

Insights from the Meshech Chochma

רב מאיר שמחה הכהן מדווינסק זצ"ל

פְּרֻשֵׁת תְּרוּמָה תִּשְׁפֹּׁׁ

Shulie Plawes

וְצִפִּיתְ אֹתוֹ זָהָב טָהוֹר מִבֵּית וּמְחוּץ תִּצְפְּנוּ וְעָשִׂיתָ עָלָיו זָר זָהָב סָבִיב... וְעָשִׂיתָ בְּדֵי עֲצֵי שֹׁטִים וְצִפִּיתָ אֹתָם זָהָב...
... וְעָשִׂיתָ כַּפֶּרֶת זָהָב טָהוֹר... (פרק כה' יא, יג, יז)

You shall cover (the Aron) with pure gold, from within and from without shall you cover it, and you shall make on it a gold crown i.e., a golden rim projecting upward and encircling the top of the Aron, all around... You shall make staves of acacia wood and cover them with gold. ...you shall make a Cover (for the Aron) of pure gold...

The gold used for the Aron and the כַּפֶּרֶת was זָהָב טָהוֹר. What does that mean? In Yerushalmi Shekalim, R' Yehuda in the name of Assi enlightens us: "Shlomo HaMelech took 1,000 talents of silver, put them repeatedly into the smelting furnace until they were reduced to one... R' Yose ben R' Yehuda said, 'It happened that the golden candelabrum which Moshe made in the Midbar was in excess of one gold denar, and they returned it to the fire eighty times and it did not lose anything? This is correct. Before it is refined it loses a lot, once it is refined it will not miss anything.'" This is also reported in Bavli מנחות כט. זָהָב טָהוֹר is the ultimate in refined gold. Chizkuni say it as follows: וְבֵלָא סִיגִים וְבֵלָא פְּסוּלָתַּ i.e., not containing any foreign particles.

Rav Meir Simcha questions why with regards to the Aron and the כַּפֶּרֶת, the Torah tells us that they are to be made of זָהָב טָהוֹר but the זָר and the בְּדִים, which were also permanent fixtures on the Aron, were to be made of זָהָב but did not need זָהָב טָהוֹר? In a most novel way, Rav Meir Simcha proposes that the Aron and the כַּפֶּרֶת, whose purpose was to have the עֲשֶׂרֶת הַדְּבָרוֹת placed in them, were like the parchment of the tefillin which has the parshiyos written on it. That קֶלֶף requires לְשִׁמָּה and as Rambam in יא' א' explains "the קֶלֶף for tefillin... must be processed with this purpose in mind i.e., to be used for the tefillin parshiyos." Similarly, Rav Meir Simcha tells us, when the Torah directs them to make the Aron and the כַּפֶּרֶת from זָהָב טָהוֹר, it means that not only must the gold go through a very rigorous refinement process but that refinement also needs to be done לְשִׁמָּה-to be used for the Aron and the כַּפֶּרֶת. Quite a big חִידוּשׁ. The זָר and the בְּדִים, on the other hand, are more like the בְּתִים of tefillin, which do not require לְשִׁמָּה and so, the gold used to make them would not need לְהִתִּיכֵן לְשִׁמָּה i.e., to melt it down for this specific intention. Rav Meir Simcha adds that the GRA in ג' א' when discussing the בְּתִים of tefillin, tells us this outright: anything which does not require a special processing, עִיבּוּד, does not need to be done לְשִׁמָּה!

Continues Rav Meir Simcha: What about the Cherubim of which the Torah tells us, וְעָשִׂיתָ זָהָב וְשְׁנַיִם כְּרֻבִים זָהָב/And you shall make two cherubim of gold-is it possible that these crucial parts of the Aron were not made of זָהָב טָהוֹר? Rav Meir Simcha says that since the Torah writes that

מְקַשָּׁה תַעֲשֶׂה אֹתָם מִשְׁנֵי קְצוֹת הַכַּפֹּרֶת.../...hammered out shall you make them, from both ends of the Cover, it is obvious that they were made of טָהוֹר and therefore, it does not have to be written explicitly. He says that it is exactly what Rambam writes regarding the *Menorah* in the הלכות בית הבחירה ג' טו: "The pasuk does not state, גְּרוֹתֶיהָ זָהָב טָהוֹר i.e., (the *Menorah's*) lamps shall be of pure gold, for the lamps were permanently fixed in the *Menorah*, and were included in the talent of gold from which the *Menorah* was fashioned." And the same would apply to the *Cherubim*. (Rav Daskal, in his הַגְהוֹת on the Meshech Chochmah, points out that Targum Yonasan, in his translation of וְעָשִׂיתָ שְׁנַיִם כְּרֻבִים זָהָב does add וְתַעֲבִיד תְּרִין כְּרוּבֵינִי דְדָהָב (you shall make two *Cherubim* of **pure** gold.)

Rav Daskal makes an interesting observation which adds a deeper understanding to this piece. He notes that later in פְּרֻשֵׁת פְּקוּדֵי, where the Torah reviews the construction of the Mishkan and its vessels, it writes וַיַּעֲשׂוּ זָהָב טָהוֹר.../They made bells of **pure** gold... Rav Meir Simcha there points out that when Moshe was *commanded* to make the מִשְׁכָּן וְכִלָּיו, earlier in פְּרֻשֵׁת תְּצַוֶּה, the pasuk writes that he should make זָהָב וְכִלָּיו **and gold** bells but does not mention טָהוֹר. Although not the thrust of his explanation for the discrepancy, Rav Meir Simcha's opening remark is very interesting: נִרְאֶה אִף בְּמָקוֹם שְׁנַיִם: זָהָב טָהוֹר, הָיוּ רְשָׁאִים לַעֲשׂוֹת זָהָב טָהוֹר i.e., it would appear that even those items which may be constructed using *plain* gold, they *would be permitted* to use *pure* gold. If so, Rav Daskal tells us, it is likely that they always used זָהָב טָהוֹר, as part of זָהָב קָדְשׁ וְאֶנְהוּ/This is my G-d and I will beautify Him. If so, what is the practical difference between writing זָהָב טָהוֹר or זָהָב טָהוֹר? This, according to Rav Daskal, may have prompted Rav Meir Simcha to create a new criterion of what being commanded to use זָהָב טָהוֹר necessitates-לְהַתִּיכֵן לְשִׁמָּה!

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