

# PARSHAS TETZAVEH

תשע"ט

The menorah requires shemen zayis zoch—the purest of the pure oil—without any impurities. And it must be lit tomid—every single night without missing once.

Chazal ask: What is the point of a menorah? Does Hashem need light? He is the light of the world. The light the menorah contributed was not very significant. It is obviously a symbol for something else. It symbolizes all of the true forms of wisdom of the universe. The pesukim in Mishlei refer to seven branches of wisdom represented by the seven branches of the menorah. But all six lamps pointed to the central branch of the wisdom of the Torah. All other wisdoms are subject to the wisdom of Torah.

But Chazal saw so much more, as expounded by the Yalkut.

The Midrash expounds on a posuk in Shir Hashirim where Hashem praises Klal Yisroel with many different metaphors. One is alluding to the beauty of their ancestors, another, the beauty of their deeds. They are beautiful because the overarching theme of the life of a Jew is that all of life is subject to Hashem. Everything we do brings Hashem into our minds and our consciousness. Every doorpost has a mezuzah. Why? The Rambam says whenever you pass a doorway you are reminded of achdus haborei, ahavas Hashem and kabbolas ol malchus shomayim. Your very house reminds you of Hashem's hashgochoh over you.

If a person has a field in Eretz Yisroel, he has numerous mitzvos. There is no aspect of life where Hashem is absent.

Sometimes people get engrossed in making a living or in a profession and prefer to forget about Hashem. But the challenge of being a Jew—regardless of how you occupy your time and make a living—is consistently asking yourself how what I am doing fits with the will of Hashem and reflects who I am as a servant of Hashem.

The posuk says “your eyes are like yonim.” The Sanhedrin are the eyes of a nation. A person who walks with his eyes closed will quickly run into trouble. You are supposed to walk with your eyes open. We need to look at our challenges to ethics and business practices and know how to avoid them. We need eyes to see the obstacles and troubles ahead and know how to deal with them. If a person wants to make sure that his life is subject to Hashem and His will, he needs a pair of eyes who can perceive the situation through the lens of the Torah to guide him through his life decisions. Everyone needs someone who has the knowledge and understanding of the Torah to see what's really going on. This is why the menorah symbolizes the wisdom of the Torah. It gives us the light through which we view the world.

There are myriad challenges and dilemmas that come up on a routine basis. We can't trust ourselves and our instincts when we have vested interests in one direction. So if we want to be straight in our business practices and the way we run our finances, we need the eyes of daas Torah to give direction to our actions and decisions. The Midrash says that this is what makes us beautiful.

Another posuk describes how the yona doesn't struggle and doesn't hesitate before being slaughtered. Klal Yisroel naturally give up their lives for Hashem. We make sacrifices for Torah and are moser nefesh in a unique way. This is also praiseworthy.

But what does this have to do with the idea of pure oil?

Chazal in the Midrash give a moshol of a King who has fancy clothes. He is most particular about the clothes that are closest to his body. He

feels them much more. So too, when Hashem chose us as His nation at Har Sinai, He expects and wants a deeper, closer connection. He wants it to be permanent. This was the point of the Mishkan according to the Ramban. The gilui shechinoh that was experienced at Har Sinai should be continued going forward. It should not be a one-time event. It should accompany them wherever they went and we should always feel that we are in the presence of Hashem.

There was a tremendous loss when the beis hamikdosh was destroyed. Through the beis hamikdosh they could always feel the presence of Hashem whenever they entered it. At the time of the churbon, that feeling of close connection was in danger of being lost permanently. This is why R' Yochanon Ben Zakai asked to spare Yavneh, the center of Torah learning. Our connection to learning Torah is the only thing that creates that close bond with Hashem in the absence of a beis hamikdosh.

There was a big difference between the level of hashro'as hashechinoh in bayis rishon and the level in bayis sheni. In the first beis hamikdosh there was Urim Vetumim, Ruach Hakodesh, Nevuah, etc., while the second beis hamikdosh lacked all these. This was because before building bayis sheni, Anshei Knesses Hagedolah davened to Hashem, demanding that He first eliminate avodo zoro from the world so that there won't be another churbon. But there was a price.

In the times of bayis rishon, human beings felt that there was a force of spirituality which controlled the physical world. They felt a spiritual presence in this world. Most people distorted this idea and thought that genuine power lies in all the various spiritual forces, and began worshipping them. But when we davened to eliminate avodo zoro, this awareness was taken away from human beings. The sensitivity to all ruchniyus was diminished as well. People now thought that the laws of physics and chemistry had true power over the physical world and everything was run by blind, mechanical forces of nature.

As a result of this drastic change, the Jews could not feel the same ruchniyus and the same closeness to Hashem in the beis hamikdosh. So Anshei Knesses Hagedolah also davened that before they build another mikdosh, all of the beauty and depth of Torah Shebaal Peh become revealed and this would give us a way where ruchniyus can be accessed again. It would be available to anyone who engages in it—not just yechidei seguloh.

What is so special about the menorah? The Ramban in the beginning of Parshas Behaaloscho tells us a story. Shevet Levi was left out of the chanukas hamizbeiach. They were pained—why can't they participate in bringing down the shechinoh with korbonos. Hashem consoled them with the menorah. He said it is a much bigger portion in the mikdosh. The Ramban explained that this was the menorah of Chanukah which will be for all generations.

The Chashmonaim actually made a dual chanukah—one for the mizbeiach and one for the menorah. But we only celebrate the chanukah of the menorah. Why? Not just because of the nes of the pach shemen. The menorah symbolizes something that is vitally relevant for all generations.

There is a question. Why is the mizbeiach hazahav left out of all the keilim describes in Parshas Terumah?

The answer is that those keilim are symbolic of the furniture that most people have in their homes. The symbolic message is that we should

have the shechinoh in our private homes just like the Mishkan had the shechinoh resting upon its furniture. But the mizbeiach hazahav was purely functional for the avodoh. It was not symbolic.

What is the function the menorah has in a person's home? It illuminates the darkness—it allows us to see and not stumble in confusion. This world is confusing and it is getting crazier and crazier. How are we to stay sane and uncorrupted? How do we remain true to our values and see things straight?

This is where Shevet Levi comes in. They are the ones who stayed pure and can give pure guidance from the light of the menorah. It symbolizes that Shevet Levi use the lens of the Torah with which to evaluate and see the world properly. This is the unique keli in the Mishkan which has an ongoing role in the very survival of Klal Yisroel.

The other keilim help us bring shechinoh into our lives, but only the menorah with the purest of oil keeps us from taking wrong turns and distorting our mission in life. The eyes of the Sanhedrin guide us to avoid obstacles and pitfalls.

The Mishkan's building was based on trumos—donations. The pesukim are contradictory. Sometimes we "take" to Hashem and sometimes we "take" for ourselves. What does this mean?

Chazal teach us a very straightforward idea. When you give, you are recognizing that you are only giving back what you have already taken from Hashem.

When a person recognizes that everything he has comes from Hashem, and all his success in life comes from Hashem's hashgochoh, then he is capable of giving it back to Hashem.

If I don't view it as a gift from Hashem, I won't be able to part with it.

The basis of my life—food—needs to come with constant reminders that they are gifts from Hashem. We need to make brochos. The same is true for all gifts and talents we have. Some have gifted singing abilities, some are gifted with oratory skills, etc. These gifts and talents aren't to puff up our egos and think higher of ourselves. They are given to us to use in avodas Hashem.

By giving back what I have to Hashem, I recognize that it came from Hashem as a gift in the first place.

There is an obligation to make a brocho whenever we put food in our mouths—mezonos, ho'adomo, and shehakol. We should never lose sight that it comes from Hashem. We should ideally make brochos on the money we make and spend and on the things we buy. It should

reflect the same consciousness. Before each medical intervention we undergo, we should say a tefillah to Hashem to make it successful—nothing is guaranteed without Hashem's making it so. One can have the best experts and the best chances of success, but it doesn't force any outcome. Hashem is giving us gifts in every area. We are apprehensive beforehand and worry about how things will turn out. So we have no problem saying we trust Hashem will make it happen. But what about after it works out, exactly the way we planned—are we still humble enough to say it wasn't from our planning but from Hashem's intervention? It's not so easy afterwards to part with your money and your ego.

Every aspect of our lives is subject to Hashem, and we need someone to show us how to properly express that obligation to Hashem. What does this have to do with mesiras nefesh? Just as all that I have belongs to Hashem, my very life also belongs to Hashem. I have to be willing to give that up as well.

The oil of the menorah had to be pure because it represented the ability of Torah to guide us through life. This guidance has to be unadulterated and unclouded Torah chochmoh. Every person has to strive to achieve some measure of Torah clarity, but that's not enough.

Each person needs to have a rav for himself to make sure there is a Torah figure who he feels meshubod to and responsible to answer to.

Also, we need someone with a Torah perspective who can give us advice without negios and vested interests.

People today don't want to ask sheilos in person and be subject to a personal rav. They prefer to send questions anonymously to websites to avoid making themselves answerable to the rabbi. This is a distortion of the proper relationship one should have with a rav. But nowadays, they wouldn't ask any sheilos otherwise. These sites have incredible traffic. People don't want to be pushed out of their comfort zone by being confronted with a Torah authority in their private lives.

Everything is meshubod to Hashem. And we need guidance which will enable us to live a genuine, Torahdig life. The light of the menorah is the light through which we view the world. In the center of the six wisdoms of the universe is the chochmoh of the Torah. All the chochmos and all the histadlus we put into our success in life have to be meshubod to Hashem.

A person has to think through in a deep way how to make that happen in real life.