

Torah Wellsprings

*Collected thoughts
from
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Vayakheil (Parah)



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Torah Wellsprings - Vayakheil - Parah

Good Times Are Coming

The Kobriner zt'l would say, "A Yid must believe that the darkness has an end, and when the darkness leaves, light will shine."

How did the Yidden have wood in the desert to build the Mishkan? Rashi (Shemos 25:5) writes, "Reb Tanchuma explains: Yaakov Avinu saw with his ruach hakodesh that Yisrael will build a Mishkan in the desert, so he brought cedar trees (אֲרָזִים) to Mitzrayim, planted them there, and commanded his children to take them along with them when they leave Mitzrayim."

But we can ask, why did Yaakov Avinu toil to arrange trees for the Yidden in the desert? Even without his efforts, Hashem would have certainly arranged wood for them. For example, they didn't have gems for the *choshen* in the desert, but Hashem provided them when needed. As Chazal say, gems rained down from heaven together with the *mon*. Neither did they have the skins of the תחש in the desert, because it was a new animal, which never existed before. Hashem created the *tachash*, and it was available only during the construction of the Mishkan (see Rashi Shemos 25:5). So, just as Hashem arranged the gems and tachash skins for the Mishkan, Hashem would have arranged the wood for the Mishkan, as well!

The Vayechi Yosef (of Pupa) zt'l and the Lubavitcher Rebbe zt'l answer that Yaakov Avinu didn't plant the trees so there should be wood for the Mishkan. He knew that Hashem could provide wood when it would be needed. He planted the trees, primarily to give chizuk to the Jewish nation. He wanted the Yidden in Mitzrayim to see the trees and

hear from the elders that their forefather Yaakov said they would one day leave Mitzrayim and build a Mishkan. They will be their own nation, with a Mishkan and the Shechinah in their midst. These consoling thoughts would give them the strength to endure the hardships of *galus*.¹

We can learn from this counsel for people going through hard times and struggling to find ways to be happy. They should remember that the suffering will end. Better times will come. These thoughts make the challenging times more bearable.

The sefarim say that the *galus* in Mitzrayim was the root of all exiles, and the redemption from Mitzrayim is the root of all redemptions. Therefore, just as Yaakov Avinu encouraged the Yidden in *galus* in Mitzrayim, telling them that the suffering will end and they will be freed one day, we should do the same today. We must encourage Yidden in *galus*, that they should know they won't suffer forever. We will be redeemed. Moshiach will come, and all our tzaros will end.

Also, the individual who suffers in this world – each person in his own way – must know and be told that the suffering won't be forever. The hard times will pass, and better times will come.

It states (Mishlei 31:6) תַּגְנוּ שִׁכָר לְאֹהֲבֵי וַיִּין לְמָרִי נֶפֶשׁ, "Give strong drinks to the hapless, and wine to those of bitter soul." The Imrei Emes asks, how does alcohol help someone who feels lost and distressed? The alcohol will wear off, and he will be back with his tzaros and difficulties again! It pasuk surely doesn't suggest that he should remain drunk forever!

1. The Rashi we quoted above (Shemos 25:5, which says that Yaakov planted trees in Mitzrayim to be used for the Mishkan) brings this commentary in the name of Reb Tanchuma. He didn't write "Chazal explain" or the like, as he often does. This is because the primary purpose of the planting was "Tanchuma", that it should be תנחומים, a condolence and consolation for the Jewish people.

But the answer is, by offering an alcoholic beverage, we are saying to the suffering person, "Your suffering isn't permanent. It is a difficult stage that will pass, and things will improve for you." That message, in itself, consoles, encourages, and brings joy.

Furthermore, the Imrei Emes added that even when the tzarah doesn't go away, one often finds out how what he thought was a problem was really for his benefit. And when one attains that insight, he can tolerate his difficulties.

It states (Tehillim 130:6) נַפְשִׁי לַיהוָה מְשֻׁמְרִים לְבֹקֵר, "My soul is eager for Hashem, among those who wait for the morning".

The Malbim explains the pasuk as follows: "When a person waits for a salvation, he isn't certain that he will see his salvation. But when a person waits for the morning, the morning will certainly come. Nevertheless, when a person has bitachon, he is certain that his salvation will come – more certain than someone who waits for the morning. [This is the meaning of the pasuk: נַפְשִׁי לַיהוָה, 'I trust in Hashem' מְשֻׁמְרִים לְבֹקֵר, more than a person who trusts that the morning will come.] He relies on Hashem

with complete bitachon that the salvation will come. He should be more certain about it than that the sun will rise in the morning."

Chazal (Shabbos 12) says that the Shechinah dwells above an ill person's head. The Maharal adds that the Shechinah is above every person who feels downtrodden, suffering, and low. The meforshim explain that the sick (and likewise, the people who feel downtrodden and broken) realize that no one can help them but Hashem. They feel entirely dependent on Hashem, and therefore they merit that Hashem is with them. Whereas, when a person thinks that he can manage on his own, this causes Hashem to depart from him.²

Happy with Yesurim

It is known that Hashem doesn't test a person unless he can pass the test. Every test a person receives is custom-tailored and measured just for him, according to his abilities. This can be alluded to in the words ובכל מאדך, that one must love Hashem with all his might. Chazal (Brachos 9:5) say, בכל מדה, "ומדה שהוא מודד לך הוי מודה לו במאד מאד", "With every measure and measure that He measures for

2. Recently, a special Yid was niftar, Reb Moshe Menachem HaKohen Adler z'l. He went to the next world clean from aveiros, after sixty-two years of *yesurim*. He was born prematurely, so he was placed in an incubator. During that time, there was an electrical short, causing the incubator to stop working. As a result, the young child was affected for the rest of his life. He was blind and his body didn't develop properly. His entire life, he lived in בית לוינשטיין, a center that provides accommodations for individuals with disabilities.

He was the oldest son to a talmid chacham, an outstanding yiras Shamayim, called Reb Aharon Adler zt'l from Bnei Brak. I heard from his children that when his son was harmed by the hospital due to the electrical short in the incubator, people advised the broken-hearted father to sue the hospital and receive compensation his entire life. The hospital was responsible for this terrible mishap and the resulting damage, and he could collect a lot of money as compensation.

Reb Aharon refused to do so. He explained that to do so, he would have to place the blame on the doctors and nurses at the hospital, to say that they are guilty of their son's suffering and that they are responsible for what occurred. But to say that is *kefirah*, because he believed with *emunah sheleimah* that the hospital crew wasn't at fault; rather, it was destined and decreed from Heaven.

It is amazing to see the level of emunah a Yid can achieve. The father could have received thousands of shekalim monthly his entire life, but he refused to consider it so that he wouldn't utter a word of *kefirah* on his lips. (We didn't write this to imply that this is necessarily the halachah, but rather to demonstrate the level of emunah a person can attain, even in our times.)

you, thank Him very much." The expression שהוּא מוּדד indicates that the yesurim were measured and tailored for the person, exactly what he needs to go through, and to the extent that he can handle.

This is also hinted at in Rash (Bereishis 37:3), where Rashi writes that Yaakov gave Yosef a כְּתוּנַת פְּסִים, a coat, and פְּסִים represents פּוּטִיפֶר, the people and countries to where Yosef was sold. Yosef's tzaros were alluded to in a coat to hint that his tzaros were like a coat, tailored and fitted especially for him. It wasn't random or more than he could handle.

Elkanah said to his wife Chanah (Shmuel 1, 1:8) וַיֹּאמֶר לָהּ אֵלְקָנָה אִישָׁה חָנָה לָמָּה תִבְכִּי וְלָמָּה לֹא תֹאכְלִי וַיֹּאמֶר לָהּ אֵלְקָנָה חָנָה לָמָּה תִבְכִּי וְלָמָּה לֹא תֹאכְלִי וַיֹּאמֶר לָהּ אֵלְקָנָה חָנָה לָמָּה תִבְכִּי וְלָמָּה לֹא תֹאכְלִי וַיֹּאמֶר לָהּ אֵלְקָנָה חָנָה לָמָּה תִבְכִּי וְלָמָּה לֹא תֹאכְלִי וַיֹּאמֶר לָהּ אֵלְקָנָה חָנָה לָמָּה תִבְכִּי וְלָמָּה לֹא תֹאכְלִי "Elkanah her husband said to her, 'Chanah, why do you weep? And why don't you eat? And why is your heart sad? Am I not better for you than ten sons?'"

We can explain that with the words אֶנְכִי לָךְ טוֹב, Elkanah was teaching her rules in emunah: Remember (1) אֶנְכִי, it is from Hashem, as it states אֶנְכִי ה' אֱלֹקֶיךָ. Your situation was planned and arranged by Hashem.

(2) טוֹב, remember that everything that occurs is for your good.

(3) לָךְ, what happened to you was prepared just for you. This is precisely what you must go through.

A person planted a wheat field, watered it, and it grew well. The field grew tall, rich

stalks of wheat. The following year, he decided to pour twice as much water on the field. He figured that it would grow doubly well. But that year, the wheat rotted in the ground and nothing grew.

The nimshal is that a person thinks, "If I had more money, things would be better for me," and similar thoughts. He doesn't realize that his life was custom-tailored for him, exactly what he needs, and that if he had more or less of anything, it wouldn't be good for him.³

It states (Shemos 25:5) וְעוֹרוֹת תַּחֲשִׁים, and Rashi writes, "It was a type of animal that existed only at that time. It had many colors. Therefore, Onkelos calls it Sasgona [which means] שֶׁשֶׁשׁ וּמִתְפָּאֵר בְּגוּוֹנִים שְׁלוֹ, it rejoices and is proud with its colors. " The Divrei Yisrael writes that (1) Creation, (2) the Mishkan, (3) and the Yidden are parallel to each other. Whatever one contains, can be found in the others.

The Mishkan had gold and silver (כֶּסֶף וְזָהָב) and so, there is an element of gold and silver in every Yid. That is his fear and love for Hashem. (Fear is represented by gold and love by silver, as is written in the holy sefarim.)

According to this principal, the Divrei Yisrael asks, where can an element of the tachash be found in the Yid?

He answers that Rashi says that tachash had many colors, and it rejoiced in them. This alludes to the various stages that Yidden

3. A young child became very ill r'l and needed extensive care. At the initial stages of the illness, the parents remained at the child's side 24/7, but this couldn't go on for too long. They had other children at home who needed attention, love, and care.

So, the sick child lived in various homes. Sometimes, he was at this uncle's house, a neighbor's home, and so on. His caretakers pitied him and gave him a lot of nosh, sweets, and chocolates to help him keep his mind off his tzaros and illness. But this resulted in the child putting on excess weight, which was unhealthy for him. The doctor warned them to stop giving him all these sweets. Every caretaker was warned, but it was very hard for them to oblige. The child begged for the sweets, and they had to refrain from giving them to him because it wasn't healthy for the child, especially due to his situation.

This is a true story. I know the details. For our topic, when a person lacks something in life, it is for his good and benefit. He wants it, but Hashem knows what is truly good for him.

go through, everyone with their own *pekel*, and they are happy with them because they know that Hashem gives them exactly what they need. Hashem is very happy with this attitude.

As is stated in Avos (4:1) איזהו עשיר השמח בחלקו, "Who is happy? He who is happy with his lot." Rashi writes, "He is happy with the portion that Hakadosh Baruch Hu prepared for him - regardless whether it is good or bad, a lot or a little." That attitude is the "tachash" skins, represented in his soul.

An early sefer (see אגרת הטיוול חלק הרמוז אות ע) writes that חם לח קר ויבש (hot, wet, cold, and dry). This means to be happy and accept with love every situation that Hashem sends, with emunah that it is from Hashem and for his benefit and good.

This is alluded to in the words of Rashi regarding the tachash ולא היתה אלא לשעה, "It was only for that time." Alluded in Rashi's words are that when going through a hard time, a Yid doesn't simply wait for the time to pass, as though he can only be happy when this hardship ends. Instead, he is happy לשעה, at this hour, at this time, with the way Hashem is leading him.

The Sfas Emes (Succos 5645) writes in the name of the Chovos HaLevavos, "There is no greater joy than the joy of a person who trusts in Hashem."

It states (Tehillim 19:9) פְּקוּדֵי ה' יִשְׂרָאֵל מְשֻׁמְחֵי לֵב. Divrei Yisrael explains that one translation of פְּקוּדֵי is lacking (see for example Bamidbar 31:49, לא נפקד מומנו איש). The pasuk is saying that the Jewish people are happy even when they lack something because they believe that Hashem planned this for their benefit.

Improvement and Teshuvah Through Torah Study

There was once a person who got sick. The doctors in the hospital put him on a particular medication. They were sure that in a few days, he would recover. However, days and weeks passed, and he didn't get

better. His life was in danger. Askanim recommended that he consult a doctor whose expertise was treating this kind of illness.

Besides the high cost that this doctor charged, there was another obstacle in seeking his care. This doctor worked for another hospital unrelated to the one the sick person was at. The head doctors in charge of his care refused to listen to or respect the expertise of a doctor from another hospital.

The patient's family and the askanim tried hard to convince the hospital to allow this other expert doctor to see the patient. After much effort, the head of the hospital agreed to let the doctor see the sick patient.

The expert doctor arrived, and the hospital staff greeted him with respect, knowing his impressive status in the medical world. They showed him the medical information they had about this patient. They all wanted to hear his opinion on why the patient wasn't responding to their treatment.

The doctor surprised them by telling them that their diagnosis and approach to treating the patient were correct. However, the dosage of the medication they were administering was wrong. For the medicine to work, it must be given at a higher dose.

They followed through on the dosage change, and in a few days the patient was doing significantly better and on the road to recovery.

We can learn a lesson from this story. Chazal (Kiddushin 30b) tell us, "I created the yetzer hara, and I created Torah as its cure." Torah study purifies us from all blemishes. Yet, there are people who study Torah and still find themselves having gaavah, bad middos, and many other faults. They don't see improvement. So, they begin searching for different means and segulos to attain purity from their bad middos. They don't realize that the means they chose to purify themselves - studying Torah - is the best

approach. There is no need to seek another solution. If a person doesn't see that Torah study is helping him, the solution is to simply increase the dosage. If until now he studied an hour each day, he should study two hours. If until now he studied one chapter Mishnayos, he should study two chapters a day. Through this, he will start noticing improvement.

The Ropshitzer Rav zt'l (Zera Kodesh, Terumah, (עשו ארון) writes, "The most powerful teshuvah is Torah study, as Chazal say, 'If he was accustomed to learn one page, he should learn two pages.' A focal point in chassidus is learning Torah with hasmadah... If you want to be a chassid... attach yourself to Hakadosh Baruch Hu and His Torah, because they are called חסד, and then you will be called a חסיד."

The Minchas Elazar came to Eretz Yisrael, and he very much wanted to go to the Rashash's kever. Reb Shalom Sharabi, the Rashash zt'l, was one of the greatest *mekubalim* and is buried in Har HaZeisim, Yerushalayim. The Minchas Elazar's genius in the revealed parts of the Torah is well known, but he was also an expert in kabbalah,

the hidden parts. Hence, he had a special interest in going to the kevarim of the great mekubalim.

When he arrived at the kever, he was astounded at the words that were written on the grave: "This is the grave of a man of G-d, a holy person, השקדן בתורה (who studied Torah with hasmadah), the chacham, the G-dly mekubal, the holy menorah, Moreinu Reb Shalom..."

The words השקדן בתורה, which means that he studied Torah with hasmadah, piqued the Minchas Elazar's interest. This type of praise might be given to a yeshiva bachur. Why was this written on the grave of this holy mekubal?

The Minchas Elazar explained that the words on the matziah were written by his holy students, and they understood that their rebbe reached his high levels because of his hasmadah in Torah.⁴

It states (Shemos 25:17) ועשית כפורת זהב טהור, "You shall make (בפנת) a cover for the aron of pure gold." Similarly, in this week's parashah (37:6) it states ויעש כפרת זהב, "He made (בפנת) the cover of the aron of pure gold." Tzror HaMor writes that the covering over the aron is

4. The Gemara (Brachos 5.) states, אין לו להקב"ה בעולמו אלא ארבע אמות של הלכה בלבד, "Hakadosh Baruch Hu doesn't have anything in this world other than the four amos of halachah - only!"

The final word, בלבד, "only," can be compared to a person writing a check. After he writes the amount, he adds the word "only". This ensures that no one can add more words onto the amount written on the check. In Eretz Yisrael, people add on the word בלבד, "alone." Similarly, we can explain that when the Gemara tells us that Hakadosh Baruch Hu's place in the world is where Torah and halachah is studied, the Gemara adds on the word בלבד, "only" for emphasis. There is no other place. Hakadosh Baruch Hu's place in this world is only where Torah and halachah are studied.

The Gemara (Megillah 17.) tells us that יעקב נטמן בבית עבר, that Yaakov Avinu buried himself in the beis medresh of Ever and stayed there for fourteen years to study Torah. We wonder why the Gemara uses the expression נטמן, buried himself? The Gemara could have simply stated למד בבית עבר, he learned in the beis medresh of Ever!

We can explain that the Gemara describes how Yaakov Avinu studied when he was in the beis medresh of Ever. He was like someone נטמן, buried in the ground. The niftarim, buried in the ground, have nothing to do in the world; they have no one to speak to. That's how Yaakov Avinu spent the fourteen years in the beis medresh in Ever. He was "buried" and engrossed in the Torah and nothing else!

The Chazon Ish (Igros 1:3) writes, "The primary study of Torah is when it is constant, without interruption. Constantly studying Torah is the secret of kedushah... It is proper that a person should find methods to acquire hasmadah in learning Torah and to daven for this at all times.

derived from the word כפרה, atonement, because the aron represents Torah, and Torah atones for all aveiros.

Tana d'Bei Eliyahu (rabba ch.18) teaches, "Come and see the great strength of Torah. It purifies Yisrael of all their sins when they do teshuvah, and it atones them even for the aveirah of avoda zarah. As it states (Yechezkel 36:25) וְרָקַתִּי עֲלֵיכֶם מִיַּם טְהוֹרִים וְטָהַרְתֶּם מִכָּל טִמְאוֹתֵיכֶם (36:25) וּמִכָּל גְּלוּלֵיכֶם אֲטַהֵר אֶתְכֶם "I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and you will be clean; from all your impurities and from all your abominations will I cleanse you." The water referred to in the pasuk is Torah study, as it states (Yeshayahu 55:1) הוֹי כָּל צָמְא לָכוּ לָפְנִים "All who thirst, go to water...." This means that Torah study will purify us from all aveiros.

The wood that was used to create the aron was of עצי שיטים, cedar wood. The Ropshitzer Rav zt'l (זרע קדוש, תרומה ד"ה ועשו ארון) explains that שיטים comes from the word שטות, foolishness. This alludes to aveiros because Chazal (Sotah 3.) say that a person only performs aveiros when a foolish spirit enters him. Also, שטן is gematriya שטים, the Satan, who convinces people to perform aveiros. So, we can explain that עצי means the עצה, counsel, for שיטים, for the aveiros that come from foolishness, and the advice to battle the Satan and the yetzer hara, is the aron, which means to study Torah.

The Holiness of Torah Study b'Chavrusah

The Midrash Tanchuma (Vayakhel 7) says that Betzalel was in charge of building the Mishkan. Everything was built according to his direction. But there was one part of the Mishkan that Betzalel built himself, and that is the aron, as it states (37:1) וַיַּעַשׂ בְּצַלְאֵל אֶת הָאָרוֹן

"Betzalel made the aron..." The Midrash explains that this is because the Shechinah resided in the aron. "Wherever the Torah is there, the Shechinah is... Therefore, the aron is more beloved than all utensils of the Mishkan." This is the reason Betzalel wanted to build it himself.

It states (Mishlei 3:15) וְקָרָה הִיא מִפְּנֵינִים, and Chazal translate it, "The person who learns Torah is more precious מִפְּנֵינִים, than the kohen gadol who went לפני ולפנים, into the kodesh kadoshim." The Bas Ayin (Bishalach) explains, "This is because the kohen gadol only goes בין הבדים, between the poles of the aron, but when someone studies Torah, it is like he is entering into the aron, itself."

It states (Shemos 25:18) ועשית שנים כרובים זהב... ופניהם איש אל אחיו, "You should make two keruvim of gold [on top of the aron]... with their faces toward one another."

Also, in this week's parashah, it states (37:7, 9) וַיַּעַשׂ שְׁנֵי כְּרֻבִים זָהָב... וּפְנֵיהֶם אִישׁ אֶל אָחִיו אֶל הַכַּפֹּרֶת "He made two keruvim of gold... with their faces toward one another."

The Baal HaTurim explains that the keruvim appeared like two friends studying Torah. This tells us the great holiness of when two people study together, *b'chavrusah*. The holiest place in the Mishkan replicates two people studying Torah. In fact, it proves that two people studying Torah together is an even higher kedushah because the keruvim represented Torah study *b'chavrusah*, which implies that Torah study *b'chavrusah* is an even greater kedushah than the keruvim.⁵

Students of the Novardok yeshiva were exiled to Siberia. The government permitted

5. It is the way of people to hang paintings on the walls of their home to decorate it. On the vestibule, they might hang up a picture of beautiful scenery, such as mountains or oceans. In the dining area, they put up more important pictures, such as pictures of their rebbes or grandparents. Deeper inside the house, even more important pictures are hung. In the innermost rooms, they hang pictures of their family, the people they love the most. Similarly, we can explain that in the innermost room of the Beis HaMikdash, the Kodesh Kadoshim, Hashem wants an example of what is most beloved to him, and that is a depiction of chavrusos studying Torah together.

them to bring food, but they didn't have permission to bring along sefarim. They asked the Chofetz Chaim whether they were allowed to wrap their food with pages of Gemara. In that way, they would have pages of Gemara to study in Siberia. But on the other hand, would it be considered a disgrace for the Gemara to use it as wrapping paper?

The Chofetz Chaim replied that it was certainly permitted. The Chofetz Chaim explained that their intention wasn't to disgrace the Torah. On the contrary, they want to do so because the Torah is precious to them and is therefore permitted.

The students assumed they should use old and torn pages that had been placed in Sheimos. They figured that it would be less of a disgrace to the Gemara. The Chofetz Chaim, however, told them to do the opposite. They should use brand-new pages of Gemara. The Chofetz Chaim explained that when someone studies from a Gemara, the Gemara attains more kedushah. So the Gemaras in sheimos, from which many people learned, have more kedushah than new Gemaras. To minimize the disrespect to the pages of the Gemara, the Chofetz Chaim recommended that they wrap the food in the newly printed Gemara pages.

We learn from this that although a sefer is a *domeim* (inanimate item), it becomes holier when people study from it. Certainly, when a Yid studies Torah, imagine how much kedushah the Torah gives him.

Reb Shlomo Heiman zt'l (Chiddushei Reb Shlomo Heiman, Imros Ketzeros #95) said, "It is written about Rav Sadyah Gaon that he was appointed to be the rosh yeshiva of Sura. Rav Sadyah Gaon wrote letters to all Jewish cities, requesting they send money to build the yeshiva. A wealthy person from Mitzrayim wanted to donate the aron kodesh. He was prepared to pay a lot of money for this merit. But when he came to Sura to give the money, he heard that someone had already donated the aron kodesh. He told Rav Sadyah Gaon how upset he was that he lost the opportunity to

donate the holiest part of the yeshiva. Reb Sadyah Gaon told him, 'Know, my son, that we have an oral Torah and a written Torah. The written Torah is placed in the aron kodesh, but the oral Torah is passed orally from generation to generation. Wherever yeshiva students study Torah, that is the aron kodesh for the oral Torah. The benches of the yeshiva are the aron kodesh. The tables of the yeshiva are the aron kodesh. The entire yeshiva is the aron kodesh!'"

It states (Shemos 26:35) וְשָׂמֶתְ אֶת הַשְּׁלֶחָן מִחוּץ לַפָּרֶכֶת וְאֶת הַמְּנֹרָה נֹכַח הַשְּׁלֶחָן... "You shall place the Shulchan on the outer side of the *Poreches* and the Menorah opposite the Shulchan...." The pasuk speaks about the Shulchan first, and then it discusses the Menorah. However, at the end of the pasuk it says, וְאֶת הַמְּנֹרָה... עַל צִלְע צָפוֹן, "צִלְע הַמְּשָׁכָן תִּימְנָה וְהַשְּׁלֶחָן תִּתֵּן עַל צִלְע צָפוֹן" "You shall place.... the Menorah.... on the southern side of the Mishkan, and you shall place the Shulchan on the northern side." When discussing the location, the northern or southern side of the Mishkan the Menorah is mentioned first, before the Shulchan.

The Chasam Sofer explains that at the beginning of the pasuk, the Shulchan is mentioned before the Menorah because the Shulchan represents one's worldly needs, and the menorah represents one's spiritual needs. The worldly needs have to be taken care of first (as this is explained in מהר"א from the Trumas HaDeshen, on his commentary on Rashi). However, when the Torah discusses location, the location of the Menorah is mentioned first. This is because although a person has to take care of his gashmiyos needs first, the pasuk is teaching us that all the gashmiyos needs are given to us *in the merit* of the spiritual. This is why the place for the Menorah is written first, before the Shulchan.

Similarly, when Moshe blessed Yissaschar and Zevulan, Zevulan (who worked in business) is mentioned first. As we explained, the gashmiyos needs are taken care of first. Nevertheless, Zevulan's success in business comes from Yissaschar because all our

gashmiyos needs are given to us in the merit of the ruchniyus.

Give Your Heart to Hashem

The Chida (פתח עינים מגילה י"ג) brings down a story that is written in איזומה כנדגלות, from Reb Yitzchak Unkeneirah (printed year 5337). A wealthy Yid took a fortune of money and went to an island near Spain to do business there. When he was in a desert on this island, a group of bandits attacked him and took away all of his money. A very strong goy came by. Tearfully the Yid told him what happened, about how the thieves took away all of his money. The goy said, "If I chase after the thieves, and I bring back the money to you, what percentage will you give me as payment?"

The Yid said that he would give him ten percent. Ten percent of the fortune was a huge sum of money.

The goy said that it wasn't enough. Gradually, the Yid increased the percentage, because this was the only way he knew how to get his money back. But the goy kept saying that it wasn't enough.

Finally, the goy said his terms: "I will take as much money as I want, and the rest I will give you. If you agree, I will chase after them and save your money."

The Yid, realizing that he didn't have a choice, agreed to those terms. A document was written up and both the Yid and the goy signed it. It read, "For reclaiming the money, the warrior can take however much money for himself, and he will give the Yid whatever he wants."

The goy successfully recovered the money and decided to keep the entire fortune for himself. He showed everyone the document that proved that he had a right to do so.

The Yid realized that he was tricked a second time. This goy was just another thief. He cried and pleaded with the goy, "It is true I signed the document, but I did so under duress. I never intended for you to

take away all the money from me. I worked for years to earn this money; I can't lose it all!" The goy wasn't moved by his tears.

The Yid called the goy to court. The judge was the king of Spain, King Alfanso. The Yid figured that he has nothing to lose. Things couldn't become worse than they already were. Even if the judge reached a compromise, he would still have more money than he has now.

King Alfanso realized that the Yid signed the document out of desperation, but he didn't see a way out. The document said that the goy could take everything.

There was a wise chacham in the courtroom. His name was Reb Shmuel HaKohen Skali. He asked the king for permission to look at the document. The king agreed, and gave him the document. Chacham Reb Shmuel HaKohen told the king, "The document says that the Jew has a right to all the money. It states clearly 'He will give to the Yid what he wants.' This means that whatever the goy wants for himself, that is what he will give to the Yid. It is clear how much the goy wants for himself - he wants everything. Therefore, he must give everything to the Yid."

With this clever response, the Yid received all his money back.

The Chida adds that Achashveirosh said to Haman הַקֶּסֶף נָתַן לְךָ וְהָעָם לַעֲשׂוֹת בּוֹ כַּטּוֹב בְּעֵינֶיךָ, "The silver is given to you, and the people to do to them as it is good in your eyes." (Esther 3:11).

When the miracle occurred, וְנִהְפֹךְ הוּא, and everything turned around, this statement was also turned around for the benefit of Bnei Yisrael. As Tosfos (Megillah 13:) writes, the gematria of הַכֶּסֶף is הַעֵץ. This is a hint that Haman will be hung. Where is the וְנִהְפֹךְ הוּא for the words וְהָעָם לַעֲשׂוֹת בּוֹ כַּטּוֹב בְּעֵינֶיךָ, "and the people, to do with them as it is good in your eyes"?

It means that the Jewish nation should receive, בָּטוֹב בְּעֵינַיִךְ, anything Haman would have wanted for himself.

Let us take this lesson to a practical level. The yetzer hara tells a person that he should act in Olam HaZeh as he desires and to do and go wherever his heart pulls him to. But we should learn from the yetzer hara to do the opposite. Everything the yetzer hara wants, is what he should give to Hashem. As the Divrei Chaim explains the pasuk (Shemos 25:2) כֹּל אִישׁ אֲשֶׁר יִדְבְּנוּ לְבוֹתָם אֶת תְּרוּמָתִי, that the matters the yetzer hara wants him to sin, he should give to Hashem.

This might seem like an unattainable lofty level, so pay attention to the following story that happened with Reb Meir Shapiro zt'l. He came to a city to collect money for building his yeshiva, Chachmei Lublin. He first met with the rabbanim of the town, and they told Reb Meir Shapiro how much they expected each wealthy person should give towards the yeshiva. One rich person arrived and placed 500 zloty on the table for the yeshiva. Reb Meir Shapiro told him, "The rabbanim said you should give 300 zloty. So, take back two hundred zloty."

The Yid replied, "They measured the amount I can give, and I can give 300 zloty. But they didn't measure my heart. My heart can give more."

Reb Meir Shapiro praised his response and would often repeat it when he went around the world collecting funds for the yeshiva. We shouldn't only measure the ability of our pockets but also of our hearts.

If a person feels that he can't give so much to Hashem, he should remember that his heart can give more. Your heart and your desire to serve Hashem will give you the strength to donate to Hashem what you need to and to sanctify yourself in His service.

The Gemara (Bechoros 8:) states that the elders of Atuna (Athens) asked Reb Yehoshua ben Levi, "Where is the middle of the world?"

Reb Yehoshua ben Levi raised his finger as if to imply "the middle of the world is here."

The Izhbitze Rebbe zt'l explains that the middle of the world is where the Beis HaMikdash stood. The scholars of Atuna were asking, "Now that the Beis HaMikdash is destroyed, where is the middle of the world? Where is the place where the Shechinah resides?"

Reb Yehoshua ben Levi raised a finger to imply that the middle of the world, and the Beis HaMikdash of our times, is the heart of a Yid.

One builds a Beis HaMikdash in his heart when he overcomes the yetzer hara that burns in his heart. His heart becomes the place where the Shechinah resides.

Even in our times, a Yid can turn his heart to be a Beis HaMikdash. The Noam Elimelech (Vayeshev וישב ויהא"י וישב) writes, "I heard a sweet mashal from our master... the Magid of Rovna zt'l (this is the Magid of Mezritch zy'a). We see that when we are in the bitter galus, there are people who attain ruach hakodesh more easily than in the days of the prophets, when they needed.... A lot of solitude with hisbodidus to attain ruach hakodesh and nevuah, as is known. He told a wonderful and sweet mashal to explain it. When a king is at his home, dwelling in his palace, if a friend tells the king that he wants to invite him to his house for a meal, the king will become angry with him. It is disrespectful to invite the king and to ask him to leave the palace to go to the home of others - even if it is a large, royal meal. It is impossible to invite the king to your home unless you prepare very well, and you have people who speak for your behalf to the king, and you have to find favor by the king, and then he will come to your home for a meal.

"Whereas, when the king is traveling and needs a place to stay overnight, wherever there is a clean place - even a motel in a small village - if it is clean, the king will agree to dwell there. The nimshal is that when the Beis HaMikdash stood, the

Shechianh was in the Kodesh Kadoshim. If a person wanted to draw ruach hakodesh or nevius, he had to strive hard to attain it. However, in this bitter galus, the Shechinah is in galus with us, and Hashem desires a place where He can dwell. If there is a clean place, clean from aveiros, that is sufficient, and the Shechinah wants to dwell there.

Parashas Parah

The Beis Ahron writes, "One must believe that just as the ashes of the *parah adumah* purify... in this generation, everyone becomes pure when *parashas Parah* is read, each person according to his level."⁶

The Sfas Emes (*Parashas Parah* 5641) explains, "The purity we're referring to is purity of sins." One of the primary reasons we read *parashas Parah* is to remind people to become pure so they can bring the korban Pesach. That aspect of the reading doesn't apply in our times because we don't have a *parah adumah*, and we cannot bring the korban Pesach, at least as of now. However, there is another benefit in reading *parashas Parah*, and that is that it purifies us from our aveiros. This is because aveiros can also be considered a type of tumah. This aspect of *parah adumah* remains forever, and we attain this taharah when *Parashas Parah* is read.

Reb Tzadok HaCohen *zt'l* taught this lesson from the *haftarah*. The *haftarah* is always based on the *parashah* that was read.

We would assume that the *haftarah* for *parashas Parah* would discuss *taharah*, becoming pure, as a preparation for the *korban Pesach*. However, the *haftarah* (*Yechezkel* 36:25) states, וזרקתי עליכם מים טהורים... ונתתי לכם לב, חדש ורוח חדשה, "I will throw onto you pure waters... and I will give you a new heart and a new spirit." The *haftarah* refers to purity from *aveiros*, implying that this is what *parashas Parah* is all about in our generation.

Step by Step

In the *yotzros* (said this Shabbos) we say, מי יתן טהור מטמא לא אחד, "Who brings forth purity from impurity, isn't it the One Hashem?"⁷

Tzaddikim explained this verse in the following way: מי יתן טהור מטמא, when someone is impure and sullied with sins, what approach should he take to become pure? לא אחד, to say "no," once. This means making **one** firm commitment never to do bad again.

The following *mashal*, by the Beis Avraham *zt'l*, demonstrates this point:

There was once an alcoholic who made a resolution that he would never drink again. He was thirsty for a drink but controlled himself and didn't take one. He soon found himself walking to the bar. Old habits were taking hold of him, but he turned around and went home. He wouldn't drink alcoholic beverages, and that was final. He had several

6. The earliest source of this concept is the *Yerushalmi*, which states: Reading *parashas Parah* is טהרתן של ישראל, "the purification of the Jewish people."

Some *poskim* say that reading *parashas Parah* is a mitzvah from the Torah. The Avodas Yisrael says that this is alluded to in the *pasuk* (*Bamidbar* 19:1-2) לאמר, "This is the law of the Torah that Hashem commanded לאמר, to say." This indicates that when we can't physically bring a *parah adumah*, there's a mitzvah to say the *parashah* of *parah adumah*.

The *Aruch HaShulchan* (658:7) says the source is (19:21) חקת עולם, "an eternal law." This implies that *parah adumah* is forever. When we can't actually perform the mitzvah of *parah adumah*, we keep the mitzvah by reading the *parashah*.

7. The paradox of the *parah adumah* is that the people involved in its preparation become tamei, and the one sprinkled with its ashes becomes pure. "How can purity come from impurity? Only the One Hashem can do this!"

difficult tests that day, and he passed them all. Towards the end of the day, he thought, "I'm doing really well. I controlled my cravings for alcohol several times today. I deserve a drink." He went to the bar and got drunk.

This isn't called a *לא אהר*, saying "no" once, because tomorrow, if he wants to stop drinking, he will have to say "no" to himself again. His first resolution didn't last. The *Yotzros* is urging us that when you decide to improve your ways, say *לא אהר*, "no" once. Make a firm and final decision to improve, and stick to it, through thick and thin.

There's another path for *teshuvah* too: to gradually improve, step by step. The Midrash (*Tanchumah, Behaloscha* 10) states, "The Jewish people said to Hakadosh Baruch Hu, 'Ribono shel Olam, You know the great power of the *yetzer hara*... How can we conquer him?' Hashem replied, 'Send the *yetzer hara* away step by step in this world, and I will remove him entirely in the future. Improve one thing today, improve a drop more tomorrow, until you acquire a second nature.'"

This Midrash teaches us the gradual approach to *teshuvah* (which is often the ideal). One can't always make a singular, firm decision to change. Often, one needs a gradual approach. Improve a bit more each day, and don't give up. You'll succeed in the end.

The Beis Avraham of Slonim *zy'a*, compared it to someone who drinks one cup of wine. He doesn't become drunk or even dizzy. Later that day, he drinks a second cup, and then a third, and soon he's intoxicated. It is obvious now that the first cup also contributed to the final result. Similarly, when one overcomes the *yetzer hara* one victory at a time, nothing seems to have changed. He feels like the same person as before. But he isn't. Something has changed. If he keeps at it, one step at a time, he will become a new person.

The Tanya (27) teaches, "When one overcomes his *yetzer hara*, even for just a short moment... for example, he desires to eat, and he pushes off eating for an hour (or for even less than an hour) and during this time, he studies Torah... Or when one remains quiet and he doesn't say what he strongly desires to say... even if it is merely for a brief moment...this sanctifies him, and it helps him immensely serve Hashem. As Chazal say, 'When a person sanctifies himself a little from down below, Heaven sanctifies him a lot from above.'" The Tanya is teaching us that when one follows the gradual approach for improvement, he isn't only gradually developing a second nature, but also receiving *siyata dishmaya*. Heaven will sanctify him from above. Each step is therefore very significant.

Tzedakah campaigns sometimes encourage donors to give money by letting them know that for each dollar they give, someone else will match it, double, or triple it. The person knows that if he gives a hundred dollars to *tzedakah*, he helped that cause with double or quadruple that amount, inspiring him to give what he can. Similarly, when you take a small step towards improvement, realize that Hashem is adding onto that much more from Heaven. You only sanctified yourself a little, but Hashem has sanctified you a lot. Within a short time, you will see that you have climbed to higher levels in Hashem's service.⁸

Reb Meir Chadash *zt'l* (*rosh yeshiva* of Chevron) was a *bachur* in the Chevron yeshiva at the time of the Chevron Massacre. Reb Meir lay among the murdered students so the Arabs would think that he was dead. As he lay there, he quietly prayed to Hashem and promised to improve. He made a long list of *kabbalos* he would do if he survived. But after the Arabs left, he forgot almost all of the *kabbalos* he made, aside from a few. He told his students that from this episode, he

8. It is written, והתקדשתם והייתם קדושים. The Chasam Sofer *zt'l* explains that the *pasuk* teaches that one should pretend he's holy. והתקדשתם, act like you are holy, והייתם קדושים, and you will genuinely become holy.

learned that it isn't necessary to take on too many *kabbalos*. It's better to take on one or two things and to stick to those since by taking on too much, he will end up with nothing at all.

This is alluded to in the *pasuk* (*Devarim* 22:8) *כי תבנה בית חדש ועשית מעקה לגגך... כי יפל הנפל ממנו*, "When you build a new house, you shall make a guard rail for your roof, so that you shall not cause... that one should fall from the roof." The Chasam Sofer *zt'l* said that a *בית חדש* refers to when one chooses to turn over a new leaf and to improve his ways. The Torah warns, *ועשית מעקה לגגך*, "Make a guard rail for the roof." This means, don't accept on yourself more than you can handle. Limit what you take on, because if you take on too much *כי יפל הנפל ממנו*, "one can fall off," and you may remain without anything at all. As Chazal say, *תפסת מרובה לא תפסת*, "If you grab too much, you end up with nothing at all."⁹

The Wonder of the Parah Adumah

The marvel of the *parah adumah* is that when people are involved in it, some become *tahor*, and some become *tamei*. For example, (1) the *kohen* that threw the cedarwood, hyssop, and scarlet (*עץ ארז ואזוב ושני תולעת*) into the

fire where the *parah adumah* was burning, and (2) the *kohen* who ignites the fire under the *parah adumah*, and (3) the person who gathers the ashes, they all become impure. Also, the one (4) who touches or carries the purifying water (mixed with ashes of the *parah adumah*) becomes *tamei*. It seems from these halachos that the *parah adumah* causes impurity. Yet, it purifies those who are *טמא מת*, who have come in contact with a corpse, which is the strongest type of *tumah*. How could something that creates *taharah* cause *tumah* too? Why do some people become *tamei* from it, while others become *tahor*? That's the phenomenon of *parah adumah*.

But the truth is, many factors in life are like that, too. Many things are good for one person are bad for another. An example is silence vs. speech. Each is good in its rightful time and place and bad when misused.

The *me'il* had bells and pomegranates along its hem. The Gemara says that the bells, which make sounds, atone for the sins transgressed through speech (such as *lashon hara*). What do the pomegranates atone for? The silent pomegranates atone for the times one remained silent when he should have spoken up to help his fellow man. This is one example, and there are many others.

9. The Chovos Halevavos (*Shaar Cheshbon Hanefesh* 5) writes, "Do not consider any mitzvah small, because what is small to you is great to Him."

Chazal say that when Adar arrives, one must increase his happiness, and when Av arrives, one must minimize the joy. The Kedushas Tzion (Bobov) *zt'l* said: If one begins being happy at Adar and continues growing and developing his joy even after Adar passes - until Av, when he must minimize his joy - his happiness will peak right before rosh chodesh Av. He will also be at the peak of his sadness right before Adar. This is because he began minimizing his joy in Av, and if, after Av passes, he continues increasing his sadness, his sadness will be at its peak just before Adar, when we increase joy. So, how can Chazal obligate him to be happy in Adar when he is so sad? He is at his lowest level; how can he possibly be happy now? The answer is that all that Hashem expects from us is that we take a step in the right direction. From whatever level you are at, take a step towards being happy; that is all Hashem requires from you.