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# PARSHA ENCOUNTERS

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Parshas Tetzaveh ✍️ Rabbi Moshe M. Willner

## Body and Soul

**T**his week's parsha deals almost exclusively with the kohanim. The Torah tells us about their selection for service in the Mishkan as well as their priestly garments. This parsha also deals with the korbonos that were used for the inauguration of the Mishkan. At the end of the parsha, there is mention of one *keli* (utensil) of the mishkan, the mizbeach hazohov. The Ramban asks why this mizbeach is discussed here as opposed to with the menorah and shulchan. We may further wonder why of all the klei hamishkon, is this the utensil listed last? Another interesting point about the mizbeach hazohov is its connection to other klei hamishkon. The possuk explains that the incense should be brought upon it at the time that the menorah is being cleaned out. The position of the mizbeach hazohov, the Torah tells us, should be opposite the place of the Aron. What is the meaning of these references?

In order to answer these questions we must first understand the function of the mizbeach hazohov. The Kli Yakar compares the outer mizbeach and the mizbeach hazahav to "body" and "soul". The outer mizbeach is likened to the body. Its function was to bring atonement through animal offerings, which signifies the animalistic body of man. The mizbeach hazohov, however, was used to burn incense. An incense offering symbolizes something spiritual like we find on motzei Shabbos when we smell Besomim in order to console ourselves on the departure of the neshama yeseira. Being that the animal offerings could only cleanse the body, and not the soul of man, the mizbeach hazohov was needed. Through this incense offering, a transgressor was able to reconnect his neshama with Hashem. Therefore, the mizbeach hazohov is likened to the "soul".

The Nesivos Shalom takes this idea a step further. One can affect his soul by sinning with his body. However, there is another way one can soil his soul, and that is by sinning in ways pertaining entirely to the soul. At times, it is possible for one to do an action which is totally permitted and yet nonetheless he has sinned. The torah instructs us, "kedoshim t'hiyu", be a holy nation. This commandment includes prohibitions in many areas which are not out-

right sins but are nevertheless unbefitting for a yid to do. As the Ramban explains this idea, the torah expects us to live beyond the letter of the law, and to sanctify ourselves even with what is permitted. This was the function of the mizbeach hazohov as well. It would cleanse the neshoma of those who failed to sanctify themselves accordingly. The Nesivos Shalom compares this area of Avodas Hashem to a foul smell. Imagine someone who dons a suit that is appropriate for a meeting with the king. He is perfectly groomed and well versed in the proper etiquette to deal with royalty. However, if he dowses himself with some foul odor, we would advise him to stay far away from the palace.

Similarly, one who keeps all the mitzvos according to the letter of the law but fails to sanctify himself, is greatly lacking. The mizbeach hazohov would bring a "reach nichoach," a wonderful smell before Hashem. Through this avodah one who strayed in the area of "kedoshim t'hiyu" would be elevated to come close to Hashem once again. With this we can understand why the mizbeach hazohov is mentioned in this week's parsha. Only after one cleanses himself in outer mitzvah observance can he start working on this level of sanctification. The Torah therefore waits to speak about the mizbeach hazohov, until all the kelim, clothing and korbonos needed for the Mishkan are enumerated. Only after those are set into place can one approach the level of the mizbeach hazohov. This is why the mizbeach hazohov is placed opposite the Aron. The Aron represents the essence of the kedush hakodoshim. Purity of the soul through the avodah of the ketores can raise one to the level of kedush hakdoshim. The Torah instructs us how to attain this kedusha in practical terms—through Torah study. This is hinted through the connection we see between the menorah and the mizbeach hazohov. The possuk instructs to bring the ketores when the menorah is being cleaned. The menorah which signifies Torah study, can uplift a human to aspire to reach great levels of kedusha. Through toiling in Torah one can reach a heightened awareness of how to sanctify himself.

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# HALACHA ENCOUNTERS

## Chatzitza in Tefil | in

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This week's parsha deals extensively with the mitzvah of the kohanim to wear special clothing when performing their avodah. The Gemara (Zevachim 19A) learns from the words, "yilbash **al** b'saro"- the clothing shall be worn **on** his flesh, that nothing may interfere between the kohen's body and the bigdei kehuna (chatzitza). The Rosh, in his teshuvos (klal shlishi) learns that the mitzvah of tefillin also requires that the batim be worn directly on the head and arm, as the posuk says "I'os **al** yadecho"- a sign **on** your hand. This is indeed the halacha as paskened in the Shulchan Aruch and traced back to the Rosh by the nosei kaylim. It is extremely significant that this halacha is derived from bigdei kehuna because unlike other areas of halacha where chatzitza is pertinent such as tevila, the criteria for bigdei kehuna is much stricter.

The gemara teaches us that even a single louse (kina) constitutes a chatzitza in bigdei kehuna. The Gemara qualifies this as a dead louse or a small piece of dirt, as opposed to something which is naturally present on the body like flaked skin etc. In the gemara's time, live lice had been "natural" and were commonly found on skin. It is clear from the gemara that despite the very small size of the chatzitza, its presence invalidates the mitzvah of bigdei kehuna. Although the application of the laws of the begodim are obviously irrelevant nowadays, when it comes to tefillin, this criteria will govern what constitutes a chatzitza according to the Rosh. Indeed, the Mishne B'rura admonishes us to be particular even about a small chatzitza, apparently based on this reasoning. Those that are familiar with the halachos of chatzitza regarding t'vilah in a mikveh will realize the contrast between those halachos and tefillin. Regarding t'vilah, min haTorah, nothing is considered a chatzitza unless it covers the (rov) majority of the body **and** is a "hakpodah"- something a normal person is particular about. Midrabonnon, either makpid **or** rov invalidates the t'vilah. Tefillin go far beyond this criteria as even the slightest amount of a chatzitza can invalidate the mitzvah min haTorah. (See Ohr Someach and Avi Ezri for an in depth understanding of this contrast)

There is, however, a major dispute among the Rishonim if the abovementioned discussion is limited to the "shel yad" or applies to the "shel rosh" as well. The Rashba seems to doubt the entire concept of chatzitza by tefillin although he doesn't allow a brocha to be said in such circumstances. (The Bais Yosef [O.C. 27] deals with this shita at length and is necessary reading material for a thorough understanding of the sugyos in question.) Certainly, barring emergency situations, we treat both the shel yad and shel rosh the same and assume that any chatzitza is problematic as long as it is not naturally found there (i.e. dandruff).

Poskim advise one who is tovel in a mikveh before davening or whose hair is drenched from rain or snow to dry his hair completely

before donning tefillin. Certainly one should take caution when putting his arm through his shirt and jacket that the fabric not buckle under the bayis and create a chatzitza. If one realized that he had such a situation, he can remove the substance and immediately make the proper brocha. Similarly, threads often cling to clothing, especially after coming out of the dryer, and they can easily cling to one's arm at the exact spot where the tefillin are placed. (See Aleinu L'shabeach Shmos Teshuva 133 where he proposes that if something is stuck to the bottom of the tefillin itself it may possibly be "batel".) Some yarmulkes have a tendency to slide under the retzuos (straps) of the shel rosh or underneath the knot in the back of the head. All these concerns, and any similar ones, should be of utmost concern to us while donning tefillin.

As mentioned earlier, any natural substance on the body does not constitute a chatzitza. There is a discussion among the poskim about very long hair perhaps being problematic. Although the general consensus seems to be lenient, if the hair is rolled up in an unnatural manner, such as a ponytail or dreadlocks it would create a problem. (We are not discussing the broader problem of men keeping their hair in such a fashion which may very well be forbidden under "chukos hagoyim"). Toupee's also constitute a chatzitza as long as they are removable as opposed to procedures that actually allow growth of hair from the scalp. One should also not get a haircut prior to davening because the detached hairs are no longer naturally in their place and can become a chatzitza. Someone who is wearing a cast or needs a bandage on his arm should still put the tefillin on directly over the spot where it would usually go and recite both brochos when donning the shel rosh. One should also avoid having a chatzitza under the straps where the tefillin are wrapped around the arm (i.e. a wristwatch) although this particular area is the subject of debate among the poskim since they do not directly contribute to the tying of the tefillin.

An inspiring story is told about the Klausenberger Rebbe Zt"l during WWI as he found himself in Crakow and was thrown in to prison under trumped up charges. The Rebbe, after having spent the evening and most of the next day in jail, agonized over his inability to fulfill mitzvas tefillin. The Rebbe "found" a small piece of paper on the floor and wrote on it "there is a young Jew in the jail from the House of Tzanz who has yet to put on tefillin today". He tossed the note out a window that faced the street. At that precise moment a Jew was passing by who spotted the note, and immediately scrambled to procure a pair of tefillin. He threw them into the cell through the same window!

If we truly desire to fulfill our mitzvos properly, we will have the siyata d'shmaya to do so. Adherence to the details of the mitzvos is the best way to show that desire.

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