

Shoftim: Tefillin Bris and Shabbos are witnesses

[From the Ahavas Sholom of Kossov]

By Rabbi Eliyahu Kirsh

In Devarim 19:17 we read of one of the sources for requirement of two male witnesses to testify in court on any judicial matter. Chazal understood this from the fact that the verse states that the two men that have the quarrel stand before Hashem. Chazl also understood from these verses that the judges must hear the testimony directly from the mouth of the litigants and not from writing or any translations. [See Rashi on verse 15 and Gemara Makkos 6B.]

The Ahavas Sholom of Kossov explains these verses homiletically and applies them to the individual Jew. The phrase 'at the testimony of two witnesses will a thing stand' refers to the two signs that one carries with him which are tefillin and the bris milah. On Shabbos, when tefillin are not worn because Shabbos itself is the sign, the Shabbos becomes the witness instead of the tefillin. The letters of the word Shabbos, shin, bet and taf are hints to these three signs. Shin is a hint to Shabbos, bet is a hint to bris milah and taf is a hint to tefillin. Each one of these signs has the ability to soften judgments and bring one closer to the Shechina. Of course, all mitzvos bring one closer to Hashem as they all are commandments of the king. However, these three mitzvos in particular have an ability to bring one extra close to Hashem to the point of being able to soften judgments and are unique in that matter. The Ahavas Sholom further points out that the gematria, numeric value for Yakum is the same as Yosef. These three mitzvos help put one into the mode of Yosef Hatzaddik. Yosef was the first example of one who was able to remain pure and holy and guard his bris in an environment of impurity. This is what earned him the title Yosef Hatzaddik. Through these three mitzvos, one can become a tzaddik who can cancel evil decrees. All true Tzaddikim who had this ability were able to earn their high level through these three mitzvos.