

Yad Avraham Institute
WEEKLY TORAH COMMENTARY SERIES
Parshas Tetzaveh
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Presented By: Rabbi Yosef Kalatsky, *Shlita*

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About the Yad Avraham Institute

The Yad Avraham is a Torah learning institute located in midtown Manhattan. Classes are offered every day during the week starting at 5:50am and throughout the day. Classes in Chumash, Halacha, Hashkofa, Gemara, and general topics are well attended by businessmen, professionals, and students. The Yad Avraham invites you to participate in our extensive offerings of classes and events.

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Parshas Tetzaveh

Presented by

Rabbi Yosef Kalatsky, *Shlita*

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1. The Prerequisite to Wisdom

The Torah states regarding the making of the Priestly Vestments, **“And you shall speak to all the wise-hearted (*chachmei leiv*) people whom I have invested with a spirit of wisdom, and they shall make the vestments for Aaron...”** Baal Haturim explains that the phrase in the verse, *“chachmei leiv asher”* has the numerical equivalent of *“yiraas – fear.”* The one who is permeated with the fear of G'd has wisdom. As King David writes in Tehillim (Psalms) “The beginning of wisdom is the fear of G'd.” Thus, the one who had fear of G'd (*yiraas Hashem*) was the one qualified to be endowed with the spirit of wisdom. The Gemara in Tractate Berachos states, “It is only the heart that contains wisdom, that I will (G'd) fill with wisdom.” Meaning, if one has the fear of G'd then He will endow that individual with wisdom. Why is the fear of G'd the prerequisite to wisdom?

There are several levels of *yiraah* (*fear*). One level of fear is fear of punishment (*yiraas ha'onesh*). This individual fears G'd because he understands that there will be repercussions if he were to transgress the Word of G'd. This level of fear is rooted in self-preservation rather than a true appreciation and understanding of G'd. Another level of fear is the one who reveres and esteems G'd because he appreciates and comprehends the awesomeness and omnipotence of the Infinite Being- (*yiraas ha'romimus*). This level of fear is emanates from one's appreciation of G'd Himself. When the Torah refers to the one who is a “Chacham leiv” (wise-hearted), it is the individual whose fear, in essence, is awe.

The Gemara in Tractate Nidah tells us that before a child is born an angel teaches him the entire Torah in utero. The Gemara explains that the child in utero has a light illuminating above his head and he is able to see from one end of the world to the other. This child has absolute clarity, without any obstruction. The moment the child is born into existence he forgets all of the Torah that he was taught because he leaves the spiritual setting and enters into the physical, which is limited and confining. When

one becomes entombed in physicality, one becomes engrossed in self-interest because of the innate make-up of being a physical being. The only way one can regain and have any relevance to that original clarity is to lead a life of spirituality- thus negating self-interest. It is only through spiritual pursuits - Torah study and mitzvos - that one can come to esteem and revere G'd. When the individual has shed his physical characteristic of self-interest, he regains the uninhibited clarity of his spiritual beginnings. Thus, he is endowed with a spirit of wisdom.

The Torah tells us that after Yosef had advised Pharaoh on how to deal with the upcoming famine to guarantee the existence of the Egyptian civilization, Pharaoh declared to his subjects, “Have we ever seen an individual who has the spirit of G'd in him.” Despite the spiritual impurity of Egypt, Yosef revered G'd on an exceptional level. He is referred to by Chazal as “Yosef ha'tzaddik – Yosef the righteous.” It was because of his personal level of fear and reverence of G'd that Yosef merited exceptional wisdom that was recognized by Pharaoh as Divine.

If one wants to come upon the truths of Torah one's fear of G'd must be within the context of awe, which is rooted in reverence. It is only then that one becomes the receptacle that is worthy wisdom.

2. Moshe's Role as the Advocate of the Jewish People

The Midrash states, “R'Yehudah b'R' Simon, ‘It is analogous to one who is making a crown. Another will ask him, ‘What are you making?’ He responds, ‘I am making a crown.’ He continues, ‘You should insert into the crown as many precious stones and pearls as you could because ultimately the crown will be worn on the head of the king. This will bring greater glory to the king.’ G'd said to Moshe, “You should praise the Jewish people before Me as much as possible because ultimately I will be glorified through them. As it states in the verse, “Through you (the Jewish people) I (G'd) will be glorified.” One would think that G'd will be glorified through the Jewish

people only if they are worthy because they live their lives in accordance with His Will. If this is not the case, then what is the value of Moshe's praise? Despite this fact, G'd wanted Moshe to praise the Jewish people before Him so that He may be glorified.

There are many opportunities in life. However, one needs to have the clarity to recognize them. Even if one is fortunate to recognize the opportunity, one needs to have the ability to act upon it. All of these steps are necessary prerequisites to succeed in life. The Attribute of Justice (Midas HaDin) demands absolute perfection. If one is not perfect then one is not deserving. Contrastingly, the Attribute of Mercy (Midas HaRachamim) says that despite one's lack of perfection one deserves the opportunity to succeed. G'd presents opportunity to the Jew to succeed spiritually despite his deficiency because he has some degree of merit. From where does this merit emanate?

There are spiritual advocates and prosecutors for every individual. The advocates argue in the heavenly court on behalf of the individual that despite his shortcomings he should be given the chance to succeed. The prosecuting angels argue that because the Jew has failed through his transgressions he should not be given another opportunity. G'd said to Moshe that he must be the advocate for the Jewish people. If Moshe would praise the Jewish people before G'd it would bring them merit. This will cause them to have the Divine Assistance they need in order to advance to higher spiritual dimensions. Without the praise of Moshe, this opportunity would not be available to them and they would not have the opportunity to glorify G'd. Moshe's praise of the Jewish people is essential for them to be given the clarity to appreciate the opportunity that will be provided for them and thus make them more special "chosen people."

Reb Chaim of Volozhin z'tl cites a Zohar which says that before one commences the Amidah (silent prayer), he should have in mind the mitzvah of "loving your fellow as yourself." What is the relevance of this mitzvah to the Amidah? The Amidah was authored in the plural. All of our requests in this prayer address the needs of the Jewish people as a whole. One must be concerned for his fellow as he is concerned for himself. Thus, by having in mind the mitzvah of loving one's fellow, it will emphasize the central thrust of the Amidah which is that every Jew is important because he is part of a unified Jewish people who have concern and love for one another. One should pray for his fellow to succeed and have the opportunity to advance. It is by doing so that one merits the opportunity and clarity to take advantage of what is at

hand. Consequently, G'd will be glorified to a greater degree through His people.

3. The Correlation between the Purity of the Oil of the Menorah and Moshe

The Torah states, "Now you (Moshe) shall command the Children of Israel that they take for you (Moshe) pure, pressed olive oil (*shemen zayis zoch*) for illumination, to kindle the lamp continually." Rashi cites Chazal who explain that *shemen zayis zoch* (pure pressed olive oil) means that only the first droplet of oil extracted from the olive qualifies for the kindling of the Menorah.

The Midrash states, "they will take for you olive oil and not oil from nuts or any other oil because it is only olive oil that illuminates the world." One would think that since any oil can be used to bring about an illuminating flame that it too would qualify as an oil that "illuminates." However, the Torah is emphasizing that it is only olive oil that illuminates the world. The commentary on the Midrash *Zayis Raanan* cites the Gemara that states, "One who consumes olive oil will be assisted with wisdom (chochmah)." Evidently, olive oil is associated with wisdom, which is the light to the world. King Solomon writes, "A hedonist walks in the dark." Meaning, one who is immersed in physicality has no clarity. Thus, he is in the dark. The light that is associated with olive oil is not a physical light but rather wisdom, which is rooted in spirituality.

The Gemara in Tractate *Bava Basra* explains that the illumination of the Menorah symbolizes the Oral Law. Since Moshe was the conduit for the transmission of the Torah, we can understand the relationship between him and the oil of the Menorah.

Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh explains in the name of the Zohar, that in the merit of the Patriarchs the Jewish people were redeemed from three of our exiles: the Babylonian exile in the merit of Avraham, the Persian (*Poras Maadai*) exile in the merit of Yitzchak, and the Greek exile in the merit of Yaakov. The Zohar continues that the redemption of the Jews from our current exile, the Edomite exile (Roman), will be in the merit of Moshe. Moshe Rabbeinu will not allow his merit to be utilized to bring about redemption until the Jewish people properly engage in Torah study and observance. The reason our exile is so lengthy and redemption has not yet taken place is because we have not yet achieved that special quality/purity of Torah study.

Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh explains that *shemen zayis* symbolizes the study of Torah and *zoch (pure)* alludes to the purity of that study. It must be for its own sake, *Torah l'shmah*. Just as only the purest droplet of oil qualified for illumination of the Menorah, so too does one's Torah study need to be pure in its intent. He continues to explain that the words "*kasis l'maohr (crushed for illumination)*", alludes to one's willingness to sacrifice and deprive himself for the sake of Torah study.

The verse states, "*Ha kol kol Yaakov v'ha yadayim yidei Esav (the voice is the voice of Yaakov, and the hands are the hands of Esav)*." Yitzhak our Patriarch had given this blessing to his son Yaakov. "The voice of Yaakov" is referring to Torah study and *tefillah* (Prayer), which is an expression of the "voice." Chazal explain that as long as the Jewish people engage with their "voice," as the "voice" of Yaakov, (symbolic of Torah study), then the hands will not be the hands of Esav. Meaning, that Esav will not have the ability to harm or diminish the Jewish people. However, if the Jews do not utilize their voice for Torah study then the hands will be the hands of Esav. Meaning we will fall victim to the oppression and cruelty of Esav.

We can now appreciate the words of the Zohar that just as the voice/Torah of Yaakov was studied with purity, identically we can only be extracted from the oppression of Esav through that quality of Torah. Thus, Moshe will not allow his merit to be utilized for the sake of redemption unless it is studied on that special level – selflessly and with great sacrifice.

If Torah is studied in its proper context, it will affect every aspect of existence and will bring about our redemption from our current exile.

4. *The Mishkan, a Conduit for Blessing*

The Gemara in *Tractate Bava Metzia*, states, "**Blessing can only come upon something that is hidden from the eye, and not upon something which is counted, measured, or weighed.**" The Gemara presents an application of this principle. If a farmer brings in his crop and has not yet quantified his harvest, if he prays to G'd that blessing should come upon his crop it is considered a valid prayer. However, if he first quantifies his harvest prior to his prayer, then it is considered a prayer in vain.

The Mishkan was an edifice that was precisely measured and weighed at a level of exactness not to be compared. There is no other blueprint that is more specific than that of the Mishkan. Each vessel, tapestry, beam etc.

was created and assembled with the utmost precision. Its accounting needed to be exact in order to bring about its functionality. Nevertheless, the Mishkan was the conduit through which all blessing flowed to the Jewish people and to the world. Yet, this seems to be contradictory to the principle that blessing cannot come upon that which has been quantified. How could the Mishkan be the source of all blessing if in fact it was an edifice that was so precisely measured and quantified?

Maharal of Prague z'tl explains that blessing comes upon that which is not quantified because the concept of "beracha" (blessing) is a spiritual concept. Something that is spiritual has no limitation and is not subject to time, space, or location. Thus, since beracha is a spiritual concept (unlimited), if it were applied to something that is known and quantified it would be subject to physical constraints. Once blessing is in the context of the physical it no longer functions as blessing – which is purely spiritual and unlimited. This is the reason blessing only comes upon something that is "hidden from the eye."

We can differentiate between the precision and quantification of the Mishkan and other measured items such as the grain of the harvest. When the farmer weighs and measures his grain he is quantifying the reality of his harvest. The value of a bushel of grain is determined by functionality of the bushel of grain, which is its consumption value. By contrast, although the physical quantities of the Mishkan and specifications are precise, nevertheless its essence and value are of an unknown value. Its physical manifestation is only to bring about spiritual influences. Only G'd knows the true value of the Mishkan and its ramifications. Thus the Mishkan, although it was quantified in every aspect of its physicality it remained "hidden from the eye." Its physicality was only a representation. Therefore it was the conduit for the greatest dimension of blessing since its value and essence was completely incomprehensible and un-quantifiable.

The Torah tells us that vestments of the Kohen (Priest) needed to be made in the most precise and specific manner. The ply and material of the thread that were used in the vestment are meticulously described by the Torah; however, they too are only a representation of the spiritual influences brought about by the vestments. The value of the vestments is also "hidden from the eye."

The Gemara in *Tractate Sotah* tells us that G'd says to the one who is arrogant, "There is not enough room in the world for the both of us." G'd despises the one who is arrogant and haughty. He is considered an abomination. Why is this so?

One who is humble does not value himself for his own qualities. He does not quantify himself; rather, his is to do the Will of G'd and his aspiration is that his actions will be valued. Contrastingly, the arrogant individual values himself for his own qualities and achievements. He not only values his own achievements, he wants others to acknowledge them. Thus, the arrogant person quantifies himself because it is through this quantification that he perceives his own value. Therefore, G'd does not associate Himself with a limited and physical being. G'd associates Himself with the humble person because by negating himself he merits the ultimate value and Divine Assistance – since he is “hidden from the eye.”

5. To What Standard is the Jew Held? (From Terumah)

The Torah states regarding the building of the Ark, **“They (v’asu) shall make the Ark made of Acacia wood.”** In another verse the Torah states, **“You (v’asisa) shall make for yourself the Ark made of Acacia wood.”** In one verse the making of the Ark is expressed as “they/v’asu shall make” (in the plural) referring to the Jewish people and in another verse it is expressed as “you/v’asisa shall make” (in the singular) referring to Moshe. The Gemara in Tractate Yomah points out the contradiction and explains, “When the Jews are doing the Will of G'd then the verse refers to the Ark as ‘They shall make.’ However, when they are not doing the Will of G'd, the Torah refers to the building of the Ark as ‘you’ (singular- Moshe).”

When the Holy Ark (Aron) was built, the Jew’s relationship with G'd at that particular moment was either at an acceptable level or not. If so, whatever the level of relationship that existed at that time should be expressed in the Torah in the singular or plural (depending on the nature of the relationship). Evidently the Torah is alluding not to the actual building of the Ark (Aron) but rather to the Jewish people’s ongoing relationship with the Ark and what it represents. When the Jewish people identify properly with G'd, then the reference will be “they shall make the Ark.” However, when they are faltering in this area, then the Ark identifies with Moshe. How do we define “doing the Will of G'd?” Is doing the mitzvah for the sake of G'd (l’shmah) sufficient to be classified as “doing the Will of G'd?” To what standard does G'd hold the Jews?

The Gemara in Tractate Berachos presents an argument between R'Yishmael and R' Shimon Bar Yochai regarding how a Jew must invest his life in spirituality. R' Yishmael is of the opinion that a Jew should conduct his

life according to the way of the world. He should plow in the plowing season, sow in the sowing season, etc... He should commit the remainder of his time to Torah study. R' Shimon Bar Yochai argues and is of the opinion that the Jew must dedicate his life totally to Torah and be engaged in Torah study full time. R' Shimon Bar Yochai explains that if one is dedicated to this degree, then “His work shall be done by others. G'd will cause the non-Jew to do the bidding of the Jew.” R' Yishmael disagrees and cites the verse contained within the second paragraph of the Shema, **“I command you today to love Hashem, your G'd, and to serve Him, with all your heart and with all your soul - then I will provide rain for your land...that you may gather in your grain...”**

This last verse clearly indicates that even when one is fully dedicated to G'd and he fulfills the mitzvos with all of his heart and soul, he will need to bring in his own harvest after G'd provides him with rains of blessing. R' Shimon Bar Yochai responds that this verse is not a refutation of his position but rather it is referring to a context in which the Jewish people are not doing the Will of G'd. It is only then that he will need to bring in his own harvest. Evidently, according to R' Shimon Bar Yochai, one could perform the mitzvos with total dedication and still be considered as one who is not doing the Will of G'd.

Seemingly, the basis for the argument between R'Shimon Bar Yochai and R' Yishmael is - to what standard does G'd hold the Jew. R'Yishmael is of the opinion that serving G'd with all one’s heart and soul is considered meeting G'd’s criteria. Thus, R'Yishmael understands that one must invest his life in the context of the way of the world. However, R' Shimon Bar Yochai understands that this criteria is not sufficient.

The Gemara concludes, “Many (people) did as R'Shimon Bar Yochai (prescribed) but they did not succeed.” Reb Chaim of Volozhin z'tl points out that the Gemara does not say that R' Shimon Bar Yochai’s prescription for life was disproven, but rather, it tells us that his standard of perfection is not feasible for most people but only for the few. As the Gemara states, “Many (people)” attempted – inferring that a minority had succeeded.

In order to identify with the Holy Ark (Aron) one must reflect the purity of the gold from which it was made-whether it is R'Yishmael’s standard of purity or the purity described by R' Shimon B'Yochai. Moshe Rabbeinu, regardless of the purity of the Jewish people, always identifies with the Holy Ark because of his dimension of spirituality, which was the purest. When the Jewish people

live their lives as G'd had requested of them, then the Ark identifies with the Jewish people. However, if they should fall short of G'd's expectation, then it only identifies with Moshe.

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7:25 - 8:20 am	Davening Followed by Breakfast
8:20 - 8:45 am	Mishna
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