

Parshat Tetzaveh 5778

פרשת תצוה details the garments the כהן גדול wore in order to complete his jobs around the משכן. What is the great significance of the bells on the hem of the מעיל האפוד described so specifically in the third aliyah of the פרשה?

The אברבנל says that the bells were to inform the people outside, that the כהן גדול was still alive. This connects to 28:35 where it says ונשמע קולו בבאו ' *Its sound shall be heard when he comes into the Holy [Sanctuary] in the presence of Hashem and when he comes out so that he will not die.*'

The רבנו בחיי says that the bells are a means of being polite, so as to announce his arrival before Hashem before he enters the King's palace. Another explanation could be that Hashem and all the angels who were running backwards and forwards would know when he was coming and the bells announced the כהן גדול approaching his 'private appointment' with Hashem. So the angels should leave until they hear the bells again, to say that the כהן גדול was leaving, and then they could come back and serve Hashem.

The גמרא in פסחים & נדה teaches us that no-one should burst into his own house or anyone else's without announcing their entry. The רשב"ם adds that ר' יוחנן based himself on the פסוק of the כהן גדול by ringing the bell to make people aware of his presence, even in his own home. The idea of not bursting into somewhere can be learnt from Hashem who stood outside גן עדן and called for אדם from there. (מסכת דרך ארץ רבה)

Rav Mordechai Gifter (1916-2001) explains that each time the כהן גדול took a step, he was resolute about what he was doing, and everyone else was aware of his actions. This sends a message that very step that he took made an impact, teaching us that when one is the כהן גדול, every action and step makes a difference. This also by extention applies to every leader in the Jewish community; the greater he becomes, the more this is true.

Furthermore, The Yerushalmi in יומא says that the fact that the כהן גדול wears the bells that announce his coming into the Sanctuary, atones for the sin of unintentional murder. Rav Gifter explains that the idea of announcing his entering is an example of דרך ארץ—i.e. having the sensitivity not to intrude on someone's space and catching them off guard. An intention to murder stems from the lack of recognition of the importance of another human being. Someone who intends to kill another person does not view that person as being 'in the image of G-d'. The foundation of דרך ארץ, is treating someone with respect i.e. recognizing that this person is a human being who is created in the image of G-d.

The כהן גדול's 'ringing 'announcement' of his arrival into the Sanctuary was a meticulous demonstration of the attribute of דרך ארץ. Therefore, this sound atoned for acts that are ultimately caused by the lack of דרך ארץ.

The מסכת דרך ארץ רבה in the 4th פרק says that you should always ask for permission to leave the presence of your Rabbi. The Vilna Gaon says this also applies to leaving a friend. We learn from the גמרא in מועד קטן that if you take leave from your rabbi and stay in the town for another night, you should again go to your Rabbi and ask his permission to leave the next day. The מדרש תנחומא in פרשת נח tells us how נח felt ill towards the end of the מבול but would not leave the stuffy תיבה until Hashem said he could. We then see later on in history how מישאל ועזריה remained in the fiery furnace and learned from נח not to leave until they had permission, in this case from נבוכדנאצר .

From פרשת תצוה we learn not only what the כהן גדול wore, but also the implications of what his garments meant and how we can apply those ideas to our everyday lives in order to elevate them in the best possible way.

Good Shabbos