

## פ' ויקהל-פקודי תשפ"ג

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### MESSAGES TO OUR CHILDREN

“Moshe called the whole community of the Bnei Yisroel to assemble, and he said to them, These are the things that Hashem commanded to do. Six days work shall be done, but on the seventh day you shall have sanctity, a day of complete rest to Hashem” (35:1-2)

Immediately after coming down from Har Sinai after Yom Kippur Moshe assembled the nation and taught them *hilchos shabbos*. The reason for this is clearly because Shabbos is the foundation of our existence, forming a covenant as it does between us and Hashem.

Chazal say that *hilchos Shabbos* have to be taught in public until the nation, both men and women, become thoroughly familiar with them, because someone who is *mechalel Shabbos* is like a non-Jew, and even someone who desecrates *Shabbos* unintentionally (even a rabbinic prohibition) has to fast for 40 Mondays/Thursdays, although these fasts can be redeemed (see *Remo* O.C. 334:26 and *M. Berura* s.k. 78 *ibid*)).

We are also obligated to protest those who desecrate *Shabbos* publicly. When the son sees how dear *Shabbos* is in his father’s eyes, and how much pain he feels at its desecration, this has a deep effect on him, and remains engraved in his memory. Conversely, if his father remains silent, the son is likely to deduce that *chilul Shabbos* is not an important matter for his father.

### NO COMPROMISES WITH CHILDREN’S EDUCATION

“Every generous hearted person shall bring it, Hashem’s offering: gold, silver, and copper” (*ibid*)

All the *klei shotes* were acceptable whether made of gold, silver or copper. The *keruvim*, however, were an exception. They had to be constructed specifically using gold. Since they had children’s faces on them, Rav Meir Shapira derived from this that we do not make compromises with our children’s education, and nothing less than gold will suffice. Only if we invest everything possible in them, will we merit *siyata dishmoyo* and blessings.

Rav Sternbuch recalls how his mother would hire tutors to learn with her sons and daughters every evening, even though they were already learning a lot during the day. Even though she was a widow who had difficulties supporting her family, she was happy to make the financial sacrifice for the sake of providing her children with a “golden” education. She would say, “A mother is not obliged to teach her sons, but she is obliged to make sure that they receive the best possible education – one of pure gold”.

### EFFORT-BASED REWARD

“Take from yourselves (*me’itchem*) an offering for Hashem; every generous-hearted person shall bring it” (35:7)

The word *me’itchem* seems superfluous. It comes to convey the message that when making a donation for a holy purpose the donor should feel that he has given something of himself, a part of himself, so to speak, out of *mesirus nefesh* for Hashem. Such an act is very dear in Hashem’s eyes. How much to give depends on one’s financial situation. For a poor person it is an act of self-sacrifice to donate even a relatively small amount, but a wealthy person has to donate a lot in order to feel that the donation is from “himself”.

Rav Sternbuch heard from Rav Moshe Schneider that the Chofetz Chaim once sent a message to an Orthodox member of the Rothschild family, who was gravely ill. This individual’s total fortune was estimated at some 50 million marks, a fabulous amount at the time. The Chofetz Chaim suggested to him that if he made a donation of one million marks to rescue the Russian *yeshivos*, which were experiencing

dire financial straits, he would receive a portion in the World to Come. No response was forthcoming, and when the man passed away, his children were contacted to establish whether he had issued any instructions before his death or made any relevant provision in his will. The answer was in the negative. The letter had clearly not reached him.

The Chofetz Chaim's response was that Hashem was sending the message that He wanted many more people to be given the opportunity to participate in this essential *mitzvah*. Hashem preferred that the yeshivas be supported by the Jewish masses in Eastern Europe, since many small donations accompanied by superior intentions and self-sacrifice are dearer in His eyes than one large donation made with relatively little effort.

### **WIVES AND TZEDOKO**

*The men came with the women [al hanoshim]; every generous hearted person brought bracelets and earrings and rings and buckles (35:22)*

On the *possuk* at the end of Malachi: "And He shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children [*al habonim*]" (3:24), Rashi says that *al habonim* means "through the children": the children will be the ones who will lovingly encourage their fathers to follow the ways of Hashem. Based on that Rashi, we may interpret the *possuk* here too to be praising the women and telling us that they encouraged their husbands to make the donations.

Wives can be very influential in their husbands' decisions to give charity. Sometimes husbands need to receive *tzedoko* collectors in their office so that their wives will not know how much they are donating. Here the *possuk* stresses that wives implored their husbands to give generously. Happy is the lot of the wife who is happy with her husband's donations and is the one who persuades him in this direction. As Chazal say (*Bovo Basro* 9a), "The one who causes another to give *tzedoko* is greater than the one who gives *tzedoko*".

### **MESIRUS NEFESH**

*"Moshe said to the Bnei Yisroel: "See, Hashem has called by name Bezalel, the son of Uri, the son of Chur, of the tribe of Yehuda" (35:30)*

The commentators wonder why in the case of Oholiov (31:6) only his father's name (Achisomoch) is mentioned, whereas here Bezalel's grandfather is mentioned as well as his father. They answer that since Chur was killed during the sin of the *egel*, and since the work of the *mishkan* came to atone for that sin, his grandson Bezalel was in charge of this work, and it is therefore only appropriate for his lineage to be attributed here to his grandfather Chur (see *Rosh* on this *possuk* and *Da'as Zekenim* and *Chezkuni* on 31:6).

Hence, Chur's *mesirus nefesh* was rewarded by his grandson constructing the *mishkan*.

Self-sacrifice not only consists in fighting the battles of Hashem, as Chur did. Every time anyone sits down to learn or to pray and overcomes the difficulties he encounters in doing so, is thereby sacrificing his personal desires for the sake of performing the Will of Hashem, and - as the Rambam notes - is performing the *mitzvah* of sanctifying Hashem's name. A great reward awaits him for his self-sacrifice.

### **TEACHING OTHERS**

*"He has imbued him with the spirit of G-d, with wisdom, with insight, and with knowledge, and with all manner of craftsmanship, and to do devise skillful works ("velachshov machashavos") (35:31-32)*

Targum Onkelos renders *velachshov machashavos* as "to teach [other] craftsmen". Rav Moshe Shmuel Shapira said that we see from here that teaching others Torah is a higher level of *chochmo*. It is possible for a person to possess all the superior qualities enumerated here: the spirit of Hashem G-d, wisdom etc., but his wisdom is incomplete if he lacks the ability to explain his thoughts to others.

Rav Yechezkel Abramsky told Rav Sternbuch that he would give a *shiur* to *baalei batim* once a week, and he found this much more difficult than delivering a *shiur* to *bnei Torah*. Before each *shiur* to

the *baalei batim* he would learn the *gemoro* six times on his own, until he found the best way to explain it to them. Of course, delivering a *shiur* to *bnei Torah*, and thinking about how to make the material as clear as possible, also requires great effort. This is the level of *lachshov machashovos*.

### **SPIRITUALIZING THE MUNDANE**

*“With him was Oholiov, son of Achisomoch, of the tribe of Don, a craftsman [chorosh] and master weaver [vechoshev] (38:23)*

It says, “*chorosh*”, he acted as a craftsman *vechoshev* (with the *vov hachibur*): he had thoughts (*choshev*) about performing the Will of his Father in Heaven. When working for a living, one should not divert one’s attention from “I have set Hashem always before me”, from trusting Hashem, not relying on the might of one’s handiwork, and being careful to avoid prohibitions such as falsehood, interest, and misleading others. Even mundane matters have to be performed for the sake of Heaven (*O.C.* 231), meaning for the sake of serving Hashem, or for something that facilitates His service.

Rav Sternbuch recalls how, in his childhood, Rav Elchonon Wasserman would encourage Rav Sternbuch’s widowed mother to spiritualize the material and the mundane. He told her that when she was working to support her family, she should think about Hashem, and trust Him to take care of all her material needs. He would gladden the heart of the young widow, and encourage her in her *avodas Hashem*.

### **VISUALIZING THE KODESH HAKODOSHIM**

The Sforno notes that the *mishkon* and its *keilim* never fell into the hands of enemies, since they were constructed by the most righteous people of the generation, and therefore the *shechino* rested on their handiwork. By contrast, Shlomo Hamelech’s *Beis Hamikdosh*, which was constructed by non-Jewish craftsmen, eventually fell into the hands of our enemies.

However, even after the destruction of the Second *Beis Hamikdosh* the *oron* that was housed in the First *Beis Hamikdosh* is hidden to this very day, deep underneath the *mokom hamikdosh* (see *Rambam Beis Habechiro* 4:1), and the sanctity of that location stems from that *oron* which was constructed with superior *kedusho*, making it completely impervious to any foreign interference.

Wherever we are located, even at the *Kosel*, all our prayers are directed physically and emotionally to the location of the *kodesh hakodoshim* (*O.C.* 94:1). Visualizing ourselves standing inside the *kodesh hakodoshim* is a wonderful method for having our prayers answered, since it is the gateway through which our prayers are accepted.

### **RELIGIOUS RAF PILOT IN WWII**

*“All the work of the Mishkon of the Ohel Mo’ed was completed; the Bnei Yisroel did [it]”.* According to all that Hashem had commanded Moshe, so they had done (39:32)

What was it that the *Bnei Yisroel* continued to do after the work of the *Ohel Mo’ed* had already been completed?

After the nation had performed the great *mitzvah* of donating their money for the work of the *mishkon* and causing the *shechino* to dwell amongst them, one might have thought that they would relax their *avodas Hashem* somewhat, figuring that in light of what they had done, Hashem would forgive them for minor misdemeanors, and they would not have to be so strict about their observance of *mitzvos*. Therefore, the *possuk* emphasizes that the *Bnei Yisroel* continued to do everything that Hashem commanded, and did not become lax in any way.

Rav Sternbuch recalls a young man in England during the Second World War who became a pilot in the Air Force. He would go out on sorties to bomb Germany every day, at great risk to his own life. He came from a very religious family, and once during a short leave home he went to visit Rav Yechezkel Abramsky. Dayan Abramsky asked the visitor whether he was managing to remain

observant in the Army. “Do you *daven* every day?” he asked. “Yes”, was the response. “Do you put on *tefilin* every day?” “Yes”. “Do you keep Shabbos?” “Yes, in principle, except that I need to go out on sorties to Germany. To tell you the truth, he added, I also smoke cigarettes on Shabbos, but I’m sure that Hashem will forgive me for that, because I am *moser nefesh* by risking my life on a daily basis for a very worthy purpose”.

Dayan Abramsky answered as follows: "Listen to me young man, when you get to heaven, you will find two books there, one will contain a record of the great *mitzvah* you performed by bombing the enemies of the Jews, but the other book will state that you desecrated *Shabbos* by smoking cigarettes when there was no need to do so for *pikuach nefesh*. One act does not cancel out the other, there is no bribery before Hashem, nor can actions be offset against each other, and you will have to render an account for all your deeds. For the great *mitzvah* you are doing you will receive a great reward, but for the big transgression of *chilul Shabbos* you will have to receive a severe punishment, if you do not repent”.

Even though the *Bnei Yisroel* gave everything they had, including their jewelry, for the work of the *Mishkon*, they displayed no sign of self-satisfaction whatsoever, and their *mitzvah* observance remained as punctilious as it was before.

### **BROCHOS FROM A TZADDIK NOT ENOUGH**

*“They brought the Mishkon to Moshe (39:33). Rashi: He [Moshe] appeared to be constructing it, and it arose by itself. (39:33)*

This teaches us that when we do our best, Hashem completes the job, and we are considered to have done everything. Moreover, due to Hashem’s great kindness, the action is even attributed to us alone.

Rav Elchonon Wasserman witnessed several times how when people asked the Chofetz Chaim for *brochos*, the latter would reply: “If you have done everything to the best of your ability, then you are already blessed by Hashem, and you do not need me, and if you have not done so, then my blessing will not help, so why are you asking for a *brocho*?”

Rav Elchonon added that sometimes a great man’s blessing for *ruchniyus* can actually be detrimental, because the recipient of the *brocho* may imagine that he no longer needs to toil to attain the spiritual qualities that he has asked for. Only if he does his part by exerting efforts to the best of all his ability will the *brocho* of the *tzadik* help to accelerate the realization of Hashem’s blessings.

In the case of Rav Sternbuch as a boy, in the end Rav Elchonon agreed to give Rav Sternbuch a *brocho*, because his mother told Rav Elchonon: “I am a widow, and he is an orphan, the *Rov* has to give him a *brocho*”, and so he did.

### **WILL OF HASHEM**

*“Moshe saw the entire work, and behold they had done it as Hashem had commanded, so had they done. So Moshe blessed them.” (39:43)*

Rav Sternbuch recalls how Rav Yechezkel Sarna would marvel at this *possuk*. The nation had donated a lot of silver and gold etc. for the construction of the *mishkon*, those responsible for constructing it had employed wonderful wisdom and expertise, and yet when Moshe saw that the work had been completed, he was impressed neither with the generosity of the nation, nor with the wonderful wisdom that had been displayed in its construction. He was only preoccupied with one point: he considered the entire work, and confirmed that everything had been achieved in accordance with the Will of Hashem. This shows that there is no higher value than that, and all other matters are only means for achieving this ultimate goal. Clearly then, this is the goal which every Jew should strive to attain throughout his entire life: to fulfil the Will of Hashem.

### **TORAH FRAGRANCES**

*You shall place the golden altar for incense before the oron (40:5)*

Even among the truly righteous, we find different hierarchies. The *Targum Yonoson* (40:5) says that the *ketores* represents *chachomim* whose Torah exudes a pleasant fragrance. The *oron hakodesh* which contained the Torah in a closed concealed manner symbolizes the 36 concealed *tzaddikim* of each generation. The *ketores* represents revealed *tzaddikim*.

The actual *ketores* offering both on Yom Kippur and every day took place in the *heichol* and was not witnessed by anybody, but its fragrance could not be confined to the quarters of the *heichol*. Similarly, every genuine *tzadik* endeavors not to publicize himself or his actions. However, the fragrance of his Torah and good deeds cannot easily be contained, and he is willing and even eager to share them with others in order to influence them. For a *tzadik* to remain anonymous is, on the one hand, a great virtue, and can increase his reward in the World to Come, because had he been given honor in this world this could detract from his reward in the next world. However, the revealed *tzadik* is on an even higher level, because his concern for the spiritual status of his fellow Jews overcomes any other considerations.

Rav Moshe Schneider told Rav Sternbuch that when he was living in Memel, Lithuania, the town was dominated by anti-religious groups, and religious Jews were few and far between. However, there was one exceptional individual who was a true *tzadik nistar*. On one occasion, Rav Schneider told the son-in-law of the Chofetz Chaim, Rav Hirsch Levinson, who was visiting Memel, about this *tzadik*. After he met him, Rav Levinson commented to Rav Schneider that this man was certainly a great *tzadik*, but Memel needed *tzaddikim geluyim* to stem the anti-religious tide, and not *tzaddikim* of this kind who had no influence over the population.

## **TORAH PARTNERS IN HEAVEN**

*He placed the menorah in the Ohel Mo'ed, opposite the table, on the southern side of the Mishkon (40:24)*

The commentators explain that the Menorah symbolizes *bnei Torah* who illuminate the world with their Torah, and the *shulchan* symbolizes the supporters of Torah. The Menorah had to be opposite the *shulchan* in order to demonstrate that those who support Torah benefit from its illumination. In the afterlife, they will be privileged to understand the holy Torah, since they are considered partners of those who learn it in this world (*Ye'aros Dvash* 1<sup>st</sup> *drush*).

However, this only takes place if they support Torah joyfully and generously, and with the awareness of the importance of their actions. In such cases, they become complete partners of the Torah of the *talmid chochom* whom they are supporting. They are then considered to be *talmidei chachomim* in Heaven, and will enjoy a place close to those whom they are supporting.

## **PRODUCTIVE REST**

*Before the eyes of the entire house of Yisrael in all their journeys. (40:38)*

Rashi states that in all the journeys undertaken by the *Bnei Yisroel* the *oron* dwelt with them, and the locations where they encamped were also considered journeys. This seemingly paradoxical statement teaches us that in our *avodas Hashem*, having a rest is not a means in itself, but rather a preparation for future activity.

Time is the most precious entity we possess, and a *ben Torah's* hours of rest should be limited to the amount of time required for revitalizing himself for the next *seder* during the *zman*, or for the next *zman* during *bein hazmanim*. As a *Godol* once noted, "I am not interested in resting more than absolutely necessary. There will come a time when I will be forced to rest more than I want, so for now I want to make the most of the time allotted to me."