

DIMENSIONS IN CHUMASH

PARSHAS TETZAVAH

A Light inside the Building

— The First of the Torah's Three Presentations of the Menorah —

וְאָתָּה תְּצַוֶּה אֶת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְיִקְחוּ אֵלֶיךָ שֶׁמֶן זֵית זָךְ כִּתִּית לְמָאוֹר לְהַעֲלֹת נֵר תָּמִיד

And you shall command the Children of Israel that they should take for you pure, pressed olive oil for the lighting, to kindle the continual lamp¹

INTRODUCTION: A COMMANDMENT AMID CONSTRUCTION

The parshiyos of Terumah and Tetzaveh are dedicated to the building of the Mishkan and manufacture of the Priestly garments. It seems strange, therefore, that the verse should interject at this juncture with the specifications of one of the mitzvos of the service in the Mishkan. Indeed, other mitzvos, such as the *Ketores* (incense) and the *Lechem Hapanim* (show-bread) are discussed later on. Moreover, the lighting of the menorah itself is discussed in detail in the end of Parshas Emor,² seemingly rendering the entire mention of the Menorah here redundant!

ILLUMINATING TESTIMONY

The Kli Yakar explains that these verses are indeed relevant to the parsha of building the Mishkan, for they are not discussing the mitzvah of lighting the Menorah per se, but rather its role in contributing to the basic definition of the Mishkan itself.

The Mishkan is referred to as “משכן העדות – The Mishkan of Testimony,”³ which the sages explain to mean that the Mishkan constitutes testimony that the Divine presence resides among Israel. The entity which embodies this testimony are the luchos that reside in the Aron inside the Holy of Holies – which are referred to as such in the next verse: “בֵּאֵהָל מוֹעֵד מִחוּץ לַפְּרֻכָּת אֲשֶׁר עַל הָעֵדוּת – *In the Tent of Meeting outside the Partition which is over the Testimony.*” However, the very fact that the luchos are blocked off from view renders them unable to function visibly as testimony! That role is fulfilled through the Menorah – more specifically, through one of its lights. As we know, although the middle lamp received the same

1 Shemos 27:20.

2 See Vayikra 24:1-3.

3 Shemos 38:21.

amount of oil as the other lamps, enough to burn through the night until morning, it miraculously continued to burn for the entire next day until the time for lighting the following evening. The Gemara explains that this miracle represented “testimony to the entire world the Divine Presence resides among Israel.”⁴

For this reason, in contrast to the section in Parshas Emor which states, “והעלה את נרותיה – *And he shall kindle its lamps,*” our verses makes reference only to the “נר תמיד – *continual lamp.*” For while the mitzvah of lighting the Menorah involves all of its lamps, the *testimony* of the Menorah as is relevant to our parsha centers around one particular lamp which gives visible expression to the definition of the Mishkan as “the Mishkan of Testimony”!

Moshe Rabbeinu and Parshas Tetzaveh

INTRODUCTION: A GLARING ABSENCE

A well-known distinctive feature of parshas Tetzaveh is that it is the only parsha in the Torah after the birth of Moshe Rabbeinu which contains no mention of his name. Numerous commentators explain this anomaly by pointing out that the day of Moshe’s passing, the seventh of Adar, generally falls in the week when our parsha is read and hence his absence from the parsha represents his passing from the world which took place at that time.

VILNA GAON: INNER PRESENCE

The Vilna Gaon⁵ adds that although Moshe himself passed from the world during this time, nonetheless, he remains present in a hidden or inner way through the Torah that was his life-essence and which he transmitted from Hashem to the Jewish people. This, too, says the Gaon, is alluded to in our parsha,

4 Shabbos 22b.

5 Cited in *Kehillas Yitzchak*, Parshas Tetzaveh.

which contains one hundred and one verses. The letters of the name **משה**, when spelled out as words, are **שין**, **מם** and **הא**, part of which are “revealed” i.e. enunciated, and part of which remain concealed, as follows:

- ▷ **מ"ם** – the first **מ** is revealed while the second letter **ם** is concealed.
- ▷ **שי"ן** – the letters **ש** is revealed while the letters **י** and **ן** are concealed.
- ▷ **ה"א** – the **ה** is revealed while the **א** is concealed.

If we take all the concealed letters – **ן**, **י**, **מ** and **א** – their numerical value totals one hundred and one.⁶ Thus, even while Moshe’s name is absent from the parsha in an explicit sense – reflecting his physical passing from the world – his inner aspect of the Torah that he taught is alluded to by the number of verses and that remains with the Jewish people.

MOSHE AND THE ANGEL MICHAEL

There is an additional element here, for one hundred and one is also the numerical value of the word **מיכאל**. Indeed, the Masoretic “siman” provided at the end of the parsha to represent the number of verses contained therein is **מיכאל**. How does this relate to Moshe?

After the Jewish people sinned with the golden calf, Hashem informed Moshe that He no longer wanted to lead the people directly, but would rather do so through an angel.⁷ Practically, this would mean that the miraculous means with which Hashem sustained the people through His direct involvement – manna from heaven, Miriam’s well, Clouds of Glory – would be replaced by a more natural setup. Through his prayers at that time, Moshe was able to avert this decree and to have Hashem return and continue to guide the people directly.⁸ However, the midrash⁹ states that the decree was not entirely annulled, rather, it was postponed as long as Moshe was alive. After he died, however, the angel appeared as Hashem’s agent in guiding the people. This was the angel whom Yehoshua beheld in Yericho, who said, “**אָנִי שָׂר צְבָא ה' עֵתָה בְּאַתִּי** – I am the commander of Hashem’s legion, now I have come,”¹⁰ i.e. although originally my involvement was deferred by Moshe, the time has now arrived. The angel in question was **מיכאל**, who is referred to elsewhere as “**שר ישראל**” – the spiritual minister of Israel,¹¹ reflecting his role as the agency through which Hashem oversees and guides the Jewish people within the framework of nature.

Hence, at the same time as the number of verses in our parsha alludes to Moshe’s physical absence with only his inner essence remaining, it also alludes to the presence of the angel Michael, signifying the transition in the way Hashem oversees His people that occurred with Moshe’s passing.¹²

6 **מ** = 40, **י** = 10, **ן** = 50 and **א** = 1.

7 Shemos 33:2-3.

8 See *ibid.* verses 15-17.

9 Shemos Rabbah 32:3, see also Rabbeinu Bachye to Shemos 23:20.

10 Yehoshua 5:14.

11 See e.g. Daniel 10:21.

12 See *Chanukas HaTorah*, Parshas Tetzaveh.