

Parsha Shiur by Rabbi Mayer Friedman

פרשת תצורה

ועשו את האפוד זהב תכלת וארגמן תולעת שני ושש משור 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.

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. - MJG

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. - MJG

ונתתה אתו לפני הפרכת אשר על ארון העדת לפני הכפרת אשר על העדת אשר אועד לך שמה

“You shall put it in front of the curtain that is by the ark of the testimony, in front of the lid that is on the testimony, where I will arrange audience with you” (30:6)

What is the importance of the fact that the Mizbeiach HaKetores, the altar of incense, faced the Aron? Why does the Torah need to tell us this? R' Dovid Feinstein answers that ketores, incense, is an atonement for lashon hara, gossip. The Torah is telling us that in order to take preemptive action and prevent lashon hara, one should learn Torah. When one studies Torah, he becomes a more modest person and he will not want to speak negatively about other people. Rambam also writes that the study of Torah brings peace to the world. Therefore, when one studies Torah, he begins to treat people with kindness.

Parshas Zachor

There are two mitzvos involved in the reading of Parshas Zachor: the positive commandment to remember what Amalek did to us in the desert and the negative commandment never to forget what they did. The Sefer HaChinuch (Mitzva 603) writes that we are obligated to remember what Amalek did so that we will keep this memory in our hearts until the time comes to wage war against them and ultimately wipe them off the face of the earth. Therefore, he writes that women are exempted from hearing Parshas Zachor because women do not take part in war. However, the Minchas Chinuch writes that women are obligated to hear Parshas Zachor because the mitzvah to destroy Amalek is separate from the mitzvah to remember what they did. There are differing opinions regarding the halacha so it is advisable for everyone to ask their local rabbinical authority.

The Sefer HaChinuch also explains that the nature of this mitzvah is that those who hate the Jewish people are hated by Hashem. Because Amalek was the first nation to attack the Jews in the wilderness, Hashem commanded us to destroy them completely.

Purim

The Aruch HaShulchan writes that the main Megillah reading is the daytime reading. It is therefore important to afford the daytime reading equal importance, if not more. This is why many communities repeat the beracha of Shehecheyanu in the morning because the daytime reading is the main one. We do not recite Hallel on Purim because the reading of the Megilla is how we thank Hashem.

The Aruch HaShulchan adds that the halacha is that one must stop whatever he is doing to go hear the Megilla reading, even if it causes Bitul Torah, a break in one's learning. However, if one is going to hear the

Megilla, what is the break in the Torah study? The reason for this is that the person will need to travel to a shul to hear the megilla and wait for everyone else to arrive. We can learn from this that one should try to live near a Beis Medrash so that he can cut down on his travel time and maximize his learning time.

Megillas Esther

When Achashveirosh had Vashti put to death, he was intoxicated and angry (Esther 1:12). We see from this story what anger can lead to. In fact, the first murder in history occurred as a result of Kayin's anger with Hevel.

The advice to kill Vashti was given by Haman (1:16). We can learn from this that it is important to make sure that you are surrounded by the right people who will give you good advice. When Rechavam, son of Shlomo HaMelech, became king, he took the advice of his friends to be harsh on the people over the advice of his father's experienced counselors to be kind to them. This big mistake led to the split of the Jewish kingdom.

The numerical value of Haman equals that of "Hamelech," "The King." Haman was the vehicle for the recognition of Hashem. However, Haman did not rise to power on his own accord. Rather, it was a result of the misdeeds of the Jews. In particular, they benefited from the feast that Achashveirosh made to celebrate the downfall of the Jewish people and what he believed to be their perpetual exile. The Bach explains that the Jews were punished with a decree of death, a physical punishment, because they derived physical benefit by eating at the table of the wicked king. Therefore, we celebrate Purim in a physical manner, by giving gifts of food to friends and with eating a festive meal and drinking.

"Esther" means "hidden." An integral part of the miracle of Purim is the fact that Hashem was completely hidden throughout the story. In fact, Hashem's name is not mentioned anywhere in the Megilla. By analyzing the story of the Megilla, we can clearly see how the hand of Hashem was directing everything that happened. This is a lesson to us that we have to be able to recognize the hand of Hashem in our life every single day.

After the miracle of Purim, the Jews reaffirmed their acceptance of the Torah (9:27). At Har Sinai, the Jews were forced to accept the Torah because Hashem had hung the mountain over them. This coercion gave them a sort of excuse for not keeping the Torah. However, after seeing the miracles of Purim and understanding that one can sense Hashem's presence even without open miracles, they accepted the Torah willingly. Thus, Purim is a time of Kabbalas HaTorah, acceptance of the Torah, and therefore it is important to use Purim as a springboard to strengthen our Torah learning.

The Megilla says that Mordechai did not bow to Haman, but when read with the exact grammar, the posuk says that "Mordechai will not bow down," in the future tense (3:2). Haman recognized the inner strength that Mordechai possessed and that he would never bow down to him, even in the future. When a person has such conviction about his actions, you can be assured that he will remain that way in the future. This is how we must serve Hashem. We must be on a level where it will appear to others that our service will continue in the same manner in the future. Another explanation is that Haman felt that if he only took care of Mordechai, there would be another Mordechai in the future who would refuse to bow down to him. Therefore, he decided to wipe out all of the Jewish people.

Mordechai left Yerushalayim on his own and went into exile (2:6). R' Dovid Feinstein explains that he did this because all of the talmidei chachamim were exiled first and he knew that he had to follow his teachers and go into exile because that was where the Torah was. Because he followed his teachers, he became Mordechai HaTzaddik.

R' Dovid Feinstein comments that the numerical value of Purim is equal to that of Refidim, the place where Amalek first attacked the Jewish people in the desert. Refidim means "weak." The whole story of Purim, just like any time that Amalek attacks, was a result of a weakening in the service of Hashem.

When Yosef revealed himself to his brothers, he gave his brothers a change of clothing, but to Binyamin he gave five changes of clothing. The Gemara in Megillah 16b states: Could it be that Yosef would fall prey to the same thing for which they caused him pain [favoring one brother with clothing just as his father had given him a special coat]? R' Binyamin bar Yefes says: Yosef was hinting to his brothers that Binyamin would have a descendant that would go out from the king wearing five garments. Who was that? That was Mordechai, who left Achashveirosh wearing five garments (8:15). R' Dovid Feinstein asks: Why did Yosef give this hint to Binyamin at this specific point in time? He answers that Yosef was saying that his sale would turn out to be beneficial in the end, just as the story of Purim ultimately turned out to be good even though it began with Haman's decree to wipe out all of the Jews. He was sending a message that Hashem had planned all of the recent events and it was all for a good purpose.

Achashveirosh made two parties: one for foreign dignitaries and government officials (1:3) and one for every commoner who lived in Shushan, the capital and the city in which Achashveirosh resided (1:5). The reason for this extra party in Shushan was because he wanted to make sure that everyone living in his backyard was his friend so that nobody would plot against him from within.

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