

פ' פקודי תשפ"ד

Based on droshos by Maran HaGaon Rav Moshe Sternbuch shlita, Gaavad of Yerushalayim. To receive these weekly divrei Torah email ravsternbuchtorah@gmail.com

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), 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 British 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, and, 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 *tzadikkim* 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 circles 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 on the population. “And you must be such a *tzaddik*!” Rav Hirsch Levinson told Rav Schneider in conclusion. Rav Schneider in fact went on to found a yeshivah there, and was very successful in spreading Yiddishkeit.

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*, 1st *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 have, 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 *Gadol* once noted, “I'm 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.”