

"The answer is next to the question." Meaning that the very text that generates a question, includes the answer.

Amazing.

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Weekly Parsha

Pekuday

RABBI BERNIE FOX

"And these are the accounts of the Mishcan -- the Tabernacle of the Testimony -- that were calculated by Moshe. It was the service of the Leveyim under the authority

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METHOD OF STUDY

Purim's Commands

RABBI MOSHE BEN-CHAIM

In passing, my friend Heshy mentioned the method of Torah study. What Heshy referred to by "method", is the unique line of reasoning used to uncover the underlying ideas encrypted in every Torah area. One, who is untrained, will encounter questions, but might find no answers, as he or

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(Pekuday cont. from pg. 1)

Weekly Parsha

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of Itamar the son of Ahron the Kohen.” (Shemot 38:21)

This pasuk introduces Parshat Pekudey. The parasha provides an account of the materials donated for the Mishcan and a description of the manner in which these materials were used.

The pasuk refers to the Mishcan as the Tabernacle of the Testimony. The simple meaning of this term is that the Mishcan housed the Luchot – the Tablets of the Decalogue. These Luchot provided testimony. They evidenced the authenticity of the Torah and the relationship between Hashem and His nation.

Rashi, based on Midrash Rabba, offers another interpretation of the testimony identified with the Mishcan. He explains that the Tabernacle indicated that Hashem had forgiven Bnai Yisrael for the sin of the Egel HaZahav – the Golden Calf. Upon the completion of the Mishcan, the Divine Presence descended upon the Tabernacle. This indicated that the relationship with Hashem was reestablished.

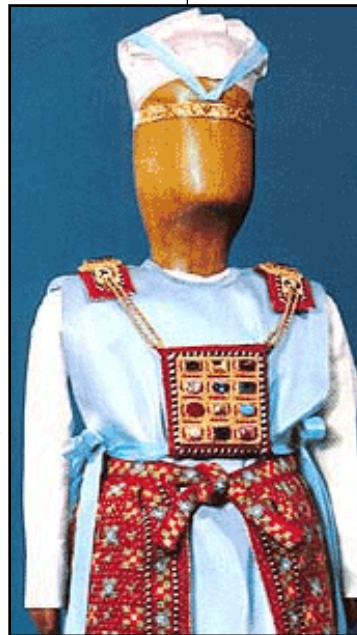
This interpretation of the midrash creates an interesting difficulty. The end of the pasuk explains that the service in the Mishcan was entrusted to the Leveyim and Kohanim. This was not the original design. Initially, service was commended to the first-born. However, the first-born became involved in the sin of the Egel. In contrast, the Leveyim and Kohanim withstood temptation and opposed the Egel. As a consequence, the responsibility for service in the Mishcan was transferred from the first-born to the Leveyim and Kohanim. The end of the pasuk confirms this change from the original plan.

According to the Midrash, the pasuk delivers a confusing message. The first part of the pasuk indicates that the Mishcan testified to Hashem's forgiveness. The second part of the pasuk seems to indicate the opposite. The service was not restored to the first-born. This seems to imply that the sin of the Egel had not been completely forgiven.

Meshech Chachmah offers an interesting answer to this question. Maimonides explains that a Kohen who practices or confirms idolatry may

not serve in the Temple. This law applies even if the Kohen repents fully from his sin. Why can the repentant Kohen not return to service? Presumably, Hashem has forgiven him! It seems that once the Kohen becomes associated with idolatry he is permanently unfit for service in the Mishcan. Repentance and forgiveness do not remove this association.

Based on this law, the Meshech Chachmah explains the message of the pasuk. The pasuk explains that Bnai Yisrael had, indeed, been forgiven for the sin of the Egel. Nonetheless, the first-born were no longer qualified to serve. They had identified themselves with the idolatry of the Egel and were permanently disqualified from service in the Mishcan.



“And they beat the gold into thin plates and cut them into threads, which they included in the blue, dark red, crimson wool, and fine linen as patterned brocade.” (Shemot 39:3)

The garments of the Kohen Gadol contain a number of materials. The basic threads are blue wool, dark red wool, crimson wool, and fine linen. The vestments also contain gold threads. However, the gold threads are interwoven into the other threads. How is this accomplished? Each thread of blue wool, dark red wool, crimson wool and fine linen is composed of seven strands woven together. Six of the strands are of the basic material of the thread. The seventh strand is gold. For example, a thread of blue wool in composed of seven individual strands woven together to create a single thread. Six of these strands are blue wool. The seventh strand is gold. In this manner, gold is included in each of the threads of the garment.

Our pasuk describes the process through which these gold threads are created. A quantity of gold is beaten into a thin plate or foil. Then, this foil is cut into fine threads.

The Torah does not provide many details regarding the manufacturing processes used in creating the Mishcan and the vestments of the Kohanim. For example, the craftsmen created silver sockets. The boards that supported the curtains of the

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Mishcan were inserted into these sockets. The Torah does not describe the process by which these sockets were fabricated. These details of the manufacturing process are not included in the Torah's narrative.

The only detail that the Torah does provide is the method by which these gold threads were fashioned. It is odd that this detail should be mentioned. Why does this detail deserve special attention?

Nachmanides offers an answer to this question. He explains that the Torah did not dictate the specific manufacturing processes. The Torah described the elements of the Mishcan and the vestments of the Kohanim. However, the Torah did not command the craftsmen to manufacture these items in any specific manner. The craftsmen were free to rely on their own ingenuity to fashion these items. For this reason, the specific manufacturing processes are not included in the Torah. These processes were not part of the commandments to create a Mishcan and vestments for the Kohanim.

This presented the craftsmen with a dilemma. They understood the description of the Kohen Gadol's garments. They realized that the individual threads of the garments must contain a gold strand. However, they were not familiar with a process through which gold thread could be manufactured. This challenge exceeded their experience and knowledge. They were required to invent some novel process for manufacturing these gold strands. The Torah is describing the manufacturing process invented by the craftsmen of the Mishcan. This process is described in order to demonstrate the wisdom of these craftsmen. They invented a completely new process.[1]

“And he burned incense on it as Hashem had commanded Moshe.” (Shemot 40:26)

After the craftsmen completed the Mishcan, they brought it to Moshe for assembly. There is a difference of opinion regarding the date of this event. Many authorities maintain that the Mishcan was first assembled on the twenty-third of Adar. On this date, a seven-day period of initiation began. Moshe assembled and took down the Mishcan every day. According to some Sages, Moshe repeated this process as many as three times daily. Ahron and the Kohanim did not perform the services during this seven-day

initiation. Instead, Moshe acted as the Kohen Gadol and the only Kohen. On the eighth day – the first of Nissan – the Mishcan was again assembled. However, on this day it was not disassembled. Ahron and his sons began to assume the duties of the Kohen Gadol and the Kohanim.

Our passage states that, as one of his duties, Moshe burned incense on the altar. It is not at all clear from the Torah whether this service was only performed on the eighth day, or whether it was also performed during the seven-day initiation period. Nachmanides takes the position that Moshe offered the incense each of the seven days of the initiation.[2]

This position presents a problem. In Parshat Tetzaveh, Hashem commands Moshe to conduct the seven-day initiation. The Torah describes the sacrifices that Moshe was commanded to offer. In our parasha, Hashem commands Moshe on the procedure he was to follow in erecting the Mishcan. Hashem tells Moshe that he should place the Mishcan's vessels in their proper place. He also tells Moshe to light the Menorah and place the bread on the Shulchan – the table. However, no mention is made of offering incense. In short, in neither instance in which Hashem instructs Moshe on the procedures of the seven-day initiation is any mention made of offering incense. Why did Moshe perform a service not commanded by Hashem?

In order to answer this question, we must resolve another difficult issue. Why does the Torah divide the instructions for the initiation period between Parshat Tetzaveh and our parasha? Why are some instructions provided to Moshe in Parshat Tetzaveh and other instructions included in our parasha within the directions for the assembly of the Mishcan?

The answer is that these two sections are dealing with completely different aspects of the initiation process. Parshat Tetzaveh deals with the special offerings required to initiate Ahron, the Kohanim, and the altar. This parasha does not include the lighting of the Menorah or the placing of the bread on the Shulchan. These activities were not special services performed to initiate the Mishcan and the Kohanim.

Our parasha deals with a different aspect of the initiation period. During this period, Moshe performed the daily activities that are fundamental to the Mishcan. These activities include the

lighting of the Menorah and the display of the bread on Shulchan. This section does not mention the special sacrifices offered as initiation. These sacrifices were not among the daily activities fundamental to the Mishcan.

It is noteworthy that the offering of the Tamid sacrifice is mentioned in both sections. The Tamid sacrifice is a daily offering made in the morning and afternoon. Why is the Tamid included in both sections? The answer is that apparently the Tamid serves two purposes. First, it is one of the fundamental daily activities of the Mishcan. For this reason, it is included in the instructions in our parasha. Second, all other sacrifices are offered after the morning Tamid service and before the afternoon Tamid. Therefore, the special offerings of the initiation period could only be sacrificed in conjunction with the Tamid. The requirement to sacrifice these special offerings generated an obligation to offer the Tamid sacrifice in the morning and afternoon. Therefore, the discussion of the special sacrifices in Parshat Tetzaveh includes mention of the Tamid.

We can now answer our question. Why did Moshe offer the incense during the seven-day initiation period? The answer is that our parasha clearly indicates that those services that are fundamental to the operation of the Mishcan were required during these seven days. For this reason, the lights of the Menorah were kindled and the bread was displayed on the Shulchan. Moshe recognized that the offering of incense is also a fundamental performance.

He concluded that the commands to light the Menorah, display the bread on the Shulchan, and offer the Tamid were only examples of a more general obligation to perform all services fundamental to the Mishcan. Therefore, he included in his daily service the offering of the incense. He realized that this service is included in the general obligation of performing all of the fundamental services.[3] ■

[1] Rabbaynu Moshe ben Nachman (Ramban / Nachmanides), Commentary on Sefer Shemot 39:3.

[2] Rabbaynu Moshe ben Nachman (Ramban / Nachmanides), Commentary on Sefer Shemot 40:27.

[3] See comments of Nachmanides Sefer Shemot 40:27.

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Method

she has not yet been tutored in the Torah's design, or its scientific approach. (Note to Torah critics parading as possessing true Torah knowledge, unaware of the deep science in Torah study.)

Of course, there are categorically different approaches one takes in his questioning methodology, depending on the area studied. For example, when studying the Written Law (Chumash, Navi, Ksuvim) we must be sensitive to the very structure of the verses God dictated to Moses, or written by the prophets. (This is not the case regarding Talmudic sections; the text is not divinely inspired) In the Written Law, each word, sentence, and section has tremendous wisdom, and only with this appreciation do we uncover the myriad of deeper meanings. For it is only he who looks for the treasure, that finds it. If one sifts sand and locates a \$50 bill, he is ecstatic. But if one knows that a priceless chest of gold was somewhere in that vicinity, he would throw away the \$50 bill along with the sand, until he finds the treasure. He knows something of immense value is here. So too the Torah student; he knows that in God's words lie vaults of deep wisdom and profound ideas, so he is dissatisfied unless he uncovers an idea that is a marvel to his imagination.

So as he studies the Written Law, he asks, "What is the vital nature of each verse: why did God have to write 'this' verse? Why is it following the previous verse, and precedes the next? What is the beginning and end of this area, so as not to force unrelated text into a working theory? How do all verses contribute to this section?" And the primary question: "Are there any unique matters here, not located elsewhere?" As each Torah area is different, the rules in Torah method are many, so elucidation via example is the best means to illustrate our points. Let's proceed by addressing both Talmudic questioning, and that pertaining to the Written Law.

Below is a Talmudic quote (Tal. Megilla 7a-b) discussing the verse in Megillas Esther 9:22 when Mordechai established the laws for all Purim holidays to come. Mordechai instituted the mitzvah of sending portions of food to friends (Mishloach Mannos) and gifting two poor people (Mattanos La-eyyonim):

And gifts to the poor – Rabbi Yosef learned, "[the Megilla states] And sending portions man to his friend" [portions is plural, meaning] two portions to one man. "and gifts to the poor people", [this means] two portions to two people.

Rabbi Judah the prince sent to Rabbi Oshiyah a leg of a third-born calf and a pitcher of wine, and the latter [wrote back] to him the message,



"Our teacher has confirmed both duties to send portions one to another; and to give gifts to the needy."

Raba sent to Mari bar Mar through Abaye a bag of dates and a goblet full of flour of dried wheat. Said Abaye to him, "Now Mari will say, When a countryman becomes a king, he is still unable to remove the basket from his shoulder. And it is the same with you: now you are the Head of the College, and send to him commonplace articles." R. Mari bar Mar returned [a gift] to Raba through Abaye, a pouch of ginger and a goblet full of long peppers. Said Abaye, "Now the Master [Raba] will say, I had sent him sweets, and he has sent to me sharp things".

The first thing we note when reading this section is a distinction: the beginning derives lessons from the Megillas Esther text, and the latter portion cites examples of Rabbis fulfilling the mitzvahs. Let's recognize this distinction, realize they deserve differing analyses, and address each separately. As the first section discusses derivations from the Megillas' verses, let's review the verses in context.

Analyzing Written Law: Megilla

9:15 For the Jews that were in Shushan gathered themselves together on the fourteenth day also of the month Adar, and slew three hundred men at Shushan; but on the prey they laid not their hand.

9:16 But the other Jews that were in the king's provinces gathered themselves together, and stood for their lives, and had rest from their enemies, and slew of their foes seventy and five thousand, but they laid not their hands on the prey.

9:17 On the thirteenth day of the month Adar; and on the fourteenth day of the same rested they, and made it a day of feasting and gladness.

9:18 But the Jews that were at Shushan assembled together on the thirteenth day thereof, and on the fourteenth thereof; and on the fifteenth day of the same they rested, and made it a day of feasting and gladness.

9:19 Therefore the Jews of the villages, that dwelt in the unwalled towns, made the fourteenth day of the month Adar a day of gladness and feasting, and a good day, and of sending portions one to another.

9:20 And Mordechai wrote these things, and sent letters unto all the Jews that were in all the provinces of the king Achashverosh, both nigh and far.

9:21 ...to establish this among them, that they should keep the fourteenth day of the month Adar, and the fifteenth day of the same, yearly.

9:22 ...as the days wherein the Jews rested from their enemies, and the month which was turned unto them from sorrow to joy, and from mourning into a good day: that they should make them days of feasting and joy, and of sending portions one to another, and gifts to the poor.

9:23 And the Jews undertook to do as they had begun, and as Mordechai had written unto them.

9:24 Because Haman the son of Hammedatha, the Agagite, the enemy of all the Jews, had devised against the Jews to destroy them, and had cast Pur, that is, the lottery, to consume them, and to destroy them.

9:25 But when Esther came before the king, he commanded by letters that his wicked device, which he devised against the Jews, should return upon his own head, and that he and his sons should be hanged on the gallows.

9:26 Wherefore they called these days Purim after the name of Pur.

Of course, when studying a text, many questions arise. So it is essential that we remain focussed on our precise topic: the two mitzvahs of giving portions of food, and gifting the poor.

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Method

With that in mind, we filter-out extraneous text from our concerns and question the related text alone:

Why in 9:19 did the Jews give meals to each other...what does this have to do with a victory over the enemy?

And why in 9:22 does Mordechai add the command of gifting the poor, not originally performed by the Jews upon their victory?

To answer the first question, we note the fact that the salvation was of the "Jewish nation" and not of an individual. This was the primary cause for rejoicing. And this is the very point we are discussing...these two commands of Purim. Multiple individuals is a sampling of the Jewish "nation" as a nation is comprised of multiples. Therefore, one may not celebrate individually, but only with others. So we understand the concept of delivering portions to a friend. Our mitzvah must incorporate a gladness with others...an expression of nationhood.

Our second question was why, in 9:22, did Mordechai add the command of gifting the poor? But as we said, we must realize divinely written texts are highly precise in design. Therefore, we must also ask about the other new information included in 9:22:

"Why does this verse include *'and the month which was turned unto them from sorrow to joy, and from mourning into a good day'*?"

We have a tradition that all elements in a single verse are related. Equally important is to make certain we have covered all text related to our question, so we are fully informed regarding all of God's "clues" in this area. Not possessing all the clues, we may get sidetracked, or ask misleading questions. Once we have studied all related texts, we continue.

We then deduce that these extra elements "and the month which was turned unto them from sorrow to joy, and from mourning into a good day" are related to Mordechai's extra command of gifting the poor...they are joined in a single verse. Now we have a starting point: we compare the two elements of, 1) gifting the poor, to the fact that the month was, 2) transformed from negative to positive. Think about what might be a commonality...pause here.

Do you see what else we did? We also categorized the starting and ending points in the transitions as "negative" and "positive". This categorization or definition of the two transformations will highlight a more apparent tie with gifting the poor. Think about it a moment, then read on for our suggested answer.

Why did Mordechai institute an additional commandment of gifting the poor? Perhaps the very verse hints the answer.

In the verse where Mordechai institutes gifting the poor, we also learn that Purim was a day that was a transformation, "from anguish to happiness", and "from mourning to holiday". Perhaps Mordechai's message was akin to Passover's message. During the Seder as free people (that's what we celebrate) we must also recall our servitude. This contrast to our current freedom engenders within us a feeling of gratitude to God for His redemption. Mordechai too sought to perpetuate our gratitude for God's salvation from Haman's holocaust by reminding us of that day's transformation. This was Mordechai's intent in creating the Purim holiday: to focus on God, as must all commands. He did so by requiring that we all gift the poor, as a recognition of man's lowly state, on the day when we celebrate salvation of life. Gifting the poor brings to our consciousness man's deprived state, and our need of God's graces for our very life and sustenance. The poor man is a model of our very state, prior to God's salvation from Haman. The verse recalls our transformation from negative to positive, and ties it together with the command to gift the poor, for this reason. In fact, the following verses bear out this contrast:

[Negative state of the Jews] Because Haman the son of Hammedatha, the Agagite, the enemy of all the Jews, had devised against the Jews to destroy them, and had cast Pur, that is, the lottery, to consume them, and to destroy them.

[Positive salvation] But when Esther came before the king, he commanded by letters that his wicked device, which he devised against the Jews, should return upon his own head, and that he and his sons should be hanged on the gallows.

We may also add that the two transitions teach an additional lesson; what should have been one of our questions: "Why is the transition duplicated"? The answer is found when we compare "anguish to gladness" and "mourning to holiday". The former addresses a person's inner feelings, while the latter is the "expression in action". We were transformed both emotionally, and in action. This shows that we weren't only removed from anguish, but our mental state was brought the "height" of happiness, expressed in actions of holiday. God rendered a "complete" transformation, only seen when man celebrates. Thus, we learn that God's kindness is abundant, and not merely a minimal response to our needs. Malachi 3:10 reiterates this point: "I will pour empty out a blessing more than enough". God

also made the patriarch's rich, even more rich than kings, "And Avimelech [King of the Pelishitim] said to Isaac, 'Depart from us, for you are wealthier than us.'" (Gen. 26:16) "And God blessed Abraham with everything". (Gen. 24:1)

Here is but a very small example of some of the methods employed to discover new Torah truths. As a final note on the Megilla, we appreciate that Mordechai – who was not coerced into exile with the Jewish nation – volunteered himself into their fate to contribute to the nation's well-being. He monitored the Jews participation in Achashverosh's feast, Jews who ostensibly accepted foreign gods. Mordechai therefore made a public rejection of Haman when the latter demanded he bow to him. Mordechai wished to instill in the Jews a new recognition of their backsliding into this foreign culture. He used his public rejection as a wake-up call to all Jews. He also used his cunning with Esther to manipulate their salvation, complimented by God's providence, as these two righteous souls sacrificed themselves for the nation. Now let us return to the second part of the Talmudic portion we study.

Oral Law: Analyzing Talmud

Rabbi Judah the prince sent to Rabbi Oshiyah a leg of a third-born calf and a pitcher of wine, and the latter [wrote back] to him the message, "Our teacher has confirmed both duties to send portions one to another; and to give gifts to the needy."

The Talmud continues with a few examples of the Rabbis' fulfillment of these two laws...meant as instruction to us. It is important to note that Talmudic study focusses on theories, so as to grasp deeper insight into God's Torah formulations. We are not necessarily concerned with halachik conclusions (final rulings).

The Talmud asks, "What is the initial thought (mai hava mena) that we come and learn this lesson?". That is, every lesson comes to remove alternative possibilities, so we wonder why the alternative cannot be true. Case and point, Rabbi Oshiyah tells Rabbi Judah that his one act, in fact sufficed to fulfill the two commands...normally construed as requiring two, distinct actions. Yet, Rabbi Oshiyah says otherwise: the food and wine you sent not only satisfies the requirement of giving "portions to a friend", but since I am also poor, you also satisfied the requirement of "gifting poor people".

Our task as Talmudic students, is to now ask the following: "How might we construe the law

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that both Mishloach Mannos (food portions sent to a friend) and Mattanos La-eyonim (gifting two poor people) should be separate acts? And conversely, how might the law be formulated that even one gift – as Rabbi Judah the Prince gave Rabbi Oshiyah – suffices to fulfill both commands, in one act?"

The first thing to note is the unique lesson of any Talmudic portion, just as we seek when studying the Written Law.

What is unique here? We read, "Our teacher has confirmed both duties". Typically, one command is distinct from another, because by their very natures, one act cannot satisfy both commands. For example, the command to build a parapet (fencing) on our roof to protect one from falling, obviously cannot also fulfill the command to eat matza. But what about the command to give charity, and gladdening the bride and groom: can we do one act of giving money to a poor couple, and accomplish both mitzvahs? What theory would explain that we need not give two separate checks for each mitzvah? Where would we look for the answer?

We might take the inverse question, "What would be a reason to give two checks?" Examining the inverse, many times brings to mind a more apparent observation. We might answer, "The Torah requires individual actions per mitzvah, so I must give two checks, as two actions". To this, we state, "But if the mitzvah is to perfect 'me', and I recognize the perfection in charity and in gladdening the couple, nothing is lost by giving a single check". Then, we are forced to apply this reasoning to our case, and wonder why we "might" have thought that Purim's mitzvahs still require two actions. What might be different here, that the Talmud found it necessary to teach us otherwise? We then examine the nature of these commands. We ask ourselves what is unique to these two mitzvahs. We recognize that we are to "improve the demeanor of others". But these two commands are distinct. We observe an intriguing new lesson...

When we give to a friend, the objective is different than giving to a poor person. The poor person requires sustenance. But my friend may be rich...yet I must give him portions of food. The reason, is in order to foster good feelings of friendship. However, when giving to the poor, we are not fostering friendship, but addressing a deprivation and instilling dignity by commiserating. As such, we assume we cannot achieve both reactions in a single person. In typical mitzvahs, the fulfillment inheres solely in the "performer". But in these two commands, the fulfillment depends on the reaction in the "recipient". Therefore, the Talmud teaches that although that is the

norm, if however as in Rabbi Oshiyah's case a recipient experienced both reactions, then we can fulfill both commands, as did Rabbi Judah.

We have gained new insight into human nature, and into halacha. Human nature is that our individual relationships carry a single "tone". We are either friends, benefactors, subservient, authority figures...the list goes on. We relate to others primarily in a single manner. Therefore, this singularity of our relationships precludes us from generating two distinct reactions in one person. It follows that we cannot fulfill Mishloach Mannos and Mattanos La-eyonim in one person. That is what we might have thought...that is the "hava mena", our initial thought. The outcome or "maskana", is that it all depends on the recipient: if he feels as did Rabbi Oshiyah, then we in fact might fulfill both mitzvahs in one person, since he can possibly appreciate our single gift in both capacities of friend and benefactor.

Repetition

Raba sent to Mari bar Mar through Abaye a bag of dates and a goblet full of flour of dried wheat. Said Abaye to Raba, "Now Mari will say, 'When a countryman becomes a king, he is still unable to remove the basket from his shoulder.' And it is the same with you: now you are the Head of the College, and send to him commonplace articles!" R. Mari bar Mar returned [a gift] to Raba through Abaye, a pouch of ginger and a goblet full of long peppers. Said Abaye to Mari, "Now Raba will say, 'I had sent him sweets, and he has sent to me sharp things!'"

Why is this next portion relevant? Think for a moment what the Talmud might be doing here.

This subsequent Talmudic portion validates the very theory we discuss: fulfillment of Mishloach Mannos does in fact inhere in the recipient, and not in us, the performer. Read it again!

Abaye – the messenger – is telling these Rabbis that this mitzvah of sending portions is only fulfilled, if the recipient is happy with the gift. Meaning, the reaction in the recipient determines whether the mitzvah was fulfilled...our exact point. And perhaps why the Talmud cites these cases here. Furthermore, satisfaction is a subjective phenomenon: we have two examples here. First, we see that according to Abaye, Mari's knowledge that Raba was a leader would dissatisfy Mari with Raba's mediocre gift. And second, Raba would be dissatisfied with Mari's sharp tasting foods, as compared to the sweets Raba had sent Mari. Many factors can contribute to the recipient's satisfaction, the exact affect we are required to elicit.

So the Talmud's repetition of the theory – now expressed in action – teaches the Talmudic student if he is on the correct track.

Summary

Aside from examining the method in Torah study, we have gained some interesting ideas! But let us review some of the methods we have outlined here.

1) Make certain to determine that the section of text to be analyzed is a self-contained area. Too little or too much content will confuse the core issue(s) with superfluous matter. Then read it a few times.

2) Identify the unique matters you feel are not elsewhere encountered, and use that as your anchor to remain focussed on the unique lesson of your selected area.

3) Most areas run for many passages or lines of text, so look for a sequence. Understand the flow of the text or Rabbinic statements; these can clue you in to the intended lesson(s).

4) If you find yourself at a loss for answers, try asking the inverse. For example, if you cannot answer the question "What is the definition of a door?" Ask the opposite, "What do I lack without a door?" The absence sometimes alerts the mind to something more obvious.

5) When reading literally "any" text, ask yourself, "Why do I need to know this...what would I have though had this NOT been written?" This can hone your focus in on a primary lesson.

6) Look for any repetition as an indication of the primary lesson, or as a validation.

7) Ideas located together in a single verse must be related. Seek out the relationship.

8) When considering an explanation for any matter, only suggest the minimal necessary to suffice as an answer. Viz., "The reason the glass broke was due to an object hitting it". You need not posit object's size, unless the question included "Why was the hole was that big?" Or, "The tire went flat since the car drove over a sharp object". But we need not stipulate that speed of the car. that does not contribute anything to the answer, and confuses the issue.

9) Remember the Rabbis saying, "the answer is by its side". This means that the content that generates your question, is also the content that will give you your answer!

10) Don't force a theory...if you hit on a correct answer, it should fit easily and perfectly into the words.

11) Use others as a sounding board for your ideas. A wise Rabbi once said that is why King Solomon was called Koheles, from the term "kehila", a group. He bounced his ideas off others so as to reduce the chances of his theories being incorrect. ■

the Ark's Poles

What is the purpose of haftoras Pekuday teaching that the Cherubim not only covered the Ark with their wings, but they also covered the poles of the Ark? What is derived from this? Additionally, what may be derived from the command (Exod. 25:15) that the Ark's poles are never to be removed? Lastly, what may be derived from the order of the Ark's assembly, (Exod. 40:20) "he (Moses) placed the Tablets into the Ark, he placed the poles on the Ark and he placed the Kapores (Ark cover) on the Ark"? Shouldn't the poles be last, as the Kapores should most certainly be prior, as it is more essential than the poles?

I believe the answer to all these questions is one concept, that is, that the Ark has no "destination" i.e., the Temple. The Ark outweighs the Temple in importance, as the Ark houses the Law - mans' main pursuit in life. Suggesting that the Ark has found 'purpose' in something else, attributes greater import to something other than the Ark itself. This is as if to say that a higher purpose in the Ark has been realized by the Ark's arrival in the Temple. This is not so. Torah study must always claim top priority for man. To demonstrate that the Ark has not 'come to finally rest' in the Temple, the poles are never to be removed. This informs us that the Ark which houses the law must be the central focus of the Temple - counter intuitive to what we would expect of such a marvelous structure.

This is why Moses inserted the poles prior to covering the Ark, to demonstrate that the poles of all other objects are merely for transport. But the Ark's poles are integrally tied to the Ark's purpose and designation. Moses therefore displayed the pole's essential character, giving them prominence by inserting them even prior to covering the Ark with the Kapores. This also explains the passage in the haftora that the Cherubim not only covered the Ark with their wings, but they also covered the poles. ■

