



Sicha Summary

Chelek 16 | Tetzave | Sichah 2

The Verse:

The Torah describes in detail how the Kohen Gadol's tunic was to be fashioned: "Upon the hem of it, you shall make pomegranates of blue, purple and scarlet around its hem; and bells of gold between them, all around. A golden bell and a pomegranate, a golden bell and a pomegranate, upon the hem of the cloak, all around. It shall be upon Aaron when he comes to minister; and its sound shall be heard when he goes into the holy place before G-d... and he will not die." (*Shemos* 28:33-35)

The Rashi and Ramban:

Pomegranates — they were round and hollow....

Between them, all around — between every two pomegranates, there was one bell which was attached and hanging at the lower edge of the tunic.

Ramban asks: If the pomegranates served no practical function, and were only there for decor, why not make decorative apples instead?

The basis for his contention might be Rashi's interpretation that the *menorah* was studded with decorative apples. (Rashi to *Shemos* 25:31) And so, if there were to be a decorative embellishment to the tunic, it should have been apples.

The Question:

Why are apples considered to be a more appropriate decoration than pomegranates?

The Explanation:

The purpose of the pomegranates and bells was so that “its sound shall be heard” when the *Kohen Gadol* approached the Temple service. What was the significance of this sound, and why was it so crucial to the extent that if it was lacking, the *Kohen Gadol* would have been liable for death at the hands of Heaven? (*Rashi 28:35*)

The *Kohen Gadol's* task was to represent the entire Jewish people in his service. When he approached G-d, he had to bring every Jew along with him. The penitent is a person who had engaged in negative behavior, but had decided to abandon this behavior and align himself with G-d's will. This turn from evil is clamorous; like one who flees from death, the penitent's return to G-d is noisy. The bells that clang at the hem of the *Kohen Gadol's* tunic represent the Jews who once dwelled “at the bottom,” far from G-d, but who now are tumultuously returning to G-d. If the *Kohen Gadol* would not have included these Jews in his service, his very life would have been at stake because his essential task and the very reason for his life was to represent every Jew, even one who has strayed.

On Yom Kippur, however, when the *Kohen Gadol* entered the Holy of Holies, he did not wear this tunic, but only four white garments. On Yom Kippur, the essence of every soul is revealed and the innately pure, righteous core of the Jew is manifest. Therefore, there was no need for the clamorous bells — every Jew was innocent and righteous.

The Jewish people are sometimes compared to apples, and sometimes to pomegranates. Apples allude to the Jews when they occupy a lofty spiritual state. And pomegranates allude to the Jewish people when they are spiritually impoverished. Our Sages taught that “even the most ignorant among you, Israel, are full of *mitzvos* like a pomegranate.” (*Berachos 57a*) Meaning, pomegranates allude to the phenomenon that even a Jew who is ignorant of Torah is still full of good deeds.

Rashi, who explains the plain meaning of Scripture, says that pomegranates were strung at the hem of the tunic, for on the surface, according to the

“plain meaning” of a Jew, he is spiritually lacking. Yet even this Jew is “full of *mitzvos*” and must be represented by the *Kohen Gadol*.

Ramban, who interprets with a mystical lens, sees that deep down, each Jew is innocent and righteous. “If the pomegranates were for decor,” if they were there to elicit and express the beauty of the Jewish people, “then they should be apples,” for that represents the true beauty of the Jew — that he is never corrupted.

The Lesson:

Even if it seems that the tranquil, quiet service of the righteous is higher than the clamor of the penitent, there is an advantage to the noise as well.

The thirst of the penitent spurs him to break free of any internal limitations. His “noise” is the sound of a person reaching far beyond his own ability and potential. This “noise” is a quality we should adopt in our own Divine service and when we spread Judaism to others.

When we see the world in a “tumult” over some materialistic pursuit, we should co-opt this same enthusiasm for holy purposes, to further Divine awareness in the world around us.