

CLASS 41 - TETZAVEH

by Rabbi Heshy Grossman

Each of the vessels in the Mishkan represent a different aspect of Divine service, physical manifestations of our connection to a spiritual dimension.

The Aron HaKodesh in the innermost sanctuary is container of the Torah SheB'Ksav, G-d's revealed word, while the Menorah, whose light is kindled by man, reflects a different sort of light, the hidden radiance of Torah SheBa'alPeh.

For numerous people, the thought of Torah study, and Talmud in particular, conjures up negative feelings of their childhood years, being forced to sit upright in a classroom for far longer than their attention span allowed, analyzing a subject of little interest.

Why is learning Gemara, the embodiment of the Oral Law, so frustrating to so many people? Perhaps, we should ask why the reverse is likewise true: how is it that so many can study Talmud for hours on end, with little interest in anything else?

In our shiur this week, we will discuss this issue, defining the unique nature of a Blatt Gemara, a world that never ends.

1

"... 'Ner Hashem Nishmas Adam - the candle of G-d is the soul of man' (20:27) Said HaKadosh Baruch Hu: let My candle be in your hand, and your candle in Mine. And what is G-d's candle? This is the Torah, as it says: 'Ki Ner Mitzva V'Torah Ohr - the Mitzva is a candle and Torah is the light' (Mishlei 6:23)...." (Shemos Rabbah 36:3)

From a rational perspective, it should be inconceivable for man to truly grasp a higher dimension, much less physically express the word of G-d. This is the function of a Mitzva, the link of mortal man to his Creator.

Every Mitzva is a vehicle carrying out its exalted task, actualizing the latent religious potential of all material life, expressing the Torah that regulates our world.

While a Mitzva is clear and defined, bound by earthly measure, the Torah it expresses is ephemerally and infinite, unrestricted by the natural constraints of physical law.

The Mitzva is the physical candle, while the Torah is the light that illuminates our lives.

"The verse compares the Mitzva to a candle and the Torah to light....sin can extinguish a Mitzva, but sin cannot extinguish Torah..." (Sotah 21a)

Good deeds are a means for man to bring a modicum of otherworldliness into his daily routine, but this elevated consciousness can be easily dissolved and distracted by the faults and missteps of sins that are all too frequent.

Torah, however, is the light itself. Permanent and indestructible, the Torah is not affected by the sins of mankind. By definition, Torah can never change. While Mitzvos compare to physical form, the material components that encompass the coordinates of life, Torah is the existence itself. More than rules and prohibitions, Torah is the basis and structure at the heart of our world. In its absence, we cease to exist.

Just as light cannot be separated from its source, G-d and His Torah are inseparable, and every word grants man a portion of eternity.

2

"...and if you have toiled in Torah, there is much reward to be given to you... Rebbe Eliezer ben Ya'akov says: one who fulfills even a single Mitzva has acquired for himself a single advocate..." (Avos 4:12-13)

One who studies Torah acquires 'much', while for the performance of Mitzvos one is compensated in precise measure, one defender for each deed..

Mitzvos are limited, fixed and determined within the boundaries of physical space. Though they express the immeasurable will of G-d, each particular Mitzva has its own time and place.

Torah is a Klal - each part containing a glimmer of the all-encompassing whole. The aggregate total is greater than the sum of its parts, and with every bit man acquires he merits a grasp on a world bigger than his own.

The study of Mitzvos is clearly delineated, with a clear order from start to finish. Talmud, on the other hand, demands an immersion with no end, its study being constant, and preferably uninterrupted.

We study Mitzvos in order to know what to do, and to understand the difference between right and wrong.

Talmud is studied for its own sake, and for no reason.

The Gemara contains the inner workings of G-dly wisdom, clarification of an intellect above our own. It defines the whole man, permeates his life, and suffuses spirituality into every fiber of his being.

It is for this reason that Yeshiva students study forever, and Kollel never ends. They want a part of eternity, an immutable, perpetual consistency, a world with no time, and no place, where all of life is

one.

3

Ironically, all of the above leads the average person to a certain frustration.

When studying Halacha, one is aware of the material he is required to know. He senses when he needs review, and feels confident when his work is complete.

Talmud is quite different.

Many are those who walk out of a Rosh Yeshiva's shiur disillusioned and confused. After having spent hours tackling a difficult Sugya, satisfied with his understanding of Rishonim and Acharonim, a few minutes with his Rebbe demonstrate that he hasn't even begun to comprehend the subject at hand.

Suddenly unsure, he no longer knows what exactly is he supposed to know, and when is he finished? Every question just adds to the confusion, and the varied opinions and approaches only complicate the picture.

He is the Ner, and he lives in the dark.

The Gemara relates to a different sort of world, where every thought is interconnected, and every idea leads to another. But modern man understands only a material existence, where every moment stands on its own, and the only constant is incessant change.

The Gemara assumes that every student knows all of Tanach by heart, and has all of Shas at his fingertips.

Every Mitzva is a Prat while the Torah is the Klal - "Ein B'Frat Ela Mah SheB'Klal"

The student of Gemara knows this: If he understands one point truly well, this idea helps him comprehend all others. And even more, he sees this one concept everywhere he turns.

The Torah is One, and it elevates man to a level beyond himself.

Carried above the limitations of ego and conceit, lifted beyond the darkness of a world that cannot see, man kindles the light that illuminates his world.

"Ner L'Ragli Devarecha, V'Ohr L'Nesivasi"

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