

TRAINING ONE'S DISCIPLE SO THAT THE TEACHER BECOMES OBSOLETE

by Rabbi Yissocher Frand

Parshas Tetzaveh

Training One's Disciple So That The Teacher Becomes Obsolete

These divrei Torah were adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Tapes on the weekly portion: Tape # 670 -- A Woman's First Candle Lighting. Good Shabbos!

Our parsha begins with the pasuk: "And you shall command the Children of Israel that they shall take for you clear olive oil, crushed for illumination, to light a lamp continually (l'ha-alos ner tamid)" [Shemos 27:20]. The Gemara [Shabbas 21a] infers from the expression "l'ha-alos ner tamid" that the Kohen would kindle the fire of the Menorah until the flame would rise on its own. (In other words, he would not remove his hand from the wick he was lighting until the flame of that candle was an independently firm flame).

Rav Samson Raphael Hirsch sees a symbolism in this halacha that affects every teacher and indeed affects every parent, because ultimately, every parent is a teacher of his own children. It is well known that the lights of the Menorah are symbolic of Torah ("the candle is a mitzvah and the Torah is light" [Mishlei 6:23]). This symbolism is expressed in many ways. The Gemara states that if a person desires wisdom, he should face (slightly) to the south when praying, because the Menorah was positioned at the southern side of the Mishkan [Tabernacle].

Using this general Talmudic equation between Torah wisdom and the Menorah, Rav Hirsch explains the specific symbolism of having the flame arise on its own: The job of every teacher is to make himself superfluous. The job of every teacher is to inspire and teach the student so that the student should become self-sufficient in their learning.

There is an aspect in many relationships where the parties involved in that relationship want to feel needed. Ultimately, the role of the teacher and of the parent is to train the child so well that they will no longer be dependent upon their teacher or parent. True success for a mentor is not achieved by having the child perpetually dependent. Rather, true success is achieved when the child becomes

independent and is able "to rise on his or her own". This "stepping back" is sometimes a psychologically hard thing for a parent to do. The child won't need them as much. Some parents need to be needed. But ultimately, the goal of teachers and parents is to render themselves obsolete.

Blot Me Out Of Your Book

Parshas Tezaveh is the only parsha in the last 4 books of Chumash (i.e. - after the birth of Moshe Rabbeinu) in which Moshe's name is not mentioned. Chazal say this was a fulfillment of Moshe's plea to be "wiped out of the Book that You wrote" [Shemos 32:32], which he uttered when pleading for forgiveness on behalf of the Jewish people for the sin of the Golden Calf. The curse of a righteous person comes true, even if it was only uttered conditionally. Thus, Moshe's words, although uttered conditionally (if You do not forgive the people), did not go totally unfulfilled, even though the Jewish people were in fact forgiven. In this small way, Moshe's name WAS erased from G-d's Book, in that his name does not appear in Parshas Tezaveh.

Rav Ovadya Yosef asks: Why of all Parshios in the Torah, did the fulfillment of this "Curse" come to fruition in Parshas Tezaveh? Rav Ovadya Yosef answers that the statement "Erase me from YOUR BOOK (Sifrecha)" can be broken down to read "Erase me from Sefer Chaf" [Book #20]. Since Parshas Tezaveh is the 20th parsha in the Torah, it is the appropriate parsha in which to have Moshe's name omitted.

This cute insight only begs the question. Why did Moshe pick the 20th parsha, Parshas Tezaveh, as the one to have his name removed from?

I saw in a sefer the following explanation: Many times when a person is being removed from the picture, he feels a need to remind people "You should know that I could have had this job".

There was a famous incident involving Rav Chaim Shmuelevitz. There are usually 3 jobs in connection with a garbage truck - the driver and the two fellows who empty the garbage cans into the back of the garbage truck. The driver has the comfort of driving around in an air-conditioned truck. He does not need to smell or handle the garbage. It is a relatively decent job. The guys in the back need to jump on and off the truck, and handle and smell the garbage, etc. Rav Chaim Shmuelevitz commented that he was once walking in Yerushalayim and he saw a garbage truck. After one of the fellows on the back of the truck did his job with the garbage cans, he noticed Rav Shmuelevitz. The man went over to the Rav and told him in Yiddish, "I could have been the driver, but I'm not looking for honor."

This precious story tells us much. We learn that there are hierarchies of honor in all aspects of life. It also demonstrates this need for people who were passed over or who even voluntarily passed over a certain privileged position to let other people know "I could have done that".

Chazal say that Moshe Rabbeinu was offered to be the Kohen Gadol [High Priest]. However, Moshe declined the job, preferring that it go to his older brother. Parshas Tezaveh is the parsha of the Priestly Garments. This is the parsha describing the glory of the Kohen Gadol. When Moshe Rabbeinu reached Parshas Tezaveh, he may be thinking to himself "the Torah could be talking about me over here; this could have been my uniform; I could have been the Kohen Gadol." In his extreme modesty, however, Moshe says that this is precisely the parsha where he does not even want to have his name mentioned. "This is Aaron's parsha. I want to take a back seat and not even be mentioned in the whole parsha."

This is a classic example of someone who "flees honor". Furthermore, as we said at the outset, this is the goal of every teacher. This is an example of what Rav Samson Raphael Hirsch means - that the flame should arise on its own. The teacher should not always hover over the student and tell him "Remember I was the guy who put you there" or "I taught you everything you know." The teacher must be prepared to stand back, take himself out of the picture, and let the student and disciple go forth totally by himself. The flame of the light of the Menorah should arise on its own.

This write-up was adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Torah Tape series on the weekly Torah portion. The complete list of halachic topics covered in this series for Parshas Tezaveh are provided below:

- Tape # 045 - The Gartel: To Wear or Not to Wear
- Tape # 088 - Parshas Zachor and Other Purim Issues
- Tape # 136 - Purim Costumes: Anything Goes?
- Tape # 183 - Candle Lighting on Friday Night
- Tape # 229 - Purim Issues II
- Tape # 273 - Taanis Esther and the Personal Purim
- Tape # 319 - Conditional Licht Benching
- Tape # 363 - The "Mazik" on Purim
- Tape # 407 - Hesach Ha'daas and Tefillin
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- Tape # 495 - Reneging on a Tzedakah Pledge
- Tape # 539 - Matanos Le'evyonim
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- Tape # 847 - Teaching Torah to a Potential Ger

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