

SICHA SUMMARY

Likkutei Sichos, Vol. 31

Teruma, Sicha 1

The Rashi

In listing the items that were to be donated to construct and furnish the Mishkan, the Torah states, “Ram skins dyed red, tachash skins, and acacia wood.” (Shemos 25:5)

Rashi comments: Tachash skins — This was a species of wild animal that existed only for a short time, and it had many hues (דְּבָרִים). Therefore, [Onkelos] renders [it] sasgona סַסְגוֹנָא, because it rejoices sas (ס) (שִׂשְׂוֹנָא and שִׁ are often interchangeable] and boasts of its hues (דְּבָרִים). [from Shabbos 28a, b]

The Questions:

The Talmud records a dispute whether or not the Tachash was a domesticated or wild animal. How does Rashi deduce from the simple reading of the verse that it was a wild animal?

Why does Rashi not just cite the Targum’s translation, but also explain its etymology? Usually he just cites the translation of the Targum to corroborate his interpretation.

How does the detailed explanation of the Targum add to Rashi’s explanation?

The Explanation:

Rashi means to exclude the interpretation that Tachas is simply the name of a color that was used to dye the ram skins with. That is, there were ram skins dyed red, and tachash as well. If that was the case, however, the verse would have said, “Ram skins dyed red, tachash, and acacia wood.” Because it repeats “ram skins dyed red, and Tachash skins...” this implies that it was a different animal skin that did not require a dye because it was itself colorful. Thus Rashi says, “This was a species of animal,” not to declare whether it was wild or domesticated, but to emphasize that it was an actual animal, not a color dye.

To support this, Rashi cites the Targum sasgona, which, as he explains, refers to the animal taking pride in its own colors. Thus Rashi proves that the animal itself was multihued.

The Deeper Dimension:

The Mishkan was a physical place where the reality of the Divine unity was tangible and

fully apparent. Every creation is composed of an essential self, particulars which align with and express that essence, and ancillary details which seem to be unrelated to that essence. In its deepest realization, the Divine reality is appreciated not just as unified with every creation, but with its smallest, most extraneous detail. Therefore, the Mishkan had to feature items which expressed this unity. The tachash skins whose color, an external feature, is part of the animal itself, not a superimposed dye, alludes to this dimension of the Divine unity. In a hermeneutical reading, the word animal is chai, referring to G-d, the life of all creation; the tachash's color was "from the animal/chai itself," meaning, the smallest details of creation are one with G-d.

Furthermore, chassidus explains that the form of every creation derives from G-d's

will and desire, and therefore expresses the nullification of the creation to G-d's will. Thus it is fitting that the tachash skins were used in the Mishkan, since their color, the extraneous form, was one with the "animal itself," the essence of G-d's creative power.

In terms of one's divine service: There is a similar taxonomy in mitzvah observance. There is the mitzvah itself, there are its details which align with its main purpose and theme, and there are customs and beautification of the mitzvah which are seemingly unrelated to the main idea of the mitzvah. The lesson of the tachash is to recognize that the ancillary details are one with the mitzvah itself. The color is one with the animal, the customs must be cherished as much as the essential deed of the mitzvah itself.
