

1. The word "וְאֵלֶיךָ יִשְׁמַח" found in Exodus 15:2 is semantically highly ambiguous. We will begin by providing a selection of the translations traditionally offered for the verse, then analyze some halakhic implications of the last translation we study.
  - 1st. Bekhor Shor – presumably, per Herman Wouk/King James? “(I will glorify (beautify?) Him) in song”, reading this as part of the introduction. From וְאֵלֶיךָ יִשְׁמַח
  - 2nd. R. Akiva – praise him exceedingly before the nations of the world. Presumably this agrees with Bekhor Shor’s translation, but sees it not merely as a statement of intent but one of purpose. Perhaps he thinks “glory” carries a connotation of public display.
  - 3rd. Onkelos – I will build Him a temple. For Onkelos this is part of the substance of the Song. From וְאֵלֶיךָ יִשְׁמַח as home.
  - 4th. Abba Shaul – Be similar to Him. Just as He is gracious and merciful, so too you should be. Where does this come from?
  - 5th. R. Saadia Gaon – I will yearn toward Him and attend His dwelling. Where does the yearning come from? My suggestion – BDB quotes an Arabic וְאֵלֶיךָ meaning “place toward which one aims”. In other words, make G-d your goal. This may also be the basis for Abba Shaul.
  - 6th. R. Yishmael ben Broka – Create beauty before Him via commandments; make before Him a beautiful sukkah, a beautiful lulav, a beautiful shofar, beautiful tzitzit, and a beautiful Torah scroll, and cause that scroll to be written for His sake with beautiful ink, a beautiful pen and by a trained scribe, and wrap it in beautiful cloths.

This statement’s opening is artful in its ambiguity as to the nature, purpose, and parameters of the beauty being created. All we know at its end is that the scope of this principle cannot be limited to either the maaseh or the cheftzah of mitzvah, as it cites example of each.

Note that Abba Shaul and R. Yishmael ben Broka transform the commitment expressed in this verse into a contemporary imperative. On what basis do they do this?

2. The Gemara in Sukkah, presumably working with the definition offered by R. Yochanan ben Broka, suggests that our phrase is the source of the position, attributed to Rabannan, that it is a mitzvah to bind the lulav, but that failure to bind does not invalidate the act of taking the lulav.
  3. The Mishnah cites a series of conditions that invalidate a lulav. Among these are being dried out and having the top cut off.
  4. Rashi explains that the issue with being dried out is “that we require a *hadarified* mitzvah as per V’anvayhu”(henceforth “V”). But we just saw that V is only lechatchilah!
  5. Tosafot think this question dispositive, and accordingly say that the source is not V but rather the word “hadar” (henceforth “H”) in Leviticus 23:40. There it refers to the etrog, but we extend it to the lulav via *hekesh*.
  6. R. Acha bar Yaakov claims that overwriting the Name of G-d *lishmah* in a Torah scroll solves the *lishmah* problem but is nonetheless problematic in light of Exodus 15:2. It is unclear whether this problem is sufficient to invalidate. The straightforward reading is that it is, implying that Tosafot’s question is an attack on the gemara rather than on Rashi – why does V sometimes invalidate and sometimes not?
- One) Kappot Temarim – Mesaran hakatuv lachakhomim. To some degree this begs the question, as we may still be able to ask what rules Chazal followed in the exercise of their discretion.
- Two) Rav – minimal level is bediavad, maximal lechatchilah. Not clear how minimal and maximal levels are defined – may be same as a).
7. Rabbi Tarfon claims that a hadas with its top cut off is valid, unlike a lulav.
  8. Rashi explains that Rabbi Tarfon’s rationale is that “he does not require a hadas to be *hadar*.” How can he say this? In the first Mishnah he said that the requirement of *hiddur mitzvah* comes from V, and V applies to all mitzvot!
  9. Ramban claims that in any case *hiddur mitzvah* can’t be the issue between Rabbi Tarfon and the others, as a hadas is defined as the tree whose leaves cover its branches, and thus it is in fact *hadar*. So the issue must be *chaser*.

One might suggest that V is not always an invalidator, as seen in source 2 above, whereas H always is. A dried-out lulav would thus be seen as sufficiently non-*hadar* for V to invalidate, not so a hadas with its top cut off. But

One) this still leaves the question based on Ramban, and

Two) should not Rashi have mentioned that V applies but doesn’t invalidate?

So it seems that we need to come up with different types of *hiddur* based on V and H. The decapitated hadas would be lacking H but possess V. My suggestion is that

First level – V applies to visual *hiddur*, H to structural *hiddur*.

10. The Mishnah/Gemara claims that if one rules like Rav Yehudah, who requires binding, one must use a binding form the 4 Species, else one has a bal tosof problem, as for example if one uses a

gold binding. According to R. Meir, who in Source 2 only requires binding as a result of V, using a non-4-species binding is acceptable.

11. And, as Rashi explains, even R. Yehudah allows it for “mere aesthetics”. In other words, things present for aesthetics are not part of the cheftzah shel mitzvah. But
12. Rashi explains that a decapitated lulav suffers from lack of H, which implies that things lacking V also lack H! This implies that things-for-aesthetics fulfill H as well as V, which should make them part of the cheftzah, since H is local to the 4 species and in the verse? But not really – just because some things, like decapitation for lulavs (but not hadasim) relate to both V and H, doesn't mean that things with only visual aesthetic implications can't be exclusively for V.

Still, why don't things exclusively for V pose a bal tosif problem?

My suggestion

Second level – V, as Rashi states explicitly in Source 4, relates to the mitzvah and not the cheftzah shel mitzvah, whereas H relates directly to the cheftzah shel mitzvah. So things for V are not bal tosif violations, since that only forbids additions to the cheftzah shel mitzvah (e.g., one can have a beautiful tallit but not five tzitziyot). I think this ties in well with the first level above, although the connection is not logically necessary.

13-14. Rabbah claims that the binding, i.e. things for V exclusively, are a chatzitzah, i.e. not part of the cheftzah shel mitzvah. That fits well with our Second Level above.

But Rava claims here that any thing-for-aesthetics is not a chatzitzah, i.e. is part of the cheftzah shel mitzvah. That contradicts source 11, which we concluded means that things for V alone aren't part of the cheftzah shel mitzvah! And that was Rava too!

My suggestion

a) V is defined as an explicit antithesis to bal tosif (like lo tasur in some interpretations. This might also fit well with a theory that V is defined as a part of every mitzvah, like chatzi shiur in some interpretations, but that might recreate the chatzitzah problem. However, one might argue that V is an independent part of each mitzvah, and thus a cheftzah shel mitzvah present for V would be neither a chatzitzah nor bal tosif. Evidence for the chatzitzah part of this formulation would be that the 4 species are not chatzitzot between each other and the hand.)