

Parsha Shiur by Rabbi Mayer Friedman

פרשת תצוה

ועשו את האפד זהב תכלת וארגמן תולעת שני ושש משזר מעשה חשב
“They shall make the ephod of gold, turquoise wool, and purple wool, scarlet wool, and twisted linen, the work of an artist” (28:6)

Rashi writes that he chose to give a full overview of how the Kohen Gadol wore the garments before explaining the individual pesukim so that the reader would be able to run through it and understand it easily. We can learn from Rashi’s method of explanation that the Torah must be taught in a manner that is easy to understand. It has to be well organized and simple. Rashi thus fulfills what he wrote in the beginning of Parshas Mishpatim that Torah must be given over like a table that is set for a meal, well prepared and simply laid out. This places an extra responsibility on a teacher to understand what he is teaching very well so that he can explain it with great clarity.

This is symbolized by the requirement for pure olive oil for lighting the menorah, as mentioned at the beginning of the parsha. The oil was obtained by pressing olives and only the first drop of oil to come out of the olive was used in the menorah because it was the purest. The menorah, which represents wisdom of Torah study, can only have purity and clarity.

The law is that the same amount of oil must be used in the menorah overnight in the summer and winter, even though the nights are much shorter in the summer time and do not require as much fuel. R’ Moshe Feinstein explains that the reason for this is that the short nights of the year represent smart students who can understand things very quickly whereas the long nights represent the students who need more time to gain complete comprehension of a subject. The oil of the menorah teaches us that the bright students require the same amount of attention, the same amount of “oil,” as the regular students. Many times, brighter students need to be challenged or else they will use their spare time for getting into trouble. One cannot ignore the smart students just because they understand the material so quickly.

Rashi explains that the Kohen must hold the flame to the menorah until it can remain lit on its own. This can also teach us a lesson about education. The goal of an educator and a parent must be to teach a child to the point where he can learn on his own. This is the ultimate goal of an education. Even individuals who are no longer in school should strive to reach a level where they can learn well on their own and become self-sufficient in learning.

ומלאת בו מלאת אבן, ארבעה טורים אבן: טור, אדם פטדה וברקת–הטור, האחד
“You shall fill it with a stone mounting, four rows of stone: a row of odem, pitdah and barekes – the one row” (28:17)

The first stone belonged to Reuven and was called “Odem,” meaning “red.” Why was Reuven’s stone red? Rabbeinu Bachya explains that after Reuven moved Yaakov’s bed from Bilha’s tent into Leah’s without his father’s permission, he recognized the error of his ways. He was so embarrassed of his sin that he turned red. This is a tremendous merit for Reuven and therefore his stone was colored red so that the merit of this embarrassment would constantly be before Hashem during the service in the Mishkan.

ונתת אל חשן המשפט את האורים ואת התמים והיו על לב אהרן בבאו לפני ה' ונשא
אהרן את משפט בני ישראל על לבו לפני ה' תמיד
“Into the breastplate of judgment shall you place the Urim and the Tumim, and they shall

be on Aharon's heart when he comes before Hashem; and Aharon shall bear the judgment of the Children of Israel on his heart constantly before Hashem” (28:30)

Rashi explains that the Urim Vetumim was a piece of parchment with the ineffable name of Hashem written on it that was inserted inside the Choshen. This holy parchment would cause the stones of the Choshen to light up in answer to questions that were posed to it by Jewish leaders at times when the people needed direction from Hashem. The Talmud Yerushalmi (Yoma 7:3) explains the derivation of the name Urim Vetumim. אורים is related to the word אור, "light." The Urim Vetumim would light up for the Jewish people literally, as well as figuratively illuminating their way. תמים is related to תם, "complete." When the Jews are complete in their trust in Hashem, the Urim Vetumim shows them the path to follow. The Torah Temima explains that if the people are not pure in their ways, the Urim Vetumim will not be effective. The proof to this is from the story of the war between Shevet Binyamin and the rest of the tribes in the days of the Shoftim. They asked the Urim Vetumim for advice in the war and were misled. (Shoftim 20:17-25) Since they did not act properly, they did not deserve to be guided by the Urim Vetumim.

Today we do not have the Urim Vetumim, but if we totally place our trust in Hashem, He will provide us with direction in other ways. "One who trusts in Hashem, kindness surrounds him." (Tehillim 32:10) The Ramban writes in Parshas Shoftim (Devarim 18:13) that there is a mitzvah to be תמים. He says that the mitzvah is that one should trust in Hashem instead of trusting superstitions and should express his belief that the future is entirely up to the will of Hashem. One must understand that if he becomes closer to Hashem, Hashem will take care of his future and he has no need to worry. Onkelos translates this mitzvah as "You shall be complete in the fear of Hashem." If our fear of Hashem is complete, then we need not be concerned about what the future will bring. If we take care of our end, then Hashem will take care of us.

ועשית את מעיל האפוד כליל תכלת

“You shall make the robe of the ephod entirely of turquoise wool” (28:31)

The Gemara in Arachin 16a says that the me'il, the robe, was worn by the Kohen Gadol as an atonement for the sin of loshon hara. The me'il, which made a sound because of the bells on its hem, served as an atonement for those who sinned through sound. The gemara further says that the ketores, incense, also atoned for the sin of loshon hara. The ketores, which was offered in private inside the sanctuary, atoned for loshon hara, which is told in secrecy. The Gemara asks: Why are there two methods of atonement for loshon hara? The answer is that the me'il and the sound that it produces atones for loshon hara told in public, which has a louder sound and travels farther. The ketores atoned for loshon hara told in private. Loshon hara is defined as anything negative said about a fellow Jew, even if it is true, whether it is said in public or in private.

The Chofetz Chaim says that even though hearing loshon hara can be very enjoyable, one must stop himself from listening to it because it is a terrible sin. One should not underestimate this transgression, even though he is not doing an action and is only passively hearing what is being told to him. To help understand the consequences of hearing loshon hara, he gave the example of a trickster who approached a traveler and offered to show him around town. After a day of touring, he told the traveler that he wanted to take him out for a lavish meal. They went to a fancy restaurant and he encouraged the traveler to eat to his heart's content. As the meal was winding down, the trickster snuck out and the traveler was forced to pay for the entire expensive meal, despite his objections that he had been hoodwinked. The Chofetz Chaim said that one

who hears loshon hara may enjoy it and thank his friend for sharing some interesting stories with him, but when he has to provide accounting for his deeds in Heaven, he will realize just how costly that enjoyment was when he finds out what he owes for hearing that enjoyable story.

Oftentimes, one finds himself in a situation where loshon hara is being told and it is hard to extricate himself from the problem in an inconspicuous manner. We have to be creative to divert the conversation to a different topic or to otherwise get out of situations where loshon hara will be said. If this cannot be done, the best solution is to leave the conversation. R' Dovid Feinstein says that even if a person listens but refuses to believe what he hears, the loshon hara still leaves a mark, akin to the writing of a pencil, which leaves a mark even after it has been erased. If a person does end up hearing the loshon hara, he is not permitted to believe what he heard.

ושבצת הכתנת שש ועשית מצנפת שש ואבנט תעשה מעשה רקם

“You shall make the tunic of checkered texture, of linen; you shall make a turban of linen and you shall make a belt the work of an embroiderer” (28:39)

The Talmud Yerushalmi (Yoma Chapter 7) teaches that the belt worn by the Kohanim was 32 cubits long, approximately 60 feet. Because the belt was so long, it had to be wound around the waist of the Kohen many times. Why was it necessary for the Kohen to wear such a long belt?

The Sefer HaChinuch (Mitzva 99) provides an interesting explanation for the mitzva to make special clothing for the Kohanim. He writes that a person's frame of mind is heavily influenced by his actions and his surroundings. When the Kohen is involved in the sacred work of the Bais HaMikdash, it is imperative that he have the proper mindset. Therefore, the Kohen must don special clothing when he begins to serve which cover him from head to toe. These garments are not worn anywhere else so that when the Kohen sees himself covered by these special clothes, he will remember what he is supposed to be doing and what his intentions should be at the time that he performs his tasks. Similarly, we put on tefillin every morning to remind ourselves how to direct our thoughts and actions during the course of the day. The need for this reminder extended so far that the belt was specifically made extra long so that it should be wrapped around him many times. In this way, the belt would not lie flat on his waist because of its length and even when the Kohen was standing around, he would feel the belt with his arms because the belt stuck out a little bit. Thus, the Kohen would be aware of his special garments at all times, even when he was just standing around, and would never lose sight of the task that he was to perform in the service of the Bais HaMikdash.

וזה אשר תעשה על המזבח כבשים בני שנה שנים ליום תמיד

“This is what you shall offer upon the altar: sheep within their first year, two each day, continually” (29:38)

What is the connection between the commandment of the Korban Tamid, the daily sacrifice of a sheep every morning and evening, and the preceding pesukim that discuss the induction of the Kohanim and the inauguration of the Mishkan? R' Samson Raphael Hirsch writes that the construction of the Mishkan alone does not fulfill the obligation to build a sanctuary and bring the Divine Presence into the midst of the people. Only with the daily self-dedication to the service of Hashem, the renewal of the commitment to the ideals of the Torah every day, does the Divine Presence rest among us. The Mishkan does not achieve this purpose in its own right. It is only a vehicle to accomplish the end goal. This is the idea represented by the Korban Tamid, the daily sacrifice. It is the unceasing, constant devotion to Hashem and his Torah that bring us closer to Him and it was for the fulfillment of this ideal that Hashem commanded the Jews to erect a Mishkan. The juxtaposition of the inauguration of the Mishkan and the daily sacrifice

emphasize that the construction of the Mishkan served one purpose: a means to rededicate our lives to Hashem each and every day.

Kesharim Baruch College/NYU Parsha Shiur

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