

Parsha Shiur by Rabbi Mayer Friedman

פרשת כי תשא

זה יתנו כל העבר על הפקדים מחצית השקל בשקל הקדש עשרים גרה השקל
מחצית השקל תרומה לה'

“This shall everyone who passes through the census give; a half shekel of the sacred shekel - the shekel is worth twenty geras - half a shekel as a portion to Hashem” (30:13)

The Vilna Gaon writes that the word מחצית contains an important lesson about the reward that awaits a person who gives charity. The צ, representing tzedaka, is surrounded by חי, life, while the outer letters spell מת, death. Charity surrounds a person with life and sends death far away. As the posuk in Mishlei (10:2) states: “Charity saves from death.”

ואתה קח לך בשמים ראש מר דרור חמש מאות וקנמן בשם מחציתו חמשים
ומאתים וקנה בשם חמשים ומאתים

“Now you, take for yourself choice spices: five hundred shekel-weights of pure myrrh; fragrant cinnamon, half of which shall be two hundred fifty; two hundred fifty of fragrant cane” (30:23)

R' Dovid Feinstein asks: Why was the command to make the שמן המשחה, the special oil used to anoint the vessels of the mishkan and the kohanim, directed specifically to Moshe with the command “now you”? He answers that the שמן המשחה was the vehicle that brought sanctity to the mishkan. This is contrary to what we would have thought. We might have said that this sanctity would have to come directly from Hashem. However, the Torah teaches that sanctity comes from within us and that a person can create holiness on his own. That is why Hashem stressed that “you,” Moshe, a human being, are the one who is going to make the שמן המשחה.

In fact, sanctity that comes from within is greater. Inspiration that a person receives passively without effort does not have a lasting impression. Even though a maidservant saw a greater revelation at the Yam Suf than the prophet Yechezkel saw when he beheld the great vision of the מרכבה,

Yechezkel's accomplishments were greater and everlasting because he worked to become a great tzadik.

The Gemara on Chullin 139b says that this posuk contains a hidden reference to Mordechai HaTzaddik because the Targum of the words מר דרור is מירא דכיא. Why is this reference placed here in connection with the שמן המשחה? Just as the שמן המשחה, shows us that we can achieve tremendous growth from within, the Jewish people were able to see Hashem hidden within the events of Purim on their own. Because of this, they were able to renew their acceptance of the Torah. The fact that they came to the recognition of Hashem on their own was even greater than the passive revelation that occurred on Har Sinai.

ואת השלחן ואת כליו ואת המנרה הטהרה ואת כל כליה ואת מזבח הקטרת
“The table and its utensils, the pure menorah and all its utensils, and the incense altar” (31:8)

Rashi comments that the menorah is called pure because it is made of pure gold. R' Moshe Feinstein explains that the menorah represents Torah wisdom. Torah must be taught without any mistakes. A teacher must purify his Torah and make sure that it is free of all errors. It must be conveyed in a way that people cannot misinterpret and it should not need any further clarification. This is also why the olive oil used to light the menorah had to be pure and free of all sediment. The perfectly clear light on the menorah made of gold of the highest quality indicates the high standard that teachers are held to when they present a Torah lesson.

ויתן אל משה ככלתו לדבר אתו בהר סיני שני לחת העדת לחת אבן כתבים באצבע
אלקים

“He gave to Moshe, when He finished speaking with him on Mount Sinai, the two Tablets of the Testimony, stone tablets inscribed by the finger of Hashem” (31:18)

Rashi says that the Torah was given to the Jewish people as a bride is given to a groom. R' Shimon Schwab says that we learn from here that every bride is a gift to her husband from heaven.

Rashi also comments that the Torah consists of 24 books, just as a bride is bedecked with 24 types of adornment. R' Schwab quotes the Netziv from his introduction to the שאילתות: Just as a woman would not go outside with all the adornments of a bride – and if she did, people would suspect her of inappropriate behavior – so, too, one who is not a talmid chacham should not publish explanations on Tanach. The Netziv wrote that this problem was a major source of suffering during the period of the Reform. Today, we also find “Bible critics” who are not talmidei chachamim and spread ideas that are not true to the Torah. There is widespread misrepresentation of authentic Torah thought because of these people and we must be aware of it so as not to stumble over it.

ויאמר ה' אל משה פסל לך שני לוחות אבנים כראש נים וכתבתי על הלוחות את הדברים אשר היו על הלוחות הראשנים אשר שברת

“Hashem said to Moshe: Carve for yourself two stone tablets like the first ones, and I shall inscribe on the tables the words that were on the first tablets, which you shattered” (34:1)

R' Moshe Feinstein asks: Why did Moshe have to make the second luchos? Why could Hashem not make them, just as He had made the original luchos? He answers that the people sinned with the Golden Calf, because they thought that since the luchos were being made by Hashem, the Torah was not attainable by human beings without a special intermediary, such as Moshe Rabbeinu. They created an image of an ox to serve in this capacity in Moshe's absence and to help them get closer to Hashem and learn His Torah. To correct their mistaken understanding, Hashem told Moshe to make the second luchos himself so that the people would realize that a human being has a part in Torah without any emissary. It is within a person's reach to get close to Hashem on his own.

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