Jewish Tribune – Vayakhel Pekudei

**The Gold Standard**

For many years, my dear friend and cousin, Reb Lezer Grossnass and I would learn with Rabbi Mordechai Rabin on Shabbos afternoons. Rabbi Rabin had learned with the late Dayan Grossnass decades earlier and together they would delve into the sugyas that became the “Lev Aryeh”, Dayan Grossnass’ fascinating sefer of questions that landed on his desk as head of the London Beis Din in the 1950s and 1960s.

As a youngster, Rabbi Rabin had learned in the famed yeshiva Chachmei Lublin. I once asked him, “Is it true that you had to know 200 blatt ba’al peh to get in?”

Rabbi Rabin nonchalantly replied “Yes, but it wasn’t word for word, just shakleh v’tarya.” You “just” had to know the “question and answer” flow of 200 pages of Gemoro!

There was always an added poignancy when I visit this yeshiva together with Hasmonean Sixth Formers. There are so many highlights of any Poland trip, but giving a shiur in the hallowed Beis HaMedrash of Yeshivas Chachmei Lublin, trying to convey the glory of this metamorphic yeshiva is certainly one.

Rav Meir Shapiro is better known for his Daf Yomi revolution. But his efforts to transform the status of yeshiva bachurim and limmud haTorah by making a yeshiva where the physical would match the towering spiritual standards is no less impressive and impactful. It has become the norm today for a yeshiva to have a kitchen, dining room and dormitories but this wasn’t the way it used to be.

Rav Meir Shapiro’s educationally philosophy is beautifully expressed in an idea relating to this week’s sedra.

The Mechilta (Parshas Yisro, parsha yud) makes an intriguing comment about the keruvim, the child like angels standing at each end of the aron, that feature again in this week’s sedra.

What would happen if replacement keilim (vessels) were needed in the Mishkan and gold was not available? Could silver be used? Or is it gold or nothing?

The Mechilta says that for all the other keilim in the Mishkan, it would be acceptable to make replacements out of silver or less valuable meterials. This is not true for the keruvim. The keruvim *had* to be made out of gold. Indeed, if they were fashioned out of silver, the Mechilta equates it to making silver idols.

Why? What is special about the keruvim that necessitates only gold?

Rav Meir Shapiro explains that the keruvim represent chinuch, The child like angel sitting on top of the aron are symbols of youngsters learning Torah.

That is why they have to be made out of gold. When it comes to chinuch, there is no room for “good enough”. Each lesson has to be outstanding and of the highest quality. Even silver is akin to idol worship!

This is a powerful idea and serves as a responsibility and benchmark for those fortunate enough to be involved in chinuch. When it comes to transmitting Torah to the next generation, only a gold standard suffices.

**Rabbi Golker is the Menahel of Hasmonean High School. To listen to his shiurim, go to TorahAnytime.com or JewishPodcasts.Org**