

“They shall bring you pure olive oil”

The Lighting of the Menorah Was to Help Moshe Rabeinu Recover the Sha’ar HaNun

In this week’s parsha, parshas Tetzaveh, we read (Shemos 27, 20): “ואתה תצוה את בני ישראל ויקחו אליך שמן זית זך כתית למאור: **“and you shall command Bnei Yisrael that they shall bring you pure olive oil, crushed for illumination, to cause a lamp to burn continually.** Let us examine HKB”H’s statement to Moshe: **“They shall bring you pure olive oil.”** We find a similar phraseology related to the “parah adumah,” the red heifer (Bamidbar 19, 2): “ויקחו אליך פרה אדומה—**they shall bring you a parah adumah.** There, Rashi comments with regards to the words “ויקחו אליך”: **“It shall forever be referred to by your name—the heifer that Moshe prepared in the midbar.”** In that light, how are we to understand the words “ויקחו אליך” uttered with regards to the preparation of the pure olive oil for the lighting of the menorah?

Additionally, it is worthwhile examining HKB”H’s command to bring: “שמן זית זך”—**pure olive oil.** Rashi explains: זך. בלי שמרים, כמו ששנינו במנחות (דף פו.) מגרגרו בראש הזית וכו’. כתית. הזיתים היה כותש במכתשת, ואינו טוחנן בריחים, כדי שלא יהא בו שמרים, ואחר שהוציא טיפה ראשונה מכניסן לריחים וטוחנן, והשמן השני פסול למנורה וכשר למנחות, שנאמר: **“The oil used for the kindling had to be free of any sediment. As we learn in Menachos (86a), only the first drops of oil obtained by crushing the olives in a mortar are suitable for the kindling of the menorah; the subsequent drops of oil obtained from grinding the olives in the mill are not; although they are fit for Menachos offerings. Let us endeavor to explain the practical significance of HKB”H’s command to only light the menorah with pure olive oil—free of any sediments.**

Thirdly, let us endeavor to explain the juxtaposition of the end of parshas Terumah and the beginning of parshas Tetzaveh. Parshas Terumah concluded with a depiction of the measurements of the “chatzer” (courtyard) of the Mishkan; while parshas Tetzaveh begins with the command to prepare the oil for the kindling of the menorah. Let us review the pesukim under discussion (Shemos 27, 18): **“אורך החצר מאה**

באמה ורוחב חמישים בחמישים... לכל כלי המשכן בכל עבודתו וכל יתדותיו, וכל יתדות החצר נחשת. ואתה תצוה את בני ישראל ויקחו אליך שמן זית זך כתית **“the length of the “chatzer” shall be one hundred cubits, and the width shall be fifty by fifty . . . All the implements of the Mishkan for all its labor, all its pegs and all the pegs of the “chatzer” shall be of copper. And you shall command Bnei Yisrael that they shall bring you pure olive oil, crushed for illumination, to cause a lamp to burn continually.**

The Area of the Mishkan Was One-fiftieth of the Area of Har HaBayis

Let us begin our illuminating journey with the Baal HaTurim’s comments at the beginning of parshas Terumah (Shemos 25, 2). He notes that the area of the Mishkan, including the surrounding courtyard, measured one hundred cubits by fifty cubits—totaling five thousand square cubits. In a sense, it constituted a form of “terumah”—equivalent to one-fiftieth of the area of the Temple Mount, Har HaBayis, which measured five hundred by five hundred cubits (two hundred and fifty thousand square cubits). These dimensions are presented in the Mishnah (Midos 2, 1).

In this manner, the Baal HaTurim interprets the passuk (Shemos ibid.): **“ויקחו לי תרומה - עשו לי מקום מקדש אחד מחמשים שבהר הבית, כמו תרומה שהוא אחד מחמשים, שהרי הר הבית ת”ק על ת”ק, ומקום החצר היה ק’ על נ’, שהוא אחד מחמשים של ת”ק ות”ק.”** **“They shall take terumah for me.”** In other words, they shall make Me a sanctuary that is one-fiftieth (equivalent to a portion of terumah) of the area of Har HaBayis.

The Baal HaTurim utilizes this idea to explain the precise language of the passuk (ibid. 27, 18): **“The length of the “chatzer” shall be one hundred cubits, and the width shall be fifty by fifty (“בחמישים”).”** At first glance, the word “בחמישים”

–“by fifty”--appears superfluous and incomprehensible. The length of the “chatzer” was one hundred cubits and the width of the “chatzer” was fifty cubits. What is the significance of the extra word “בַּחֲמִישִׁים”? According to the Baal HaTurim, however, the passuk is indicating that the area of the “chatzer” was “בַּחֲמִישִׁים”—one-fiftieth of the area of Har HaBays.

Now, however, we must endeavor to explain why HKB”H commanded Bnei Yisrael to build the Mishkan on an area equivalent to a terumah-portion of the Temple Mount. Furthermore, we should address the question posed by the Chatam Sofer regarding the Baal HaTurim’s comment: Why was this terumah-portion only one-fiftieth, equivalent to the intermediate level (“ayin beinoni”) of terumah, rather than the generous level (“ayin yafah”) of terumah, equivalent to one-fortieth?

The Mishkan Constituted Atonement for the “Cheit HaEigel”

In an effort to reconcile this difficulty with the comment of the Baal HaTurim, I was struck with a wonderful idea! Along the way, our path will be illuminated by several precious and essential Torah principles. First of all, it is well-known that the Mishkan was built as atonement for the “cheit ha’eigel.” In parshas Pekudei, Rashi remarks (Shemos 38, 21):

“אלה פקודי המשכן משכן העדות - עדות לישראל שוויתר להם הקב”ה על The Mishkan was testimony to the fact that HKB”H forgave Yisrael for the making of the eigel; for He once again rested His Shechinah among them; hence, it is referred to as Mishkan HaEidus—the Mishkan of Testimony. The source for Rashi’s remark is the following Midrash (S.R. 51, 8): “אמר הקב”ה, יבוא זהב המשכן ויכפר על זהב העגל, אמר הקב”ה לישראל, בשעה שעשיתם את העגל הכעסתם אותי באלה אלהיך, עכשיו שעשיתם המשכן, HKB”H said, “Let the gold of the Mishkan come and atone for the gold of the eigel.” HKB”H said to Yisrael, “When you made the eigel, you angered Me with the pronouncement “these are your gods”), now that you have built the Mishkan, I forgive you with אלה (“these”)”—referring to the words “אלה פקודי המשכן”.

Next, let us present a statement from the Gemara (R.H. 21b): “חמשים שערי בינה נבראו בעולם, וכולן ניתנו למשה חסר אחד, שנאמר (תהלים) “fifty levels of “binah” were created in the universe, and they were all bestowed upon Moshe except for one, as it is stated (Tehillim 8, 6): “Yet You have

made him only a little less than the divine. It is worthwhile explaining why the passuk utilizes the unconventional terminology: “וכולן ניתנו למשה חסר אחד”--and they were all bestowed upon Moshe except for one. Seemingly, it would have been more appropriate to state that Moshe was only granted forty-nine levels.

Nevertheless, the Arizal has provided us with an explanation in Likutei Torah (Vaetchanan). During Matan Torah, Moshe merited achieving all fifty levels of binah; however, in the aftermath of the “cheit ha’eigel,” he was deprived of the sha’ar hanun, so that he would not deliver it to Yisrael. For this reason, the statement in the Gemara was formulated as follows: “וכולן ניתנו למשה”—they were all bestowed upon Moshe at the time of Matan Torah; “חסר אחד”—with the exception of one which was confiscated from him after the “cheit ha’eigel.” Still, when he departed this world, he merited once again access to the sha’ar hanun.

Prior to the cheit, Moshe had achieved a state of perfection, including the fiftieth level of binah. Yet, when Yisrael sinned, it was taken away. This is alluded to by the passuk (Shemos 32, 7): “ל”ך רד כי שחת עמך”. Moshe was instructed to step down from his level of perfection, due to the people’s sinful acts. He is told to descend from “ל”ך, which has a numerical value of fifty—alluding to the sha’ar hanun. Nevertheless, since Moshe’s intentions were good, the Almighty did not withhold the sha’ar hanun from him indefinitely. When he passed away, it was returned to him, as alluded to by the passuk (Devarim 34, 1): “ויעל מערבות מואב אל הר נבו”.

The Shela hakadosh (Vaetchanan) discusses this matter at length. He adds that this is the significance of the passuk (Shemos 19, 3): “ומשה עלה אל האלקים”—and Moshe ascended toward G-d. This passuk implies that at the time of Matan Torah, he achieved all fifty levels. Whereas after the “cheit ha’eigel,” Moshe is described as lacking the sha’ar hanun: “ותחסרהו מעט מאלקים”.

The Shela also explains the Arizal’s concluding remark asserting that, nevertheless, Moshe achieved the sha’ar hanun once again as he departed from this world. As substantiation, he cites the passuk: “ויעל מערבות מואב אל הר נבו”. Moshe is described as ascending from the plains of מואב—b—with a numerical equivalent of forty-nine—to the mountain of נב. The name נבו stands for נ בו (the “nun” was within him)—alluding to the fact that he now embodied the sha’ar hanun.

Let us add to this what the Megaleh Amukos on Vaetchanan (12) writes. He points out an allusion in Moshe's declaration to Yisrael before his passing (Devarim 3, 29): "ונשב בגיא, ומלת ונש"ב: נוסריקון נ' שערי בינה, והקב"ה אמר לו בחייו (דברים ג-כז) עלה ראש הפסגה, שהוא שער החמישים שהיה חסר ממנו עד אותו שעה, שלא נתגלו לו רק מ"ט שערי בינה ושער אחד היה חסר, ועל אותו שער הסגור הפנימי אמר לו עתה עלה ראש הפסגה." **And we stayed (נש"ב) in the valley.** The word נש"ב is an abbreviation for **נ' שערי בינה**—fifty levels of binah. While still alive, HKB"H said to Moshe (Devarim 3, 27): **"Ascend to the top of the cliff"**—referring to the fiftieth level, which he lacked until that very moment. Previously, he only had access to forty-nine levels of binah; he was now being instructed to ascend and access the one, exclusive level he lacked.

So, we learned from the Arizal that Moshe achieved the sha'ar hanun at Matan Torah; however, as a result of the "cheit ha'eigel," it was subsequently confiscated. This is alluded to by the words: "לך רד"—indicating that he was to step down from the sha'ar hanun. Thus, we can conclude that in order to atone for the "cheit ha'eigel," it is necessary to reawaken and regain the "fiftieth level," which was taken away from Moshe. In light of this conclusion, we must explain how the Mishkan served as atonement for the "cheit ha'eigel." How was it a tikun for the "sha'ar hanun" which Moshe was temporarily deprived of?

Terumah Alludes to the Sha'ar HaNun

We can explain all of this based on a wonderful principle presented by the Ohev Yisrael (Toldot). He teaches us that HKB"H commanded us to separate a portion of our grain, equaling one-fiftieth of the total yield, as terumah, corresponding to the sha'ar hanun—the fiftieth level. Here are his actual words:

"והנה אמרו חז"ל חמישים שערי בינה נבראו בעולם, וכולם היו ידועים למשה רק אחד לא השיג שנאמר ותחסרהו מעט מאלהים, ואלו הנ' שערי בינה הם בכל חלקי הבריאה, ואפילו בצמחים בכל אחד כמוס כח ושכל רוחני מכל הנ' שערי בינה, ואולי שעבור זה שיעור תרומה גדולה הוא תרי ממאה היינו אחד מחמשים.

כמו בנו"ן שערי בינה העליונים הרוחניים, יש שער אחד שאינו מתגלה לשום אחד מבני אדם, ואפילו למשה רבינו ע"ה רבן של כל הנביאים, כמו כן בכל הדברים אשר כמוס בהם כוחות מכל הנ' שערי בינה כמו תבואה וכדומה, לזה אמרה התורה להפריש חלק אחד מחמשים ויהיה קודש לה', דוגמת שער החמישים אשר הוא קודש קדשים וטמיר ונעלם ונגוז מבני אדם".

The fifty levels of binah are present in all parts of creation, even in plants. Perhaps this is why the amount set aside for terumah equals one out of fifty. Of the fifty spiritual levels of

binah, there is one level that is not revealed to any human being, even to Moshe Rabeinu, a"h, the chief prophet. Similarly, this is true of all elements of creation containing the force of the fifty levels of binah, such as grain. Therefore, the Torah instructed us to set aside one portion out of fifty to be sanctified to Hashem— analogous to the fiftieth level, which is exclusive and sacred and concealed from human beings.

We can embellish this incredible idea based on the following Midrash (B.R. 1, 1):

"התורה אומרת אני הייתי כלי אומנתו של הקב"ה. בנוהג שבעולם מלך בשר ודם בונה פלטיין, אינו בונה אותה מדעת עצמו אלא מדעת אומן, והאומן אינו בונה אותה מדעת עצמו אלא דיפתראות ופינקסאות יש לו, לדעת היאך הוא עושה חדרים, היאך הוא עושה פשפשיין. כך היה הקב"ה מביט בתורה ובורא את העולם, והתורה אמרה (בראשית א-א) בראשית ברא אלקים, ואין ראשית אלא תורה, היאך כמה דאת אמר (משלי ח-כב) ה' קנני ראשית דרכו".

We learn from this Midrash that the Torah was the instrument and blueprint used by HKB"H to create the universe. Consequently, the Zohar hakadosh states (Terumah 161a): **"זכאין אינון כל אינון דמשתדלי באורייתא, בגין דכד ברא קודשא בריך" —Praiseworthy are those who engage in Torah-study; for, when HKB"H created the world, he looked in the Torah and proceeded to create the world.**

In parshas Bereishit, the Maor Einayim describes a fundamental principle: **"בראשית, באורייתא שנקרא ראשית דרכו ברא קוב"ה עלמא, נמצא כל דבר נברא על ידי התורה וכח הפועל בנפעל, אם כן בכל דבר ובכל העולמות כח התורה".** The force of the one performing an act is contained to some degree in the object created or acted upon--"כח הפועל בנפעל". Since, HKB"H used the Torah to create the universe, it stands to reason that every element of creation contains the force of the Torah.

This helps us to better understand the Ohev Yisrael's claim that all elements in creation, including plants, are imbued with the fifty levels of binah. Due to this fact, the Torah instructed us to set aside one portion out of fifty to be sacred for Hashem. That portion is exclusive, sacred and concealed just like the sha'ar hanun.

The Mishkan Constitutes a Form of Terumah

We have succeeded in shedding some light on the deeper significance of the Baal HaTurim's comment regarding the passuk: "ויקחו לי תרומה". Yisrael were commanded to build the

Mishkan as a form of terumah—occupying one fiftieth of the area of the Temple Mount. As we know, the Mishkan represented atonement for the “cheit ha’eigel,” which deprived Moshe and Yisrael of the sha’ar hanun. Therefore, HKB”H commanded the construction of the Mishkan representing a form of terumah—specifically one-fiftieth—alluding to the sha’ar hanun.

Even if they did not fully recover the sha’ar hanun with the construction of the Mishkan, nevertheless Moshe—and along with him all of Yisrael—succeeded in receiving a degree of enlightenment from the sha’ar hanun via the Mishkan. This represented the beginning of the tikun process for the “cheit ha’eigel”—which will need to suffice until we merit receiving the entire sha’ar hanun at the time of the future geulah. This ultimate enlightenment is alluded to by the name משיח—an acronym for משיח יגלה שער חמישים, **Mashiach will reveal the fiftieth level.** At that time, the “cheit ha’eigel” will be rectified completely, leaving no trace of blame or shortcoming.

We can find substantiation for the fact that Moshe Rabeinu received illumination from the sha’ar hanun via the Mishkan from HKB”H’s statement to Moshe (Shemos 25, 22): **“ונועדתי לך שם ודברתי אתך מעל הכפורת מבין שני הכרובים אשר על ארון העדות את כל אשר אצוה אותך אל בני ישראל—and I shall arrange audience with you there, and I shall speak with you from atop the lid, from between the two keruvim that are on the Aron of the Testimony, and it is all that I shall command you pertaining to Bnei Yisrael.** The great Rabbi of Ropshitz, zy”a, teaches us in Zera Kodesh (Behaalotcha): **“וכתיב בספרים שארון אותיות אור נון שיתגלה לנו שער הגון”**—the word ארון is made up of the word אור and the letter “nun”—indicating that it facilitates the revelation of the sha’ar hanun. Thus, we learn that the Aron represented the sha’ar hanun of kedushah. Seeing as Moshe received divine communication from between the two keruvim atop the Aron, it is evident that Moshe received enlightenment from the sha’ar hanun.

This is alluded to very nicely by HKB”H’s words: **“ונועדתי לך שם—and I shall arrange audience with you there.** As pointed out above, the two letters לך add up to fifty (30+20). As a consequence of the “cheit ha’eigel,” HKB”H instructed Moshe: **“לך רד”**—step down from the sha’ar hanun. Here, HKB”H returns the illumination from the sha’ar hanun to him with the statement: **“ונועדתי לך”**—I am returning the לך that I previously confiscated.

We can suggest, therefore, that this is alluded to at the conclusion of parshas Terumah. The Torah informs us of the

dimensions of the courtyard of the Mishkan; it was one hundred by fifty cubits. As the Baal HaTurim points out at the end of parshas Terumah, its area was one-fiftieth of the area of Har HaBayis. Hence, the parsha concludes with the passuk: **“וכל יתדות החצר נחשת—and all the pegs of the “chatzer” were made of נחשת.** The word נחשת can be viewed as an abbreviation for **נבילות חכמה שלמעלה תורה** (B.R. 44, 17)[translated loosely: bits of chochmah gleaned from the highest level of Torah]. This alludes to the fact that the purpose of the Mishkan, which was a one-fiftieth portion like terumah, was to provide illumination from the sha’ar hanun—the fiftieth level—which is **“למעלה”**—above and beyond—all the other levels of the Torah. The word נחשת is also an abbreviation for **נשערי חכמות תורה—the Torah’s fifty levels of chochmah.**

The Menorah Itself Corresponds to the Fiftieth Level of Binah

Continuing our journey upward along this path, let us now address the juxtaposition of the parshiyot: **“וכל יתדות החצר נחשת, ואתה תצוה את בני ישראל ויקחו אליך שמן זית זך כתית למאור להעלות נר—תמיד—we conclude last week’s parsha with the chatzer’s pegs of נחשת and begin this week’s parsha with the command to provide pure olive oil for the kindling of the menorah.** The great luminary Rabbi Eliyahu of Vilna, zy”a, writes an amazing thing in Aderes Eliyahu (Devarim). He explains Rashi’s comment (Shemos 25, 40): **“שנתקשה משה במעשה המנורה עד שהראה לו הקב”ה—מנורה של אש—the menorah until HKB”H showed him a menorah of fire.** What perplexed Moshe about the menorah more so than about any of the other vessels?

He explains in his own inimitable way based on the Gemara (B.B. 25b): **“הרוצה שיחכים ידרים ושיעשיר יצפין, וסימנך שלחן בצפון ומנורה—one who desires chochmah should face the south, while one who desires wealth should face the north; this is symbolized by the fact that the shulchan is in the north and the menorah is in the south.** This illustrates that the kindling of the menorah alludes to the light of Torah and its chochmah. This, too, is the meaning of the passuk (Mishlei 6, 23): **“כי נר מצוה ותורה אור—a mitzvah is a candle, while the Torah is light.** The mitzvos are compared to candles, whereas the Torah is compared to the light itself.

We have already discussed the Gemara’s statement: **חמישים שערי בינה נבראו בעולם, וכולן ניתנו למשה חסר אחד שנאמר ותחסרהו מעט—of the fifty levels of binah in creation, Moshe was privy**

to forty-nine; he was just a drop shy of the divine. Accordingly, the Gra notes that if we examine the structure of the menorah, we find that it contained: seven branches, eleven knobs, nine flowers and twenty-two goblets. The sum of these parts totals forty-nine items, corresponding to the forty-nine levels of binah given to Moshe.

The overall shape of the menorah itself, however, corresponded to the fiftieth level. For, the fiftieth level incorporates all of the other forty-nine levels. This is why Moshe was perplexed by the construction of the menorah. Seeing as the menorah itself corresponded to the fiftieth level, which was not given to Moshe, he could not fully comprehend its structure. Therefore, HKB”H showed him a menorah of fire. This concludes the explanation of the Gra.

“See and construct, according to their form that you are shown on the mountain”

With this understanding, we can provide a very nice interpretation of HKB”H’s command to Moshe concerning the construction of the menorah (Shemos 25, 40): **“וראה ועשה בתבניתם”**—**“see and construct, according to their form that you are shown on the mountain.”** As we learned from Rashi, this passuk indicates that Moshe was perplexed by the construction of the menorah.

Let us recall what we learned from the Arizal. At the time of Matan Torah, Moshe achieved all fifty levels of binah; however, in the aftermath of the “cheit ha’eigel,” the sha’ar hanun was taken away from him. Therefore, after HKB”H directed him to construct the menorah—corresponding to the sha’ar hanun—HKB”H hints to him the following: **“וראה ועשה בתבניתם אשר אתה מראה בהר”**. When you were on Har Sinai to receive the Torah, you merited and achieved the sha’ar hanun due to your extreme kedushah, as implied by the passuk: **“ומשה עלה אל האלקים”**—**Moshe approached G-d**. In similar fashion, use your kedushah to stir and awaken that sha’ar hanun for the sake of the construction of the menorah. To assist Moshe in accomplishing this feat, HKB”H showed him a fiery menorah, the embodiment of the sha’ar hanun.

We can now appreciate the significance of the juxtaposition of the two parshiyot. The conclusion of parshas terumah: **“וכל יתדות החצר נחשת”**—alludes to the fact that the Mishkan represents a portion of terumah, one-fiftieth, corresponding to the sha’ar hanun, the ultimate and highest of all the levels of the Torah. For, as we have learned **נחש”ת** is an abbreviation for: (1) **נִזְבוּלוֹת חִכְמָה שְׁלֵמַעֲלָה תּוֹרָה**—the chochmah gleaned from the supreme level of Torah, the sha’ar hanun and (2) **נִשְׁעָרֵי חִכְמוֹת תּוֹרָה**—conveying the fact that the Mishkan atones for the “cheit ha’eigel,” which caused the sha’ar hanun to be confiscated from Moshe.

Therefore, HKB”H immediately followed with the directive to bring pure olive oil—**“shemen zayit zach”**—for the kindling of the menorah, which also corresponds to the sha’ar hanun. This explains the reason HKB”H employed the word **“ואתה”**. The letter “vav,” with which parshas Tetzaveh opens, indicates that the topic being introduced is a continuation and addendum to the previous topic. In other words, HKB”H conveys that He commanded Yisrael to construct the Mishkan—one-fiftieth, just like terumah—as atonement for the “cheit ha’eigel.” For the very same reason: **“תצוה את בני ישראל ויקחו אליך”**—they are instructed to bring the oil with the specific intent of returning to you, Moshe, the sha’ar hanun, which was taken away from you as a consequence of their commission of the “cheit ha’eigel.”

To make amends for the loss they caused you, they should bring you **“שמן זית זך”**, alluding to the sha’ar hanun—the pure, refined light of Torah, surpassed by none. Additionally, the oil had to be: **“כתית למאור”**—as Rashi explains, the olives had to be crushed in a mortar, and only the first pure drop of oil, free of all sediments, was used to kindle the menorah—providing the ultimate illumination. This process alludes to the nature of the sha’ar hanun, which is free of any doubts or uncertainty; this level provides the ultimate clarity and enlightenment. Lastly, we are taught that the purpose of this procedure is: **“להעלות נר”**—**“תמיד”**—to draw from the immense light of the sha’ar hanun, so that it will ultimately illuminate eternally, when it is revealed in its full glory with the arrival of the future geulah—swiftly, in our times. Amen.

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