

SANCTIFYING THE MUNDANE IS PRECIOUS

by Rabbi Yissocher Frand

These divrei Torah were adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Tapes on the weekly portion: CD #1024 – Turning Old Dress Into Cover for a Sefer Torah? Good Shabbos!

The Torah tells us that the women donated their mirrors to the Mishkan building fund, and the mirrors were used to make the base of the *Kiyor* [Laver]. Rashi quotes *Chazal* that initially Moshe was hesitant to take this donation, because he felt that mirrors were a tool of the *Yetzer Ha'rah* [evil inclination]. Rashi uses a very strong expression. Not only did Moshe Rabbeinu reject these mirrors, "he was repelled by them" (*haya mo'ays bahem*). "How can the mirrors -- which are made for sensual purposes -- be used for a spiritual purpose in the *Mishkan*?" But the Almighty overrode Moshe's objections, also using a very strong expression in instructing him: "Accept them; for they are more precious to Me than any other donation!"

Rashi explains that in Mitzraim, the men did not want to engage in the act of procreation, because they felt they were in a futile situation where it was not worth bringing additional Jewish children into the world. The women were not so pessimistic. They used their mirrors to beautify themselves, went out into the field, and enticed their husbands. As a result, the Jewish population continued to increase. By virtue of the fact that these mirrors were used for such a positive purpose, the Almighty told Moshe that He considered them to be the dearest donation of the entire *Mishkan* fundraising effort.

I saw an interesting question raised by Rav Dovid Kviat, one of the Roshei Yeshiva in the Mir Yeshiva. Tosfos says in many places in Shas that Talmudic disputes do not result from "*sevaros hafuchos*" [diametrically opposed lines of reasoning], where one opinion says "black" and another opinion says "white." True, one point of view can be "*mutar*" [permitted] and another point of view can be "*asur*" [forbidden] or one point of view can be "*Kosher*" and another point of view can be "*Treife*", but that is only the practical outcome of the dispute. However, the source of the underlying dispute cannot come from diametrically opposed logical positions. In other words, if one "person" says something makes sense, how can the disputant take the exact opposite point of view?

In effect, Rav Dovid Kviat is asking, what happened to Moshe Rabbeinu here? Moshe considers the mirrors repugnant -- he is repelled by them -- while the Almighty finds them to be His favorite and

most precious donation. How can that be? Moshe usually has a keen understanding of the Will of Hashem. After all, he was Moshe Rabbeinu! How could he be so off base here with his reaction to the mirrors?

Rav Kvat answers that Moshe Rabbeinu was not off base. Moshe's reaction was logical and totally understandable. However, Moshe Rabbeinu was missing a piece of information that the Holy One Blessed be He possessed. Moshe Rabbeinu, who was in Midyan at the time, had no way of knowing what happened in Egypt regarding the intimate relationships between the Jewish men and their wives. He had no way of knowing that the men were hesitant to have children, and that their wives used these mirrors to encourage their them.

This is a way in which it *is* possible to have *sevaros hafuchos*. The *Ribono shel Olam* knew the purpose that the mirrors served. Had Moshe had this same "inside information" regarding the history of these mirrors, he would also have felt the same way. Moshe saw the mirrors simply as tools to put on eyeliner and mascara. As such, he felt they were a totally inappropriate gift for use in the *Beis HaMikdash*. The Almighty told him, "Moshe, you do not know the whole story. The whole story is that the women built *Klal Yisrael* with these mirrors. These are more precious to Me than anything else."

Chazal say, regarding the words "With all your heart," [Devorim 4:29] that a person must worship the Almighty "with both his inclinations" (i.e., the *Yetzer Ha'tov* and the *Yetzer Ha'rah*). It is obvious how a person serves the Master of the Universe with his "Good Inclination." How does a person serve Him with his "Evil Inclination?" One explanation is by conquering it. When someone has an urge to do something forbidden, he can subdue that urge, and thereby serve G-d by conquest of his Evil Inclination. However, there is a higher form of serving G-d through one's *Yetzer Ha'Rah*. The highest form of serving G-d is to take that *Yetzer Ha'Rah* and turn it into a *Davar Kodesh* [Holy Item]. That is what these women did. They leveraged something that is in fact the *Yetzer Ha'Rah*. Lust for women, lust for sexual relations, can be internal drives that derive from one's "Evil Inclination." To take those urges, and to make them into an act of holiness, is the highest form of Divine Service. It gives special pleasure to the Almighty, and the tools used to accomplish this transformation became the most precious donation to His *Mishkan*.

A similar idea is found with the *Tzitz* [Headplate] worn by the *Kohen Gadol* [High Priest]. One of the eight garments of the *Kohen Gadol* was the *Tzitz*. The *pasuk* in this week's parsha says, "And they made the Headplate, the holy crown, of pure gold, and they inscribed on it with script like that of a signet ring, 'Holy to Hashem'" [Shemos 39:30]. The words "*Kodesh l'Hashem*" Were engraved upon the *Tzitz*, which was worn on the forehead of the *Kohen Gadol*. This is the only garment that has those words upon it. Why?

Chazal say that the *Tzitz* sat on the *metzach* [forehead] of the *Kohen Gadol*, and the word *metzach* is symbolic of the term *azus metzach*, which means *chutzpah*. On Yom Kippur, as part of the *Al Chet* confession, we confess for sins we have committed with "*azus metzach*." *Chutzpah* is a terrible trait.

The Mishna says "*Az panim l'Gehinnom*" [a person with *chutzpah* goes to Hell] [Avos 5:24]. The fact that they wrote "Holy to Hashem" on the *metzach*, which represents *azus* [*chutzpah*], is symbolic of the fact that sometimes the attribute of *chutzpah* can be *transformed* and sanctified. It can become *Kodesh l'Hashem*! The item which represents the bad and evil traits in man, when sanctified and transformed into holiness, represents the highest form of Divine Service.

Sometimes we need to stand up for principles, and take action that requires *chutzpah*. Such manifestation of *chutzpah* is called "*azus d'Kedusha*." Of course we need to be careful, but to take *chutzpah* and use it for fighting Hashem's battles can reflect a high level of spirituality.

Rav Tzadok comments on the famous Mishna at the end of Sotah. The Mishna writes that in the pre-Messianic era, "*chutzpah* will multiply." This is certainly true on a simple level in our own time. The Kotzker Rebbe gives this Mishnaic statement a positive twist, and says that in pre-Messianic times we will need to have *chutzpah* to spiritually survive. We will be in such a spiritually hostile environment, that unless a person has a certain degree of *chutzpah*, he will melt away in the corrupt society in which he finds himself. The Mishna says that in the time before the imminent arrival of Moshiach, we will need to take that attribute of *azus-chutzpah*, and turn it into a tool for our spiritual survival. This is an instance of having the words *Kodesh l'Hashem* engraved on the *metzach*.

This concept can allow us to properly interpret a famous statement of *Chazal*. The pasuk in Parshas Pekudei says that they finished the *Mishkan*, and Moshe Rabbeinu gave them a blessing: "Moshe saw the entire work, and behold, they had done it as Hashem had commanded -- so had they done! -- and Moshe blessed them." [Shemos 39:43] Rashi adds, "He said to them 'May the Divine Presence dwell in the work of your hands.'"

The simple reading of the *pasuk* is that now that the work was all done, and the *Mishkan* [Tabernacle] was built exactly to specification. Moshe gave the people a blessing that the *Shechina* should now come down to the *Mishkan* and dwell therein. Why would they need a *bracha* for this? This is what they had been promised all along. It was part of the deal. The *Ribono shel Olam* guaranteed, "You build for Me a *Mishkan*, and My Presence will dwell therein!" [Shemos 25:8] So what is this blessing doing here after they did everything correctly? They had every reason to expect the *Shechina* now, without any new blessings!

I once saw an interpretation that the expression 'May the Divine Presence dwell in the work of your hands' means more than just that the *Shechina* would come down to the *Mishkan*. "*Yehi Ratzon she'Tishreh Shechina b'ma'aseh yedeichem*" means that the effect of the *Mishkan* -- the effect of having the *Ribono shel Olam* in your midst -- should turn all of your mundane acts into vessels for the *Shechina*.

"The work of your hands" is not referring only to the *Mishkan*, to the act of construction. Moshe's blessing was that if you did this right and the *Ribono shel Olam* is going to dwell in your midst, consequently you will be different people. Your eating is going to be different, your sleeping is going

to be different, your business is going to be different. Everything about you is going to be different because you are going to elevate yourselves. This is the ultimate *tachlis* [purpose] of the *Mishkan*. "*Yehi Ratzon she'Tishreh Shechina b'ma'aseh yedeichem*" is the highest possible level of spirituality. "*Elu chavivim Alai min ha'kol*."

If you can take a mirror, if you can take makeup, if you can beautify yourselves and that becomes a mitzvah -- and that becomes "G-d's most treasured contribution" -- that is because this is what *Yiddishkeit* is all about. "You shall be a holy people to me" [*anshei kodosh...*]. I want you to be human beings, but holy human beings. You should become different through your work and contributions towards establishing the *Mishkan*.

Rav Shimshon Raphael Hirsch says that in Sefer Vayikra, which we are about to start next week, the first *Korban* [sacrifice] mentioned is the burnt offering (*Korban Olah*). The unique feature of the *Olah* offering is that it was *Kulah l'Hashem* -- it is entirely burnt as an offering to G-d. At the end of Sefer Vayikra, the last *Korban* mentioned is *ma'aser be'heimah* [animal tithe]. This is a form of Peace Offering [*Korban Shlomim*]. It is almost entirely consumed by those who bring it.

In other words, the *Toras Kohanim*, the Book of the Law for the Priests (i.e., Vayikra), begins with an offering that goes entirely to G-d, but ultimately -- at the end of Vayikra -- the Torah demonstrates that it is possible to take something that is a *Korban* -- *Kodoshim Kalim* -- and enjoy it. We are supposed to eat it; we are supposed to take enjoyment from our consumption of this holy offering. It primarily belongs to the owners, and they are supposed to enjoy eating it as a spiritual experience.

That is what the *Mishkan* is all about, and that is what *Toras Kohanim* is all about. This is what having a *Beis HaMikdash* is all about. It is about giving us the capacity to elevate our handiwork, to elevate our lives above the mundane. We are charged with taking the profane and making it holy. We take the mirrors and make a *Kiddush Hashem* with them. We take *Chutzpah*, and use it for the Sake of Heaven. We take our possessions and our professions and make with them things which are holy. This is the blessing of "*Yehi Ratzon she'Tishreh Shechina b'ma'aseh yedeichem*".

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This week's write-up is adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissochar Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Series on the weekly Torah portion. A listing of the halachic portions for Parshas Vayakeil/Pikudei is provided below:

- # 047 Pikuach Nefesh: To Save a Life
- # 090 The Melacha of Carrying

- # 138 The Melacha of Tying Knots on Shabbos
- # 185 The Melacha of Writing
- # 231 Making a Siyum
- # 275 Electricity in Halacha
- # 321 Leap Year and the Second Adar
- # 365 The Melacha of Tearing
- # 409 The Melacha of Melabain (Laundering)
- # 453 Wearing A Watch on Shabbos
- # 497 The Tefillah of B'rich Sh'mei
- # 541 Learning Kabbalah
- # 585 The Melacha of Trapping
- # 629 Sitting in Judgement on Shabbos
- # 672 The Mishebeirach in Halacha
- # 673 Putting A Sefer Torah in the Aron
- # 717 One Hundred Brachos A Day
- # 761 Killing Two Birds with One Stone
- # 805 Baruch Sh'omar, Ashrei and Yishtabach
- # 849 Saying L'shem Yichud - A Good Idea?
- # 893 The Unique Parshas Sh'kolim
- # 937 Magnetic Forces
- # 980 Siyum M'sechta: For The Past Or For The Future?
- #1024 Turning That Old Dress Into A Cover for a Sefer Torah?
- #1068 "This (Aron Kodesh/Ner Tamid/Window) Is Donated By"...A Good Idea
- #1111 Paying the Baal Koreh/Chazan/Babysitter for Shabbos
- #1154 Does The Husband's Early Kabolas Shabbos Affect His Wife?
- #1197 Hachana Issues: Loading Dishwasher on Shabbos; Defrosting For Yom.Tov Sheni
- #1241 The Case of the Mishloach Manos That Was Delivered to the Wrong Person
- #1285 "It's A Siman Min HaShamayim": Is There Such A Thing?

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