

שמע קולנו



SHEMA KOLEINU: DIVREI TORAH FROM THE REBBEIM, TALMIDIM, AND FACULTY OF MTA

Parshas Tetzaveh

פרשת תצוה

Pure Life

Naftali Frankel ('24)

Subsequent to the Torah's delineation of the many details of the *keilim* and structure of the *Mishkan*, *Parshas Tetzaveh*, following a brief passage regarding the oil of the *Menorah*, directs our attention toward those who would perform the *avodah* in the aforementioned *Mishkan*. At the start of *perek chaf ches*, Hashem tells Moshe, "*hakreiv eilecha es Aharon achicha v'es banav ito... l'chahano li, Aharon, Nadav, v'Avihu, Elazar, v'Itamar, bnei Aharon*"—"Bring near to yourself your brother Aharon and his sons with him... to serve Me, Aharon, Nadav, and Avihu, Elazar and Itamar, the sons of Aharon." Upon a brief look at this *passuk*, one will notice that Hashem makes a clear effort to mention the names of each of Aharon's sons, despite having already said "Aharon and his sons." The reason for this, as explained by the Ibn Ezra, is that it is possible that Aharon had other children who were not fit for the *kehunah*, making it necessary for the *passuk* to specify the sons who would be granted priesthood. This idea is also reflected in the Ramban's explanation of the seemingly superfluous mentioning of each of the sons, as he answers that Hashem did not want

Moshe to think that by appointing Aharon as a *kohen*, his sons would automatically gain this priestly status. Instead, the Ramban writes, it was necessary for Moshe to personally appoint each son, excluding other descendants of Aharon in the process. It is evident from both of these explanations that eligibility for the role of *kohen* was limited, and that Aharon, along with each of these four sons, possessed special character and status that allowed them to serve as the *kohanim*.

Interestingly, the Torah precedes the designation of the *kohanim* with two *pesukim* that concisely describe the commandment to produce *shemen zayis zach*—pure olive oil—for the lighting of the

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Menorah. It is here that Rashi explains that to produce *shemen zayis zach*, one must beat the olives, as grinding them would result in the oil containing sediment, which would render the oil impure. Additionally, only the oil from the initial crushing of the olives could be taken as *shemen zayis zach*, and any oil that results from further processing would not be suitable for the *Menorah*. Finally, the Ramban points out that once the oil was made, it was necessary to bring the oil to Moshe to be examined. It is clear from this meticulous procedure that, to serve as fuel for the *Menorah*—the perpetual testimony that the *Shechinah* dwells among *Bnei Yisrael*—the oil required a thorough refinement, and would be unfit otherwise.

The juxtaposition of the topics regarding the oil required for the *Menorah* and the selection of the *kohanim* should not be viewed as incidental; rather, it should be used to identify a glaring theme that these two subjects share. As we have seen, the creation of pure olive oil for the *Menorah* necessitated a full physical refinement, one that would result in an adulterated product that contained no residue. It can be deduced from here that until an item contained no remnant of its formerly impure self, and reached its highest potential, it would not be fit for use in the *Mishkan*. It is this idea, the refinement of one's self, that played a driving role in the selection of the *kohanim*. Evidenced by the *peirushim* of the Ibn Ezra and Ramban, it was likely due to their exclusive character and temperament that Aharon and his sons were eligible to receive priesthood. It is justifiable to assume that this included a substantial degree of physical and mental separation from material life. In other words, it is conceivable that a major aspect of the uniqueness of Aharon and his sons was that they were able to maintain a refinement of the physical self, to better serve, and enhance the spiritual aspect of their being. This can be seen from the fact that the role of the *kohanim* was to take that which is material, such as animals, incense, or oil, and, through the *avodah*, utilize it as an act of spiritual service of G-d. Alternatively, we can see that misuse of material items, specifically in the context of *kehunah*, is a grave sin. This is most blatantly seen in the context of the sin of Nadav and Avihu, in which they entered the *kodesh* while intoxicated, and were subsequently killed. It does not appear to be coincidental that, at the moment physical pleasures were inappropriately combined with the *avodah* in the *Mishkan*, Nadav, and Avihu, who were supposed to serve as the paragons of those who can use the physical to serve the spiritual, fell to their tragic deaths.

It is through these ideas of the *shemen zayis zach* and the *kehunah* that one must strive to remember that all of the physical objects that we possess, or desire to possess, are not an end, but rather a means toward a higher spiritual goal. Through a refinement of our view of the physical world, and ridding ourselves of those things that contaminate us, we will *im yirtzeh Hashem* achieve a form of pure life.

'The Clothes Make the Man', or Do They?

Yehuda Jannenbaum ('26)

"The clothes make the man" is a famous idiom used to illustrate the point that a person is judged and perceived based on how they dress. In regards to the *kohanim*, the temple serving faction of the Jews, clothes mean more than just that. What exactly is the reason that the *kohanim* had to wear special clothing for their service in the *mishkan*? Why wouldn't regular clothes be enough? All of the commenters point out that the *begadim* served not just to spotlight the significance of what the *kohanim* were doing, but also so that *Am Yisrael* would realize the importance of the holy work. The *Ramban* points out that the *begadim* were akin to clothing of royalty and thus elevated the *kohanim* to a similar status. The clothing was made like this so that whenever someone saw the *kohanim* going about their daily work, they would see people who dressed like kings in order to do the service of Hashem, who is the king of kings.

The *Sforno* takes a different approach, explaining that the *begadim* actually symbolized the glory and splendor of Hashem, but what exactly does that mean? The *Malbim* explains that glory refers to someone's God given abilities, while splendor refers to what someone has earned through their own accomplishments. The *begadim* of the *kohanim* thus symbolized both, the glory of being born a *kohen* and having the opportunity to work in the *Mishkan*, and the splendor of what they actually did with that option, choosing to dedicate themselves to Hashem and thus spiritually uplifting themselves and all of *Am Yisroel*. Furthermore when describing the *begadim* that the *kohanim* would wear, the *gemara* in *Yoma* (35b) says that the garments that the *kohanim* wore must be made of materials that belonged to *Klal Yisroel* and were donated to the *Mishkan*.

The reason for this is that this symbolizes that the *kohanim* were servants of the people and thus must completely submit themselves to the will of the

people, even going as far as only wearing what the *tzibur* has given him. A *kohen* couldn't even wear a bandage while doing the *avodah* because it would be a barrier between him and the *begadim* that he wore! (Zevachim 19a) All of these different explanations for the *begadim* that the *kohanim* wore highlight one important fact, that despite the fact that the clothes themselves lend a certain air of royalty and honor to the *kohanim*, it was actually the *kohanim* themselves who made the *begadim* what they were. So perhaps it's better to say that "the man makes the clothes," and not the other way around.

The Hidden Meaning of Colors

Noah Segelnick ('24)

In *Parshas Tetzaveh*, Hashem gives Moshe instructions regarding the creation of the *Kohanim's* garments. One aspect of these garments that is stressed many times throughout the *pesukim* is the colors they should be made of. These colors are first mentioned in *Shemos* (28:5), "And they shall take the gold, the sky blue, the purple, and the red wool and the [white] linen." Like everything else in the Torah, Hashem did not choose these colors at random. There must be a hidden meaning that can be discerned by analyzing these specific colors. The best way to do this is by looking at some other times these colors appear throughout *Tanach*.

In *Aicha* (4:7) the *passuk* states, "her princes were whiter than snow... their appearance ruddier than rubies." In *Shir Hashirim* we read, "My beloved is pure and reddish." In both these cases, it appears that the color red is associated with appearances or base physicality.

This form of physicality however, if not held in check, could lead one down horrible roads resulting in violence and bloodshed. All one has to do is look at *Esav*, someone known as the epitome of physicality, and for his red appearance. It is recorded in *Bereshis Raba* that *Esav's* red countenance was a sign that he would be destined to spill blood. As we can see, Hashem uses the color red throughout *Tanach* to represent a type of physicality that we should all strive to distance ourselves from.

Regarding the topic of color, Rav Shimshon Raphael Hirsch has an outstanding insight. He writes that when light is shined through a prism and breaks off into many different colors, it is the color red that is closest to the unbroken ray of light absorbed by the prism. This seems to indicate that light's very first meeting with the earthly world is imbued with red. Red could represent that first bit of divine light shining through the earthly beings that we all are. It could represent someone who is just starting on their journey to reach their full potential.

If red is the color of one's humble start on their spiritual journey, then what color would represent the completion of that journey? It should be, according to Rav Hirsch, the color that diverges the most from the light shined into a prism, the color that just so happens to be *techeiles* blue. The same color blue that is compared to Hashem's very throne. The Rambam, when discussing *Tzitzis*, brings up the connection between the word *techeiles* and the word *tachlis*, goals and achievements. This further shows that blue represents the ideal summit of one's spiritual quest. Not only that, but the only item in the *Mishkan* to be wrapped in the color blue while *Bnei*

A Short Vort

Flisha Cohen ('24)

"וְאֵתָהּ תְּדַבֵּר אֶל-כָּל-חֲכָמֵי לֵב אֲשֶׁר מִלְּאֵתִי רוּחַ חֵכְמָה וַעֲשׂוּ אֶת-בְּגָדֵי אֶהְרֹן לְקֹדֶשׁ לְכַהֲנֹתִי" (שמות כח:ג)

"Speak to all who are wise in heart, whom I have filled with the spirit of wisdom, and have them make Aharon's garments, to sanctify him to serve Me" (Shemos 28:3)

This *pasuk* talks about making the special clothing for Aharon, the *Kohen Gadol*. It says that Hashem wants skilled and wise people to make these garments because they're not just regular clothes. They are special and holy and will highlight the level of holiness that Aharon *Hakohen* is on. The *Haemek Davar* mentions that Hashem is not just requesting that they be wise people, rather the *pasuk* says "wise in the heart". The *Haemek Davar* answers that this means they are wise because they truly understand the power of God and are in awe of Him. This is the beginning of true wisdom. In the *sefer* "The Art of Tefillah" (See Chapter 2), it highlights the importance of understanding the power of Hashem. The best way to connect to Him is by believing He is there and He is real. This is what Hashem means when He says "wise in the heart". *Im yirtzeh Hashem* we will all be able to realize that Hashem is constantly with us, and understand the power He holds. When we realize this, we will ultimately become much closer to Him.

Yisrael were traveling was the *Aron* itself, the epitome of *kedusha*.

It is safe to say that red and blue are opposites; one represents the very beginning while one represents the very end. So then what would purple represent? Purple is just a combination of red and blue, or the middle part of one's journey. No one can make the jump straight from red to blue, there must be that purple phase in between that everyone must cross. The final color mentioned in the *pesukim* is white. White, as seen most prominently on *Yom Kippur*, is a representation of purity and *teshuvah*. It is only by embracing the spiritual cleansing that white offers that one can hope to rise through the ranks from red to purple to blue.

All of us should strive to eventually bring our *avodas Hashem* into the blue category. However, that is more difficult for some people than for others. What we should all do is try to recognize where we are standing on this red-blue spiritual color spectrum and position ourselves facing the blue. If we recognize where we are and where we want to end up, it will make the process of getting there that much easier.

Could You Make the Menorah?

Dovid Winston ('24)

The Gemara (*Menachos* 29a) says that it was difficult for Moshe *Rabbeinu* to understand how to make the *menorah* in the *Mishkan* (mentioned in this week's *parshah*) until Hashem showed him how with His finger (Himself). There is a well-known *Medrash* (*Tanchuma*, *Shemini* 8) that Hashem therefore told him, "Cast the gold into the fire, and the *menorah* will be made from it." However, this *Medrash* is rather difficult. Moshe *Rabbeinu* had no trouble with any of the other *keilim* for the *Mishkan*, but for some reason he did with the *menorah*? Furthermore, regarding the construction of the *Mishkan*, Hashem told him that he should set it up "*kemishpato asher hareisa bahar*"—"like its law that you will be shown on the mountain [Sinai] (*Shemos* 26:30)." When it came time for construction though, even after being shown how on *Har Sinai*, Moshe *Rabbeinu* still somehow didn't know how to make the *menorah*.

To understand, it is necessary to preface with the essence of the *Mishkan* and its *keilim*. In both *Terumah* and *Tetzaveh*, we see that the *Mishkan* and its *keilim* are all made from *gashmius*: gold, silver, copper, etc. How are we making a dwelling place for

the *Shechinah* from such worldly items? It would make more sense if our learning and davening would build a *Mishkan*, so to speak. However, it is our gold that is creating this miracle?! Shlomo *Hamelech* asked the same thing (*Melachim* 1 8:27): "*Hinei hashamayim ushmei hashamayim lo yechal'kelucha af ki habayis hazeh*..."—"Behold, the heavens and the heavens' heavens can't contain you, how much more so this house," referring to the *Beis Hamikdash*.

The Alter Rebbe writes in *Tanya* (chapter 47), quoting the *Zohar* (II, 140b), that in the *pasuk* in *parshas Terumah* (*Shemos* 25:2), "*veyikchu li terumah*"—"they shall take for me an offering," the word "*li*" could be understood as "*osi*," meaning "they shall take Me." In this case, the *pasuk* should have said "*uterumah*"—"Me and an offering." Answers the *Zohar*, "*ela mishum dchula chad*"—"rather, because everything is one." This means that all materials that were enumerated as necessary for the construction of the *Mishkan*, although they are physical materials, are one thing with "*li*." Everything in the world only exists as long as Hashem continues to will it into existence. Thus, everything is truly part of Hashem and has a Divine spark within it. It is only our job to realize this in everything and to bring this from hidden to revealed. This is the concept of using physical, lowly materials to construct a truly infinite dwelling place, beyond the definitions of nature. It was specifically through these means that we are very able to see the Divine spark revealed and transformed into *Elokus*.

From this, we can understand why Moshe *Rabbeinu* was troubled specifically by forming the *menorah*. The concept of the *menorah* is to expel darkness with light, specifically as a testimony to the world that the *Shechinah* rests on *Bnei Yisrael* (*Gemara Shabbos* 22b). Moshe *Rabbeinu* couldn't understand how gold could be turned into something like this. So, Hashem told him that really, it is only Hashem who can do this.

Our part in this is to take our gold and throw it in the fire, and with this, Hashem will make a *menorah* for the *Mishkan*. When Hashem said, "*veshachanti besocham*"—"I will dwell among them," it can be understood as, "I will dwell in them," that we each are really a miniature *Beis Hamikdash*. When a Jew uses all his physicality to form himself further into a *Beis Hamikdash*, Hashem tells him to take all the gold and the choicest of the *gashmius* and make a *menorah*. Not only our learning and davening, but also that we should take what seems like the lowliest things and transform them into *kedushah*. We can't make the *menorah* ourselves, but if we remove the gold from

Parsha Puzzlers!

1. Where were the *avnei shoham* previously mentioned in the Torah?
2. Who in the Torah has a name that is one of the Kohen Gadol's articles of clothing?
3. Only three items in the *midbar* were required to be *miksha* – hammered and formed from the same piece. What were they?

Answers:

1. In *Bereishis* 2:12, the Torah describes various characteristics of the locations where the waters of Gan Eden reached. One of the characteristics of the land of Chavila is the presence of "shoham" stones.

2. In *Bamidbar* 34:23, the *Nasi* of *Shevet Menashe* was *Chaniel ben Ephod*. The *Ephod* was also one of the articles of clothing of the Kohen Gadol.

3. The *keruvim* (*Shemos* 25:18), the *menorah* (*Shemos* 25:31), and the *chatzotzros* (*Bamidbar* 10:2) were all required to be *miksha*.

These questions and answers were adapted from "Torah IQ: The Great Torah Riddle Book" with the permission of the author.

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