

# THE GOODNESS WITHIN

*by Shlomo Katz*

## Parshas Tetzaveh

### The Goodness Within

One of the actions which is prohibited on Shabbat is "borer" / "selection." However, not all selection is prohibited on Shabbat. One is permitted (under certain circumstances) to select the "ochel" / "food" out of a mixture, but he is not permitted to select the "p'solet" / "rejects" out of the same mixture. For example, if a person has a salad in front of him, and he wants only the tomatoes, he is not permitted to push aside the other vegetables to get to the tomatoes. (In this case, the other vegetables are the "p'solet" even though they are technically food. In the context of this law, anything desirable is called "ochel," and anything undesirable is called "p'solet.") On the other hand, if any tomatoes are already uncovered, one may select the tomatoes out of the salad if he meets certain other conditions. [Please consult reliable halachic sources for practical applications.]

R' Avraham Eiger z"l (1846-1914; the Lubliner Rebbe) offers the following rationale for these laws: Shabbat was given as a time for man to work on self-improvement. How does one improve himself? Deep down within every Jew is a soul which is inherently good. Man's task, especially on Shabbat, is to draw out the goodness which is hidden within him. (Indeed, on Shabbat, that goodness awakens and tries to show itself.) The laws of borer teach that one should not improve himself by peeling away the layers of "p'solet" / undesirable qualities. Rather, one should reach deep inside himself and bring out the "ochel" / desirable qualities within. (Quoted in Noam Ha'Shabbat p.49)

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"And you shall speak to all the chachmei lev/wise-hearted people whom I have invested with a spirit of wisdom." (28:3)

The Gemara (Berachot 55a) teaches: Hashem gives wisdom only to one who has wisdom, as it is written (Shmot 31:6), "I have endowed the heart of every wise-hearted person with wisdom." It also is written (Daniel 2:21), "He gives wisdom to the wise." Hashem operates the world such that a full vessel can receive more, while an empty vessel cannot receive anything. [Thus, one who already

has wisdom can receive more, while one who has no wisdom cannot receive any].

If so, asks R' Chaim of Volozhin z"l (1749-1821), how does one acquire wisdom in the first place? The answer is found in the words of both King David (Tehilim 111:10) and King Shlomo (Mishlei 9:10), "The beginning of wisdom is the fear of Hashem." The "wisdom" which precedes Hashem's gift of wisdom is fear of Heaven.

A person can acquire this initial "wisdom" (i.e., fear of Hashem) only through his own toil. The Gemara teaches (Berachot 33b), "Everything is in the hands of Heaven except for the fear of Heaven." Thus, when the Gemara says that Hashem gives wisdom only to one who has wisdom, it means that He gives wisdom only to one who has acquired fear of Heaven through his own hard work. Similarly, the "wise-hearted people" of our pasuk are those who possess fear of Heaven. (Ruach Chaim 4:1)

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"They shall make the Ephod / apron of gold; turquoise, purple, and scarlet wool, and twisted linen, with a woven design." (28:6)

Rashi z"l writes: "If I set out to explain the making of the Ephod and the Breastplate in the order of the verses, their description would be fragmentary and the reader might err in piecing the details together. Therefore, I shall write down in order how they were made, so that the reader may run through it, and afterwards I shall explain them in the order of the verses . . ."

R' Yerucham Levovitz z"l (mashgiach ruchani of the Radin and Mir yeshivot; died 1936) comments: This statement by Rashi awakened me to the immense kindness that Rashi did for us. We read earlier (21:1), "These are the ordinances that you shall place before them," on which Rashi comments: "God said to Moshe, 'It shouldn't enter your mind to say, 'I will teach them a section of the Torah or a single halachah twice or three times until its wording is fluent in their mouths, but I won't take the trouble to make them understand the reason of each law and its significance.' Rather, the Torah says, 'which you shall place before them,' like a table fully laid with everything ready for eating'."

R' Levovitz continues: One might have thought that a teacher need not trouble himself to explain every detail to a student; rather, the teacher could place the material before the student and let him toil until he understands it. However, the Torah is teaching us that this is not the way. Not only Moshe Rabbeinu was obligated to ensure that the material was understood. Instead, halachah requires every teacher to "set the table" for the student, and this is what Rashi Ha'kadosh did for us as well. (Da'at Torah)

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"The stones shall be according to the names of Bnei Yisrael, twelve according to their names . .

. Aharon shall carry the names of Bnei Yisrael on the Breastplate of Judgment when he enters the Sanctuary, as a constant remembrance before Hashem." (28:21, 29)

R' Yitzchak Isaac Chaver z"l (1789-1852; rabbi of Suvalk, Lithuania) writes: It is no coincidence that there are twelve tribes and twelve stone in the Breastplate. These are in opposition to the twelve constellations of the zodiac. Through the Kohen Gadol, the Shechinah rests on Yisrael and we are able to transcend the laws of nature and to be subject to hashgachah pratit / G-d's direct intervention. In turn, this gives us the ability to get advice and direction from the Urim V'tumim, contained in the Breastplate with twelve stones. If we do not merit, we are subject to the laws of nature and to the influence of the stars.

R' Chaver adds: There are twelve months in a year and twelve hours in a day, and it is for us to determine whether they will be subject to the twelve signs of the zodiac or to hashgachah pratit. Also, when we merit, Yerushalayim of the future will have twelve gates. (see Yechezkel 48:31-34). (Haggadah Shel Pesach Yad Mitzrayim p.206)

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"The contents of the document were to be promulgated in every province and be published to all peoples so that the Jews should be atidim / ready on that day to avenge themselves on their enemies." (Esther 8:13)

In this verse in the megillah, the word "atidim" is spelled with an extra, silent letter "vav." What is the significance of that vav? R' Mordechai Zvi Adler z"l (dayan in Uglya, Hungary; late 19th - early 20th centuries) explains:

The Mishnah (end of Tractate Uktzin) teaches that Hashem has found no receptacle more suitable for holding blessings than shalom / peace. This is why Birkat Kohanim / the Priestly Blessings culminates with a blessing for shalom, for that is the pinnacle of all blessings. Note that Birkat Kohanim consists of six phrases, of which, "May He give you shalom," is the sixth. Note also that the gematria of the letter vav is six.

When Mordechai pleaded with Esther to go to Achashveirosh in an attempt to annul Haman's decree, she responded (4:16), "Go, assemble all the Jews to be found in Shushan . . ." It was understood that if the Jewish People would observe the entire Torah, they would be invincible. However, it is impossible for any one Jew to observe the entire Torah, since some mitzvot are only for men, others only for women, some only for kohanim, some only for levi'im, etc. But, if the Jewish People are united, then, collectively, they can observe the whole Torah. That is why Esther instructed Mordechai to assemble "all" the Jews.

This, concludes R' Adler, is the reason for the extra vav. In order to be ready to fight back against Haman's attack, the Jewish People needed the vav, the sixth blessing, which is shalom. (Ir Mivtzar)

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## Introductions

R' Moshe Isserles z"l ("Rema"; 1525-1572), best known for his glosses on the Shulchan Aruch, also authored Torat Ha'olah, a work of philosophical and ethical lessons derived from the structure of the Bet Hamikdash and the laws of the korbanot. In the introduction to that work, he writes about the importance of studying these matters:

The Midrash Tanchuma states: "The Torah is greater than all of the sacrifices, as it is written (Vayikra 7:37), 'This is the Torah of the olah / burnt offering, the minchah / the meal offering, the chatat / guilt offering etc.' One who studies the Torah, i.e., the laws, of the olah is deemed to have brought an olah; one who studies the Torah of the minchah is deemed to have brought a minchah; and so on." Similarly, Rema writes, early commentaries state that if one studies the structure of the mishkan and its utensils, he fulfills a great mitzvah. How much more so is this true if we merit to understand the inner meaning of even one of the things to which the mishkan or its utensils alludes!

In reality, there are two benefits from studying the inner meaning of the mishkan, the Bet Hamikdash, the utensils and the sacrifices, Rema writes. One is that this study will cause us to mourn for the Temple, for we will understand what we are missing. The second benefit is that we will be able to "bring sacrifices" in our minds when we sin; this is relevant to us all, as it is written (Kohelet 7:20), "There is no man in the world who is a tzaddik who does only good and does not sin."

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