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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

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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

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 Shechinah dwells among Bnei Yisrael—the 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)

"וְאַתָּה תְּדַבֵּר אֶל־כָּל־חַכְמִי־לֵב אֲשֶׁר מִלֵּאתִיו רוּחַ חָכְמָה וְעָשׂוּ אֶת־בִּגְדֵי אַהֲרֹן לְקַדְּשׁוֹ לְכַהֲנוֹ־לִי״ (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 *teshuva*. 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 the pasuk should have case, "uterumah"—"Me and an offering." Answers the Zohar, 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

our hearts and bring a flame to Hashem to burn it, we will not only build our personal *Batei Mikdash*, but also spread light into the world and show that the *Shechinah* dwells among the Jews.

It Just Doesn't Click

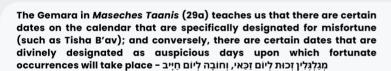
Noam Sheffey ('25)

At the tail end of this week's parsha, we learn about the Mizbe'ach Hazahav, the mizbe'ach on which the ketores was burned. At first glance, it appears reasonable that the mizbe'ach would be mentioned here, as Tetzaveh and the surrounding parshiyos are all about the Mishkan. However, taking a closer look at the context in which the discussion of the mizbe'ach is placed will reveal something surprising. The parsha is filled with themes including the clothing of the kohen hedyot and the kohen gadol, the inauguration ritual, and even the korban tamid. While

the Mizbe'ach Haketores may seem to fit with these topics, a question should arise: Why wasn't the Mizbeach Haketores mentioned in Parshas Terumah, which dealt with the construction of the other keilim in the Mishkan? The Mizbeach Haketores indeed fits the credentials to be in last week's parsha, so why is it talked about here? The Kedushas Levi gives an answer that could provide some insight into why this is the case. He presents the idea that it was the ketores that proved Aharon's legitimacy as the kohen gadol. With this in mind, it only makes sense that after having just spent parts of the parsha learning about the clothing of the kohen gadol, who, of course, is Aharon, we should talk about the very things that reinforced Aharon's role as kohen gadol. This idea could clarify why one of the vessels that should have appeared last week in Parshas Terumah instead appears this week, in Parshas Tetzaveh.

Yahrzeits & Insights: This Week in Jewish History

A Jime to Build - 16 Adar



The 16th of Adar, this coming Sunday, is certainly one such auspicious occasion; a day that has brought a sense of hope and rejuvenation throughout the ages. Allow me to illustrate:

In Megillas Taanis, in the 12th perek, we are told as follows:

בשיתא עשר ביה שריו למבנא שור ירושלים דְּלָא לְמִסְפָּד מפּני שסתרוהו אויבים וכשהתחילו לבנותו אותו היום עשאוהו י"ט

"On the 16th (of Adar) they (the Jews) were permitted to (re)build the walls of Yerushalayim; it is therefore forbidden to say a eulogy (on that day)...and the day that they began reconstruction was designated as a holiday."

The above passage likely refers to the second of the following occurrences, although it could possibly refer to both:

On the 16th of Adar, in the year 3390 from creation (just before the reign of Achashveirosh), King Cyrus of Persia granted permission for the building of the second Beis Hamikdash.

Exactly 412 years later, on 16 Adar, in the year 3802/42 CE (just 28 years before the destruction of the Second Beis Hamikdash), King Agrippa I, who was pious and kind to his Jewish subjects, ordered that construction to repair, broaden and heighten the *chomah*, wall, around Yerushalayim, begin. During his reign, the Jews began to prosper and live comfortably. The Sages of the time accorded him great respect. The Romans, wary of the Jews' rising prosperity, placed many obstacles in King Agrippa's way. Nevertheless, the wall was ultimately completed, (although the finished product was not as magnificent as originally planned).

Hence, we see how the 16th of Adar became a fulfillment of the aforementioned statement of מגלגלין זכוּת ליום זכאיי.



But that would not be the last occasion when 16 Adar would be marked as an auspicious time of rebuilding; in an eerie precognition of sorts, the words of the Megillas Taanis would once again be realized, albeit in the very distant future, and a different part of the globe:

It was 1614 years later, on the 16th of Adar in the year 5416, corresponding to March 12, 1656, that the Jews of New Amsterdam (eventually to become New York) were officially denied the legal right to erect a synagogue, by the virulently anti-Semitic Governor Peter Stuyvesant ym"s. In 1654 he wrote: "The Jews who have arrived would nearly all like to remain here, but... [we have] deemed it useful to require them in a friendly way to depart.....so that the deceitful race – such hateful enemies and blasphemers of the name of (their lord) – not be allowed further to infect and trouble this new colony." (The Jews were spared eviction only because the Dutch West Indian Company was heavily dependent on Jewish investments. Stuyvesant contented himself with subjecting the Jews to paying unreasonably heavy taxes.)

But in somewhat of a Divine twist of fate, the date of the 16th of Adar would experience a modernized "venahafoch hu", not for the Jews of Shushan, but for the Jews of New York:

It was 240 years later, on the very same date (and on the very same territory!) as Stuyvesant's refusal to allow a synagogue, on 16 Adar (II) of 5656; March 20, 1896, that Yeshivas Rabbeinu Yitzchak Elchanan Theological Seminary (RIETS), the first established Institute of Higher Talmudic Studies (Yeshiva) in the United States, was incorporated!

Once again, the principle of מְגַלְגְּלִין זְכוּת לְיוֹם זַכָּאי was clearly demonstrated, this time on American soil!

Of course, we hope and pray for the ultimate וקבצנו יחד מארבע of יוֹם זָכָאי of וקבצנו יחד מארבע; may it be speedily in our days!

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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:

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

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.

I. 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.

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

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Format

Pinchas Rosenfeld

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