

Although this week's Parsha, Parshat Pekudei appears to be mostly a review of the Mishkan's construction and the specifications of the priestly garments, there are still many lessons to be gleaned from the Parsha. In the review of the Tzitz, the head covering for the High Priests, the verse states, "And they made the plate of the holy crown of pure gold, and they wrote upon it a writing, like the engravings of a signet: Holy to G-D." The Imrei Emes (Rabbi Avraham Mordechai of Gur) is puzzled about the specific language in this verse. Why are the verbs in the verses – "they should make, they should write", written in plural? The verse seems to be inaccurate as Betzalel the talented craftsman who was in charge of the Mishkan's construction was fully capable of fashioning the Tzitz by himself and presumably that is exactly what he did. There was no "they" who worked on the Tzitz, it should simply be "And he made the plate and he wrote on it"?

This special joyous month that we are currently celebrating is known as the month of "Adar." There are many etymological interpretations of this word. The Gerrer Rebbe, Rabbi Yitzchak Meir Alter says that the word Adar is reminiscent of a Talmudic statement that says, "One who wants to keep his possessions should plant an Adar tree." While the Gemara taken literally seems to be advocating investing in real estate or agricultural production, the Gemara does not usually dispense financial advice. In addition, it would be very difficult for us to practically follow this advice as we are never actually told the exact nature of this tree, all that we know is that it is strong and mighty as indicated by the root "Adir." Rather, explains the Gerrer Rebbe, the Talmud is not referring to the physical planting of an Adar tree in our backyard, instead, the Gemara is telling us to plant the Adar within us. It is not enough to profess a love of Judaism, speak of a connection to G-D or advocate for the Jewish people. Our faith must be planted, plowed and cultivated deep within us; that is the Adar tree that will insure our continued spiritual wealth.

The work of Adar should never be taken for granted or dismissed as child play. The Gemara tells us that one who has a court case with a non-Jew should schedule the trial for the month of Adar, because Adar is a fortuitous month for us. The Rebbe explains that obviously this Gemara should not only be taken literally, as the Talmud does not usually give us scheduling advice, but there is a deeper personal message that is relevant to our daily lives. The court cases that we should schedule for Adar are the inner debates, personal struggles, and the daily challenges that we fight to overcome. The battle to balance our culture and our faith is one that we are constantly fighting. Whether the battleground is ethics, morality, or modesty, the confrontation is dangerous and victory can be elusive. Yet, the best time for this battle is now in the month of Adar, for during this auspicious time the joy and happiness permeate the very essence of our being. It is the month that saw the downfall of Haman during the Perisan Empire and it continues to see the downfall of evil within us to this very day.

The Beis Yisroel, Rabbi Yisroel Alter explains that the creation of the Tzitz was not solely the responsibility of Betzalel, nor was it to be worn only by the high priest, figuratively each of us must create our own Tzitz to be placed atop our very own heads. Each of us has to create our connection to G-D that reflects our intense devotion and commitment to the King above us. This crown must be then adorned with the words "Holy to G-D", demanding that we not only live with G-D, but live with a sense of holiness as well. We cannot just create the crown, we must insure that it is adorning holiness beneath it. It is up to us to be the trendsetters for morality and ethics in the world.

Certainly we can fashion our crowns and inscribe these life changing words at any time, however this is the month that the joy and happiness afford us the opportunity to turn inwards and reflect on our personal lives. It is the month that we concentrate on our personal "Adar" tree and it is the time when we emerge victorious from our internal struggles. However, the crowning achievement of Adar would be the creation of our very own Tzitz, with our commitment to G-D boldly emblazoned on it.

Shabbat Shalom and Chodesh Tov

Rabbi Meir Tannenbaum