י. יש נוהגים, לנשק הציצית בשעה שרואה בם, והכל הוא חיבוב מצוה. [רמ״א שם]. גם יש נוהגים שבכל פעם שמזכירים בקריאת שמע בפרשת ויאמר תיבת ״ציצית״, מנשקים הציציות. [כה״ח סופר ס״ק יח בשם החס״ל. וכ״ה ביפה ללב סי׳ כד ח״א אות יב]

יא. על פי דברי האר״י כך הנהגת הציצית בקריאת שמע: כשיאמר ״ברכה ושלום מהרה מארבע כנפות כל הארץ״, יקבץ כל ארבע כנפות הטלית, ויאחזם בידו השמאלית כנגד הלב שהוא בשמאל. ויניח

Kissing the tzitzit

10) Some people have a custom to kiss the tzitzit when they gaze at them to display their love for the mitzvah.[294] There is likewise a custom to kiss the tzitzit each time one recites the word *tzitzit* in the *Shema*.[295]

The Arizal's formula

11) The Arizal gave the following instructions: When a person reaches the words בְּרָכָה וְשָׁלוֹם מְהֵרָה מֵאַרְבַּע כַּנְפוֹת הָאָרֶץ, he should gather all four corners of the tallit together and hold the tzitzit tassels in his left hand, between the pinkie and the ring finger, on his heart. He should hold the tzitzit in this position until he completes the *Shema* and reaches the words וּדְבָרָיו חַיִּים וְקַיָּמִים וְנֶאֱמָנִים וְנֶחְמָדִים לְעַד. (Illustration № 100a)

Day 100

The final ruling

The *Shulhan Arukh* states (24:4): "It is commendable to grasp the tzitzit in one's left hand and to hold them on one's heart while reciting the *Shema*. Some people have the custom of gazing at the tzitzit when they reach the words וּרְאִיתֶם אוֹתוֹ. This is a beautiful custom."

Why is the practice of grasping the tzitzit defined as "commendable" while the practice of gazing at the tzitzit is simply a beautiful custom? As explained above (*Hagahot Maimoniyot* citing *Midrash Shohar Tov*), our Sages mentioned the practice of grasping the tzitzit. There is no such Talmudic source for gazing at the tzitzit, and in fact Rav Natrunai Ga'on and Rav Moshe Ga'on opposed it. Although the practice is justified and appears to be commendable, it must be counted only as an acceptable custom.

293. The *Hesed La'alafim* (24:2, cited in the *Kaf Hahayim* Sofer 24:15) instructed us to have in mind to fulfill the mitzvah of gazing at the tzitzit. This is in deference to the *Sefer Mitzvot Katan*. According to other *Rishonim* there is no distinct mitzvah to gaze at the tzitzit, as explained in the previous footnote. Nevertheless, no harm is done by following these instructions.

294. Kissing the tzitzit

Maran did not mention the practice of kissing the tzitzit, not in the *Bet Yosef* nor in the *Shulhan Arukh*. Nevertheless, the Rama wrote (*Darkhe Moshe*): "I have witnessed people who have the custom of kissing the tzitzit and placing them on their eyes when they recite the words וּרְאִיתֶם אוֹתוֹ to display their love for the mitzvah." The Arizal likewise recommended kissing the tzitzit, as explained in the following halakha.

In connection with this, the *Mishna Berura* (477:5) cited the *Shene Luhot Haberit* testifying, "I have witnessed people who kiss their matzo and *maror* (before eating them at the Seder). They also kiss the sukkah whenever they enter or exit it, and they kiss the *lulav*, all to display their love for the mitzvot. Fortunate is he who feels joy in worshipping God." See also the *Kaf Hahayim* Sofer (24:19).

295. A number of *Aharonim* (*Hesed La'alafim* 24:2, *Kaf Hahayim* Sofer 24:18, *Yafe Lalev* Vol. I 24:12, *Kitzur Shulhan Arukh* Ganzfried 17:7) mentioned the custom of kissing the tzitzit each time one mentions this word in the *Shema*. The *Damesek Eliezer* Papo (*ma'arekhet tzaddik* #5) complained about this custom, however, since the word *tzitzit* always appears in the middle of a phrase and it is incorrect to corrupt the reading of the verse by interrupting it with a kiss. He ignored the fact that great *Poskim* had endorsed this practice. The responsa *Hare Yehuda* (Vol. I, page 119) refuted the *Damesek Eliezer's* complaints, explaining that taking a moment to kiss the tzitzit is not considered an interruption at all. Furthermore, even if it would constitute an interruption, there is no source in the Talmud or *Poskim* that it is forbidden to interrupt one's reading of a verse and continue it after some time of silence. See more on this topic in responsa *Hemdat Avraham* Dayan (Vol. III, #5).

הציציות בין קמיצה לזרת. ויהיו הציציות כך בידו, עד לאחר קריאת שמע כשיאמר: "ודבריו חיים וקיימים ונאמנים ונחמדים לעד". [תמונה ק,א]

וכשיגיע לפרשת ציצית, יאחז כנפי הציציות גם בידו הימנית, באופן ששרשיהם יהיו בידו השמאלית, והחוטים המופרדים בידו הימנית [תמונה ק,ג]. ויביט ויסתכל בציציות שבידו בכל פרשת ציצית.

וכשיאמר "וראיתם אותו" יסתכל בציציות שבידו שני פעמים בזה אחר זה, ואחר כל פעם משתי הפעמים אלו יעבירם על גבי עיניו [תמונה ק,ד]. וינשקם אחר כך. וכן באומרו "ואחרי עיניכם" יעבירם על גבי עיניו, וינשקם.

ושתי ידיו יהיו אוחזות בציצית כאמור, עד שיאמר: "ודבריו חיים וקיימים ונאמנים ונחמדים לעד", שאז בתיבת "לעד" ינשק הציציות שהיה אוחז בהם, ויעבירם על גבי עיניו, ויסירם מידו שישתלשלו למטה, ולא יאחזם עוד בידו. [ראה בא"ח פ' שמות ה"ה והו"ח, פ' וארא הכ"א, כה"ח סי' כד ס"ק ח-ט]

Upon reaching the passage of tzitzit, he should grasp the tzitzit tassels with his right hand as well, holding the knotted sections in the left hand and the loose strands in the right hand. (Illustration №100c) He should gaze at the tzitzit repeatedly as he recites the passage of tzitzit.

When reciting the words וּרְאִיתֶם אוֹתוֹ, he should glance at the tzitzit in his hands two times. After each glance he should lift the tzitzit and pass them across his eyes and then kiss them [the tzitzit]. (Illustration №100d) Likewise, upon reciting the words וְאַחֲרֵי עֵינֵיכֶם he should pass the tzitzit across his eyes and kiss them.

As mentioned above, he should continue to hold onto the tzitzit tassels until he reaches the words וּדְבָרָיו חַיִּים וְקַיָּמִים וְנֶאֱמָנִים וְנֶחֱמָדִים לָעַד. As he recites the word לָעַד, he should kiss the tzitzit, pass them across his eyes for a final time and let them fall to their original positions. He should not hold onto the tzitzit any further.[296]

296. Most of these instructions are found in the *Sha'ar Hakavanot*, cited in the *Ben Ish Ḥai* (*parashat Shemot* halakhot 5 and 8; *parashat Va'era* halakha 21). The *Ben Ish Ḥai* omitted the detail about holding the tzitzit in the right hand, although this is mentioned explicitly in the *Sha'ar Hakavanot* and cited in the *Kaf Haḥayim* Sofer (24:8). Nevertheless, it is mentioned in *Od Yosef Ḥai* (*parashat Va'era* halakha 2 and in *Tikkun Tefilla* (page 6).

The Arizal did not specify in which fingers one should hold the tzitzit, but the *Magen Avraham* (24:1) stated to hold them between the ring finger and pinkie. In fact, Harav ḤIDA (*Sheyare Berakha* 24:1) asserts that these are the Arizal's instructions, and he testified that this is the common custom. The *Kaf Haḥayim* Sofer (24:9) complained that this is not found anywhere in the Arizal's writings, nor is it found in the works of Harav Shalom Mizraḥi Sharabi. Their original source is the Arizal's disciples, however, and it is recommended to observe all these details. The *Leket Katzir* (page 76) testified that he witnessed Harav ḤIDA holding his tzitzit between his ring finger and pinkie.

The Arizal and *Ben Ish Ḥai* both state that when one reaches the words מְהֵרָה וְהָבֵא עָלֵינוּ one should lift the sides of the tallit onto one's shoulders. This is difficult to understand according to our custom, which is to keep the tallit up on the shoulders at all times, as mentioned above in *Siman* 8:16. The *Od Yosef Ḥai* (*parashat Shemot* halakha 9) mentioned that this is not a universal custom.

יב. לדעת מרן השלחן ערוך כשמסתכל בציצית (בשעת העטיפה, וכשאומר "וראיתם אותו") מסתכל בשני הציציות שלפניו, שיש בהם עשרה קשרים רמז להויות, וגם יש בהם ט"ז חוטים ועשרה קשרים, עולה כ"ו כשם הוי"ה. [ש"ע סי' כד ס"ה]. וכן ימשמש בשני הציציות שלפניו, כשאומר "וראיתם אותו". [ש"ע סי' סא סכ"ה].

אולם לדעת האר"י, בפרשת ציצית יש לאחוז ולהסתכל בכל ארבעת הציציות (כפי שהבאנו בהלכה הקודמת). **ומנהגו** של מרן הראשון לציון זצ"ל ברוב הפעמים, היה לאחוז ולהסתכל רק בשני הציציות שלפניו, ככתוב בשלחן ערוך [תמונה ק,ב].

The *Shulḥan Arukh's* formula

12) According to the *Shulḥan Arukh*, one should gaze at the tzitzit when putting on the tallit. When reciting the words וּרְאִיתֶם אוֹתוֹ in the *Shema*, one should gaze at the two front tzitzit tassels, since they have a total of ten knots, alluding to God's Name. The two tassels consist of sixteen strands. Added to the ten knots, this comes to a total of twenty-six, equaling the numerical value of God's Name. While reciting these words, one should grasp the two front tzitzit tassels.

As explained in the previous halakha, the Arizal taught that we should hold all four tzitzit tassels and to gaze at all four. Maran the Rishon Letziyon usually held the two front tassels only, in deference to the *Shulḥan Arukh*.[297] (Illustration № 100b)

297. The *Shulḥan Arukh* followed the teaching of Rabbenu Menaḥem Rikanati (*parashat Shelaḥ*). In the *Bet Yosef*, Maran added that each tassel consists of five knots and eight strands, for a total of thirteen, the numerical value of the letters of the word *eḥad*. By holding two tassels together to gaze at them, we get a total of twenty six, the numerical value of the letters of God's Name. The instructions in the *Shulḥan Arukh* (61:25) are that one should handle the two front tassels when reciting the words וּרְאִיתֶם אוֹתוֹ. Harav Eliyahu of Vilna observed this practice as well.

As explained in halakha 11, the Arizal's instructions are to hold all four tzitzit tassels and to gaze at them, counter to the instructions in the *Shulḥan Arukh*. The *Kaf Haḥayim* Sofer (24:20) recommended that we follow the instructions of the Arizal. Actually, the *Shevile David* and *Shulḥan Esh* both interpreted Maran's instructions to match those of the Arizal. See the footnotes on the HaKeter edition of *Shulḥan Esh* (*Siman* 24, footnote 37; *Siman* 8, footnote 5).

The authors of *Yalkut Yosef* (page 283) and *Halakha Berura* (page 423) testified that their father, Maran the Rishon Letziyon, usually followed the instructions of the *Shulḥan Arukh* and not those of the Arizal. The *Yalkut Yosef* explained that his father pointed out that Harav Eliyahu of Vilna, who was fluent in all the teachings of the Arizal, nevertheless observed the instructions of the *Shulḥan Arukh* in practice.

Harav Shalom Messas, in his approbation to the *Ish Matzli'aḥ* edition of *Mishna Berura* (#4) admitted that he likewise held only the two front tzitzit tassels. He argued that this is the preferable practice for two reasons. One is that in this way we allude to God's Name, as explained in the *Shulḥan Arukh*. Furthermore, it is important to keep two tzitzit tassels behind and two in front so that the person is surrounded by mitzvot, as explained above in *Siman* 8:16 and 8:20. Rav Messas complained that people have a foolish desire to emulate the Kabbalists, whereas the Arizal himself remarked that his teachings should be observed by extremely devout people only.

These arguments may or may not be valid. There is a basis to follow either school.