

matanos we received in the *Midbar*: (1) the *Be'er Miriam*; (2) the *mann*; and (3) the *Ananei HaKavod*. The connection between the sea and the *Be'er Miriam* is obvious, and we received it in the *zechus* of Miriam. The connection between the heavens and the *mann* is that the *mann* was called “לחם מן השמים”² and we received it in the *zechus* of Moshe Rabbeinu. The *Kisei HaKavod* correlates to the *Ananei HaKavod*, which were given in the *zechus* of Aharon HaKohen.

All of this ties readily to the *Shalosh Regalim* — Pesach commemorates *Yetzias Mitzrayim*, Shavuot commemorates *Kabbalas HaTorah*, and Succos commemorates the *Ananei HaKavod*.

The *Sfas Emes* explains that with these three pivotal events of *Yetzias Mitzrayim*, *Kabbalas HaTorah*, and the *teshuvah* that led to us meriting the Mishkan, Klal Yisrael earned its national “soul.” With *Yetzias Mitzrayim* we earned our *nefesh*; with *Kabbalas HaTorah* we earned our *ruach*; and with the *teshuvah* that led to us meriting the Mishkan, we earned our *neshamah*.

Fascinatingly, the *Sfas Emes* states that although Moshe Rabbeinu stood on an exalted spiritual plane, Aharon HaKohen rose even higher. This was because Aharon HaKohen was the one who led Klal Yisrael to do *teshuvah* after the *Cheit HaEgel*, which then allowed Klal Yisrael to receive the highest level of its national “soul,” its *neshamah*. The *Sfas Emes* brings the Gemara that says: “במקום שבועלי תשובה עומדין אין צדיקים גמורים יכולים לעמוד”³ — In the place that *ba’alei teshuvah* stand, *tzaddikim gemurim* cannot stand, and “וגדולה תשובה שמגיע עד כסא הכבוד”⁴ — And great is *teshuvah*, that it reaches all the way to the *Kisei HaKavod*, tying this third stage clearly to the *Kisei HaKavod* and to Aharon, as we stated above.

The Answer

With this background, we can now answer our original question and understand the deeper connection between Korach and the mitzvah of *tzitzis*. We can see from the discussion above that spirituality is a *process* with multiple steps — an attenuated flow from an infinite Source down to finite vessels, which can absorb only a limited measure of that light without shattering. That is what the single string of *techeiles* represents — a small flow of spiritual energy from the “*Techeiles Elyonah*” above. Moshe Rabbeinu understood this, and therefore knew why the mitzvah

of *tzitzis* included only one string with *techeleis*; this was his position in the *machlokes*. Korach, however, did not understand this concept. He thought it did not need to be a process, and that Hashem’s light did not need to be attenuated for our finite beings to receive it. He did not think we needed to go through struggles, up and down, climbing step-by-step in *aliyos b’ruchniyus*; he assumed Hashem could simply transfer all His *ruchniyus* to us in a one-step procedure. This is what his *begeid*, completely dyed in *techeleis*, represents.

Korach thought that this one step-operation had been completed when Klal Yisrael heard the first of the *Aseres HaDibros*, “אנכי ה' אלוקיך” directly from Hashem at Har Sinai.⁵ That is what led him to say, “העדה כולם קדושים.”⁶ Korach thought we had reached the highest level of *ruchniyus* at Har Sinai when we heard these words, and that the words had elevated the entire nation to the highest level. However, he was wrong.

Furthermore, after the *Cheit HaEgel*, he reasoned that he was on a higher level than Aharon HaKohen, because as a *Levi*, Korach did not take part in it — while Aharon HaKohen did. What Korach did not understand, as we discussed above, was that Klal Yisrael only reached a higher level than *Kabbalas HaTorah* in their third stage, when they received the *Luchos Shenios* on Yom Kippur — after Aharon HaKohen helped Klal Yisrael do *teshuvah*, paving the way for the Mishkan with its *hashra’as haShechinah*.

Practical Takeaway

The *Sfas Emes* lays out what our practical takeaway should be from his beautiful words of Torah here. Just as Klal Yisrael earned its soul through the three-step process of leaving *Mitzrayim* and gaining its *nefesh*, then *Kabbalas HaTorah* and gaining its *ruach*, and finally *teshuvah*, which led to the Mishkan and gaining its *neshamah*, so too, this is the process we all need to follow in our individual life missions. First, we need to leave our *yetzer hara* (which is what *Mitzrayim* represents) and earn our *nefesh*. Then we need to have our own individual *Kabbalas HaTorah*, *shteiging* and gaining our *chelek b’Torah*, and earn our *ruach*. And finally, the *Sfas Emes* explains, we need to achieve our specific *tikkun* in this world through *tefillah* and *teshuvah*.

² Shemos 16:4.

³ Brachos 34b.

⁴ Yoma 86a.

⁵ Shemos 20:2.

⁶ Bamidbar 16:3.