



The One and the Whole

Rav Kook, in *Orot*, described the establishment of the State of Israel as “The foundation of G-d’s throne in the world, the only desire of which is that G-d should be One and His Name One.”

Rav Kook’s greatness – at a time of immense complexity – was his insistence on seeing the whole picture, the whole process, with all of its complexities and challenges – rather than focusing on any particular aspect of Israel’s return to its Land.

To a large extent, the Israeli flag integrates this intricacy. An individual *tallit* and national belonging. The *tallit* as correction for the collective sin of the Spies and a personal reminder to every individual.

Blue and White

The Israeli flag – two blue horizontal stripes above and below a central blue Magen David – was adopted by the First Zionist Congress and later, as the official flag of the State of Israel – by Israel’s Knesset.

The Magen David is an ancient Jewish symbol, used frequently in Judaica and synagogues throughout the ages. Its source is unknown and its actual connection to King David and his shield unclear.

The colors are the colors of the *tallit*, the *tzitzit*. David Wolfson, the second President of the Zionist Organization, designed the flag for the First Zionist Congress in Basel: “And behold! The idea lit up in my mind that we already had a flag, blue and white. The *tallit* with which we wrap ourselves in prayer... that is our symbol! Let us remove the *tallit* from its bag and roll it out for the eyes of Israel and the

eyes of all peoples. So I ordered a blue and white flag with a Magen David drawn on it, and thus the national flag was born.”

Sea, Heaven and the Throne of Glory

The Torah does not explain why the color blue was chosen for the *tzitzit*. However, the *Gemara* tells us it had nothing to do with considerations of design and fashion. This color was designated to remind the Jewish people of their Father in Heaven: “Rabbi Meir said: ‘Why is blue different from all the other colors?’ Because blue is comparable to the sea, and the sea is comparable to the sky and the sky to the Throne of Glory...” (Sotah 17a).

Blue skies remind the Jewish people of their Father in Heaven not only because He is in Heaven, but also because of their unity and eternity. The one color of the sky reminds us that G-d is One and His Name is One, and that He sees all and looks from Above upon everything below.

Blue and white together remind us of cloudy skies, producing rain at the appointed time when we listen to G-d’s *mitzvot* and observe them. For that purpose were we given *Eretz Yisrael* – so we can observe G-d’s *mitzvot* in G-d’s Land. Indeed, the rain falling on the land in *Eretz Yisrael* is the direct expression of our people’s connection to G-d (Devarim 11).

Hence the color of Heaven symbolizes the fact that accepting the *mitzvot* is an obligatory condition for inheriting the Land. Hence it is also the color chosen for the *tzitzit*, for that too is slated to remind us of G-d’s *mitzvot* – “למען תזכרו ועשיתם את כל מצוותי”.

So on the one hand, the *tzitzit* reminds us of our great love for *Eretz Yisrael*, while on the other, the obligation of *mitzvah* observance. This is the bond between Land and Torah. And this is why the flag is also blue and white, expressing the Jewish people’s independence in the Land G-d gave us and in which we are obliged to listen to His commands.

From Corona to Renewal

This year, during the days commemorating Holocaust and Renewal, the whole world is as “one bundle,” passing before Him like sheep. How appropriate it is to see the Israeli flag flying over the buildings in Israel, and on the balconies of Your people, next to Jews praying to G-d – each in his own space, enveloped in a *tallit* – to speedily send succor to His world and thanking Him for the merit we have of living in a generation in which the Jewish people has a State capable of defending and protecting its citizens from every threat.

May He bless all of *Am Yisrael* to be able to celebrate *Torat Yisrael* and *Eretz Yisrael* together, with great joy, in good health and economic strength, speedily in our days.

Based on an essay by Rabbi Ya’akov Medan in the Be’er Miriam anthology for Yom HaAtzmaut.

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