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קול תורה

Parashat Tetzaveh

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GO AHEAD, JUDGE A BOOK BY ITS COVER

by Rabbi Chaim Poupko

Great comedians often make very astute observations. For instance, one famous comedian imagined what it would have been like had there been a coin-toss at the beginning of the American Revolutionary War, as there is at the beginning of a football game. Clearly, the colonists won the coin toss, as that provides the only explanation as to how the colonists managed to wear the camouflage they wanted and ambush the British as they pleased, while the British soldiers remained out in the open in their bright red uniforms.

The British weren't the only ones in history to be over-dressed for battle. At the beginning of World War I, the French army was still wearing its stylish red pants and blue coats that it had been wearing for centuries. When the minister of defense attempted to change the uniforms, he was rebuffed with the assertion that "red trousers are France!" With the severe losses the French army suffered during the war, naturally their uniform was changed.

The mistake of these two armies is related to a key lesson that emerges from this week's Torah reading. Parashat Tetzaveh describes at length the uniform that the Kohanim wore during their service in the Mishkan. Moshe is commanded "*VeAsita Vigdei Kodesh LeAharon Achicha LeChavod ULeTifaret*" "and you shall make holy garments for Aharon your brother for honor and beauty" (Shemot 28:2).

In other words, the primary function of the clothing that the Kohanim wore was to bring honor and beauty to their service. That's why Ramban suggests that the clothing the Kohanim wore was characteristic of royal garments. In this light, clothing can be understood as a means of fostering a certain attitude or atmosphere. They are a means to achieve a certain goal, but they are not the goal in and of themselves. This was the mistake of those

armies who chose fashion over function for their uniforms. Instead of looking at the function of their clothing – and whether it was serving a greater purpose – they looked at their clothing and its style as a goal in and of itself.

Clothing is crucially important even outside service in the Mishkan. It represents how we project ourselves to those around us. While no one should be judged strictly by what they wear, it would be a mistake to ignore the messages we convey to others by our clothing. Just as the uniform of the Kohanim projected honor and beauty, what we wear projects our values and our attitude towards our surroundings. The aphorism "don't judge a book by its cover" doesn't apply here. Instead, one's outer appearance should reflect his or her inner attitude. It's the reverse of Rabban Gamliel's standard by which he measured people. He insisted that one should be "Tocho KeBaro" – one's inner sincerity should match his outer deeds and words. We learn the reverse from the clothing of the Kohanim, that the way one projects him or herself on the outside should match what he or she believes in the inside.

STARTING ON THE RIGHT FOOT

by Avi Finkelstein ('16)

In both Parashat Tetzaveh and Parashat Pinchas, we are instructed to bring one Keves in the morning and one in the evening, but looking closely at the Pesukim reveals one minor contrast in language – the letter "Hei." In Tetzaveh, which speaks of the initial consecration of the Mizbei'ach, the Keves is described as "HaKeves HaEchad," "the one [specific] sheep" (Shemot 29:39). In Pinchas, which speaks of the everyday Avodah, the Torah simply refers to the Keves as "HaKeves Echad" (BeMidbar 28:4), leaving out that all-important "Hei HaYediah," "the emphasizing Hei."

Rav Yissocher Frand of Yeshivas Ner Yisroel explains that in order to understand the lesson of this discrepancy in language, we must understand the contexts in which the two phrases appear. Rav Frand quotes the Brisker Rav, who, in his discussion on this topic, points out that the morning Keves can be offered independently of the evening one and the evening Keves

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independently of the morning in all instances except one: the initial offering described in Parashat Tetzaveh. This Halachah is derived from the Hei HaYediah which describes the Keves described in Tetzaveh. The Sefer Shemen HaTov draws on this point to teach an ethical lesson, namely that when one begins something new, he must do it properly. The initial steps in a process are critical in setting the tone for the entirety of its duration; therefore, it would be inappropriate to consecrate something as important as the Mizbei'ach with a "half-baked" Avodah. In order to properly set the tone for our Korbanot to Hashem, it was critical that both the morning and evening Keves be brought, even if that high standard would not be obligatory forever.

Rav Frand tells over that when the current Beit Midrash in Yeshivas Ner Yisroel was built, the Rosh Yeshivah, Rav Ruderman zt'l, called on everyone to, for at least the first week, refrain from idle talk while inside. Rav Ruderman hoped that if everybody acted properly in the Beit Midrash during its first week, it would hopefully set a tone which would be able to enhance the learning of every Talmid in that Beit Midrash from its initial week of use and on. The Hei HaYediah in Parashat Tetzaveh teaches us to focus on our beginnings and make sure that they are done right.

FRATERNAL ROLES

by Eitan Leff ('18)

In Parashat Tetzaveh, Hashem designates Aharon and his descendants to serve as the Kohanim (Shemot 28:1). The ensuing Pesukim (28:2-29:43) describe the Bigdei Kehunah, the clothing for the Kohanim. Why was Aharon, not Moshe Rabbeinu, appointed as the Kohein Gadol? As the leader of Am Yisrael, Moshe appears to have been the obvious candidate for the role of Kohein Gadol. What can we learn from the fact that Aharon led the Jews spiritually while Moshe led the Jews in regard to material matters?

To explain why Aharon was appointed as the Kohein Gadol, we must look at the Gemara (Zevachim 102a), which cites Rav Shimon bar Yochai's opinion that Moshe Rabbeinu should have been the Kohein Gadol, but he lost the opportunity when he objected to Hashem at the burning bush (Shemot 4:14-16). According to this Gemara, Moshe

was the Kohein Gadol until Aharon and his children became the Kohanim forever.

According to most Meforashim, however, Moshe was never supposed to be the Kohein Gadol. Why was Moshe denied the job of being the Kohein Gadol? Ibn Ezra (28:1 s.v. VeAtah) believes that Moshe was not the Kohein Gadol for a practical reason – because Moshe was so busy as the leader of the Jewish people, he simply did not have the time to also be the Kohein Gadol. Malbim (ad loc. s.v. VeAtah Hakreiv Eilecha) writes that different jobs require different skills, and Hashem thought that Aharon was more suited for the job. The Dubno Maggid, a Chassidic master, believes that the job of the Kohein Gadol is to educate and lead the Jews by example. Moshe could not fulfil the job of being a role model for the Jews because he was considered to be on a higher level than the average Jew. Aharon, on the other hand, related to all Jews and therefore was more suitable for the job. Both Malbim and the Dubno Maggid believe that the reason Moshe did not become the Kohein Gadol was that Aharon was more qualified for the job.

To explain why Moshe and Aharon were each given their roles, we must analyze their personalities. Moshe is known as a person who always sought the truth. Aharon, on the other hand, is known as a person who always sought peace. Hashem's decision to make both Moshe and Aharon leaders of the Jews teaches us that a good leader is one who is strict at some times and lenient at other times.

THE CASE FOR RESTRICTIONS – PART FOUR

by Rabbi Chaim Jachter

Introduction

In our previous issues, we discussed the importance and benefits of Hashem's Mitzvot. Additionally, we explored certain Mitzvot, such as those which we fulfill at the Seder, and demonstrated how they clearly positively influence our lives. In this issue, we will begin by discussing Mitzvot whose benefits are not as easily detectible.

Healthy Acceptance of Human Limitations

Human beings are capable of grasping the reasons for many Mitzvot. However, there are certain Mitzvot, classified as Chukim, that are either very difficult to understand or whose explanations rest beyond human comprehension¹. Although Rambam (Hilchot

¹ The Rishonim disagree as to whether Chukim are merely difficult to understand (Rambam Moreh Nevuchim 3:31) or whether their reasons

are known only to Hashem since they are beyond human comprehension (Rashi to BeMidbar 19:2).

relationships with other people as well. He continued and stated that they should also choose a Mitzvah that they do not understand in order to help adjust their thinking to recognize that it is not necessary to understand every command of Hashem in order to function as a Jew.

Rav Amital presented an example of a plastic cup. He noted that we use it even if we do not understand how it is made and how it maintains its integrity. Similarly, Rav Amital explained, Parah Adumah teaches that we can and should observe Mitzvot even if we do not understand the reason for everything we do.

Chinuch: Raising and Teaching Children to Love Being Jews

Rav Moshe Feinstein bemoaned the fact that many of the generation of European Orthodox Jews who came to the United States lost their children to religion because of a grave mistake they made in raising their children. Encountering the difficulties of being observant in "the New World," they raised their children with the dictate that "es iz shver tzu zein a Yid," meaning that it is difficult to be a Jew⁶. They tried to implant in their children the willpower to serve Hashem even under trying conditions. While this may have worked in "the old country," where all was essentially hard for everyone anyway, it was ineffective in North America, where the choice of living a difficult life as an observant Jew or living a life of "fun" as a non-observant Jew was readily available for everyone.

Instead, what they should have shown their children, said Rav Moshe, was the beauty and thrill of serving Hashem and observing His Mitzvot. They should have emphasized the happiness and the spiritual and emotional tranquility of the religious Jew as opposed to the confusion and instability that the non-observant person experiences. For example, enjoying Shabbat with the family brings countless blessings in this world. One who works on the Sabbath misses out on these tangible benefits in addition to the rewards in the World-to-Come for those who keep Shabbat⁷. Needless to say, it is similarly essential for Torah educators to present their Shiurim in a joyful manner that makes Torah learning attractive to their students⁸.

Rav Moshe's idea is hardly revolutionary. Our Tefillot are replete with similar ideas, such as, "VeHa'areiv Na Et Divrei Toratecha BeFinu," "Ahuv VeNechmad HaDavar HaZeh Aleinu," "Ashreinu Mah Tov Chelkeinu," "Ivdu Et Hashem BeSimchah" and "Yismechu BeMalchutecha Shomerei Shabbat."

Thus, instead of complaining about Torah restrictions, parents and educators should express their pleasure with the fact that Hashem has blessed us with them.

Conclusion

Next week, we will, God willing, continue our discussion of the importance of approaching Judaism joyously, and we will begin with a quote from Rav Efreim Goldberg which demonstrates the centrality and critical nature of being content and pleased by living a Torah life.

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⁶ It is wonderful to hear Yeshivah high school students correcting this terrible error when they sing a newly popular song, "Geshmack to be a Yid!" (it is delicious to be a Jew).

⁷ In my experience, Sephardic Jews do not complain about reciting Selichot throughout Chodesh Elul. They communicate to their families their delight in reciting the joyful and interactive Sephardic style Selichot.

⁸ The Midrash (Shir HaShirim Rabbah 4:11) cites a stunning statement from Reish Lakish that "Whoever presents Divrei Torah and they are not pleasant like a Kallah is to her Chatan at their Chuppah, it is better that he not say them."