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פרשת תצוה
Parshat Tetzaveh

פרשת זכור
Ashreinu | אשרינו

Enhancing your Study of the Weekly Torah Portion

Parsha Summary

In this week's parsha, Parshat Tetzaveh, the Torah teaches the laws of special clothing that Kohanim and the Kohen Gadol wear when they work in Mishkan. After that, Hashem gives Moshe instructions for a week-long inauguration of the Mishkan. The parsha ends with describing the Mizbeach Ketoret in the Mishkan.

You Are What You Wear!

Rabbi Raphael Stohl

Rabbi Raphael Stohl

Jake Davidson ('25)

Abby Rosenblatt ('26)

Akiva Scher ('24)

Sarah Posner ('24)

This week's parsha speaks about the honorable clothing of the kohanim. The concept of "dressing with honor" is not just for kohanim, but for all Jews. Quite frankly, it's for all of Mankind.

Many ask: What is so important about clothing? Let me explain with a short anecdote:

When I was about 20 years old, a friend from yeshiva was diagnosed with cancer. Our Rebbi, Rav Moshe Stav (from Yeshivat Kerem B'Yavneh), went to visit him in the hospital. Rebbi gave him the following advice: "Make sure to get dressed in regular clothing and shave every day.

When you dress like you matter, you'll feel like you matter." Throughout the battle, my friend always viewed himself as alive…a dignified, real person. He never gave up hope. Thank God, he recovered and today he is raising a beautiful family.

When you dress with dignity, you live with dignity. You feel dignified and others relate to you that way. Your behavior is better. People's expectations of you — and your expectations of yourself — are higher. You raise yourself up… and you raise others up too.

Don't hide your Jewishness. Dress with honor. Dress with pride! You are great…make sure your clothes display it.

Connection

Jake Davidson ('25)

In this week's parsha, Parshat Tetzaveh, we learn about the *urim v'tumim*. The *urim v'tumim* were some type of spiritual instrument used for determining and finding the truth. Stones and letters would illuminate while the kohen, with *ruach hakodesh*, would decipher the message with a clueless civilian next to him. So, where has this heavenly device disappeared to? The Piaseczno Rebbe, Rabbi Klonimus Kalman Shapiro, writes in Sefer Derech Hamelech that this heavenly help might still be around today. He claims we may still have access to prophecy even though we have not used it for over 2400 years. His proof for this is that at times we have all become suddenly inspired by something, whether a holy book, inspiring speech, or watching someone perform a beautiful mitzvah. This changes us into a different person, suddenly uplifting and sanctifying ourselves. All of this is a form of *urim v' tumim*. We can all connect to the Torah in different ways and with a different message. He is talking to us. We are not just learning his books, but we are absorbing His advice; the Torah is connecting to us both inanimately and to a much deeper, more personal level.

Valuable Efforts

Abby Rosenblatt ('26)

Last week's parsha, Parshat Terumah, laid out the materials used to build the Mishkan. Last on this list are the twelve special gems that the Kohen Gadol wore which are described in this week's parsha. Rabbi Chaim Shmuelevitz asks the following question: How could these special stones of such great importance be listed last? The Torah does not operate on the "save the best for last" policy!

Rabbi Shmuelevitz explains that these stones were actually not as valuable to Hashem as the other gifts. Why? Masechta Derech Eretz Zuta states that a one who wishes to love another must involve themselves in doing things for that person. As human beings, we are accustomed to valuing the pieces of our lives that we put effort into. The people who donated these stones put very little effort into donating them. Therefore, while the stones may have physical value, you cannot put a price on a gift from the heart. Hashem does not believe in price tags. We can learn from this to make sure we value the things in our lives and allow that to determine where to direct our efforts.

In the Purim story, wicked Haman is a prime example for us of what NOT to put effort into. All of Haman's wealth and success meant nothing to him when Mordechai would not bow to him. All Haman cared about was his pride and status, and this shallow value led to his demise. Looking at Haman's failure with the knowledge of how valuable our efforts are, we are presented with the opportunity to self-reflect and make sure that our efforts are geared to what we value, instead of materialistic and shallow things.
Shabbat Shalom

If You've Got it, Use It

Akiva Scher ('24)

In this week's parsha, Parshat Tetzaveh, Hashem gives the specifications for how the Kohen Gadol's clothing is to be made. Since this entire process requires very precise work, He wanted the clothing to be made by:

"כָּל חַכְמֵי לֵב אֲשֶׁר מִלֵּאתִיו רוּחַ חָכְמָה..."
"the wise-hearted people whom I have invested with wisdom" (Shmot 28:3).

What does it mean that God invested certain people with wisdom?

It means exactly what is meant by any other investment – a return on the investment isn't just hoped for, it is expected. Hashem makes an investment in each and every one of us when He gives each of us a unique and special talent. Would you put all your money into a bank that never paid interest on your accounts? Of course not.

Every person born to caring parents has heard, at least once, that they are "unique in their own way." As children, we embrace this and it has an effect on us for the rest of our lives. Whether we have a passion for history, music, art, writing, or cooking, we're aware of the things that bring us joy. In fact, we often wonder why everyone else has such a hard time with what comes so naturally to us. These are God-given talents that were pure gifts from Hashem.

Sadly, as a person gets older, he stops using this talent. Instead, he convinces himself that the invested talent isn't really that big of a deal. This really is a terrible mistake to make.

We have the responsibility – not just the option – to use whatever unique talent Hashem has given us and give Him a good return on His investment. We're all designed for greatness, and the one-way ticket to accomplish greatness is to use the talent we were given at birth to make the world a better place. When we use what we've been given, we immediately begin to pay interest on the investment.

Internal Oil

Sarah Posner ('24)

Parshat Tetzaveh begins with the instructions for Bnei Yisrael to have pure olive oil for the functions of the Beit Hamikdash:

וְאַתָּה תְּצַוֶּה אֶת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְיִקְחוּ אֵלֶיךָ שֶׁמֶן זַיִת זָךְ כָּתִית לַמָּאוֹר לְהַעֲלֹת נֵר תָּמִיד

"And you shall command Bnei Yisrael, and they shall take to you pure olive oil, crushed for lighting, to kindle the lamps continually" (Shmot 27:20).

The Sfat Emet quotes a midrash from Sefer Yirmiyahu which compares Bnei Yisrael to a ripened and lush olive tree. The Sfat Emet explains the comparison as follows: the extraction process of oil puts immense pressure on the olive. Despite the oil always being within the olive, it cannot be derived without the intense conditions. Similarly, the Jewish people can only reach their full potential once they have faced tremendous adversity. The qualities of religious purity are latent within everyone, but can only truly emerge after enduring challenging experiences.
The Sfat Emet continues to define the purity of oil as religious clarity. The instruction for Bnei Yisrael to take the oil to ignite the light of the Beit Hamikdash can represent taking inspiration, or surge or religious clarity, and acting on it.

Once we find our personal *shemen zayit zach*, it can be used as motivation to grow. We need to acknowledge all instances of inspiration, and act on them.

Overcoming adversity produces pure oil, but it is impossible to achieve the end result without drawing from the internal clarity we discover along the way.

The wounds of the first churban were still fresh in the hearts of the Jewish People when the Purim story occurred. Bnei Yisrael's grief was now compounded with Haman's wicked,

genocidal decree. Despite imminent destruction, the Jews found within themselves inspiration which they expressed through fasting and prayer. The events of the Purim story eventually lead to the Jews' return to Eretz Yisrael and the period of the Second Beit Ha-mikdash, Shivat Tzion.

The story of Purim soundly illustrates the Sfat Emet's explanation of the *shemen zayit zach*; despite the hard-ships the Jews endured in Persia, they were able to find within themselves their own *shemen zayit zach*. This in turn led to an abolishment of Haman's decree and eventually the return to Eretz Yisrael.

Everyone has within themselves their own *shemen zayit zach* just waiting to be developed. It is up to us to decide what we do with it.



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