

Bells and Pomegranates

פשיית ויקהת - בקובץ

²² They made the Me'il of the Eiphod, the work of a weaver, entirely of turquoise wool; ²³ its head-opening folded over within it, like the opening of a suit of armor; a border for its opening all around, it may not be torn. ²⁴ They made on the hem of the Me'il pomegranates of turquoise wool, and purple wool, and scarlet wool, twisted. ²⁵ They made bells of pure gold, and they put the bells among the pomegranates on the hem of the Me'il, all around, among the pomegranates. ²⁶ A bell and a pomegranate, a bell and a pomegranate on the hem of the Me'il all around, in order to minister, as HASHEM had commanded Moses.

והיה על אהרן לשרת, ונשמע קולו בבאו אל הקדש לפני השם ובצאתו ולא ימות. (שמות כ"ח ל"ה)

"AND IT [the m'eel] SHALL BE ON AHARON FOR OFFICIATING; AND ITS SOUND SHALL BE HEARD WHEN HE GOES INTO THE SANCTUARY BEFORE THE LORD, AND WHEN HE COMES OUT, THAT HE DIE NOT." (Shmos 28:35)

3 רב היסקון

(גד) פעמון זהב ורמון, הרמון עשוי להיות הפעמון חובט ומקיש עליו להוציא קול. (לה) ונשמע קולו, כדי שידעו זמן העבודה, ובכך יכוונו לבם לאביהם שבשמים. ד"א ונשמע קולו, כדי שיהא ניכר ונבדל

4 שפת חיים - ר' חיים ב"ר אבן

פירושו חז"ל "כשנגלה הקביה על הים ... וראין בראיית נשמה ובראיית הלב ומכירין כבוד יצום דומה להם באילו דאם בענייהם ואפילו עוללים ויונקי שדים היו וראין כבוד יצום וסראין אותו באצבע, ואומרים זה אל"י (מדרש) שכל טוב, שמתו טו, ב). כלומר, בהיחזת השנתם את יחוד השי"ת ומלכותו הייתה בודאית כזו כאדם המראה באצבעו על דבר הסמוך לו. התוצאה ממדרגת זה אל"י הייתה ואנתו, שדרשוהו חז"ל (מכילתא, שבת קלג): "אתנאה לפניו במצותה, אעשה לרלב נאה, טובה נאה, ציצית נאה ... אבא שאול אומר נדמה לו מה הוא רחום חנון אף אתה רחום חנון", ופרשי (שבת, שם, ד"ה הי דומה לו) "ולשון אנהו אני ותוא אעשה עצמו כמותו לרבע בדרבנן. דהיינו, ע"י ההליכה בדרבני ה' במעשים הנשמיים בחיי היום יום. והיים האני ותוא' כביכול דבוקים זה בזה (ולאו דווקא ע"י השגות שכליות גבוהות).

* יש לשאול מדוע יש צורך בראיית נשמה ובראיית הלב כדי להתקרב ולירבב בהשי"ת, הרי באמידת השירה כבר הגיעו לרום המעלה האפשרי בהשגה ובאמונה, כמו שאמרו חז"ל "בוא ודאה כמה גדולים יודי

אלא, יסוד גדול למדנו כאן שכל השגה רוחנית שאדם משיג ובכל דרך שהיא ואפילו במדרגות העליונות ביותר, צריך מיד ללמוד לקח ולהסיק את המסקנות למעשה, להתבונן מה אני יכול ללמוד ולהגשים מזה! מפני שאנו חיים בעולם המעשה שבו העיקר הוא לעשות את רצון ה', ותכלית הלימוד ההשגה הוא המעשה כמו שאחז"ל (קידושין פ:): "תלמוד גדול שהתלמוד מביא לידי מעשה".

יחר על כן, גם ההשגה עצמה תאבד לאדם! אם לא יציאנה מהכח אל הפועל במעשים, ורק ע"י המעשים תתבסס בו ההשגה ותהיה לו לקיחה. לכן מיד כאשר הגיעו למדרגת "זה אל"י" - הסיקו את המסקנא המעשית - זאנהר, להתנאות לפניו במצותה ולהיחזת דומה לו במעשי החסד והרחמים.

Love to my father - R. Akiva

The m'eel, one of the eight garments of the High Priest, was decorated with bells. Whenever the High Priest would enter the *Bais Hamikdosh*, his presence would be announced by the jingling of the bells on his garment. Rabbi Yochanan learned from this the practice of always knocking on the door of his house before entering. This is one of the seven directives that Rabbi Akiva gave to his son Rabbi Yehoshua, "Don't enter your own house suddenly (that is, without knocking); all the more so, the house of your neighbor." (*Psochim* 112a, and Rashbam)

6 רמון

שילבשם. ומה שאמר למעלה³ ונשמע קולו בכואו אל הקדש ולא ימות, הוא על דעתו בציור למצות הפעמונים⁴ כי מפני שאין בהם צורך בלבישה ואין דרך הנכבדים לעשות להם כן, לכך אמר כי צוה בהם בעבור שישמע קולו בקדש, יכנס לפני אדונו כאילו ברשות, כי הבא בהיכל מלך פתאום חייב מיתה כטכסיסי המלכות, כענין אחרורו⁵, וירמו למה שאמרו במסכת יומא

On the other hand, the Torah cannot have a proper, central place in our lives, cannot be rightly understood and observed, unless we have an innate sense of *derech eretz*, a fundamental recognition of decency and good behavior. For instance, the author of *Hovoth haL'avovth* writes that for the proper worship of the Almighty we must have a sense of gratitude toward a benefactor.²¹⁸ We must be able to recognize when someone has treated us with kindness, and be ready to "return the favor," gratefully and graciously. Then we can appreciate the overabundant goodness of the Creator that surrounds us, and in gratitude "accept the yoke of the kingdom of Heaven."

16. על-פי די' — According to the word of HASHEM. It would have been improper for Moses to enter the Levite tents to count the suckling infants. He waited outside, therefore, while the Divine Presence preceded him, and a Heavenly voice proclaimed how many babies were in the tent (Rashi).

¹⁴ HASHEM spoke to Moses in the Wilderness of Sinai, saying, ¹⁵ "Count the sons of Levi according to their fathers' household, according to their families, every male from one month of age and up shall you count them." ¹⁶ Moses counted them according to the word of HASHEM, as he had been commanded.

אפ"י שנצטו בפירוש למנות את כל הנפשות, מ"מ שאל את הקב"ה היאך אני נכנס לתוך אהליהם, כי אין זה ממת דרך ארץ ליכנס לאהליהם, וע"כ כונת הקב"ה לא כפשוטו של הציווי. והתורה מעידה שכיון משה רבינו לרצון די' ממש, כדכתי' "ויפקוד אותם משה עפ"י די' כאשר צוה", כאשר צוה ממש בלי שינוי כלל, ומשום שמד ד"א מלמד ומכוונת את הדרך לקיום רצון די', יכי ישרים דרכי די' וכמו שנתבאר.

נדקדק הפשוט, ע"ם. ולדעתי מלות הפעמונים הוא דומה למנות ליאת, גם המנחה היא למזכרת על המנחה ע"י שום הראי" כדכתי' וראיתם אותו וזכרתם, וכאן המנחה היא להזכיר את המנחה ע"י שום השמיעה, כי לגודל מעלת הכהן הגדול ולהתמיינו במנחה רבות יחיות על שאר הכהנים ועל כל ישראל, לכן נחוסף לו מזכרת ע"י שום השמיעה על המזכרת שם"י שום הראי" כי ע"י שמיעתו קול הפעמונים שזמיעיל יתעורר לחם דעתו ולבו לפני וי' הוא מתלבש בצנדים אלו וי' הוא אהרן לוי לו להתלבש בהם, ולתכלית זה הוא לבדו מליין צנדים כולם, בזה יחסי' כל ומשנותיו ורעיונותיו לעבודת המלך העליון יי', ולא בלבד בהיותו נקדש לעבודה, כי גם בלאו מן הקדש

"And you shall make holy garments for your brother, Aharon, and they shall be for honor and for beauty" (Sh'mos 28:2). The garb of Aharon and his sons was to be tailored in such a way that it would lend both honor and beauty to its wearers. In this commandment honor and beauty appear to be valued so highly that the Torah declares them to be essential ingredients of the solemn rites of the Divine service in the Beis HaMikdash.

At first blush it appears that nothing could be more alien to the spirit of the Torah than the duo of honor and beauty. Is not the pursuance of honor a factor conducive to man's ruin? Do our Sages not say,

"הקנאה והתאוה והכבוד מוציין את האדם מן העולם,"

"Jealousy, desire, and honor take a person from the world" (Avos 4:21)? The ethics of Judaism require humility, a contrite heart, whereas honor implies viewing oneself as being especially important. When the Torah wishes to praise Moshe, who was endowed with supreme wisdom, ideal leadership capabilities, and many other qualities, it praises him for one trait: "והאיש משה ענו מאד מכל האדם אשר על פני האדמה" — "And the man Moshe was exceedingly humble among all other men on the face of the earth" (Remidbar 12:3).

However, in emphasizing that the garments of the *kohanim* were to feature these two qualities, honor and beauty, the Torah teaches us that these two, in fact, do have a place in our lives. Honor is a destructive force if it stems from selfishness and if it tends to negate one's granting honor and recognition to other people. Pursuance of special honor for oneself to the exclusion of honoring others is synonymous with vanity. However, honoring all people on account of the image of God inhering within them is as essential to one's spiritual personality as oxygen is to one's lungs. "Who is honorable? One who honors all beings" (Avos 4:1). This type of honor stems from the concept that every human being is so potentially unique as to be irreplaceable. Honor of this kind is indispensable to a life of dignity. It is extremely important in the relationship of parents and children and it is absolutely essential in the correlation of husband and wife. Mutual respect is the cement which holds a marriage together and injects it with stability.

How beautiful is Rashi's account in the name of the midrash on the verse "And he made the laver of brass, and the base thereof of brass, from the mirrors of the serving women . . ."—The daughters of Israel had in their possession mirrors into which they looked when they adorned themselves . . . But Moses was displeased with them for they were made for the Evil Inclination. So the Holy One Blessed Be He said to him: 'Accept, for these are more beloved by Me than everything else . . .'" Moses did not understand how the very mirror that the women used to employ while they

ornamented themselves for their husbands and while they gained pleasure from their own beauty could be properly incorporated in the laver adjacent to the altar where a Jew brings his sacrifice of atonement and on which he recites confession with a broken heart. How can the beauty of the mirrors harmonize with the sensation of blackness with which the road to the altar is bound? However, the Sovereign of the Universe said: "Accept, Moses!" The woman who knows she is beautiful, who was able in Egypt, in the bitter and dark exile, to comfort and strengthen her husband and to raise a generation thirsty for redemption, that same woman, when she shall transgress, will recite her confession with hot tears and with more grief and regret than another person. This woman will remember what she suffered in Egypt "tahat ha-tapu'ah"² and the guilt feeling will be increasingly impressed upon her conscience.

18

Noise is the mark of resistance. Consider the sounds emitted by a log fire, a pile of burning straw, and an oil lamp. In each case, matter is succumbing to the energy locked within it. The log offers the most resistance, voicing its reluctance to part with its outer form with a noisy crackle and sudden explosions. The straw, not quite as physical as the

log, protests with a whispering sizzle. And the oil in the lamp, the finest substance of the three, burns silently, freely yielding to the essence within.

⁹¹ Thus, Elijah the Prophet experienced G-d's immanence as "a small still voice." In his refined self, the material of the body did not resist the spirituality of the soul. Thus, he perceived the divine reality not in a norm-shattering storm, but in the same tranquil manner in which a person is aware of the life within him.

And yet, Aaron the *Kohen Gadol* (High Priest), the epitome of refinement and spirituality, is commanded to wear a robe with bells sewn onto its hem, so that "its sound shall be heard when he enters into the Holy before G-d." For the *Kohen Gadol* represents the entirety of Israel in his service of the Almighty, including those for whom connection to G-d is still a noisy struggle—the struggle to transcend their external, earth-bound selves and bring to light their true, inner identity.

A sage was once asked: "How come you are accepted as the undisputed leader of the people of your generation?" He replied: "I have never met any person in whom I did not detect some quality in which he was superior to me. If he was wiser than I, I suspected that he might also be more God fearing. If he was less wise, I considered that on the Day of Judgment he will be held less accountable than I — for my transgressions were committed with full knowledge, while his were committed in error. If he was older, I would reason that the merits which he already acquired must exceed mine. If he was younger, I calculated that his sins were fewer than mine . . . If the man was richer, then perhaps his wealth has enabled him to surpass me in serving God. If he was poorer, I would consider him to be contrite and of a humbler spirit than I. Thus, I honored all men and humbled myself before them" (*Chovos HaLevovos, Shaar HaKeniah, ch. 10*).

17 The Inside Story - R. Tabor

So the bells on the hem of the *Kohen Gadol's* robe are an indispensable part of his divine service. "Its sound shall be heard when he enters into the holy before G-d," commands the Torah, "lest he die." Were he to disclaim the lowly "hem" of the nation he represents, he would be violating the very essence of his mission. Were his service of the Almighty not to embody the struggles of his imperfect brethren, it would have no place in G-d's inner sanctum.

19

The debate addresses the question of how to interpret the word *b'tocham*, which translates either as "between them" or, in a more literal rendering, "within them." Does the Torah command to "make upon its hem pomegranates... and bells of gold between them" or to fix the "bells of gold within them"?

Rashi, in his commentary on the verse, maintains that the bells were "between them... between each two pomegranates a bell was attached and hanging on the hem of the robe."

Nachmanides disagrees. "I don't know why the master [Rashi] made the bells separate, a bell between two pomegranates," he writes. "According to this, the pomegranates served no function. And if they were there for beauty, then why were they made as hollow pomegranates? They should have been made as golden apples.... Rather, [the bells] were literally within them, for the pomegranates were hollow—like small, unopened pomegranates—and the bells were contained within them...."

20

Both the apple and the pomegranate are representative of the Jewish people. The Torah likens Israel to an "apple" ("Like an apple among the trees of the wood, so is my beloved") as well as to a "pomegranate" ("Your lips are like a thread of scarlet, and your mouth is comely; your temple is like a piece of pomegranate within your locks").

21 But while the apple represents Israel in a virtuous state, the pomegranate refers to the "hollow" or "empty ones amongst you." As interpreted by the Talmud, the verse "your temple is like a piece of pomegranate" comes to say that "even the empty ones amongst you are full of good deeds as a pomegranate [is full of seeds]." (*Raka*, the Hebrew word used by the verse for "temple" is related to the word *reik*, "empty." Thus "your temple" is homiletically rendered "the empty ones amongst you.")

22 The pomegranate is more than a model of something that contains many particulars. On a deeper level, this metaphor also addresses the paradox of how an individual may be "empty" and, at the same time, be "full of good deeds as a pomegranate."

24 Thus, Nachmanides sees the pomegranate-encased bells on Aaron's hem as a preliminary phase of one's divine service, rather than as the service itself. Beauty, however, is to be found in the apple-perfection of the *menorah*—seven lamps of pure olive-oil, representing the soul's silent, tranquil flame. If the pomegranates on the priestly robe were for beauty, argues Nachmanides, they would not be pomegranates, but apples. These hollow fruits are purely functional, a preparatory stage in the soul's quest for perfection and union with her source in G-d.

26 *Toward A Meaningful Life* - Adapted by R. Jacobson

If you were to make a list of all the things you did today, it might look like this: You woke up, exercised, showered, ate breakfast, made a phone call, read the newspaper, checked the weather forecast, got dressed, went to work, had pleasant moments with some colleagues and unpleasant ones with others, took a lunch break, had some productive meetings and some unproductive ones, went home, ate dinner, did a little paperwork, talked with your family, read a magazine, and went to sleep. Along the way, you had hundreds of trivial encounters and perhaps one or two meaningful ones.

Your life is made up of countless such bits and pieces. One day's worth may not seem like much, but add up the pieces day after day, year after year, and you end up with an entire life split into millions of fragments, with no connecting thread. What is wrong with that? Human beings naturally abhor fragmentation; it rattles our peace of mind, creating untold tension and anxiety. What's worse, these trivial activities are bound to overwhelm the very few truly significant events in our lives. Over time, the fragments pile up and begin to suffocate your soul. While your inner self craves focus, purpose, and direction, any stray experiences disturb its steady course. Is it any wonder that after forty or fifty years of slogging through such disjointed days, we wake up and suddenly wonder, "V'nat have I done with my life?"

27 Obviously, it is impossible to eliminate your basic daily needs—you have to eat and sleep and make a living. So the only option is to find a thread that unites all your daily activities and sews all the fragments together.

This thread is the mission that G-d has asked you to fulfill: to refine yourself and every aspect of your life, from your intellect and emotions all the way down to the most mundane activities. Such focus has a twofold result: Everything in your life becomes united toward one end, eliminating the fragmentation, and even the smallest activity becomes infused with real meaning, since everything you do has a G-dly purpose.

23 The pomegranate is a highly "compartmentalized" fruit. Each of its hundreds of seeds is wrapped in its own sack of flesh and is separated from its fellows by a tough membrane. In the same way, it is possible for a person to do good deeds—many good deeds—and yet, they remain isolated acts, with little or no effect on his nature and character. So unlike the "apple," whose deliciousness is from core to skin, the "pomegranate" contains many virtues, but they do not become him. He may be full of good deeds, yet he remains morally and spiritually hollow.

→ This explains the connection between the pomegranates and the bells on the hem of the priestly robe. As explained above, the noisy bells represent the imperfect individual who is striving to transcend his deficient state. Although he is still a spiritual pauper, he refuses to act like one—hence the noisy friction that characterizes his life.

25 According to Rashi, however, the beauty of Israel lies also in its pomegranates. In fact, in a certain sense, the struggle of the imperfect soul is even more beautiful than the serene perfection of her more virtuous fellow. For the perfectly righteous individual serves G-d by being what he is, while every positive deed of the "empty ones amongst you" is an act of sacrifice and self-transcendence. So even before a person attains perfection—even if his entire life is spent in the quest for perfection—the clamor of his efforts is music to G-d's ear.

28

This is the key to time management—to see the value of every moment. Not only will this make you treat each moment more precious, but you will be more patient with yourself and with others, recognizing that there are millions of moments on the path to any worthwhile achievement.

You cannot add more minutes to the day, but you can utilize each one to the fullest. How do you do this? By totally investing yourself in the one activity you are engaged in at any moment, ignoring everything that came before it and that will come after it. And how can you achieve such concentration? By recognizing that everything you do is important to G-d, and is one vital piece of the larger picture of your life.

29

Many of us have learned to look at each step—at each day in our life—as an almost inconsequential side trip that is disconnected from any larger journey. But the secret to any journey is to fix your eye on the destination and to keep traveling steadily toward it. Veering off, even for a short while, is at best a loss of time; at worst, we get confused and find it difficult to return on course.

30 Remember that in the journey of life, your body is the vehicle but your soul is the compass. By following its voice, you remain focused on your destination, and each step—each day—brings you closer. How you live today determines how you will live tomorrow. The very next thing you do, no matter how small, will determine the rest of your day and, ultimately, the rest of your life.

It is never too late to start living your life meaningfully.