

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*

Dean

1. Humility- The Basis for Purity and Sacrifice

The Torah states, "Now you (Moshe) shall command the Children of Israel that they take for you pure, pressed olive oil (*shemen zayis zoch*) for illumination, to kindle the lamp continually." Rashi cites the Gemara in Tractate Menachos which explains that the oil that was used for the kindling of the Menorah had no sediment in it because it was only pressed and not ground. Only the first droplet of oil extracted from the olive qualified for kindling.

The Gemara in Tractate *Bava Basra* tells us that the Menorah symbolizes the Oral Law. Its illumination is the equivalent of the Oral law elucidating the Written Law. The Gemara states, "If one wishes to become wise, he should recite the Amidah (Silent Prayer) in a southerly direction because the Menorah was located on the southern wall of the covered sanctuary." Since the Menorah represents wisdom on the most cogent level the Jew who prays in its direction is able to draw clarity from it. It is only the purest olive oil that is able to draw Divine Assistance at its most advanced level.

The Gemara in Tractate Megillah states, "If one were to say, 'I have toiled and have not come upon it (the truth of Torah).' You should not believe. If one were to claim, 'I have not toiled and have come upon it. You should not believe. If one were to say, 'I have toiled and have come upon it.' You should believe." It is only if one truly applies himself sufficiently that he will come upon the truth of Torah. Why is toil and sacrifice the prerequisite to come upon the truth Torah? It is because the Torah states, "...**pure, pressed/crushed olive oil ...**" It is only when the olive is pressed that one could extract the purest droplet of oil that qualifies for illumination. Since the Divine Assistance that is needed to come upon the truth of Torah emanates from the oil of the Menorah, which came about through "crushing" the olive, identically in order for one to have relevance to that truth, one must apply himself in a similar manner.

The Gemara in Tractate Taanis tells us that Reb Yehoshua ben Chananya was one of the greatest Torah sages of his time who was recognized for his exceptional wisdom. He was not physically an attractive person, but rather was extremely ugly. The daughter of the Roman Emperor asked him, "How could such beautiful wisdom be contained in such an ugly vessel?" He replied, "Tell your father's wine steward to take his best wines out of their earthen casks and transfer them into golden and silver vessels." She followed his instructions and in a number of days all the wine soured. When the Emperor had discovered what had taken place, he summoned Reb Yehoshua ben Chananya to explain why he had advised his daughter as he had. He responded to the Emperor, "Your daughter had difficulty understanding how could such exceptional wisdom be contained in such an ugly vessel? My response to her was that the Torah is compared to wine. When wine is contained in a golden vessel, despite its precious nature, it sours because the properties of the metal intermingle with it causing it to turn. Wine is only able to retain its character and quality when it remains in its unadulterated state – when it is within an earthenware cask. The earthen cask only absorbs but does not transfer its own properties into the wine. Similarly Torah can only retain its integrity and purity when nothing else intermingles with it. If one, because of his ego, chooses to process it as he sees fit, then it is no longer the unadulterated Word of G'd. Thus, if one has less reason to pride himself, he will be more humble. He then qualifies to be the greater receptacle for the Torah. If my physical appearance were to be even more displeasing my grasp of Torah would be even on a more profound level."

The Gemara also compares Torah to water. Just as water flows from an elevated location to a low-lying one, so too Torah can only be contained within one who is humble. Humility is the prerequisite to qualify to be the repository for Torah.

The reason one does not sufficiently toil in the study of Torah is because he has personal conflicts, which stem from his lack of humility. The selfless application of oneself to Torah study is an infringement on his own needs and interests. It is only the one who is humble who can

apply himself sufficiently to be compared with the olive that is crushed to extract from it the purest droplet of oil.

2. What is Necessary to Achieve Joy?

The Torah tells us that the Breastplate (*Choshen*) that was worn on the heart of the Kohen Gadol (High Priest) had twelve stones. Each was engraved with one of the names of the tribes of Israel. The Torah states, **“Aaron shall bear the names of the sons of Israel on the Breastplate of Judgment when he enters the Sanctuary, as a constant remembrance before Hashem. Into the Breastplate of Judgment shall you place the Urim and the Tumim, and they shall be on Aaron’s heart when he comes before Hashem; and Aaron shall bear judgment of the Children of Israel on his heart constantly before Hashem.”** What is the significance of the Torah’s reiteration of the fact that the Breastplate was worn on the “heart” of Aaron, the High Priest?

The Torah tells us that when G’d appeared to Moshe in the desert at the burning bush He had entered into a seven-day dialogue with him. Moshe was told by G’d that he was chosen to be the Redeemer of Israel. Moshe was obstinate in accepting this role. Ultimately it was revealed that Moshe was obstinate because he was concerned that if he had accepted the role as Redeemer he would slight his older brother Aaron. G’d told Moshe that he should not be concerned, because Aaron, when he would be made aware that his brother was chosen to be the Redeemer he would go out and greet him with “joy in his heart.” The obstinacy of Moshe was considered a disrespect to G’d. He consequently forfeited his right to be the Kohen. This role was transferred to his brother Aaron. Chazal tell us that because Aaron greeted Moshe with “joy in his heart,” he merited to have the Breastplate of Judgment worn upon his heart. Aaron, the High Priest, was considered unusual because, although he was the elder brother and should have had a degree of envy- he did not.

In order for the Breastplate to function it needed to be worn on the heart of High Priest and it needed to have the name of G’d inserted into its fold. The prerequisite for the Breastplate to function was that the heart of the High Priest needed to be pure and joyous.

The verse in Psalms tell us that one must serve G’d with joy. The Torah tells us that when the Kohanim officiated, there was a “service of the service.” Meaning, there was an additional service in which music and song accompanied the Kohen. This was intended to evoke joy within them. If one understands and appreciates the great

privilege of serving G’d, then experiencing joy would be a natural consequence. It is only the one who does not understand and appreciate this opportunity will not experience joy.

One can only pray selflessly for another if he has love in his heart for his fellow. When one has any degree of issue with another, then it becomes difficult to pray wholeheartedly for him. Reb Chaim of Volozhin cites the Zohar that before one begins the Amidah (Silent Prayer), one must have in mind the positive commandment of loving one’s fellow as himself. This is because the supplications of the Amidah are written in the plural-addressing the needs of the entire Jewish people. The recitation of the Amidah corresponds to the communal offerings that were brought in the Temple. These communal offerings evoked the necessary level of Divine Assistance that was needed for the Jewish people. Thus, the Amidah is inherently a communal prayer and not a personal one. For one to be deserving of G’d’s assistance, his prayers must conform with this format. One can only truly pray for his fellow when he feels love/concern for him. Therefore one should reflect upon the mitzvah of loving one’s fellow before beginning the Amidah. When one has love for his fellow, he consequently experiences joy in his heart. Conversely if there is no love between individuals, there is a degree of negativity. Thus there is no joy. One is an outgrowth of the other.

Aaron, the High Priest, had a unique level of love for his fellow Jew. The Mishna in Pirkei Avos (Ethics of our Fathers) states, “You should be of the disciples of Aaron, who loved peace and pursued peace.” The Gemara in Tractate Bava Basera tells us that the reason the Divine Presence was removed from the Jewish people after the sin of the spies (when they wandered the desert for a period of forty years) was because they were in a depressed state. The generation between the ages of 20 and 60 were meant to perish over this period of time. The Divine Presence only rests upon one who is in a joyous state. Since Aaron was the one who had purity of heart, he did not possess any negativity. Thus he experienced an exceptional level of joy. It is therefore befitting that he should be the one to be qualified to wear the Breastplate of Judgment on his heart.

3. The Song of Songs – the Most Special of the Scriptures

The Torah states, **“Now you shall command...”** The Midrash cites a verse from the Song of Songs, “King Solomon writes, ‘How beautiful are you My dearest. How

beautiful...’ Rebbe Akiva states: From the beginning of existence until the moment the Song of Songs was given to the Jewish people, existence was not as worthwhile as that moment. All of the Scriptures are considered holy, however, the Song of Songs is considered ‘holy of holies.’ Reb Elazar ben Azarya explains, ‘It is analogous to a king who had taken a large measure of wheat and had given it to his baker. He instructed the baker to take from the wheat a certain amount of the purest flour and an amount of lesser qualities of flour. The baker was then to make one special loaf of bread from the finest flour. Similarly all the Scriptures are holy; however in comparison the Song of Songs is considered ‘holy of holies.’ Why is this so? It is because in the Song of Songs we see to what degree G’d praises His children, the Jewish people. G’d Himself refers to the Jewish people as – ‘How beautiful are you My dearest. How beautiful...’ Why is the term ‘beautiful’ reiterated? It is because the Jewish people are beautiful in their actions. In addition the achievements of their forefathers are also beautiful. They are beautiful in their houses and beautiful in their fields –because their homes are adorned with mezuzos. In the field, they give the tithes of their harvest to the Kohen, Levy and the needy. They are beautiful in their rooftops because they construct parapets around their roofs...’

The Song of Songs is the most special of scripture because in it, G’d expresses His special love for the Jewish people. The beauty of the Jew lies in the fact that despite his physicality and inclinations for the material, he addresses his spiritual responsibilities by adhering to the Word of G’d. The Mitzvos have relevance to every aspect of the life of the Jew. They touch upon every aspect of his existence. Contrastingly, the life of a non-Jew is governed by the Seven Noahide Laws, which only dictate that he must live as a civilized human being. However outside of this context, his conduct is determined by his own prerogative. Thus, he has no relevance in advancing his spirituality. G’d Himself, in the Song of Songs, attests to the fact that the Jewish people have succeeded in addressing their potential – thus establishing themselves as spiritual beings. They are therefore identified by G’d as “beautiful.”

G’d created this existence for His Glory. His Glory is achieved through the Jewish people when they abide by the dictates of the Torah. The Song of Songs is considered to be the equivalent of the “Holy of Holies” because it is G’d’s confirmation that His people are adhering to His Will. By G’d expressing His special love for them, He attests to the fact that the Jewish people are fulfilling the objective of Creation. Although at Sinai the Jewish people accepted the Torah unequivocally, it was

only an expression of their faith and commitment to G’d. However, it was not yet proven that they would in fact carry through. The Song of Songs, which was written many generations after Sinai, confirms that their role as the Jewish people had been actualized. Therefore, the day that the Song of Songs was given to the Jewish people was considered one of the most special days of existence.

4. 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.

5. 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.

6. 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."

YAD AVRAHAM DAILY CLASS SCHEDULE

*Energize your day...
... with a solid morning of Torah study*

Monday Through Friday

| | |
|----------------|--------------------------------|
| 5:50- 6:00 am | Chumash with Rashi |
| 6:00- 6:15 am | Pirkei Avos |
| 6:15- 6:30 am | Mishna Berurah |
| 6:30- 7:25 am | Halacha |
| 6:30 -6:45 am | Mussar |
| 6:45 -7:25 am | Talmud—Tractate Avodah Zorah |
| 7:25 - 8:20 am | Davening Followed by Breakfast |
| 8:20 - 8:45 am | Mishna |
| 9:00 -10:00 am | Daf Yomi |

2:00pm Mincha

Special Weekday Classes

Monday

11:15 – 12:15pm **Talmud**
Location: Sunrise Capital 641 Lexington (25th FL.)
Enter on 54th Street

12:30 – 1:30pm **Talmud: Pesachim**
Location: Shandholt 488 Madison Avenue
Between E.51st and E.52st

Tuesday

12:15 - 1:15pm **Torah Insight Based on the Parsha**
Location: Yad Avraham

Wednesday

11:30 – 12:30 pm **Talmud**
Location: Sunrise Capital 641 Lexington (25th FL.)
Enter on 54th Street

1:00—2:00 pm **Derech Hashem**
Location: Yad Avraham

Thursday

10:30 –11:30am **Tehilim with Malbim**
Location: Yad Avraham

12:00 – 1:00 pm **Talmud**
Location: Sunrise Capital 641 Lexington (25th FL.)
Enter on 54th Street