part of the תורה. The written תורה is in the ארון קודש, but the real writing is within our hearts. That is both what the בית הלווי and R' Chaim are saying. It is a profound thought, a very beautiful thought. And if we realize the level that we rise to when we fulfill מצוות, it is really quite awesome and gives us pause to think and to realize who we truly can be if we work at it.

