

**Potomac Torah Study Center**  
Vol. 7 #20, March 6, 2020; Tetzaveh; Purim 5780

**NOTE: Devrei Torah presented weekly in Loving Memory of Rabbi Leonard S. Cahan z"l, Rabbi Emeritus of Congregation Har Shalom, who started me on my road to learning almost 50 years ago and was our family Rebbe and close friend until his recent untimely death.**

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**Devrei Torah this week sponsored by the Friends of the Beth Sholom LATE MAARIV in appreciation for another winter season with a minyan on time for every service. See you again in November.**

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We always read parashat Tetzaveh the Shabbat of the week including Moshe's birthday (7 Adar), and Shabbat Zachor always comes on this Shabbat in a non-leap year. During a leap year, we read Tetzaveh the Shabbat after 7 Adar I, but Purim comes during Adar II.

Tetzaveh has the distinction of being the only parsha from the beginning of Shemot through all of Bemidbar in which Moshe's name does not occur. The simple explanation of why Moshe's name is absent in Tetzaveh is that God's instructions to Moshe on how to build the Mishkan, which started at 25:1 (Terumah), continue uninterrupted throughout Tetzaveh and do not end until 30:10. Ki Tisa picks up with Hashem speaking (again) to Moshe (30:11), a new conversation, so Moshe's name appears again at that point.

A more poetic explanation for Moshe's name being absent from Tetzaveh is that God threatened to destroy the people after the sin of Egel Zahav (Golden Calf), and Moshe told God to erase his name from the Torah if He refused to forgive the people (32:32). Although God agreed to forgive the people, He erased Moshe's name from the parsha that we read during Moshe's birthday week. (There is a lot more to say on this subject, which my son David discussed during his Bar Mitzvah speech 26 years ago on Shabbat Zachor.)

Rather than focus on Tetzaveh, this year I decided to focus more on Purim. In one sense, the Megillah is a satire. The heroes, Mordechai and Esther, have Babylonian (not Jewish) names. God's name is never mentioned; instead the king is the symbol representing a God who has hidden his face from the Jews. The story takes place in Shushan HaBilah – a satire, because the only previous reference to Biah is the Temple in Jerusalem. These satirical features are close to the surface and help provide a humorous tone to the Megillah.

According to our tradition, there are 70 layers of depth to the Torah. Many of these layers come through in Megillat Esther and in connections between the Megillah and the Torah. Rabbi David Fohrman introduced many of these connections in his amazing book, *The Queen You Thought You Knew*. Rabbi Fohrman has extended this analysis in extensive videos at [www.alephbeta.org](http://www.alephbeta.org). The wealth of insights that Rabbi Fohrman presents is beyond what I can describe here. One example illustrates his treasures. Many generations before Esther and Mordechai, Yaakov sent Yosef to check on his brothers. The brothers put Yosef in a pit and debated what to do with him. Yehuda, a son from Leah, proposed selling Yosef into slavery. Although traders of the family of Ishmael found and sold Yosef first, the fact is that Yosef ended up being sold into slavery, as Yehuda had proposed.

The first place in Tanach where we encounter the term "Yehudim" is late in Kings II, after the split between the Northern Kingdom (Israel) and the Southern Kingdom (Yehuda), after the death of King Solomon. Dispersion of Israel dates to the Assyrian conquest of the Northern Kingdom. Dispersion of Yehuda was later, after the Babylonian conquest and later defeat of the Babylonians by the Persians. The Jews in Persia were predominately from Yehuda, with a much smaller portion from Benyamin.

When Esther identified herself to King Achashveirosh as a Jew whom Haman wanted to destroy, the king had Haman killed. However, the king's decree of death to the Jews was still in force. Esther had to approach the king again. This time she mentioned that she would not have complained if her fellow Jews were to be sold into slavery, but she had to



intervene when they were under a decree of death. What is the relevance of being sold into slavery? Esther and Mordechai were from the tribe of Benjamin, a son from Rachel. The vast majority of the Jews in Persia were from the tribe of Yehuda, a son from Leah. By intervening to save the Jews from Yehuda, Esther was redeeming the Jews who centuries earlier had stood aside and permitted her closer relatives (children from Rachel) to be sold into slavery. Esther redeemed an ancient grievance among the Jews.

Our tradition teaches us that at some time in the future, Jews will no longer celebrate (or observe) most of the holidays the way we do now. The one exception is Purim, a holiday in which all Jews came together to reaffirm the mitzvot and work together to preserve all Jews against a common enemy. To appreciate how the Megillah connects with key elements from the Torah, read more examples from Rabbi Fohrman. Learn why Esther and Mordechai may be the most remarkable Jews in our history, because their story provides a tikkun for many of the sins of our ancestors going back to Gan Eden.

My beloved Rebbe, Rabbi Leonard Cahan, z"l, left us on Rosh Hodesh Shevat. With Rosh Hodesh Adar, we enter the final month of the year, the month in which we increase our happiness. After Purim, we look ahead to Nisan, the first of the months for Jews, and the beginning of our freedom (Pesach). This year, with the threat of coronavirus, we look forward to spring and summer, with the hope that the disease will fade down (as most viruses do in periods of heat and high humidity).

Shabbat Shalom and Frelicht Purim.

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**Please daven for a Refuah Shlemah for Nossan ben Pessel, Mordechai ben Chaya, Baruch Yitzhak ben Perl, David Leib HaKohen ben Sheina Reizel, Zev ben Sara Chaya, Uzi Yehuda ben Mirda Behla, HaRav Dovid Meir ben Chaya Tzippa; Eliav Yerachmiel ben Sara Dina, Amoz ben Tziviah, Reuven ben Masha, Moshe David ben Hannah, Meir ben Sara, Yitzhok Tzvi ben Yehudit Miriam, Yaakov Naphtali ben Michal Leah, Zissel Bat Mazal, Chana Bracha bas Rochel Leah, Elisheva Chaya bas Leah, Leah Fruma bat Musa Devorah, Hinda Behla bat Chaya Leah, Beyla bat Sara, Nechama bas Tikva Rachel, Miriam Chava bat Yachid, Ruth bat Sarah, and Tova bat Narges, all of whom greatly need our prayers.**

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Hannah & Alan

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### **Medical Issue: Using Hand Sanitizer on Shabbat** by Rabbi Mordechai Rhine © 2020

Question: Dear Rabbi, Am I allowed to use hand sanitizer on Shabbos?

Answer: Yes you may!

There are a number of considerations that make it a really great question!

One consideration is that we don't usually smooth gel-like substances on Shabbos. That is why we don't use gel soap on Shabbos, and instead add water so that it is not so thick. Similarly, we do not use regular toothpaste on Shabbos. And when we need to apply creams on Shabbos, we do so by dabbing it on and not smoothing it in. At first glance it would seem that "smoothing" hand sanitizer on Shabbos, should be a Halachic concern.

In actuality, although hand sanitizer seems to be a gel when it is the bottle, once it is squeezed out, it presents as a liquid, and there is no concern of rubbing it on your hands on Shabbos.

Other issues, such as "killing" germs, are not Halachic concerns, as the prohibition against killing refers to organisms that can be seen through regular sight.

Wishing everyone a healthy, safe, and enjoyable Shabbos!



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## **Drasha: Purim: Hear Conditioning**

by Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky © 1996

[Please remember Mordechai ben Chaya for a Mishebarach!]

Whoever misses the Divine hand that touched the Purim story is not looking. And if he claims that he heard the Megilah, he probably was not listening. Imagine, the Prime Minister draws lots and decides to annihilate the entire Jewish nation. Within 24 hours he has approval from the ruler of the not-so-free-world, King Achashveirosh.

Within days, the plot is foiled, the Prime Minister is hanged and his prime target is promoted to replace him! Pretty political. Pretty miraculous. And definitely divine. Yet Hashem's name is not mentioned once in the Megilah. Why? Of course, the Megilah is replete with allusions. There are acronyms that spell the name of Hashem, and our sages explain that every time the word "King" is mentioned in the Megilah, it has a divine reference. But, still, why does the last book of the Prophets, a Divinely inspired Megilah, have only veiled references to Heavenly intervention?

**It was a sweltering August day when the Greenberg brothers entered the posh Dearborn, Michigan offices of the notoriously anti-Semitic car-maker, Henry Ford.**

**"Mr. Ford," announced Hyman Greenberg, the eldest of the three, "we have a remarkable invention that will revolutionize the automobile industry. " Ford looked skeptical, but their threats to offer it to the competition kept his interest piqued. "We would like to demonstrate it to you in person." After a little cajoling, they brought Mr. Ford outside and asked him to enter a black Edsel that was parked in front of the building.**

**Norman Greenberg, the middle brother, opened the door of the car. "Please step inside Mr. Ford."**

**"What!" shouted the tycoon, "are you crazy? It must be two hundred degrees in that car!"**

**"It is," smiled the youngest brother, Max, "but sit down, Mr. Ford, and push the white button."**

**Intrigued, Ford pushed the button. All of a sudden a whoosh of freezing air started blowing from vents all around the car, and within seconds the automobile was not only comfortable, it was quite cool! "This is amazing!" exclaimed Ford. "How much do you want for the patent?"**

**Norman spoke up. "The price is one million dollars." Then he paused, "And there is something else. We want the name 'Greenberg Brothers Air Conditioning' to be stamped right next to the Ford logo."**

**"Money is no problem," retorted Ford, "but no way will I have a 'Jew-name' next to my logo on my cars!"**

**They haggled back and forth for a while and finally they settled. One and one half million dollars, and the name Greenberg would be left off. However, the first names of the Greenberg brothers would be forever emblazoned upon the console of every Ford air conditioning system.**

**And that is why today, whenever you enter a Ford vehicle you will see those three names clearly defined on the air-conditioning control panel: HI — NORM — MAX.**

The writers of the Megilah left us with a message that would accompany us throughout our long exile. You will not always see G-d's signature openly emblazoned upon every circumstance. However, throughout persecution and deliverance, He is always there. And just like on Purim His obvious interference is undocumented; but we know and feel it — and we search for it, and we find it! So, too, in every instance we must seek His name, find it, and recognize it. It may not be emblazoned on the bumper; it may be hidden on the console — but it is there. For Hashem is always speaking. All we have to do is listen. Joyous Purim!

Good Shabbos!

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## **Tetzaveh/Zachor: A Thought on the Parsha \***

by Rabbi Dov Linzer, Rosh HaYeshiva, Yeshivat Chovevei Torah © 2013, 2020



This Shabbat is Shabbat Parashat Zakhor when, as a lead up to Purim, we read about the mitzvah to remember Amalek:

*Remember what Amalek did to you by the way, when you came forth out of Egypt.... Therefore it shall be, when the Lord your God has given you rest from all your enemies... that you shall blot out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven; you shall not forget it. (Devarim 25:17,19)*

Three mitzvot: One, remember. Two, do not forget. And three, sandwiched in between – you shall blot out their memory. Kill them, wipe them out. What possible message can we learn from this mitzvah?

God is a vengeful God. Violence must be met with violence. Even innocents – the infants and the future descendants of the original nation – can be slaughtered by the hand of Israel when Israel is following God's command and is the agent of God's justice. Is this the message of Amalek? Is this the story that we tell?

We know that it is not. It is not the story that we as a people have told. Having as a people been persecuted and slaughtered in the name of religion, and as witness today to the evils that can be perpetrated by a murderous, fundamentalist religious belief – this also is not the story that we can ever tell.

The mitzvah to blot out the memory of Amalek is surrounded by two other mitzvot, two mitzvot of memory. Zakhor, remember, and lo tishkach, do not forget. The latter, according to the Rabbis, is a command to remember in our hearts, whereas the former is a command to verbalize that memory, a mitzvah to tell a story. How do we live up to these obligations? What is the story we choose to tell and what is the story we choose to remember?

It is a story, first and foremost, of moral grappling, of a people who treasure the sanctity of human life, and who believe in a God who commands them to preserve human life. It is the story of a people who can only be confounded by such a command.

The Talmud gives voice to this struggle through the mouth of King Shaul. Says the Talmud in Yoma 22b:

*When the Holy One, blessed be He, said to Saul: Now go and smite Amalek, he said: If on account of one person the Torah said: Perform the ceremony of the heifer whose neck is to be broken, how much more [ought consideration to be given] to all these persons! And if human beings sinned, what has the cattle committed? and if the adults have sinned, what have the little ones done?*

Where is the justice in God's decree? Such a command violates God's own treasuring of human lives, and the most fundamental sense of justice, says Shaul. And the Talmud gives no answer to this challenge.

This grappling echoes throughout the generations. It can be heard in the words of the great Chasidic rabbi and posek, Rav Avraham Bornstein of Sochachov (1839-1910), who states that the punishment cannot be just because the Torah teaches that children do not suffer for the sins of their father (Avnei Nezer, Orah Hayyim, 508).

It can be heard in the words of Rav Yakov Chayim Sofer of Bagdad (1870-1939) who writes in his halakhic magnum opus the Caf HaChayim that we made no brakhawhen we do the mitzvah of remembering Amalek, because how could we make a blessing over the story of the destruction of God's creatures? And this he says about a mitzvah that God has commanded!

It is a story of a grappling, yes, but not one that leads to resignation or rejection, but to transformation. It is a story about how Amalek stops being a people whom we must physically destroy, and instead becomes a symbol, an idea, that we must fight against, peacefully and without violence.

This story can be heard in the words of Rav Shimshon Raphael Hirsch, who states that we must destroy not Amalek, but zekher Amalek, the glorifying of all they stood for. This is a mitzvah about opposing the sword, not wielding it. Amalek represents a culture that valorizes violence and the sword. Such a culture is pernicious for the moral future of mankind, and it is such a culture, not a people, which must be wiped out and obliterated.

This story can be heard in the writings of all those halakhic authorities who, through various halakhic devices, make the mitzvah to destroy Amalek effectively moot. From Rambam's claim that if they accept the Noachide laws they are not to be destroyed, to the consensus amongst poskim that such a people can no longer be identified, the practical implications of this mitzvah have effectively been erased and blotted out.

It is a story of moving from the passage in Devarim, from the charge of timche – that you shall blot out – to the passage in Shemot, and the declaration of macho emche, that I, God, will blot out. It is the transferring of the war, from B'nei Yisrael to God. Milchama laHashem bi'Amalek, a war of God against Amalek. Midor dor. The story that we have chosen to tell, from generation to generation, is the story of Shemot, the story of God's war, not of ours. The story of a war not against a people, but against violence, against evil.



We are truly an amazing people. We have taken the mitzvah to destroy Amalek, amitzvah that disrupts our moral and religious order, a mitzvah that embraces violence and, through interpretation, through choosing how we will tell the story, we have transformed it into a mitzvah of memory, a mandate to restore moral order and to repudiate violence.

This is not just a story about the mitzvah of Amalek. It is the story of the brit that we made with God at the foot of Mount Sinai. At that moment, we moved from being passive recipients of the Divine command, from having the mountain suspended over our heads, to becoming parties in a brit, active participants in the reception, interpretation, and application of God's Torah.

We have one God and one Torah, but our Torah has many mitzvot, and many potentially conflicting messages. How do we engage our Torah. What messages do we prioritize?

When we tell the story of the Akeida do we tell the beginning of the story, or the end? Do we tell the story that one must be prepared to commit murder in the name of God, or do we tell the story of the angel's intervention, the story that God will never – in the end – command us to do such a heinous act? Do we, in the words of Dr. David Shatz, tell the story of the Akeida or the story of Al Qaeda?

The translation of the Written Torah into halakha happens through the Oral Torah. This process transforms an intense passion and a lofty idealism into a day-to-day way to live one's life. It transforms a passion that could lead to a fundamentalist extremism into an attention to detail, an anchoring in the real world, and a sense of responsibility to people and relationships.

The story of Amalek, then, is the story of the Oral Torah. It is, in fact, a Purim story. Kiymu vi'kiblu ha'Yehudim, the Jews reaccepted – according to the Rabbis – what they had already accepted in the past. The freely accepted the Torah, at a time of exile, at a time when God's commanding presence was less felt, in a way that they could never have accepted it in the past when the mountain was suspended over their heads. Our acceptance of Torah today, when so many alternative interpretations of reality are available, is predicated on our choice, on our being full partners in the brit. And with great choice comes great responsibility.

We must embrace our role as partners in the enterprise of Torah, as part of the process that is the Oral Torah. We must be scrupulous to work within the parameters of cannon, precedence, and authority, the weight of the text, and the weight of our history. And we must be conscientious of our responsibility to the deeper values of the Torah, to the story that we are choosing to tell, to our role in this covenant.

As partners in the covenant, we will choose to hear the voices that resonate with our deepest sense of probity and morality, which we believe to reflect the Torah's deepest sense of morality and of justice. But we cannot lose sight that there are others who hear other voices. Others for whom the fundamentalist and extremist voices are the most attractive. Others who are more prepared to hear the mitzvah of mechiya and milchama, of war and destruction. Others who will tell a very different story from the one that we would tell.

Remember. Do not forget. We have a responsibility of memory and a responsibility of speech and of story. We, each one of us, will choose the story that we will tell.

Shabbat Shalom and Purim Sameiach!

\* Rabbi Linzer will have a new Devar for this Shabbas, but it is too late for me to include it this week. Look at the Shabbas table at Beth Shalom for copies of his new Devar – or look at on line at Yeshivat Chovevei Torah on Friday, March 6.

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## **Purim: The Holy Letter**

by Rabbi Mordechai Rhine ©2020 Teach 613

One of the mitzvos of Purim is to recount the Purim story by reading the Megillah. The custom is that the reader unravels the scroll from which he will read and then he folds it so that it should look not like a scroll, but like a letter. Interestingly, at the conclusion of the reading, the reader must promptly roll the megillah back into a scroll, "because leaving it folded as a letter is disrespectful to it."

One wonders: If folding the megillah as a letter is indeed disrespectful, why do we do it during the reading?

Let us take a moment to consider the role that Jewish Scripture plays in Judaism. Jewish Scripture begins with the five books of Moshe, or the Biblical Era. During that time, G-d's presence was shown in a most dramatic way. Great open miracles occurred such as the splitting of the sea. Daily miracles were experienced such as when the Jews were provided with water from a rock, and Manna from heaven.

As the Biblical Era ended, we entered the time of the prophets. G-d's presence became less open as the Jews transitioned into a more natural lifestyle. When necessary, G-d would still perform an open miracle, but open miracles became the exception and not the rule.



The story of Purim occurs after the Temple was destroyed. At this time, open miracles would no longer occur. Yet, even then, as the Jews found themselves in exile in a foreign land, G-d promised that He would not forsake His people. During this period of exile, when G-d chose to intercede, He did so through natural events. In the Purim story, for example, Vashti was killed, Esther was taken to be the queen, and Haman sent letters which were later revoked. Everything looked natural. But if one looks carefully, one can see the Hand of G-d, guiding and nurturing events every step of the way.

The Talmud relates that Esther requested that her story should be accepted as part of Scripture. It was clear to her, that in addition to the books of the prophets, the Jewish people needed another step to properly transition them to natural living. The events of Purim were a paradigm of the way G-d would run the world during exile. "Do not think of the letter that was sent by Haman and Achashveirosh as merely a letter," Esther argued. "And do not think of the Megillah as merely a letter." Both look like letters. But if you study the story well, you will conclude that they are Holy Letters from G-d, each one planned and implemented according to His Will.

The custom to unroll the megillah and make it look like a letter is "to show the miracle." It illustrates that while we are experiencing the story, the events look like casual letters and directives. But by the time the megillah is done we are ready to symbolically recognize the holiness of the letter. "It is demeaning to leave it as a letter." Once we get the message, we must quickly roll it into a scroll. Recognize its holiness as the story of G-d's guiding Hand.

The gift of Purim is for us to see ordinary living as a holy expression of G-d's Will. Although in exile G-d's Hand is hidden, to the discerning eye He is ever present. Live life as a Holy Letter. Learn the lesson of Esther, and you too will be a messenger of G-d to bring about goodness.

With best wishes for a wonderful Shabbos and a Happy Purim!

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## **Rav Kook Torah**

### **Purim: Accepting the Torah in the Days of Ahasuerus**

#### **Assimilation in Ancient Persia**

The Talmud in Megillah 12a states that the near-annihilation of the Jews in the time of Ahasuerus was a punishment for participating in the royal banquet, where they prostrated themselves before Persian idols. What led them to this act of disloyalty?

The Jews of that time believed that the root cause of anti-Semitism was due to a xenophobic hatred of their distinct culture and religion. In fact, this was Haman's explanation for seeking to destroy them:

*"There is a certain people scattered and dispersed among the peoples in all the provinces of your kingdom. Their laws are different from those of every people; neither do they keep the king's laws." (Esther 3:8)*

In order to overcome this hatred, the Jews felt that it would be prudent to adopt the customs and ways of their idolatrous neighbors. They demonstrated their allegiance as loyal Persian subjects by attending the royal banquet and bowing down to the Persian idols.

To their consternation, the Jews soon discovered that their efforts were futile. They were shocked to learn of Haman's plot to annihilate them, despite their best attempts at integrating into the local culture.

#### **Accepting the Torah Again**

With the realization that assimilation is not the answer, and that their only true protection is God's providence, the Jews reaffirmed their commitment to keep the Torah and its mitzvot. This is the meaning of the verse, "They confirmed and accepted upon themselves" (Esther 9:27) — "they confirmed what they had accepted long before" at Mount Sinai (Shabbat 88a).

The Talmud teaches that their renewed commitment to Torah complemented and completed the original acceptance of Torah at Sinai. What was missing at Sinai? The dramatic revelation at Mount Sinai contained an element of coercion. Alone and helpless in the wilderness, the Israelites were hardly in a position to refuse. The Midrash portrays this limited free choice with God's threat to bury them beneath the mountain had they refused to accept the Torah. In the time of Ahasuerus, however, they voluntarily accepted the Torah in a spirit of pure free will, thus completing the original acceptance of Torah at Sinai.

#### **Effusion of Good Will**

This appears to be the explanation for the unusual rabbinic requirement to become inebriated on Purim (Megillah 7b). It is ordinarily forbidden to become drunk, since without the intellect to guide us, our uncontrolled desires may lead us to improper and unbecoming behavior.



But on Purim, the entire Jewish nation was blessed with an outpouring of good will to accept the Torah. On this special day, we find within ourselves a sincere yearning to embrace the Torah and its teachings. For this reason, we demonstrate on Purim that even when intoxicated we do not stray from the path of Torah, since we are naturally predisposed to goodness and closeness to God. Even in a drunken state, we are confident that we will not be shamed or humiliated by the exposure of our innermost desires. As we say in the Shoshanat Ya'akov prayer on Purim:

*"To make known that all who place their hope in You will not be shamed, and all who take refuge in You will never be humiliated."*

(Silver from the Land of Israel. Adapted from Olat Re'iyah vol. I, p. 441.)

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## **Who Were Amalek and the Amalekites?**

By Boruch Altein\* © Chabad 2020

The Amalekites, descendants of Amalek, were an ancient biblical nation living near the land of Canaan. They were the first nation to attack the Jewish people after the Exodus from Egypt, and they are seen as the archetypal enemy of the Jews. The nation of Amalek is long gone, but they live on as the internal enemies that we each battle on a daily basis.

### **Who Was Amalek**

Eliphaz, son of Esau (the patriarch Jacob's brother and sworn enemy), and his concubine Timna had a child named Amalek.<sup>1</sup> Amalek grew up in Esau's household, imbibing Esau's pathological hatred of Jacob's descendants along the way. His offspring became the nation of Amalek, and they lived to the south of the Land of Israel, in what is now known as the Negev Desert.<sup>2</sup>

### **The Amalekites Attack**

After the Jewish people crossed the Red Sea, they encamped in Rephidim, a barren location in the Sinai Desert. The people thirsted for water, and G d provided a miraculous well of water to accompany them on their journeys.

While the Jews were still at Rephidim, recuperating from their escape from Egypt,<sup>3</sup> the nation of Amalek launched a vicious surprise attack on them—though the Jews had no designs on Amalekite territory and were not even headed in that direction.

Moses commanded his disciple Joshua to take an elite troop of soldiers into battle the next day. Moses himself ascended a nearby mountain to pray for G d's salvation.<sup>4</sup>

The Jews defeated Amalek in battle, killing their strongest warriors while allowing the others to return home.<sup>5</sup>

Following the battle, G d commanded Moses to record the story of Amalek's treacherous attack for posterity, and to enjoin Moses' future successor, Joshua, to remember the attack as well. G d promised to completely wipe out the memory of Amalek from the earth, and to wage an eternal war with Amalek in every generation. G d swore that His name and throne would not be complete until Amalek was destroyed.<sup>6</sup>

Forty years later, as the Jews stood poised to enter the Land of Israel, Moses reminded the Jews of the command to combat Amalek.<sup>7</sup>

### **The King of Arad**

In the fortieth year of the Jews' wandering in the desert, Aaron, the high priest, passed on. The protective clouds of glory that surrounded the Jewish camp disappeared, as they were present only in Aaron's merit. Seeing the exposed encampment, the Canaanite king of Arad launched a savage attack against the Jews.

The sages explain that the king of Arad and his army were actually Amalekites who had merely disguised themselves as Canaanites before entering battle. They wanted to confuse the Jews about their attackers' identity. While the Jews would pray to G d for salvation from Canaanites, the Amalekites would be free to do whatever they pleased.

The plan backfired. The Jews were victorious, and went on to enter the Land of Israel unimpeded by the Amalekites.<sup>8</sup>

### **To Remember and Destroy**

The Torah lists two mitzvahs regarding Amalek:

- To obliterate the nation of Amalek (timcheh et zecheir Amalek)



- To never forget the evil deeds Amalek did (zechor al tishkach).<sup>9</sup>

## To Wipe Out Amalek

The mitzvah to destroy Amalek implies that no trace of Amalek's existence could be left.<sup>10</sup> "Nothing," explain the sages, "could serve as a reminder of Amalek's name—not even an animal about which it could be said, 'This animal belonged to Amalek.'" <sup>11</sup>

The first Jewish king, Saul, was commanded by the prophet Samuel to finally wipe out Amalek. Saul was victorious against the Amalekites, but spared the choicest of their flocks and the Amalekite king, Agag.

When Samuel found out about Saul's disobedience, Saul lost his right to kingship. Samuel then killed Agag himself.<sup>12</sup>

However, before he was killed, Agag sired a child who would keep Amalek's lineage alive. Some 500 years later, one of this child's descendants was Haman the Agagite, of Purim fame.<sup>13</sup>

## To Remember—Parshat Zachor

The Torah commands us to always remember what Amalek did. The sages understand from this that once a year we must read the verses of the Torah where Moses reminds the Jews of Amalek's actions.

Indeed, each year on the Shabbat before the holiday of Purim we read the section of the Torah in Deuteronomy recounting Amalek's action. On Purim the Jews were saved from the evil designs of the wicked Haman, a descendant of the Amalekite king Agag—a perfect time to celebrate the destruction of Amalek.<sup>14</sup>

## The First in Line

Amalek represents the worst form of evil. The prophet Balaam refers to Amalek in the following passage: "Amalek was the first of the nations, and his fate shall be everlasting destruction."<sup>15</sup>

The sages compare Amalek's attack to a bathtub of boiling water, too hot for any living creature to handle. A fool came along and jumped in; though he scalded himself, the water's heat seemed less intense to onlookers. So too, the Jews seemed invincible after their exodus from mighty Egypt. Amalek was the first to attack them; though the Jews were victorious, their aura of security was shattered.<sup>16</sup>

## Amalek Today

The command to destroy Amalek cannot be fulfilled today, since the identity of Amalek has been lost over the millennia. However, the command to "remember Amalek" still holds true in the spiritual realms.

## The Scoffer

Chassidic philosophy explains that Amalek represents the pinnacle of evil, the ability to "know G d and intentionally rebel." Most evil can be combated by arguments of reason; not so Amalek. He cynically scoffs at every reason to do good, sowing doubt and confusion.

Irrational doubt neutralizes the most convincing arguments or inspiring experiences. Amalek is the constant doubter, brazenly rushing to any sign of passion for holiness and cooling things down.

In fact, the numerical value of the Hebrew letters of Amalek (עמלק) is 240—the same as the value of the Hebrew word for "doubt" (קפץ).

The only response to Amalek is to be supra-rationally good, calling forth the essential connection to G d that is hidden in the essence of our souls, and rooted in the essence of G d. This connection is above logic or feelings, and Amalek cannot oppose it—and so loses his brazen power, allowing the individual to grow and develop.

When we do good despite our self-doubts or feelings of hypocrisy, we shatter the very citadel of evil, completing G d's name and revealing His rulership to all.

## FOOTNOTES:

1. Genesis 36:12 and Rashi ad loc.

2. Numbers 13:29.

3. Deuteronomy 25:18.

4. Exodus 17:8–12.

9. Deuteronomy 25:17–19.

10. I Samuel 15:3.

11. Rashi, Deuteronomy 25:19.

12. I Samuel 15.



5. Ibid. 17:13 and Rashi ad loc.

13. Esther Rabbah, Petichta 7.

6. Ibid. 17:14–16 and Rashi ad loc.

14. Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim 685.

7. Deuteronomy 25:17–19.

15. Numbers 24:20.

8. Numbers 21:1–3 and Rashi ad loc.

16. Tanchuma, Ki Teitzei 9..

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## Purim: An Insight on the Megillah

by Rabbis Y. Marcus and E. Block

***Queen Esther and Mordechai...sent letters to all the Jews to observe these days of Purim...in the manner that Mordechai the Jew and Queen Esther obligated them.... And the request of Esther confirmed the aspects of these Purim days, and the story was included in Scripture. Megillat Esther 9:29-32***

Mordechai and Esther played different roles in rescinding Haman's decree. Mordechai primarily addressed the spiritual lapses that caused the decree, arranging for public prayer, fasting, and study, while Esther orchestrated the political maneuvers to ensure their survival.

This division of labor reflected their different spiritual strengths: Kabbalah associates Mordechai with the Divine attribute of chochmah, creative insight, and Esther with malchut, submersion in the physical world. In other words, Mordechai was focused on light, expression, creativity, and Esther on hard reality and action. Therefore, Mordechai reinvigorated the spiritual focus of the Jews, while Esther worked with the reality of the situation, manipulating the physical world so the Divine light could enter and illuminate it.

The miracle of Purim embraces both these elements. On the one hand, it is a miracle, an introduction of Divine light into the world. On the other hand, it was submerged within nature.

Therefore, when it came time to commemorate the miracle, Mordechai and Esther advocated different practices corresponding to their principal passion and concern. Mordechai joined Esther in establishing the days of Purim and its mitzvah observances, but Esther made certain that it was canonized in Scripture and would be read every year. The mitzvot of Purim make its miracle tangible and relatable, so we can grasp its implications. Reading the Megillah aloud from a scroll brings the miracle into the physical world, because it is inscribed with ink and parchment and vocalized with our mouths.

Mordechai, who focused on enlightening the soul with Divine illumination, advocated only for the mitzvot of Purim, with the goal that they inspire the person to remember the story and reflect upon it. Esther, who was more concerned with transforming the material world, asked for the Purim story to be remembered not only in our minds, but that it be verbalized physically and written on parchment. It is not enough to inspire the soul; we must transform and elevate the world with tangible action.

From Kehot's Deluxe Edition Megillat Esther

Gut Shabbos,  
Rabbi Yosef B. Friedman  
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Volume 26, Issue 20

Shabbat Zachor - Parashat Tetzave

5780 - B"H

## Covenant and Conversation

Rabbi Jonathan Sacks

### Brothers: A Drama in Five Acts

It is interesting to note the absence of Moses from the parsha of Tetzaveh. For once Moses, the hero, the leader, the liberator, the lawgiver, is off-stage in the only instance where the name of Moses is not mentioned at all in any parsha since the first parsha of the book of Shemot (in which he is born).

Instead our focus is on his elder brother Aaron who, elsewhere, is often in the background. Indeed, virtually the whole parsha is devoted to the role Moses did not occupy, except briefly – that of priest in general, High Priest in particular.

It is important that we have a parsha dedicated to the legacy of the priestly role for Judaism. However, need this focus have removed Moses from the passage entirely? Is there any larger significance to his absence? The commentators offered various suggestions.[1]

One given in the Talmud refers to an event at the beginning of Moses' leadership: his encounter with God at the burning bush. Moses repeatedly expressed reluctance to undertake the mission of leading the people out of Egypt. Finally we read

But Moses said, "O Lord, please send someone else to do it."

Then the Lord's anger burned against Moses and He said, "What about your brother, Aaron the Levite? I know he can speak well. He is already on his way to meet you, and his heart will be glad when he sees you. You shall speak to him and put words in his mouth; I will help both of you speak and will teach you what to do." (Exodus 4:13-15)

The Talmud records a debate about the lasting consequences of that moment when Moses, as it were, refused one time too many. To decline a leadership challenge once or twice is a sign of humility. To continue to do so when it is God Himself issuing the challenge risks provoking divine anger, as happened here. The Talmud comments: "Then the Lord's anger burned against Moses" – Rabbi Yehoshua ben Karcha said: every instance of [divine] anger

in the Torah leaves a lasting effect, except in this instance. Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai said: here too it left a lasting effect, for it goes on to say, "What about your brother, Aaron the Levite?" Surely Aaron was a priest [not just a Levite]. Rather, what God meant was: I originally intended that you [Moses] would be a priest and he [Aaron] would merely be a Levite. But now [because of your refusal], he will eventually become a priest and you will only be a Levite.[2]

According to Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai, the lasting effect of Moses' reluctance to lead was that one vital leadership role – priesthood – would eventually go to Aaron rather than to Moses himself.

Basing himself on this passage, Rabbi Jacob ben Asher (1270–1340) suggests that Moses' name is missing from Tetzaveh, which deals with the priestly garments, "to spare him distress" on seeing Aaron acquire the insignia of priesthood that might have been Moses' own.[3]

Without negating this or other explanations, there is also a more fundamental message. One of the recurring themes of Genesis is sibling rivalry, hostility between brothers. This story is told, at ever-increasing length, four times: between Cain and Abel, Isaac and Ishmael, Jacob and Esau, and Joseph and his brothers.

There is an identifiable pattern to this set of narratives, best seen in the way each ends. The story of Cain and Abel ends with murder – fratricide. Isaac and Ishmael, though they grow up apart, are seen together at Abraham's funeral. Evidently there had been a reconciliation between them, though this can only be read between the lines (and spelled out in Midrash), not directly in the text. Jacob and Esau meet, embrace and go their separate ways. Joseph and his brothers are reconciled and live together in peace, Joseph providing them with food, land, and protection.

Genesis is telling us a story of great consequence. Fraternity – one of the key words of the French revolution – is not simple or straightforward. It is often fraught with conflict and contention. Yet slowly, brothers can learn that there is another way. On this note Genesis ends. But it is not the end of the story.

The drama has a fifth act: the relationship between Moses and Aaron. Here, for the first time, there is no hint of sibling rivalry.[4] The brothers work together from the very outset of the mission to lead the Israelites to

freedom. They address the people together. They stand together when confronting Pharaoh. They perform signs and wonders together. They share leadership of the people in the wilderness together. For the first time, brothers function as a team, with different gifts, different talents, different roles, but without hostility, each complementing the other.

Their partnership is a constant feature of the narrative. But there are certain moments where it is highlighted. The first occurs in the passage already cited above. God tells Moses that Aaron "is already on his way to meet you, and his heart will be glad when he sees you." How different this is from the tense encounters between brothers in Genesis!

Aaron, we may have thought, would have many reasons not to rejoice on seeing Moses return. The brothers had not grown up together. Moses had been adopted by Pharaoh's daughter and raised in an Egyptian palace, while Aaron remained with the Israelites. Nor had they been together during the Israelites' sufferings. Moses, fearing for his life after his assault on an Egyptian taskmaster, had fled to Midian.

Besides this, Moses was Aaron's younger brother, and yet it was he who was about to become the leader of the people. Always in the past, when the younger had taken something the elder might have believed belonged naturally to him, there was jealousy, animosity. Yet God assures Moses: "when Aaron sees you, he will rejoice." And so he did: And the Lord said to Aaron, Go to the wilderness to meet Moses. And he went, and met him in the mount of God, and kissed him. (Exodus 4:27)

The second fascinating clue is contained in a strange passage that traces the descent of Moses and Aaron: Amram married his father's sister Yocheved, who bore him Aaron and Moses. Amram lived 137 years... It was this same Aaron and Moses to whom the Lord said, "Bring the Israelites out of Egypt by their divisions." They were the ones who spoke to Pharaoh king of Egypt about bringing the Israelites out of Egypt. It was this same Moses and Aaron. (Exodus 6:20, 26-27)

The repeated phrase, "It was this same," is emphatic even in translation. It is all the more so when we note two peculiarities of the text.

By Sari & Russell Mayer, Avi, Atara, and Arella  
on the occasion of the 36th yahrzeit  
(11 Adar) of Sari's father,  
Dr. A. Abba Walker, z"l  
(Avraham Abba ben Shlomo)

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The first is that the phrases, though at first they sound identical, in fact place the names of the brothers in a different order: the first says “Aaron and Moses,” the second, “Moses and Aaron.”[5] Even more striking is the grammatical oddity of the phrase. Both times, the third person singular is used. Literally, they read: “He was Aaron and Moses,” “He was Moses and Aaron.” The text should have said, “They” – all the more so since the pronoun “they” is used in the middle of the passage: “They were the ones who spoke to Pharaoh.”

The unmistakable implication is that they were like a single individual; they were as one. There was no hierarchy between them: sometimes Aaron’s name appears first, sometimes Moses’. There is a wonderful Midrash that bears out this idea, based on the verse in Psalms (85:11) “Loving-kindness and truth meet together; righteousness and peace kiss each other.”

Loving-kindness – this refers to Aaron. Truth – this refers to Moses. Righteousness – this refers to Moses. Peace – this refers to Aaron. [6]

The Midrash brings proof-texts for each of these identifications, but we understand them immediately. Moses and Aaron were quite different in temperament and role. Moses was the man of truth, Aaron of peace. Without truth, there can be no vision to inspire a nation. But without internal peace, there is no nation to inspire. Aaron and Moses were both necessary. Their roles were in creative tension. Yet they worked side by side, each respecting the distinctive gift of the other. As the Midrash goes on to say:

“And he kissed him” [the brothers kissed when they met] – This means: each rejoiced at the other’s greatness.[7]

A final Midrash completes the picture by referring to this week’s parsha and the vestments of the High Priest, especially the breastplate with its Urim and Tumim:

“His heart will be glad when he sees you” – Let the heart that rejoiced in the greatness of his brother be vested with the Urim and Tumim.[8]

The Urim and Tumim were a form of oracle, carried by the High Priest in his breastplate. They conveyed divine inspiration and guidance, a kind of priestly equivalent of the divine word that came to the prophet.[9] It was precisely the fact that Aaron did not envy his younger brother but instead rejoiced in his greatness that made him worthy to be High Priest. So it came to pass – measure for measure – that just as Aaron made space for his younger brother to lead, so the Torah makes space for Aaron to lead. That is why

Aaron is the hero of Tetzaveh: for once, not overshadowed by Moses.

“Who is honoured?” asked Ben Zoma. “One who honours others.”[10] Aaron honoured his younger brother. That is why Moses (not mentioned by name but by implication) is told in this week’s parsha, “Make sacred garments for your brother Aaron, to give him honour and splendour” (Exodus 28:2). To this day a Kohen is honoured by being the first to be called up to the Torah – the Torah that Aaron’s younger brother Moses gave to the Jewish people.

The story of Aaron and Moses, the fifth act in the biblical drama of brotherhood, is where, finally, fraternity reaches the heights. And that surely is the meaning of Psalm 133, with its explicit reference to Aaron and his sacred garments: “How good and pleasant it is when brothers live together in unity! It is like precious oil poured on the head, running down on the beard, running down on Aaron’s beard, down upon the collar of his robes.” It was thanks to Aaron, and the honour he showed Moses, that at last brothers learned to live together in unity.

[1] See my earlier essay on Tetzaveh, “Priests and Prophets”, *Covenant and Conversation: Exodus, the book of Redemption*, p. 219.

[2] Zevachim 102a.

[3] R. Jacob ben Asher, commentary of Baal HaTurim to Exodus 27:20.

[4] Some developed later – see Numbers, chap. 12 – but was resolved by Moses’ humility.

[5] “This teaches that they were equals” (Tosefta, Kritot, end).

[6] Shemot Rabbah 5:10

[7] Ibid., ad loc.

[8] Ibid. 3:17.

[9] According to Ramban, they consisted of letters spelling out the divine name or names, some of which would light up at key moments, spelling out a message to be deciphered by the High Priest.

[10] Avot 4:1

### **Shabbat Shalom: Rabbi Shlomo Riskin**

“Now you bring near to yourself Aaron your brother and his sons with him.... to minister to Me. You shall make vestments of sanctity for Aaron your brother, for honor and splendor” (Exodus 28:1,2) The two leaders during this interim “desert” period of 40 years were Moses the prophet and Aaron the kohen-priest. Moses’s main task was to bring the Word of God to instruct the Israelites how to behave with each other as individuals and families and how to interact with the world at large as a nation; Aaron’s main task was to maintain the religious ceremonies and celebrations in the sanctuary in order to serve as the guardian over how the Israelites were to serve their God.

From this perspective, there seems to have been a fairly clear line of demarcation between affairs of state and affairs of religion. Nonetheless, because it was God who was the Ultimate Architect of every realm of life as well as the Ultimate Source for the laws of their governance, there could never be more

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than a fairly transparent curtain separating the two; after all, serving the will of the One God of compassionate righteousness and moral justice had to be the operating goals of both religion and state, respectively and together, as we are mandated by the Bible again and again.

However, there is one crucial distinction: Although there must be fundamental and absolute principles of justice governing all affairs, still changing conditions in the social and economic spheres as well as differences between the two individuals standing before the judge must certainly influence the outcome of the judgment; justice dare not be blind (see Babylonian Talmud, Bava Metzia 83). Hence it is very rare that two cases, even if similar to each other, will be adjudicated in the exact same way, and a great deal of latitude must ultimately be given to the individual rendering judgment.

This is not the case in ritual law as expressed in the Sanctuary or the synagogue, as I believe we may derive from the opening verses of our biblical portion, which is dedicated to the priesthood and its functions. For example, it is fascinating how Aaron is introduced together with his two sons, and is then presented with the special garments he must wear when serving in the sanctuary.

Unlike Moses and the prophets throughout the generations, the priesthood (kehuna) is indeed transmitted from father to son; unless the priest is properly garbed in his special vestments, he may not enter the Temple precincts. The kohen-priest, you see, is entrusted with transmitting the outer form of Judaism, its external structure from generation to generation; it is the task of the charismatic prophet to remind us the inner fire and internal spirit of our faith. External garb may be inherited and ritual performance may be taught; but inspiration of the Holy Spirit is a divine gift and an individual acquisition which is totally independent of geneology.

To be sure, there can be no meaningful religious experience without the sense of the Divine in the here and now, without the spirit of the prophet; but neither can religion be maintained without the continuity of the kohen-priest. And this continuity is equally crucial to the religious-ritual experience. From the earliest times of the pre-Socratic philosophers, humanity has desperately sought for constancy in a world of change, for continuity in a world of flux, for the ability to participate in that which was here before I was born and which will still be here after I die.

This, too, is an important aspect of the quest for God, the search for the Divine. And so we have the human need to maintain time-honored traditions, to repeat familial customs, to pray not from an ever-changing loose-leaf but rather from an ancient text which is wine-stained and tear-worn from feasts and fasts, which go back centuries and even millennia.



\*\*\*

After the Yom Kippur War, Prime Minister Golda Meir went to New York for a dinner in her honor sponsored by the Conference of Presidents of American Organizations. As the young president of a fledgling Center for Russian Jewry at the time, I was invited and seated two tables away from the Prime Minister. I was fascinated by the undisguised boredom on her face as she was forced to sit through the unending litany of inane and sycophantic speeches, the evident relief she exuded when at long last the dinner was being served, and the ambidextrous grace she exhibited in balancing knife, fork and cigarette as she elegantly began to eat and smoke at the same time.

And then, to her obvious annoyance, an unprogrammed “private” presentation of Rabbi Mordecai Kaplan’s interpretation of the Haggada was handed to her just as she was taking her third bite. I know of the Kaplan Haggada, a sincere attempt to make the seder more relevant by substituting the Holocaust for the Egyptian enslavement and the establishment of the State of Israel for the desert experience, and they presented it to her with great pride and flourish.

She seemed a bit exasperated, put down her utensils and flipped through the Haggada, and then, in true Israeli fashion, returned it, saying, “Thank you very much, but I’m not really interested.”

The delegation of two looked shocked. “But Madam Prime Minister, surely you’re not an Orthodox Jew and this Haggada brings the story up to date, to the State of Israel.”

“No,” said Golda, “I’m not an Orthodox Jew and I’ll never be one. But I do make a Pessah Seder, especially for my grandchildren. And what is most important to me is that my granddaughter intone at my Seder the same words that my grandmother said at her Seder.” That is the eternity of Israel!

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### **The Person in the Parsha Rabbi Dr. Tzvi Hersh Weinreb Clothes Make the Man**

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My interest in the relationship between a person and his or her clothing goes back to my early days in graduate school. I was taking a course on human personality, under the tutelage of a remarkably insightful and erudite woman, Dr. Mary Henle. I was so enthusiastic about the courses that I took with her that I asked her to supervise my master’s degree thesis.

I remember the morning I shared my proposed topic with her. I thought that one of the ways to assess personality was to take note of the kind of clothing that a person wore. I further postulated that not only does a person’s clothing tell us a lot about him or her, but the

clothing that we wear actually has an impact upon us. Our clothing helps make us who we are.

Dr. Henle tactfully deflated my ego that morning. She said, “That’s just an old wives’ tale. Our personalities are very profound, subtle, and complex. At most, our clothing reflects just a superficial aspect of our identity. You give too much credit to the saying, ‘Clothes make the man.’ It is really only a wisecrack attributed to Mark Twain. There is nothing more to it than that.”

I subsequently chose another topic for my master’s degree thesis.

Many years have passed since that disappointing encounter, and Dr. Henle has long since passed away, although I remember her respectfully. During those years, I have learned that she was mistaken on many grounds. For one thing, the saying, “Clothes make the man,” did not originate with Mark Twain. Centuries before the American humorist, the 16th century Catholic theologian Desiderius Erasmus wrote: “Vestis virum facit,” which translates as, “Clothes make the man.” Not long afterwards, none other than William Shakespeare put these words into the mouth of the character Polonius in his famous play Hamlet: “The apparel oft proclaims the man.”

Truth to tell, statements about the relationship between a person and his clothing go back much further than a mere several centuries. Such statements originate in the Bible, and a passage in this week’s Torah portion, Parshat Tetzaveh (Exodus 27:20-30:10), is a case in point. We read:

“You shall bring forward your brother, Aaron, with his sons, from among the Israelites, to serve Me as priests... Make sacral vestments for your brother Aaron, for dignity and adornment. Next you shall instruct all who are wise of heart... to make Aaron’s vestments, for consecrating him to serve Me as priest.”

Maimonides, codifying the concepts which emerge from the Biblical text, writes: “A High Priest who serves in the Temple with less than his eight vestments, or an ordinary priest who serves with less than his four required vestments... invalidates the service performed and is subject to punishment by death at the hands of Heaven, as if he were an alien who served in the Temple... When their vestments are upon them, their priestly status is upon them, but without their vestments their priestly status is removed from them...” (Hilchot Klei HaMikdash, 10:4).

We are left with the clear impression that these vestments are external manifestations of the royalty and majesty of the priestly role. The clothing literally makes the man. Without the clothing, each priest is “ordinary”—one of God’s subjects for sure, but without any regal

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status. With the clothing, he is not only bedecked with “dignity and adornment”, but has become a prince, and can play a royal role.

Rabbi Moses ben Nachman, Ramban, makes this even more explicit. He writes, “These are royal garments. These cloaks and robes, tunics and turbans are even today (he lived in 13th century Spain) the apparel of nobility... and no one would dare to wear the crown... or the tekhelet (blue yarn) except for royalty.”

From this perspective, clothes make the man. With them, he is imbued with the spirit of royalty and can carry himself with regal bearing.

Others interpret the function of the sacred garments differently, but all agree that garments influence the wearer in some fashion. For example, Rashi, commenting on the verse, “Put these on your brother Aaron, and on his sons as well; anoint them, and fill their hands” (Exodus 28:41), points out that in the Old French language with which he was familiar, when a person received a new official position the nobleman would put gloves upon him, indicating that he now had the authority of a new position. Rashi uses the Old French word *gant*, which the reference books that I consulted translate as a “decorative glove.” This would indicate that the garments were a type of official uniform, not necessarily regal, but symbolic of a specialized responsibility. With the donning of the *gant* the person himself gained the self-assurance of authority and power.

The late 15th century commentator Rabbi Isaac Arama, in his classic *Akedat Yitzchak*, provides even stronger support for our contention that clothes make the man. He identifies a similarity between the Hebrew word for the Kohen’s uniform and the Hebrew word for ethical character. The Hebrew word for uniform is *mad*, plural *madim*, and the Hebrew word for a character trait is *midah*, plural *midot*.

Rabbi Arama notes that in Latin, too, the word *habitus* refers to both a special garment (e.g., a nun’s habit) and a character trait (e.g., a good habit). He persuasively argues that “just as it can be determined from a person’s external appearance as to whether he is a merchant or a soldier or a monk, so too, the discovery of our hidden inner personality begins with our external behaviors.”

For Rabbi Arama, that our clothing is metaphor for our moral standing is evident in this biblical verse: “Now Joshua was clothed in filthy garments when he stood before the angel. The latter stood up and spoke to his attendants: ‘Take the filthy garments off him!’ And he said to him: ‘See, I have removed your guilt from you...’” (Zechariah 3:3-4).

Finally, there is another biblical verse which demonstrates the central role of clothing in



“making the man.” And here we go back even further in history than this week’s parsha. Indeed, we go all the way back to the first parsha in the Torah, Bereishit: “And the Lord God made garments of skins for Adam and his wife, and clothed them” (Genesis 3:21).

Nechama Leibowitz comments: “Everything in the way of culture and civilization was given to man to discover and develop on his own, with his own capacities. Nothing in the way of repairing the world and settling it was given to him by God. Neither the discovery of fire nor farming nor building houses was revealed to man by God. Rather, he was required to invent all these procedures on his own. Only clothing was given to him from Above. “And the Lord...made garments.”

God made clothing for man. And clothing makes the man.

Ah, do I now wish that I had not abandoned my original idea for a master’s degree thesis. What a fascinating thesis it would have been!

### **Zachor: An Enemy On Many Fronts**

Three very different individuals inspired me to write this week’s column. One was a newspaper editor who “dared” to censor a sentence in one of my submissions. The other was a very wise sage whose pre-Purim lecture I was privileged to hear many years ago. And the third was an anonymous Jew who was fond of the use of gematria, the technique by which special significance is given to the numerical value of the Hebrew letters which comprise a biblical word or phrase.

Let me begin by telling you about the editor. I have been writing columns on the weekly Torah portion for many years. My columns have been reviewed by quite a few editors, coming from quite a variety of backgrounds. Only once did an editor insist upon censoring a phrase, and a critical one at that, from one of my columns.

As a pulpit rabbi in the community in which I then served, I was invited to be part of a rotation of rabbis, each of whom would submit a column once a month to the local Jewish newspaper. My turn in the rotation coincided with this week’s special additional Torah reading, Parshat Zachor. In it, we read the verses from Deuteronomy 25:17-19, in which we remember the treachery of our ancient enemy, Amalek. We are commanded to eradicate every trace of this vicious foe from the face of the earth.

I no longer recall all that I had written in this connection way back then. But I concluded my remarks by quoting from the Midrash (Bamidbar Rabba 21:4) which enunciates the principal of self-defense: “Haba lehorgecha hashkem lehorgo, When someone attempts to kill you, kill him first.” That is to say, there are situations in which one’s life is threatened and which justify killing another person in self-defense. Kill or be killed.

The Jewish people have found themselves in such dire circumstances many times in our history. Aggressive responses to mortal threats are not merely permissible, they are correct and proper. The editor of the newspaper found my words objectionable, and, without requesting my permission, simply omitted them.

I protested then, and continue to maintain, that when we face an enemy, we must respond firmly and assertively. In those hopefully rare circumstances in which our very lives are threatened, we must be prepared to “kill or be killed.” In less extreme situations, we must resort to less extreme responses, but we must not forget that we are dealing with an enemy and must respond in kind. I refer specifically to the recent rise of anti-Semitism all over the world. We are misguided if we limit our responses to attempts at dialogue, efforts at persuasion, and programs designed to educate our opponents. We are dealing with enemies who must be stopped by whatever effective means are at our disposal. To borrow a phrase from an article I recently read, “no more Mr. Nice Jew.”

This age-old archenemy, Amalek, operates on many fronts. Often, as in the biblical story, he is murderous. But sometimes he adopts more subtle methods of doing us in. Thus, another Midrash (Shemot Rabba 27:6) quotes a phrase from the Book of Proverbs (Chapter 19, verse 25) to define Amalek. In Hebrew, this verse reads, Leitz takeh ufesi yaarim. One translation renders this: “Strike a scoffer and the simpleton may become shrewd.” Traditional Jewish readers understand leitz to mean not merely a “scoffer, but a “joker,” or, perhaps, a “clown.”

This brings me to the second source of inspiration for this column. I was but a teenager when I joined an old friend at one of the pre-Purim talks of the late Rabbi Isaac Hutner. He proposed a different translation for the term leitz. He suggested that a leitz was a “cynic,” and he went on to define “cynic” as a person who, when confronted with another person’s accomplishments, feels compelled to belittle those accomplishments, and therefore exclaims, “big deal!” or, “so what!”

This, for Rabbi Hutner, was and remains Amalek’s strategy. When faced with the Israelites’ triumphant enthusiasm during the early weeks of the Exodus, Amalek “cooled off” their enthusiasm by sneaking up upon them and attacking them. To this very day, we have individuals, including some in our own ranks, who diminish the spiritual enthusiasm of others by deriding them, teasing them, or otherwise denigrating their achievements.

Rabbi Hutner concluded his remarks by urging his audience to avoid such cynicism and to remain ever appreciative of the accomplishments of others.

Besides physical hostility, and in addition to scoffery and scorn, there is yet another technique that Amalek utilizes to attack people

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of the Jewish faith. He takes aim at our basic belief system and attempts to instill philosophical doubts in our minds. For the linkage of Amalek to agnosticism, I return to the third source of inspiration for this column.

He was an elderly gentleman who frequented the same tiny synagogue as did I in the early years of my marriage. He was adept at a homiletic technique known as gematria, sometimes referred to as “numerology.” Every letter in the Hebrew alphabet has a numerical value, and profound meanings can be found by comparing the numerical values of different words and phrases in the Bible. The letters that spell out “Amalek” total 240. The letters of the Hebrew word for “doubt,” safek, also total precisely 240.

“This,” proposed my elderly gentleman friend, “is Amalek’s secret weapon. Get people to doubt the principles of our faith. Amalek does not only dress in the guise of a Gestapo officer. He sometimes sits in a lounge chair, or across a table over a cup of coffee, and says things that get young Jews to doubt the Almighty and His benevolence.”

Amalek is a tricky adversary and operates on many fronts. He can be murderous. He can be abusive. He can be cynical or insulting, persuasive or even seductive. No wonder we are commanded to devote this particular Shabbat to contemplating this ancient enemy, against whom we must always be on guard, and whose final elimination must be our ultimate goal

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### **Yeshivat Har Etzion: Virtual Bet Midrash**

#### **The Challenge of Amalek**

#### **Harav Mosheh Lichtenstein**

When we consider the sequence of events in the middle of Adar, we find that Purim requires a build-up, as it were. The Fast of Esther precedes the days of feasting and rejoicing, and Parashat Zachor (the commandment to eradicate Amalek, Devarim 25:17-19) precedes the reading of the Megilla.

Why is this so? We find no analogue among the other holidays; for example, we are not required to act as if we are enslaved in the lead-up to Pesach!

It appears that the answer emerges from the unique nature of the days of Purim. The holiday of Purim, at its core, is about defeating Amalek. But what is the Amalekite philosophy? What does it mean to defeat it?

A few chapters the commandment of Amalek, the Torah dictates the laws of marriage (Devarim 23:4-9):

No Ammonite or Moabite or any of their descendants may enter the assembly of the Lord, not even in the tenth generation. For they did not come to meet you with bread and water on your way when you came out of Egypt, and they hired Bilam son of Beor from Petor in Aram Naharayim to pronounce a curse on you. However, the Lord your God would not



listen to Bilam but turned the curse into a blessing for you, because the Lord your God loves you. Do not seek a treaty of friendship with them as long as you live.

Do not despise an Edomite, for he is your brother. Do not despise an Egyptian, because you resided as foreigners in their country. The third generation of children born to them may enter the assembly of the Lord.

While Ammon and Moab are permanently banned from marrying native-born Israelites, Edomites and Egyptians are allowed, from the third generation on. The question jumps out at us: How could this be? The Egyptians, who tossed Hebrew newborns into the Nile, who enslaved the entire people for centuries, are allowed to enter God's assembly? The Edomites, who respond to the Israel's request to peacefully pass through their territory by massing their armies and threatening war (Bamidbar 20:20-21), are welcomed with open arms into the Jewish nation? Why should they be treated more lightly than Ammon and Moab, who are never allowed to enter the Jewish people?

An analysis of the text shows us the justification for such an attitude. The Egyptians enslave the Israelites due to what they perceive as an existential threat (Shemot 1:10): Come, we must deal shrewdly with them or they will become even more numerous and, if war breaks out, will join our enemies, fight against us and leave the country.

The Edomites have a similar concern: "Do not pass through me, lest I come out to meet you with the sword" (Bamidbar 20:18).

We may dispute this concern — indeed, we do in fact dispute it. Still, we cannot delegitimize it, as the existential threats of war, ideological opposition, et cetera, may arouse alarm from many directions. Morally, these concerns may justify war, harmful and horrible as its reality may be.

The Moabites have a different motivation: "They hired Bilam son of Beor from Putor in Aram Naharayim to pronounce a curse on you." Moab pays money, employing Bilam, in order to exterminate the Jewish people. This emerges from a base impulse, a destructive desire.

This is echoed, centuries later, by Haman's declaration (Esther 3:9): If it pleases the king, let a decree be issued to destroy them, and I will give ten thousand talents of silver to the king's administrators for the royal treasury.

This is the Amalekite method: to engage in battle not for the sake of ideology or identity, but merely to satisfy the dark side of the human spirit — the desire to harm others not in order to advance one's principles, but simply to express the cruelty lurking in the darkest crevices of the soul.

This brings us to the essential question: What is the source of this power? What motivates Amalek? What separates it and its ilk from all other nations?

The answer is quite simple: the Amalekite tendency is within every human being. This is not something unique to one nation, but inherent in every person. This is mentioned twice in Bereishit.

The Lord saw how great the wickedness of the human race had become on the earth, and that every inclination of the thoughts of the human heart was only evil all the time. (6:5)

The Lord smelled the pleasing aroma and said in His heart: "Never again will I curse the ground because of humans, even though every inclination of the human heart is evil from childhood. And never again will I destroy all living creatures, as I have done." (8:21)

Every person has this brutal, cruel characteristic within him or her naturally; this is the source of Amalekite actions. This tendency exists deep within human nature, a primal survival mechanism maintaining its animalistic character. Like the lion, the human must attack any creature invading its territory.

Most nations and most people have defense mechanisms, on the personal and communal level, which subdue and limit this primal instinct. An internal system of laws and societal sanctions produce the expected social norms and the disincentive to act in this manner.

It was taught: "[And Moshe said unto the people, fear not: for God has come to prove you,] that His fear may be before your faces" (Shemot 20:17): By this is meant shame; "that you sin not" — this teaches that shame leads to fear of sin: hence it was said that it is a good sign if a person has shame. (Nedarim 20a)

Moreover, each person has an inner sense of limitations and binding ethics, restraining his or her actions.

Amalek, however, does not. Amalek, instead of directing these violent, primal urges towards some beneficial end, lets them run wild and unbridled.

The nature of Purim emerges from this point. It is not merely an occasion for feasting and rejoicing, recalling our victory over those who sought to destroy us; it requires that we think of where we came from, what evil can exist within us, and how we withstood that destructive impulse and conquered it. Our joy is not just at being saved from certain death, but at the defeat of that evil, destructive force, that survival instinct planted within us by the Holy One, blessed be He.

In the encounter with Amalek, the nation which attacked Israel first, the initial reaction is to lick our wounds and seek a respite. "The

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people who survived the sword found grace in the wilderness; when Israel sought for calm" (Yirmeyahu 31:1). However, once the time is right, Israel must rise and counteract Amalek. Thus, erasing the memory of Amalek is conditioned in Parashat Zakhor on a time of national security (Devarim 25:19):

When the Lord your God gives you rest from all the enemies around you in the land which He is giving you to possess as an inheritance, you shall blot out the name of Amalek from under heaven.

Only when "the people who survived the sword" find the minimal mental and physiological equilibrium do they have the capability and indeed the duty to rise and counteract Amalek.

This is the most central message of Purim, unlike other holidays. This is also the message of the Fast of Esther, she who orders: "Go, bring in all the Jews who are found in Shushan and fast for me" (Esther 4:16). We are to bring ourselves in, to turn inward, to make a spiritual reckoning, to come to terms with this compulsion in our very nature.

We come together for Purim, after recalling Amalek on Shabbat Zakhor, after observing the Fast of Esther, after reckoning with this evil impulse in the human heart. This, in fact, allows us to express more meaningfully the manifold positive forces which humanity possesses as well. (*Translated by Yoseif Bloch*)

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### Torah.Org: Rabbi Yissocher Frand

#### When Someone Says "Don't Worry About It," It Is Time to Start Worrying

This week's Parsha contains the mitzvah of lighting the Menorah in the Mishkan: "Now you shall command the Children of Israel that they shall take for you pure, pressed olive oil for illumination, to kindle the lamp continually..." [Shemos 27:20]

The Gemara [Shabbos 22] raises an obvious question: Why does the Almighty command us to have a Menorah in the Mishkan/Mikdash? Does He need its light? After all, throughout the 40 years of wandering in the Wilderness, the Jews were led by His Light. He certainly does not need our light. Rather, the Light of the Menorah is symbolic of the fact that G-d's Presence dwells in the midst of the Jewish people. This is how the Gemara deals with this question.

However, the Medrash Rabbah has a different take on the matter. The Medrash is bothered by the same question. The Medrash, putting words, as it were, into the mouth of the Almighty, states: "I do not need the light, but let them provide a light for Me just as I provided a light for them. As it is written, 'And Hashem walked before them in the day.'" The Medrash explains that when the Jewish people



were given this mitzvah (to light the Menorah), they asked Moshe Rabbeinu — ‘Why does HaKadosh Baruch Hu need our light?’ Moshe responded that it was to give them the opportunity to “pay back” Hashem, so to speak. “Let them provide light for Me like I provided light for them.”

This Chazal teaches an insight into how people act. When Reuven does Shimon a favor, Shimon will say “Thank you so much.” Reuven’s response will be “Think nothing of it. It was nothing. You do not even need to say thank you. Don’t worry about it!” How do we view Reuven? We think, “He’s a great guy! A tzadik!

Rav Yeruchem Levoviz zt”l, the Mirrer Mashgiach, says that Reuven is not such a tzadik. He has an ulterior motive. As long as Shimon feels that he is unable to pay Reuven back for the favor he has performed, Shimon remains indebted to Reuven. As the expression goes, “You owe me — big time!” People like it when others owe them “big time”. Deep down, Reuven does not want Shimon to feel he is able to pay back the favor, regardless of what Shimon says to or does for Reuven.

The fact that the Ribono Shel Olam — who in fact Klal Yisrael did owe “big time” — allows them to do a favor for Him as “payback,” as it were, for the favor He did for them, shows that Hashem does not want us to feel helpless in this relationship. It was a tremendous chessed [Divine Kindness] that after having provided them with Light for 40 years in the Wilderness, the Almighty was now giving them an opportunity to pay Him back.

This is the difference between the Master of the World and a flesh-and-blood person. He does us a favor and He lets us pay Him back. He does not want us to feel indebted to Him.

Shoftim Chapter 13 contains the story of the future parents of Shimshon, who were barren for many years. One fine day, an Angel came and told Manoach’s wife that she would conceive and have a child. The Angel instructed the mother not to drink wine during her pregnancy, and likewise commanded her that the child should be a nazir his entire life.

Manoach’s wife told her husband about the prophecy. He asked to meet the Angel. The Angel reappeared in the presence of both of them. They offered a sacrifice and then the Angel disappeared never to return again. The pasuk states that when the Angel failed to reappear, “Then Manoach knew that it was an Angel of G-d.” [Shoftim 13:21]

In other words, they had a child as the angel foretold, but the angel was never seen again. Then Manoach knew it was truly an Angel of G-d. From the flow of the pasuk, it sounds like the reason Manoach realized it was truly an Angel of G-d was specifically because he never returned. The reason this is so is because

if this was a regular person, we could bet our bottom dollar that on the child’s birthday, the person would return and say “Nu, how’s my little child doing?” Then Manoach and his wife would need to say, “Oh, we cannot thank you enough. What can we ever do for you do show our appreciation?” And the person would say “Oh, think nothing of it” (but he would in fact want them to feel indebted to him.) However, the one who delivered the message of a child to Manoach and his wife was indeed an Angel... because he never came back to implicitly demand thanks and indebtedness.

The Brisker Rav zt”l had many children. He married them all off in the same Jerusalem wedding hall called Vagshal. The owner of the establishment was honored to have the Brisker Rav choose his wedding hall for the weddings, and offered the hall at no charge. The Brisker Rav refused to accept the offer. He said something to the effect: “The highest price I ever pay for something is when it is free.”

When someone gives something for free, do not think that you are not paying anything. When it is free, you are in someone’s debt. That is what this pasuk is teaching us. Hashem gave us the opportunity to pay Him back by lighting a light for Him, as He did for us for so many years, in order that we not feel indebted to Him.

### Putting Aside the Attribute of Silence as Necessary

There was a certain Jew who gave the shirt off his back to any and all comers. This person went to see the Rebbe Reb Bunim of Pishische. The Rebbe told this person that he should not act that way. The Rebbe explained that such behavior only demonstrates that he does not have the ability to say “no”. Such an attribute is not characteristic of Gemilas Chessed. Gemillas Chessed is when a person makes a conscious decision: This person “Yes”; this person “No.” Some people are undeserving. When a person cannot say “no,” all it says about him is that he is not in charge of his emotions. That, per say, is not an admirable quality.

The Rebbe told this fellow a vort [homiletic teaching] from the Chozeh of Lublin. The pasuk says that the Patriarch Yaakov was an “Ish Tam, Yoshev Ohalim” [Bereshis 25:27]. “Ish Tam” is normally translated as a “simple person” or a “naive person”, a person who knows no “shtick”, who does not connive, a man who does not know how to cheat — that is how we usually picture an “Ish Tam”!

And yet Chazal say that Yaakov Avinu said about his uncle, Lavan, “I am his match when it comes to trickery.” The Chozeh of Lublin asked — which is it? Was Yaakov an “Ish Tam” to whom one can sell the Brooklyn Bridge or was he “Achiv ani b’Ramaus” [Lavan’s match in deception]? The Chozeh of Lublin answers that the description “Ish Tam” means that Yakov had control over his Temimus [his naiveté]. When the situation demanded

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Temimus, Yaakov was a Tam; but when the situation demanded that he not let a conniver run circles around him, he could be as full of tricks as the best of them.

This is why the Baalei Mussar say that when we describe a person who is a mensch, we call him a Baal Midos. The word Baal means the person is the master. He is the “Ba’alim” [owner] over his middos. He can choose as necessary. Sometimes he will employ this characteristic and other times he will employ that characteristic. There is a place for humility and there is a place for being proud. There is a time and place to be forgiving and there is a time and place to stand up for one’s rights. There is a time to be a man of peace and there is a time to be a man of war.

We need to know when to employ each human attribute. Yaakov was an “Ish Tam” — he had control over his “Temimus” but when the situation demanded it, he could act the other way as well.

If a person’s nature requires him to feed any and all comers no matter what, he has lost fulfillment of the specific Mitzvah of Hachnasas Orchim. It tells us that his kindness and generosity do not stem from the fact that he is a true Baal Chessed. They stem from the fact that he is a bleeding heart who can never say no.

Based on this idea, the Bei Chiya from Rav Elisha Horowitz shares a beautiful observation on a pasuk in Megillas Esther. In the famous pasuk there, Mordechai tells Queen Esther, “For if you will persist in keeping silent at a time like this (b’Es haZos), relief and deliverance will come to the Jews from another place, while you and your father’s house will perish...” [Esther 4:14] This is the time to go to Achashverosh and plead for your people. If you keep quiet now, you and your family will be wiped out.

The question is, what is meant by the expression b’Es haZos? What does it mean “at a time like now”? Of course it is “now”! It is always “now”. What was Mordechai emphasizing by use of this expression?

Chazal say that Queen Esther possessed the Midas HaShtikah [the attribute of remaining silent]. She had the capacity to keep quiet. Some people cannot keep their mouth shut. Esther had an inborn capacity to remain silent. The Medrash (on the words “and Esther revealed nothing of her kindred and her people” [Esther 2:20]) says that Esther received this strength of character from her ancestress Rochel.

Rochel kept quiet. She did not reveal to Yaakov the secret that it was actually going to be Leah under the wedding canopy. Esther inherited Rochel’s Midas haShtikah. Chazal point out that Binyamin, the son of Rochel, possessed this family trait as well. He knew the secret of the sale of Yosef and he refused to share it because of the Cherem [ban of excommunication] the brothers imposed on



anyone who revealed it. Likewise, Shaul (who also came from the Tribe of Binyamin and descended from Rochel) also kept quiet. Finally, by Esther as well it is written that "Esther did not reveal her national origin."

The Attribute of Silence is a great thing. However, Mordechai tells Esther there is a time and place for everything. Yes, you possess the Midas HaShtikah, but if you will maintain silence AT THIS TIME, tragedy will occur. NOW is not the time for silence. Now is the time to speak up. If you, Esther, are really in charge of your Midas HaShtikah then you will demonstrate that ownership.

There are people who keep silent because they are shy. There are people who are quiet and introverted. They cannot open their mouths. "Esther, now is the moment of truth. Why are you a "Shosekes" [silent one]? Are you silent because that in fact is your middah, which, in this situation demands that you do not keep quiet, or are you merely shy and introverted? Esther, show your true colors: Are you in charge of your Midas HaShtikah, or is it in charge of you?"

With this concept, we can explain the following idea: All the Tribes had a unique stone in the Choshen worn on the Kohen Gadol's chest. The stone of Binyamin is Yoshpeh. The word Yoshpeh (yud-shin-fay-hay) is made up of two words: Yesh (yud-shin) Peh (fay-hay) meaning "There is a mouth." Binyomin had the Midas HaShtikah. Why did he possess the Midas HaShtikah? Was it because he was too shy to open his mouth? Chazal say, no. His trademark stone was Yesh Peh – "I have a mouth." I am able to speak when the situation demands it, BUT when the situation demands for me to keep quiet – if they tell me do not reveal the secret of our sin of selling Yosef – then I am able to keep quiet. Someone who has a mouth, but can keep it closed, demonstrates that he is a Baal [owner] of his Shtikah.

This too may be the interpretation of the end of Mordechai's warning – "...you and your father's house will be destroyed." Why is Esther's father's house brought into the picture? It is because Mordechai is telling her that if you go ahead and keep quiet now, this will retroactively reveal that your whole genealogy – Rochel, Binyomin, Shaul – did not keep quiet because they controlled their "attribute of silence", they kept quiet because they were naturally shy people.

Show me by speaking now, Mordechai told Esther, that the Midas HaShtikah that is part of your genealogy, part of your heritage, part of your family, does not come from the fact that you have introverted genes. Show me that your entire mishpacha had the ability to control their silences, based on the needs of the moment.

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#### Dvar Torah

**Chief Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis**

**Who is Hashem really speaking to?**

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At the beginning of Tetzaveh, in the first five verses, Hashem poses a question to Moshe with the word: "Ve'ata – Now you."

Hashem says to Moshe:

Now you – see to it that there will be people who will be responsible for the daily kindling for the light of the Menorah.

Now you – see to it as well that there will be Kohanim who will be the spiritual leaders of the people.

Now you – ensure that there will be a sufficient number of people to build and to furnish the 'Mishkan' – the Sanctuary of the people.

Both Ramban and Sforno comment that Hashem was purposefully saying to Moshe, "Ve'ata – Now you," in order that he shouldn't think that since he was the leader of the people he could stand aside and watch other people doing the job. No. Whoever you are, in whatever capacity you work, you need to be personally involved in the task.

Interestingly, Parashat Tetzaveh stands out as a Sedra in which Moshe is the central character but his actual name does not appear within the Parsha. It is as if Hashem is purposefully avoiding mentioning it.

Therefore I would like to suggest that the 'Ve'ata' here is intended to go beyond Moshe the individual. Rather, Hashem is sending a message to each and every one of us throughout the ages – "Ve'ata – What about you?"

We must ask ourselves, are we kindling lights? Are we an inspiration to others?

Perhaps you are like the Kohanim – you're a leader, you're a Chairman of an organization, you're starting initiatives, you say to others, 'follow me'.

Or perhaps you're one of the builders. Ensuring that institutions, buildings or facilities within our community, are there for others and you're concerned with furnishing or keeping them running.

Whatever it might be, 'Ve'ata' calls upon us to ask ourselves the question – 'what is it that I am actually doing?'

The very first question that Hashem posed to any human being is featured in Parashat Bereishit. In the Garden of Eden, Hashem called out to Adam and he said to him "Ayeka – Where are you?"

That first question continues to be eternally valid and the most relevant question Hashem poses to each and every one of us.

'Ve'ata' – Hashem was not only speaking to Moshe. He was addressing each and every one of us. As a result, it is important that we ask ourselves, how we are feeling? How are things going? How are we responding? But perhaps most importantly of all we should ask, what are we doing?

## Likutei Torah

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**Dvar Torah: TorahWeb.Org**

**Rabbi Benjamin Yudin**

**The Great Unifier**

Every day brings us one day closer to the third Beis Hamikdash. It is therefore with a sense of excitement that we read and study these parshiyos dealing with the Mishkan, eagerly awaiting and anticipating what will occur. Interestingly, the Sefer HaChinuch, in identifying the seven mitzvos found in Parshas Tetzaveh, follows his mentor the Rambam and lists the donning of the bigdei Kehuna by the kohanim as a mitzvah. The Ramban disagrees and sides with Ba'al Halachos Gedolos who considers the bigdei Kehuna a hechsher mitzvah, a necessary prerequisite and component for the performance of the avodah (service in the Mikdash), but not an independent mitzvah.

A regular Kohen had to wear four garments, a kesones - shirt, michnasayim - pants, mikbaas - turban, and avneit - belt. In addition, the Kohen Gadol wore four additional garments, each containing gold. What is most interesting and perplexing is that the belt of the Kohen contained sha'atnez - wool and linen together - and for this reason, according to the Rambam, as soon as the Kohen completed his avodah he removed the avneit immediately as the wearing of sha'atnez was only permitted during the actual time of service. I'd like to explore why the Kohen had to wear and incorporate sha'atnez as part of his service.

The prohibition of sha'atnez found in Devarim (22:11), "you shall not wear combined fibers, wool and linen together," is most certainly a chok, meaning a law whose reason we don't know. In Vayikra (19:19) the Torah commands, "you shall observe My decrees...and a garment that is a mixture of combined fibers shall not come upon you." While the Torah does not provide a reason for this law, the Rambam (Hilchos Temurah 4:13) enjoins us to explore and understand, to the best of our ability, all of the Torah including the chukim. The Medrash Tanchuma (Bereishis 9:9) teaches that the source of the prohibition of sha'atnez indeed stems from the encounter of Cain and Hevel. The Torah teaches (Bereishis 4:3), "after a period of time" (which the Tanchuma suggests is when they were 40 years old) Cain brought an offering to Hashem of the fruit of the ground. The medrash continues to cite the Rabbis who understood Cain's offering to be that of flax/linen. "Hevel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and from their choicest." The Medrash Tanchuma explains that it is for this reason that sha'atnez was prohibited, as Hashem declared that after the sin of fratricide it is not proper that we commingle the offering of the sinner with that of the righteous.

It is interesting to note that every Friday night following Shalom Aleichem we honor the woman of the household with the singing of Aishes Chayil. The fourth line is the



approbation (Mishlei 31:13), "she seeks out wool and linen." With the above Tanchuma we praise her for her ability to differentiate between wool - good, and linen - bad. Her binah yeseirah gives her greater insight and intuition.

So why must the Kohen wear sha'atnez? Perhaps to help us realize the specialty of the Beis HaMikdash which is in a realm above us. The Maharal (in his commentary on Avos, Derech HaChaim, 1:12) teaches that we live in the world of preidah - separation. It is interesting to note that the Maharal gives the example of Cain killing Hevel as the beginning of this world representing the world of preidah - divisiveness. Too much emphasis is placed upon that which divides us - Ashkenaz and Sefard, Chasid and Misnagid, observant and not-yet observant. The Beis HaMikdash is the ultimate meacheid - unifier. Yerushalayim, which is an extension of the Mikdash, is described by Dovid HaMelech (Tehillim 122:3) as, "the built-up Jerusalem is like a city that is unified together." Moreover, when Yaakov awakens from his majestic dream of the ladder reaching Heavenward, he proclaims (Bereishis 28:17) "this is the gate of the Heavens." The Beis HaMikdash connected Heaven and earth. Shlomo HaMelech, in his thanksgiving address at the occasion of the dedication of the first Beis HaMikdash (Melachim I 8:41), speaks of Jew and non-Jew turning to this house to offer prayers. The Beis HaMikdash is that opportunity of connecting with Hashem and gleaned a portend of what will be in the future. At that time the world will be elevated to a higher level of achdus/unification. The Kohen who blesses the people with love, unifies not only the nation of Israel, but also the different spheres of existence, including animal and vegetable. He unites these different realms, even as they appear metaphysically in an oppositional state. Thus, the Kohen's wearing of sha'atnez reflects the future harmonious existence that will elevate not only man, but nature as well.

Perhaps, as we pray thrice daily for the rebuilding of the Beis HaMikdash, we can each in our own way gradually work on removing the barriers that exist between us. The verse (Shir HaShirim 7:2), "How lovely are your footsteps shod in pilgrim's sandals, oh daughter of nobles" is understood by the Talmud (Chagigah 3a) to portray the ultimate unity of all Jews ascending to the Beis HaMikdash to celebrate the three pilgrim festivals. There will not be a Sefard or Ashkenaz Beis HaMikdash, not a Chasidish or Litvish one, or one for observant or not-yet observant Jews. We should therefore, now, attempt to intentionally visit and experience the flavor and teachings of those in other Orthodox circles. Become familiar with the teachings of Rabbi Nachman of Breslov, or the Alter Rebbe, or other groups. The benefit is not only "mikol melamdai hizkalti - from all my teachers I grew wise" (Tehillim 119:99), rather, the social interaction, respect, and

recognition is an important first step towards unity. Instead of the sad, humorous lesson of the Jew stranded on a desert Island who builds two shuls and explains, "this is the one I daven in, and this one not," we should feel comfortable in all Batei Kneisios, preparing us for the elevated time when the Kohen will once again wear the belt of sha'atnez, symbolizing the higher world of achdus, not divisiveness.

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#### **Torah.Org Dvar Torah by Rabbi Label Lam**

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##### **60,000 Golden Thoughts**

And you shall make a Head plate of pure gold and you shall engrave upon it, engraved like a signet ring, Holy to HASHEM...and it shall be on his forehead always, to bring them favor before HASHEM. (Shemos 28:36-38)

What is the value of the Kohein the High Priest wearing a golden plate on his head with the words Holy to HASHEM? How does that bring favor to HASHEM?

In the construction of the Aron which was the centerpiece of the Holy of Holies we find the following description, "And you shall overlay it with pure gold; (MiBais) from inside (oobachutz) and from outside you shall overlay it, and you shall make upon it a golden crown all around. (Shemos 25:11) The Talmud asks (Taanis) "Why was it covered with gold from the inside? To teach you that a Talmud scholar whose inside is not like his outside is not a Talmud scholar!"

The golden quality of his personality has to be through and through. It cannot just be a show of golden pageantry but rather it needs to be emanating from and radiating and at least congruent with the outer appearance. How can that be measured? How can the Talmud scholar himself know if he is approaching this standard? I was struck by the wording for "from the inside"- "MiBais". Literally the Bais is the house- the home. It is also a code term for the wife who is the internality, the spiritual essence of the home. Shalom Bais is the primary arena for the Talmud scholar.

Rabbi Nosson Tzvi Finkel ztl. was addressing a group of alumni at a hotel on a Friday night after Kabbalah Shabbos. His wife interrupted his talk and reminded him that the wives were probably hungry. The students were interested to hear more so they insisted that the ladies could wait a little while longer until he finished.

He told them, "You cannot be certain that they are not hungry and uncomfortable now and besides my wife has indicated to me that she is hungry." They may have thought that the Torah lecture was cut short and the lesson was truncated, but that decision was a lecture by itself with a lasting lesson.

I once brought a friend to receive a Brocho from Rabbi Mordechai Schwab ztl., the Tzadik

## **Likutei Torah**

of Monsey, the night before his wedding. Rabbi Schwab told us, "I met the wife, the Rebbetzin of the Chofetz Chaim in a Malon- a Hotel after the war. I asked her, 'What was it like to be married to the Chofetz Chaim?'" She told me, "Oy was he Mechabed Me- Did he honor me!"

I suppose one would expect to hear about his holiness, and scholarship and world renown but her experience was that he honored her and that speaks volumes and validates the rest of his enormous accomplishments.

We must assume that the Kohain Gadol did not just wear a gold plate on his head that announced, "Holy to HASHEM". It needed to be a reflection of his inward reality. King Solomon writes, "From all the things you watch guard your heart (mind) because from it founts life (Mishlei 4:23). We think something like 60,000 thoughts each day. Imagine producing 60,000 thoughts daily that are Kodesh to HASHEM! Is such a thing possible!?

Someone once tried to recruit me to be a spokesman for a Shmiras HaLoshon campaign. I told them that I did not feel that I was the fitting poster child for that project. I am not the Chofetz Chaim. He told me, "Reb Label, that's the perk! That's the benefit!"

Wearing such a plate on the forehead is certainly a powerful reminder and a major perk for the Kohain Gadol to help him stay focused and produce daily 60,000 golden thoughts.

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#### **Bar Ilan University: Dvar Torah**

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##### **In Praise of Humility**

##### **By Dov Schwartz**

This week's reading deals in depth with the details of the priestly garb. From the way the subject is introduced, we can learn about the figure of Aaron and what he represented regarding the priesthood. I would like to present my thoughts on the matter and examine how they are reflected in interpretation of the plain sense of the text.

At the very beginning of the reading we have the following three verses (Ex. 28:1-3): You shall bring forward your brother Aaron, with his sons, from among the Israelites, to serve Me as priests (= *le-khahano li*): Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, Eleazar and Ithamar, the sons of Aaron. Make sacral vestments for your brother Aaron, for dignity and adornment (= *tiferet*). Next you shall instruct all who are skillful, whom I have endowed with the gift of skill, to make Aaron's vestments, for consecrating him to serve Me as priest (= *le-khahano li*).

Rashi commented on the words *le-khahano li* in verse 3: "The expression, *kehunah*, denotes service." Now we must ask why Rashi only felt he had to explain *kehunah* in verse 3, when the very same expression, *le-khahano li*, occurs back in verse 1.



Rashi's understanding of the text appears to have been as follows: In verse 1 it says, "You shall bring forward"—Aaron is well-known as a passive figure, the one in whose mouth Moses would put the words he was to utter. He loves peace and pursues it, and when his sons died for offering alien fire, his response was to be silent. This sort of personality is the embodiment of humility and introversion. Therefore the Holy One, blessed be He, instructed Moses to bring Aaron forward, because Aaron himself would never have put himself forward as a candidate for sacred service.

Aaron would also not put himself in the forefront, before Moses. He most likely would remain in the background, and therefore the Holy One, blessed be He, had to tell Moses explicitly to bring him forward. But why? Because the priesthood is a lofty office. There is no greater office than to stand before the Holy One, blessed be He, in His abode and to minister the sacred service. Since we are dealing with the most important office in the service of Gd, it is reasonable to assume that Aaron would consider himself unworthy and try to evade being chosen.

Indeed, verse 2 expresses the notion of dignity (*kavod*) and glory (= *tiferet*, rendered as "adornment"). Rashi did not explain *tiferet* as meaning "glory," but perhaps he took the interpretive approach that Abraham Ibn Ezra was to follow, "That they would show off in them (same root as *tiferet*), for no other Israelite would wear such garments." In other words, we are not only dealing with an office of the highest rank, but also with one that came with magnificent garments.

History has known quite a number of people who started out humbly, but who ultimately were affected by the high offices they held. For example, King Saul, began modestly but in the end being king influenced the way he acted. Therefore, in verse 3 Rashi took pains to clarify that the priest was but a servant of the Holy One, blessed be He, and of the people of Israel, alike. If, heaven forefend, he be touched by hubris, he should always remember that he is but an emissary and not an initiator. Therefore, Rashi deliberately explained here, after the command to make ornate priestly garments, that the priesthood is a delegated mission.

Now back to the matter of *kavod*, dignity. Existential philosophy relates in no small way to existential dignity. Existential dignity means that even when a person experiences great suffering or when inescapable difficult times are forced upon him, the person still retains his sense of being as a Subject, that is, he does not lose his uniqueness and sense of person.

Victor Frankl, an important existential psychotherapist, treated Holocaust survivors, who managed to preserve their sense of person despite the hardships they underwent. Rabbi Eliezer Berkowitz criticized Frankl for

ignoring the largest body of Holocaust victims and survivors, those for whom the Torah and its commandments provided their lives with authentic meaning. In his view, precisely those who did not adhere to the Torah and its commandments had to seek meaning to their lives in order to remain a Subject; those who kept the commandments found existence as a Subject in religious life, and in that way they maintained their dignity. Rabbi Dov Soloweitchik also dealt with existential dignity in the face of suffering, maintaining that the *Halakhah* directs a person towards these values. In sum: the person who adheres to the *Halakhah* has existential dignity.

This approach can help us understand the significance of the sacral vestments: even when the priest has a status of grandeur, enjoying priority over others who have not the privilege of ministering the sacred service, he does not lose his original, authentic and humble sense of person. Aaron remained reserved, restrained, and a pursuer of peace even when he donned the magnificent garments that gave him "glory." They did not make him opinionated and outspoken, because he was gifted with existential dignity. Rashi knew of eras in which the priesthood had been corrupted, hence with the benefit of hindsight he read a warning into Scripture: the priests in future generations should imitate Aaron and remember that they are servants, even when they are dressed in ornate garb and are perceived as having a lofty social status.

Interestingly, in kabbalist writings *Kavod* often denotes the *sefirah* of Majesty, whereas *Tiferet* denotes the six *sefirot* above Majesty or the *sefirah* in the center between them. The *sefirah* of Majesty denotes passivity since it transfers the Divine influence to the earthly world and in a sense has no essence unto itself. In other words, even when the priest is granted glory, he must remain passive and humble as in the *sefirah* of Majesty.

In conclusion, we see that the priesthood oscillates between the glory of its status and the humility that should characterize the personality of the priest. He steps up to bless the public, he teaches the Lord's laws to the community, but he himself is supposed to remain as humble as he had been before. Such was Aaron, and such was the way he taught his fellow priests to be. As proof: in the worship on the Day of Atonement the High Priest officiates in vestments of white alone. The Day of Atonement is the day of the individual, the day each individual lays himself bare and transparent before Gd. On this day the High Priest, too, wears white in order to denote the motif of simplicity and humility. Even when standing before the Holy One, blessed be He, without the trappings of the mundane, all human beings are revealed as flesh and blood. Aaron remained who he was even when he wore magnificent garments.

Thus one can understand verse 3. There appears to be a stylistic difficulty in this verse: "Next you shall instruct all who are skillful

## Likutei Torah

(*hakhmei lev*, pl.), whom (sing.) I have endowed with the gift of skill (*hokhmah*).” Our initial understanding is that the second half of the verse begins with the word “whom” and refers to those same skillful persons, who have been endowed with the gift of skill. But then it is not clear why the change from plural to singular; the first half refers to those “who are skillful” in the plural, whereas the second half switches to the singular (“him whom I have endowed...”).

Therefore, in *Ha'amek Davar* the Netziv interpreted that the two parts of the verse refer to different things. The first half indeed concerns the skillful artisans who prepare the priestly garments, but the second half refers to Aaron. Accordingly, Scripture uses the term *hokhmah* as a homonym. Both senses of *hokhmah* pertain to practical, behavioral realms. The first refers to skill and ability (*hakhmei lev* are those who evince great talent in the art of weaving), while the second sense of the word pertains to morality, as in the verse, “See! Fear of the Lord is wisdom (*hokhmah*); to shun evil is understanding” (Job 28:28).

If so, Scripture intended here to establish a contrast between the two meanings: the priestly vestments were exceptional in their magnificence, their appearance, and the way they were woven. But the person who wore them, Aaron the priest, was of the opposite nature. He actually personified humility and morality of the highest degree. Such a combination of opposites, magnificence and humility, befits the person who is to minister before the Holy One, blessed be He; and thus, indeed, the end of verse 3 becomes sensible.

By this reading, the three statements should be taken as a dialectical depiction of the contrast between the lofty, glamour of the priesthood and the humble morality of the priest. Aaron, the man who flees from honor, must be brought forward because it is precisely such a figure that befits the honorific position of priest. This dialectic had to be conveyed to those working on the priestly vestments, so that they would understand the complexity of sanctity. [Translated by Rachel Rowen]





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### No One Runs for the Office of Gadol HaDor

In speaking of the service to inaugurate the Mishkan, its vessels, and the bigdei kehunah (the priestly garments), the Torah says that Hashem commands Moshe, "You shall dress Aharon, your brother, and his sons with him..." [Shemos 28:41] This means that although as a matter of routine in carrying out their priestly duties, the Kohanim dressed themselves, the first time they put on the newly created bigdei kehunah, Hashem commanded Moshe Rabbeinu to personally put these garments upon them. The truth of the matter is that we find this same type of practice in the end of Sefer Bamidbar. When (in Parshas Chukas) Aharon HaKohen dies, and Elazar, his son, takes over in the role of Kohen Gadol (High Priest), the Torah says the same thing: "And Moshe removed from Aharon his clothes and he put them upon Elazar, his son..." [Bamidbar 20:28] Thus, we see that when Aharon and his sons became Kohanim for the first time, Moshe had to put the bigdei kehunah upon them, and when Aharon died and Elazar became the Kohen Gadol for the first time, Moshe had to put Aharon's bigdei kehunah upon Elazar.

I saw in the sefer Milchamos Yehudah that this teaches us a lesson about Jewish leadership which differs from the way the nations of the world do things. When anybody runs for elected office, he calls a press conference or he stands in front of his old high school building and proclaims for everyone to hear, "I am the best and most qualified person in the country to become let's say mayor, governor, or president." This is the way it always works. Has anyone ever run for the position of "Gadol haDor" (the greatest sage of the generation)? Did Rav Moshe Feinstein go to FDR drive and stand in front of his little apartment and say, "I am the Gadol haDor" or "Please, elect me for Gadol haDor because I am the biggest talmid chochom in the country"? It just does not happen like that. Who elects the "Gadol haDor"

Nobody! The people coalesce around the person by acclamation. People see him fit to be the Gadol haDor.

This process started over here, in this week's parsha—Parshas Tezaveh. The fact that Moshe Rabbeinu dressed Aharon with these garments and made him the Kohen Gadol is setting the stage and setting the tone that this is how we inaugurate our leaders. Somebody else must appoint you.

Before his passing, Rav Elazar Schach let it be known that Rav Aharon Leib Shteinman should be the posek for the Yeshivos after he passed on. Rav Aharon Leib Shteinman did not get up and run for the office. He was appointed. Who appointed him? Someone bigger than him—Rav Schach. That is the way it has always been. Do you know where that started? It started over here in Parshas Tezaveh, and continued in Parshas Chukas (when Moshe dressed Elazar in the bigdei kehunah). Moshe Rabbeinu had to put the garments on them. Taking the mantle of leadership for oneself is not the Jewish way.

### War is Not the Norm

The pasuk says, "For a seven-day period he shall don them—he who serves in his stead from among his sons, who shall enter the Tent of Meeting to serve in the Sanctuary." [Shemos 29:30] Rashi explains this pasuk to mean that the son of the previous Kohen Gadol has the right to become Kohen Gadol after his father (provided he is worthy of serving in the position). The pasuk concludes with the words "Asher yavo el Ohel Moed, l'share b'Kodesh" (who shall enter the Tent of Meeting to serve in the Sanctuary). The Talmud [Yoma 72b] says, "I might think that the son of the Kohen Anointed for War (Mashuach Milchama) shall succeed his father in the same way that the son of a Kohen Gadol succeeds his father..." The Gemara teaches however that this is not the case. The Gemara learns this exclusion from the very pasuk we just quoted: Only one who is "fit to enter the Tent of Meeting to serve in the Sanctuary" succeeds his father, but one who does not enter into the Tent of Meeting (because he is out on the battlefield) is not fit to serve in place of his father.

Why is this so? If the High Priesthood passes from father to son, why shouldn't the office of Mashuach Milchama also pass from father to son? It is true that the Gemara learns it out from a pasuk, but what is the rationale? I heard an explanation in the name of Rav Avraham Yitzchak HaKohen Kook, zt"l, regarding why we do not pass down the office of the Kohen Anointed for War through inheritance. Rav Kook explains that inheritance is all about continuity. It passes from father to son, from son to grandson, from grandson to great-grandson. It is about "hemshech" (continuity). This is appropriate for Kehuna Gedola. The Gemara says it is also appropriate for rabbinic leadership. Ideally, Rabanus should go from father to son. Ideally, the position of being head of a Talmudic Academy (Rosh Yeshiva) should go from father to son, if the son is worthy of the position. Continuity. However, there is one area of Jewish life where continuity is not appropriate. On the contrary, we do not want to emphasize continuity. That area is the area of war. War is not supposed to be a permanent function of Jewish life. War is an exception to the rule. It is an anomaly. We do not want it to happen. There should not be a need for a Kohen Anointed for War. Linking inheritance with the role of Kohen Mashuach Milchama is saying that we view war as part of the eternal continuity of Jewish existence. We do not want that.

The Mishna states, "A man should not go out on Shabbos (into the public domain) with his sword. Rav Eliezer says that it is considered an ornament (and he may go out into the public domain wearing it). The Rabbis (disagree with Rav Eliezer and say it is not an ornament) but rather it is something that is unseemly (a g'nai) as it is written: 'They shall beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks; nation will not lift sword against nation and they will no longer study warfare' [Yeshaya 2:4]." [Shabbos 63a]

The Rabbis reject the idea that a sword should be considered an ornament. A weapon should be an ornament? This is not what we live for! This is not supposed to be a function of our lives! It is true that when war occurs, we



need to fight the war and be successful in our battles. However, to make it a permanent institution—to say the position of Masuach Milchama should pass down to son and grandson—that would send the wrong message. That would send the message that war needs to be a part of our lives. That is not the case. Our goal is that nation should not lift sword against nation and that they should no longer study warfare.

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**Peninim on the Torah - Parshas Tetzaveh**

ואתה הקרב אליך את אהרן אחיך ואת בניו אתו... לכהנו לי

Now you, bring near to yourself Aharon, your brother, and his sons with him... to minister to me. (28:1)

Hashem instructs Moshe Rabbeinu to induct Aharon and his sons into the Kehunah, Priesthood, with Aharon becoming the Kohen Gadol, High Priest. At first, Moshe functioned as the Kohen Gadol, but he lost that status due to his rejection of the opportunity to lead Klal Yisrael out of Egypt. He suggested that Aharon, his older brother, become the nation's leader. In a second exposition, Chazal (Shemos Rabbah 37:4) teach that Moshe was unhappy when Hashem instructed him to induct Aharon into the Priesthood. Hashem countered, "The Torah was mine, and I gave it to you. If not for it (the Torah) I would have destroyed My world." Chazal supplement this with an analogy to a wise man who married his relative. After ten years passed without a child being born to them, he told his wife, "Please search for a wife for me. I could have done this by myself. However, I do not want to do anything without your knowledge and input." Likewise, Hashem said to Moshe, "I could have appointed Aharon as Kohen without discussing it with you. However, I want you to stand over him and make sure that he is acting properly."

According to the above, Hashem's instructing Moshe to induct Aharon was, in a sense, for the purpose of assuaging Moshe's pain at being "passed over" for the Kehunah. Rather, Hashem wanted Moshe to be the one to give over the Kehunah to Aharon. This way, Moshe remained involved in the process, and Aharon would be forever cognizant that he received the Kehunah via Moshe. When we see how far Hashem went to be certain not to give Moshe any ill feelings, we derive a lesson on how we should act in our interpersonal relationships.

According to the Midrash, Moshe was not happy that Aharon was assuming the Kehunah Gedolah, since during the Shivas Yemei Milluim, seven days of the inauguration service, Moshe had served as Kohen Gadol. No one enjoys giving up his position. Moshe Rabbeinu certainly was not objecting due to trivial envy. He sought every opportunity to serve and become closer to Hashem. Why should he lose an opportunity? All of this is true and even laudatory, but was it not Moshe that told Hashem to designate Aharon to lead the Jews out of Egypt? What changed that provoked Moshe's reaction to the transfer of the Kehunah to Aharon?

Horav Baruch Dov Povarsky, Shlita, explains that Moshe definitely did not want the Kehunah for personal reasons. He was surely happy to delegate the Kehunah to his brother, Aharon. Hashem, however, appointed Moshe as the manhig Yisrael, leader of the nation, and, as such, he had a din of melech; in other words, he was halachically viewed as the king. Moshe felt that in his position of leader and king, he should also be the High Priest. By functioning in all of these positions, he would be able to guide the nation to a higher level of shleimus, perfection. Hashem responded to Moshe's query, "The Torah was mine, and I gave it to you." This means the maaleh, asset/benefit, of Torah supersedes everything. Its kedushah, sanctity, rises above kehunah.

If one achieves distinction in Torah, he has acquired the ultimate plateau in the spiritual hierarchy of Klal Yisrael. Torah is the "engine" that governs and drives every spiritual endeavor in which we are involved. With this principle in mind, I think we may be able to shed light on the Ridbaz's elucidation of this Midrash. He explains that Moshe had no angst over the selection of Aharon to be Kohen Gadol. He could accept his brother as High Priest. What troubled him was the second part of the message, "and his sons with him." Moshe did not merit to see his sons in positions whereby they would succeed him as the leaders of Klal Yisrael. Inheritance goes just so far. It works for Kehunah, and it works for malchus, monarchy. Torah is in a different realm. As Hashem told Moshe, "The Torah was mine, and I gave it to you." Torah is not the possession of any one single individual. The Torah belongs to Hashem, and He gives it to whomever He deems worthy.

Let me explain. Torah tzivah lanu Moshe, morashah kehillas Yaakov, "The Torah that Moshe commanded us is the heritage of the congregation of Yaakov" (Devarim 33:44). The word morashah, heritage, is related to yerushah, inheritance. The Mordechai writes that just as an inheritance is divided equally among all children regardless of their aptitude or wisdom, likewise, the Torah belongs to all Jews equally; each and every Jew – in accordance with his individual capacities – is capable of acquiring a portion in the Torah. The Torah belongs to Hashem, and He is constantly giving it to whomever is worthy of its receipt. Kehunah was given once to Aharon; malchus was given to David Hamelech. Torah is the gift that "keeps on giving." We all inherit it equally.

Achieving greatness in Torah has nothing whatsoever to do with acumen. While it is certainly true that one who is blessed with a sharp mind might find the material easier to absorb, his responsibility to achieve is even greater as a result of his head start. In Devarim 30:6, the Torah writes U'mal Hashem Elokecha es levavcha... l'maan chayeicha, "Hashem, your G-d, will circumcise your heart... that you may live." The Maggid, zl, m'Dubno explains that when Hashem circumcises a person's heart, the person (whose heart was heretofore sealed) begins to feel the pleasure and sweetness inherent in Torah study and mitzvah performance. They, (Torah study and mitzvah observance) in turn, cause him to "live" in the same manner that one lives via such physical pleasures as eating, driving, sleeping, etc. This sense of spiritual living is real. When he enters the bais hamedrash, he feels the walls beckoning him to enter; when he opens up his Gemorah, he experiences such intense excitement that his heart is overflowing with joy at the opportunity to learn.

After the Kotzker Rebbe's passing, the chassidim gravitated to his appointed successor, the Chidushei HaRim, zl, the first Gerrer Rebbe. He chose to make his residence in Ger, Poland, which became a vibrant center for Torah Chassidus until the devastation wrought by the Nazis during World War II. His chassidim built a beautiful edifice to serve as the Rebbe's new bais hamedrash.

Thousands of chassidim from throughout Poland convened for the chanukas habayis, inauguration, of the shul. The Rebbe spoke the following words that day, focusing on the well-known passage in Chazal (Berachos 28a): "The day that Rabbi Elazar ben Azaryah became Nasi, they removed the doorman from the study hall and permission was granted to all who sought to study Torah to enter. When Rabban Gamliel was Nasi, he would proclaim and say: 'Any student who is not tocho k'baro (inside commensurate with his outside, i.e., genuinely sincere) may not enter the study hall.' That day, many benches were added to accommodate the new students (one opinion is 400 benches; others say 700). Upon seeing this development, Rabban Gamliel became dispirited, wondering; 'Did I, Heaven forbid, withhold Torah from Yisrael?' Rashi explains that Rabban Gamliel feared that he would be punished for preventing more students from joining the ranks of the yeshivah students."

The Chidushei HaRim asked: "What caused Rabban Gamliel to regret his policy denying entry to a student who was insincere?" How did the addition of benches (with people to sit on them) alter his policy? He did what was appropriate. If he were willing to permit insincere students to join the others,



he would have an overflowing bais hamedrash. He did not want that. Who is to say that his previous selection process was flawed?

The Rebbe explained that when the insincere students entered the bais hamedrash, they immediately became influenced by the spiritual luminance of the bais hamedrash, and their hearts became “circumcised,” so that they could now “live” the sweetness and pleasure of learning. Thus, they became better and achieved sincerity.

When Rabban Gamliel observed this transformation, he began to worry that perhaps he had withheld Torah from the Jewish People, since had he allowed them to enter and cross the threshold of the bais hamedrash, they would have been inspired by its spiritual vitality.

The Rebbe concluded with his charge to the chassidim: “We, too, have to make sure the light of our bais hamedrash shines on all who enter, imbuing them with the joy of learning.”

We might suggest that the chassidim must be made comfortable enough to acquiesce to entering. Today they might appear unsuitable and thus discouraged, but who wants to assume responsibility for turning away a potential talmid chacham, Torah scholar, just because of external appearances and (perhaps) behavior that leaves much to be desired?

While we are addressing the concept of inheriting a position, I quote a story from the Sefer Chassidim (758) (quoted from Aleinu l’shabeiach), which is unusual, and, as such, very inspiring. Inheritances can become contentious and filled with acrimony, at times tearing apart loving relationships that had existed (or were thought to exist) in families for a lifetime. Furthermore, they are everything but an illui neshamah, perpetuation of the soul, of the deceased. They forget that the one who is mevater, gives in, earns and reaps the greatest blessing. This is the story of a chazzan, who had led the services for many years, had earned the respect and admiration of the kahal, congregation, and, as a result, had the “rights” to the position. When he became old, he informed the leaders of the shul that he was retiring as chazzan. This decision stunned the members of the community, since his voice was still strong and melodious. From their standpoint, he certainly could continue.

Finally, after much prodding by the congregation, the Chazzan relented and explained the reason for his decision, “The position of Chazzan,” he began, “is such that it traditionally passes on to the Chazzan’s son. Hashem blessed me with wonderful sons, all of whom are eminently qualified to step into the position of Chazzan and do well. Others in the community, however, are more qualified to serve as Chazzan. I was concerned that if I continue as Chazzan until Hashem prevents me from continuing, my sons will automatically inherit my position, although others exceed their qualifications. I, therefore, decided to resign in order that my family’s chazakah, rights, to the position be severed.”

I wrote that the story was unusual, since “keeping it in the family” is something for which people will go to war. It is also inspiring to read about those who place the needs of the community of others above their own. Perhaps this was the objective of the Sefer Chassidim when he included the story in his sefer.

והיו על אהרן ועל בניו בבואם אל אהל מועד... ולא ישא עון ומתו

They shall be on Aharon and on his sons when they enter the Ohel Moed... and they shall not bear a sin and die. (28:33)

The Torah emphasizes the significance of the Bigdei Kehunah, Priestly vestments, more so than any of the vessels of the Mishkan. The requirement to wear the Begadim, vestments, is such that, if any performance of the Priestly service is without the full complement of the vestments, the offending Kohen is subject to Heavenly death penalty. What more did these garments add to the Kohen’s already exalted state of sanctity, so that without them his service would be considered to be defective?

Horav Mordechai Gifter, zl, explains that character traits and abilities are of little to no consequence if one does not use them to express himself. A quality that remains concealed and internal remains but a potential that has yet to achieve fruition. For a Kohen’s avodah, service, to the Almighty to

achieve its potential, he must render honor and glory to Hashem to the best of his ability. Thus, his garments were to be constructed l’kavod u’liferes, for glory and splendor, so that even his garments were to contribute to expressing honor to Hashem. Without them, the service was invalid – because it had not reached its intended apex of sublimity.

The Rosh Yeshivah adds that this lesson is not limited exclusively to Kohanim, but to all of us, for the Torah (Shemos 19:6) exhorts us to be a mamleches Kohanim, “A kingdom of Kohanim.” Every act that we perform must be executed for the purpose of praising Hashem, and our avodas HaKodesh can achieve its potential only when it is expressed in every facet of our being. The Torah’s perspective concerning our eternal garb is that it is far more than a medium for attaining honor and attention. Clothes are a form of expression through which our avodas HaKodesh can reach higher levels. It is for this reason that we dress appropriately – not in a flashy manner; immaculately and respectfully – not because it is in vogue, but because it is part and parcel of our avodas HaKodesh; an overall spotless demeanor plays an integral role in our avodas Hashem. (Calling attention to oneself bespeaks a lack of tznius, modesty),

To the public eye, the saintly Rebbe of Rizhin, presented an image of fabulous wealth and undreamed of treasures. All of his personal belongings, even his everyday cutlery, were fashioned from the most expensive materials. The buttons on his bekeshe, outer jacket, were made of solid gold inlaid with diamond; his pillowcase was woven from pure gold thread. While most people did not understand the reasons for the Rebbe’s conduct, he was, nonetheless regarded as one of the tzaddikim, righteous persons, of his era.

Although according to all outward appearances, the Rebbe seemed to be enjoying the comforts of this world, nothing could be further from the truth. In reality, the Rebbe afflicted himself terribly, denying his body even its most basic requirements. The following incident underscores this idea. The Rebbe would wear a magnificent pair of boots. Rumor had it that even the Russian Czar was envious of these boots. They were made of solid gold and studded with diamonds and other precious stones. Is it any wonder that they were the envy of all who beheld them? On one bitterly frigid night, the Rebbe went out to be Mekadesh levanah, sanctify the New Moon. The Rebbe was outside in the snowy night for some time. When he left, the chassidim noticed blood on the ground where he had been standing.

An investigation of the Rebbe’s boots revealed a shocking discovery – the Rebbe’s boots had no soles. Whenever the Rebbe wore the boots, he was actually walking barefoot. Thus, when he stood on the freezing ground, his feet became stuck to the icy ground, causing them to bleed when he began walking. It was stories such as this one and so many others, that caused even those who had previously questioned the Rebbe’s ostentatious lifestyle to bow their heads in deference, acknowledging that the Rebbe’s every action was focused only l’shem Shomayim, for the sake of Heaven.

Prior to his petirah, passing, at the young age of fifty-four, the Rebbe declared, “Rabbi Yehudah HaNasi testified about himself that he never derived any enjoyment from this world, not even the amount of a small finger. I testify about myself that I did not enjoy this world, not even the amount of chut ha’ saarah, hairbreadth. The reason for my grand and royal conduct was purely l’shem Shomayim.”

In loving memory of Mrs. Glika Scheinbaum Bogen by her family

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from: Esplanade Capital <jeisenstadt@esplanadecap.com>

subject: Rabbi Reisman's Chumash Shiur - Audio and Print Version

**Rabbi Reisman** - Parshas Terumah 5777

1 - Topic - Mizbaiach Chodosh B'tzion Tachin

Of all the Keilim in the Bais Hamikdash and the Mishkan the Keili that is mentioned the most often in our Davening is the Mizbaiach. Not the Menorah, not the Shulchan, not even the Aron Hakodesh. When we talk about our desire for the rebuilding of the Bais Hamikdash we mention the Mizbaiach most often.



In the Rosh Chodesh Mussaf we say Mizbaiach Chodosh B'tzion Tachin. We talk about the Mizbaiach. The reason for this is that the Rambam in Sefer Avodah, Hilchos Bais Habechira, Perek 6:14 and 6:15 says a Chiddush. He says (מקריבין הקרבנות כולן אע"פ שאין שם בית בנוי). That we are allowed to bring Korbanos even if there is no Bais Hamikdash. That is a Chiddush but it comes from the Gemara. The Gemara as a matter of fact says that Chaggai the Navi presented this Chiddush at the time that the Jews returned for the second Bais Hamidash that Makrivin, you can bring a Korban even without a Bais Hamikdash.

What the Rambam adds is that you can be Makriv without a Bais Hamikdash but you need to build a Mizbaiach. Without a Mizbaiach you can't be Makriv. The other Rishonim hold that you are Makriv on the Makom Hamizbaiach. You don't need a Bais Hamikdash means that you don't need anything at all. Not so the Shittas Harambam because he holds that you need a Mizbaiach. Therefore, we understand the consistent mentioning of the Mizbaiach independent of the Bais Hamikdash. (ועל מִזְבֵּיחַ. ועל הִיכָלָהּ). We thank HKB"H for the Mizbaiach. In Selichos, we say Asei L'man Yerushalaim Ir Kodshecha, Asei Lman Tzion Mishkan Kivodecha, Asei Lman Shimimos Heichalecha and then Asei Lman Harisos Mizbachecha. We don't talk about the destruction of the other Keilim of the Bais Hamikdash only the Mizbaiach.

In the Sefer Shiras Shmuel he explains this idea. That it is most unique that it is the Mizbaiach because the Mizbaiach in and of itself has a significant value. Then he adds an interesting Nekuda. In the Mussaf of Yom Tov we don't mention the Mizbaiach specifically. He suggests the following. He says that on Yom Tov we are missing the whole Aliya L'regel. The whole idea of having a Bais Hamikdash to be Oleh Regel to. Oleh Regel that is not the Mizbaiach itself, that is the entire Bais Hamikdash and since that is the entire Bais Hamikdash therefore, there is no reason to mention the Mizbaiach even though regarding the Korbanos it does make a difference having the Mizbaiach, but since we are Nis'abeil on the whole Aliya L'regel that is a different story. And so, that is my first Nekuda for the day. A special notice that we have regarding the Mizbaiach. Two Aveilos that we have no Bais Hamidash and no Mizbaiach.

## 2 - Topic - The squaring of the Mizbaiach

Let me go to a Dvar Halacha. In the beginning of Perek 27:1 we mention the Mizbaiach and it says (חָמֵשׁ אַמּוֹת אֶרֶץ חָמֵשׁ אַמּוֹת רָחֵב, רַבּוּעַ הָיָה הַמִּזְבֵּיחַ). I have taken notice of this last year that once it says 5 Amos one and 5 Amos the other way (רַבּוּעַ הָיָה) saying that it has to be square seems to be redundant, it seems to be repeating itself because 5 x 5 is a square.

I have mentioned to you in the past that in Tosafos in Maseches Zevachim דאריך וקטין. והא דכתיב חמש (ואה מ'אכ"ב) Ravua is M'akeiv (אמנות אורך וחמש אמות רוחב למצוה והא' קרא לעכב ומיהו קשה דלעכב מהמזבח נפקא). That squaring is M'akeiv even if the exact measurement may or may not be a Davar that is M'akeiv. This is what it says in Tosafos on Daf 62b.

What I would like to add to you is a Biyur Halacha in Hilchos Tzitzis of all places in Siman 10:9 that discusses the fact that for Tzitzis the corners of the Beged have to be square. If a corner is rounded then of course it does not count as a corner. The Biur Halacha there is M'supak how much of a break in the squaring of the Beged constitutes a rounded corner. How square, how rounded.

The Mishna Brura is Mesupeik and says that it should be like the Mizbaiach where it says Ravua Yi'yeh. The Gemara in Chullin 18a (top of the page) says (מיתבי כמה פגימת המזבה) how much can it be Pagum? Rav Shimon Ben Yochai says Ad Tefach (ר' שמעון בן יוחאי אומר טפח) and another Man D'omar

says Ad K'zayis (ר"א בן יעקב אומר כזית). There is a certain amount that constitutes an imperfect corner. Just being rounded a little is not a problem. That is in the Mizbaiach it is not a problem and in the Beged of Tzitzis it is not a Psul. The Mishna Brura says that maybe it should be like the Mizbaiach but he says that the Mizbaiach was so big and a Tefach is a Pgam, so in our Tzitzis which are much smaller it is not logical that the Shiur should be exactly a Tefach.

Rav Ahron Leib (Shteinman) says in the Ayeles Hashachar (page # 222 on 27:1) on the Parsha brings the Biyur Halacha and says that the Biyur Halacha should have said take a proportion for the Mizbaiach being a Tefach to our Bigdei Tzitzis and maybe that amount is the amount.

I mention this to you because many people take notice about a different Mitzvah which has to be squared and that is the Tefillin. The Tefillin Shel Rosh tend often to become imperfect. The pointy square gets worn away, gets touched and it is not perfect anymore. And so I say to you that we see from here that a small rounding of a corner doesn't count. How much? Ad Tefach. Well our whole Tefillin are not a Tefach wide. Certainly a small amount is not an amount that is a problem and therefore, this Ravua Yi'yeh in this week's Parsha teaches us something that is Halacha L'mayseh. The idea of the measurement of Ravua.

Two thoughts regarding the Mizbaiach, one the Mizbaiach Chodosh B'tzion Tachin and the other regarding the squaring of the Mizbaiach.

## 3 - Topic - What area in the Bais Hamikdash was covered?

Let me move on to a third topic for the Parsha. I would like to mention to you a Shittah Michudeshes of the Rambam. Sometimes people who give Drashos mention a Mechudashdika Shittah to raise eyebrows and people talk about it as if it is a normative Shittah. I tell you right away that this is a Mechudashdika Shittah but nevertheless listen and you will see a Shtikel Lomdus and maybe you will have the time to go into.

We all know when we read the Parsha that the Mishkan had the outdoor area which was the majority of the area of the Mishkan and the Ohel Moed the (indoor area) which was covered by 3 different coverings and that was the indoor area. Everything else was uncovered.

Similarly in the Bais Hamikdash, the Heichal, the Ulam, the building was covered and everything else was uncovered. Right? Not so simple!

The Rambam in Hilchos Bais Habechira 5:1 writes that the Har Habayis was 500 Amos by 500 Amos which is the gigantic area which is behind the Kosel Hamaravi. The Rambam says (הר הבית והוא הר המוריה היה חמש מאות אמה) על חמש מאות אמה והיה מוקף חומה. וכיפין על גבי כיפין היו בנויות מתחתיו. מפני אהל (הטומאה). It was covered. If you think about it it must have rained sometime so it would make sense to be covered. Well if we know it is not it is not (covered). The Rambam says it was covered.

The Markeves Hamishnah asks that in the Mishkan we find that only the Heichel was covered not the outdoor area. The Markeves Hamishnah says (אין זה קושיא) this is not a question because covering the Heichel or the Ohel Moed is an obligation, it is a Chiyuv. (אבל העזרה היה רשאי לכסות בכל דבר לפניו מהקלעים) However, the outdoor area, the Azara is a Reshus to cover it and the Kavod of the Azara is that it should be covered as after all people come and therefore, the Markeves Hamishnah explains the Rambam that it was covered not out of an obligation but as a sign of respect of Kavod, that in a place that Yidden gathered to serve Hashem should be covered. Perhaps in the summertime when it was hot they had a retractable roof.



There are a few Kashas regarding this that I am calling a Mechudashdika Shittah. I am aware of 3 Kashas. 1) The Tiferes Yisrael in his Pirush on Maseches Middos Perek 2 in Boaz Aleph (the first of his long notes there). He brings the Rambam and he asks a Kasha that we find in Pesachim 13b that around the Azara there were bleachers (places where people sat) and Rashi says in both Pesachim 13 (גג האיצטבא. גג היה בנוי למעלה מפני הגשמים) and Sukkah 42b (seven lines from the bottom in Rashi) (ע"ג האיצטבא. רחבה של הר) הבית היתה מוקפת איצטבאות לישב שם ומסוככת למעלה מפני הגשמים. על גב האיצטבא גר' (במתני' דהיינו על גבי הספסלים) that there was a roof was built above these bleachers because of the rain. It is not Mashma that everything else was covered. It seems only that bleacher area was covered?

Kasha # 2, in the back of the Mishnayos Yachin Uboaz there is a Pirush on the Tiferes Yisrael I believe it is called Tiferes Yaakov, and he asks a second Kasha. The Gemara says in Sukkah 51a (bottom line) (לא היה חצר בירושלים) (שאינה מאירה מאור בית השואבה) that there was no Chatzeir in Yerushalayim that didn't have light from the Menoros of the Simchas Bais Hashoeva. The question is if it was all covered so then how did that light spread to all of Yerushalayim?

Kasha # 3 - The Aruch Hashulchan Ha'asid 11:12 says that it can't be that it was covered. Why? It can't be that it was covered because the Mizbaich was heavy with smoke because it was burning wood and Korbanos? What is going on?

He says that the Rambam who writes that the Har Habayis was covered must be talking about the Har Habayis itself and not the Azara.

We have 3 Kashas, how can you say it was all covered, first of all the Gag Haitz'taba, second of all the light of the Simchas Bais Hashoeva and third of all the smoke of the Mizbaich, which are all Mashma that it was not covered.

It is interesting that Rav Chaim Kanievsky in his Pirush on the Rambam on Hilchos Kodshim he writes that the Har Habayis was Mikura and someone wrote to him commenting bringing these 3 Rayas and he wrote that the Rayas are not proof.

And so we have something to think about the Azara, our image of the Azara. What is fascinating to me is that when we learned Maseches Tamid on 28a there is a Raivid's Pirush. The Raivid who is always the Bar Plugta of the Rambam, here it says that the Azara was covered except in the area of the Mizbaich and the Makom Hash'chita which needed air where it was not covered. But the rest was covered.

So suddenly a Mechudashdika image of something that we didn't have until now and as I told you at the outset it is a Chiddush. I don't know if this is a so to speak normative Shittah but Torah Hi Ulilamda Ani Tzorech. It is a B'feirsh in the Rambam. Take a look and bring it to the Shabbos table. Read it. The Rambam in Hilchos Bais Habechira 5:1. You can read it as if you are pretending you never heard of it before. Just reading it to the people around the table B'derech Chiddush. A Geshmake thing to talk about. Parshas Terumah the Binyan Hamishkan. May we speedily see the Binyan Bais Hamikdash Bimihaira B'yameinu Amen!

#### **Rabbi Reisman - Parshas Terumah 5776**

This week's Parsha of course deals with the building of the Mishkan and there are both technical Halachik issues in the Parsha and Mussar issues in the Parsha. I would like to start with a Halachik issue, something that comes from the Parsha and has a ramification in Din.

1. It says in the Parsha that when the ceiling which consisted of different

embroidered material was assembled, (וְהָיָה הַמִּשְׁכָּן, אֶחָד) the assembling made the Mishkan all into one. We find this here in 26:6 by attaching the hooks that connected the Yerios, the roof became one.

In the Ayalas Hashachar (page # 220), Rav Shteinman wonders what this Posuk is telling us. (וְהָיָה הַמִּשְׁכָּן, אֶחָד). He makes the following comment. He says that maybe it is a Halachik statement that it becomes one by being connected. He wonders then, because the Poskim deal at great length with a Shaila whether the Parshios of Tefillin that are sown together become one. The Tefillin Shel Yad have to be one. Whether sown together they become one or not. Here (וְהָיָה הַמִּשְׁכָּן, אֶחָד) sounds like it does become one and somehow this is not brought as a source for that Din.

Rav Shteinman ends with the words Shechibar Kraism, the connecting with hooks certainly couldn't be considered one when it came to other Halachos, and therefore, he wonders why the Posuk (וְהָיָה הַמִּשְׁכָּן, אֶחָד). Ad Kan, these are the words of Rav Shteinman.

I discovered that this idea that Rav Shteinman introduces is actually a Teshuva in the Terumas Hadeshen Siman 296 which is one of the earliest of the Teshuva Seforim, and the way he explains this not only is it a Halachik point (וְהָיָה הַמִּשְׁכָּן, אֶחָד) but it is a Halacha that has to do with assembling the Mishkan.

Let me preface this with the following. If you read the Parsha you see that when the Yerios were assembled, at the center each half had a hook and the two hooks were connected with an S shaped hook which attached itself to both. If the S remained open it would be a rather loose connection. Of course it can stay together. Naturally if you took plyers and closed the S tightly then it would stay together well and even a wind would not shake it and make it fall apart. Yet we don't find anywhere in the Parsha that they were actually pressed together to stay close together.

The Terumas Hadeshen was asked in Hilchos Shabbos if someone has a vest made out of linen and he wants to attach to it sleeves which were made out of wool but they are not being sown together they are being connected Al Yedai K'nepel, through some type of a hook or button which connects it together. Is this Shatnez?

The Terumas Hadeshen answers that if they are connected through something that is loose and can easily fall apart, that is not considered connected and then there is no problem of Shatnez. However, if they are connected by something that stays together tightly then it is Shatnez.

For example, if you were to have a lining in your coat which is zipped together with the coat, since the zipper is a solid connection he says there is an Issur Shatnez. Naturally he is not talking about zippers he is talking about hooks. He writes the following words. He says even though we find by the Mishkan that they were connected through hooks so that would seem to say that that is enough of a connection despite the fact that it is loose. He says NO because it says (וְהָיָה הַמִּשְׁכָּן, אֶחָד). It says that there was a connection (וְהָיָה הַמִּשְׁכָּן, אֶחָד) it says in Posuk 11 and that indicates that the hooks were not left open and that they were pressed together like with plyers and therefore, only a case where they are pressed together (וְהָיָה הַמִּשְׁכָּן, אֶחָד) is it considered one, when they are loose they are not considered one. Hence this Din in Hilchos Shatnez.

So we learned a Halacha that in order to be Halachically considered one there needs to be some type of a tight connection. We also learned a new Teitch to the Posuk. When you teach a class (וְהָיָה הַמִּשְׁכָּן, אֶחָד), it is not just telling you that the result is that they were one, but it is a command that they be connected in a way that they become Halachically one which means in a tight fitting way. It is a Beautiful Halachik thought in a way that a Posek Teitches up a Posuk in the Torah.



2. Let's move on to an Inyan of Machshava something to do with what the parts of the Mishkan represent. As you know, every part of the Mishkan represented one aspect of service of Hashem. We know the Shulchan represented the need for Parnasa

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Yeshivat Ateret Yerushalayim

From the teachings of the Rosh Yeshiva

**Ha-Rav Shlomo Aviner Shlit"a**

Ask Rav Aviner:

Ha-Rav answers hundreds of text message questions a day. Here's a sample:

Blessing on Miscarriage

Q: I had a miscarriage. Should I recite the blessing "Baruch Dayan Ha-Emet – Blessed be the True Judge"?

A: Yes. It is bad news. May Hashem bless you in your next pregnancy.  
Person Who was Thought Dead

Q: If people said that someone had died but he was actually alive, what message is that for him?

A: Not good or bad. Baruch Hashem that he is alive.  
"Our Community"

Q: When someone asks Ha-Rav a question about "our community", i.e. the Religious-Zionists community, Ha-Rav always answers "Our community is Am Yisrael". This is a beautiful idea, but other Rabbis do not feel the same way.

A: You need to ask forgiveness from all the Rabbis! They all feel this way! It is related that a devoted Satmar Chasid once said to the Satmar Rebbe, after a tragedy where many Jews were killed: "Baruch Hashem, none of them were our people". The Satmar Rebbe responded: "This is how a Jew who has been around me for so many years talks?! A Jew is a Jew, and it does not matter whether he is one of 'us' or not"! In the book "Beit Peshversk Volume 1, p. 94 note 1).

Blessing on Music

Q: Why isn't there a blessing for enjoying music?

A: We do not know the exact principles by which our Sages established the blessings over enjoyment. And some explain that it is because sound does not have concreteness (Rabbenu Bechaya in his book "Shulchan Arba", brought in Magen Avraham 216:1)

Rabbi Ovadiah of Bartinura

Q: When we learn Mishnah, should one refer to the commentator as Rabbenu Ovadiah, or it is permissible to call him Bartinura?

A: It is preferable to call him Rabbenu Ovadiah, but it is permissible to call him Bartinura, since it is not his name, but the Italian city from whence he came, and is a nickname for him.

Turning Off Light on Shabbat

Q: If I forgot to turn off a light before Shabbat, can I do so with my elbow?

A: Certainly not.

Zecher Le-Churban

Q: Is it true that after the liberation of Yerushalayim, one need not leave a Zecher Le-Churban (Remembrance of the Destruction, i.e. leaving part of one's home unfinished)?

A: Not true.

Peyot Behind One's Ears

Q: Is there any worth in growing Peyot which one places behind his ears and they are not seen?

A: Certainly. We do not fulfill Mitzvot in order to be seen, but rather to serve Hashem (See the book "Orchot Rabbenu" Volume 1, p. 236 that the Steipler and the Chazon Ish were very particular that one should not put his Peyot behind his ears, since it looks like he is embarrassed of them).

Corona

Q: While Davening Shemoneh Esrei in the blessing of Refaeinu for health, should one have in mind that the virus Corona should be eliminated?

A: It is permissible. There are obviously many other illnesses and many which are much more deadly.

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<https://torah.org/learning/yomtov-purim-5757-vol2no29/>

Question: **My family likes to have the Purim seuda toward the end of the day, and then we eat well into the night. What are the halachic implications (if any)?**

Answer: According to the normal rules, we would think that this is not an optimal practice. Presumably, every moment and element of festivity of Purim adds to the mitzva (Rama, Orach Chayim 695). We do not find a halacha of tosefet (adding on to the day before and/or after Purim). Therefore, it all should be during the day.

However, the Terumat Hadeshen (I:110) cites an early source and a broad minhag to start the meal late in the day and go into the night. His requirement that a (significant) part of the meal is during the day makes the matter more one of preferences than of basic fulfillment of the mitzva. After all, if one has a meal in honor of Purim, then even if the part that was eaten during the day was not elaborate, he still fulfills the mitzva, especially if part of the festive food is eaten during the day.

The way the Terumat Hadeshen paints the minhag, it developed based on trading off the preferences of one mitzva vs. another. The morning and even part of the afternoon is full with Kri'at Hamegilla, mishloach manot, and matanot la'evyonim. The latter two are open-ended mitzvot which are strongly recommended to be done on a large scale (Shulchan Aruch, OC 695:4 regarding mishloach manot; Rambam, Megilla 2:17 and Mishna Berura 294:3 regarding matanot la'evyonim). One should also daven Mincha before the big and sometimes incapacitating meal (see Shulchan Aruch, OC 232:2). Thus, allowing the meal to start later enables one not to rush the other mitzvot. One may also add that in order to enable the inclusion of others (which is desirable, family or not), including those coming from a distance, one must give time for them to finish their mitzvot and make it.

The Terumat Hadeshen describes the minhag as having the main part of the meal in the evening, although, he also writes that he personally had his in the morning. The way the Rama (OC 695:2) sets out the minhag in the manner he considers acceptable, people should not start the meal too close to the end of the day; the main part of the meal should be during the day. It seems logical that he does not care how long one continues after nightfall but whether there was enough time to have the majority of what would have been a proper meal (including merriment and songs and words of inspiration).

Is the festivity into the next night worth anything religiously? There are three ways to explain how it can be. The Terumat Hadeshen seems to say that the two time periods of the meal form one unit, and thus the day-rooted meal was lavish, which is what is important. The Meshech Chochma (see Mikraei Kodesh (Frank) 53)) says that in the time of the Purim story, the celebrations started in the day and continued into the night (as do the laws of korbanot – see Y'mei Hapurim, p. 157) so that the night is an appropriate time for festivities. The Levush (OC 695:2) says that both days of Purim (14 & 15 Adar) are days of festivity, so that the night is appropriate as the second day of Purim. According to the Levush, this minhag should logically not be as desirable in Yerushalayim, where the evening after the seuda is the 16th. That being said, the minhag, at least for Ashkenazim (see Mikraei Kodesh (Harari), 13:5), is to allow extending the meal into the night – even in Yerushalayim.

In theory, there could be a practical consequence of this minhag. The Rosh (see Tur, OC 695) says that Al Hanisim can be said only if Birkat HaMazon is recited during the day. He says the same thing regarding R'tzei at seuda shlishit (Shut 22:6). On the other hand, the Beit Yosef cites a Hagahot Maimoniot that Al Hanisim can be said at night if the meal started during the



day, as we do in practice regarding seuda shlishit (Shulchan Aruch, OC 188:2). While the Shulchan Aruch elsewhere (OC 695:3) cites two opinions on the matter, his conclusion and that of the Rama is that Al Hanisim is to be recited in this case.

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from: torahweb@torahweb.org to: weeklydt@torahweb.org date: Mar 5, 2020, 9:28 PM subject: Rabbi Eliakim Koenigsberg - Do Clothes Really Make the Man?

Rabbi Eliakim Koenigsberg - Do Clothes Really Make the Man?

torahweb@torahweb.org

Thu, Mar 5, 9:28 PM (3 hours ago)

**Rabbi Eliakim Koenigsberg**

**Do Clothes Really Make the Man?**

The story of Megillas Esther is punctuated by references to clothing. At his lavish royal parties, Achashveirosh wears the special garments of the Kohen Gadol (Esther 1:4 and Megillah 12a). When Mordechai hears of Haman's decree, he rips his clothing and puts on sackcloth (Esther 4:1). Before Esther enters the king's chamber, she dresses in royal garments (5:1). Haman expresses his desire to be dressed in royal clothing (6:8). And finally, after Haman's plan is foiled, Mordechai leaves the king's presence wearing royal clothing (8:15). What is the message behind these multiple references to clothing? What's more, the custom on Purim is to dress up in costumes and masks. What is the idea behind this type of masquerade?

In Parshas Tetzaveh, the Torah instructs Moshe to make special clothing for the kohanim - l'chavod u'l'sifares, for glory and splendor (28:2). The bigdei kehunah are designed to give honor and respect. The question is whose honor are they meant to accentuate? The Ramban offers two interpretations. First he suggests that the bigdei kehunah give honor to the kohanim who wear them. Just like royal vestments give honor to a king, and cause his subjects to treat him with greater respect, so too, the bigdei kehunah make the kohanim look distinguished, so that those who see the kohanim wearing these garments will view them differently and they will treat them with greater respect.

The Gemara (Bava Kama 91b) says that R' Yochanan would call his clothing mechabdusa - things that honor me. Clothes may not make the man, but they certainly can help him make a more powerful impression. They can shape the way people view him. And this is one of the purposes of the bigdei kehunah - to bring honor to the kohanim.

But the Ramban adds another idea. He suggests that perhaps the phrase l'chavod u'l'sifares does not refer to the kohanim at all. The bigdei kehunah are not meant to bring honor and glory to the kohanim. But rather, they are designed to make the kohanim appreciate the importance of the avodah that they are performing, so that they will treat the avodah with proper respect and dignity.

This idea is echoed by the Sefer HaChinuch (#99) as well. The mitzvah of wearing bigdei kehunah is one of the places where the Sefer HaChinuch makes his famous statement that ha'adam nif'al l'fi p'oo'losav - a person is affected and shaped by his actions. When a kohen wears bigdei kehunah, he feels differently about the avodah. He takes it more seriously and treats it with greater respect. The Sefer HaChinuch adds that the same should be true of someone who wears tefillin. He should feel elevated and more spiritually focused. He should feel inspired to live with a renewed sense of purpose, to take his mission in life more seriously. Clothes don't necessarily make the man. But they can make him more aware of his mission.

Sometimes clothing is misused. People dress in fancy expensive clothing to draw attention to themselves, to cause others to treat them with honor and respect they do not deserve. This is what happened at the time of Purim. Achashveirosh threw elaborate parties to demonstrate his power and prestige. He wore the bigdei kehunah to show off y'kar tiferes gedulaso - the honor and splendor of his majesty (1:4). The emperor was wearing beautiful clothing, but the clothes were not his own. He was covering himself in the

superficial trappings of majesty, but (according to one opinion) he did not really deserve the honor of kingship (Megillah 11a).

Haman also had delusions of grandeur. He wanted to be dressed in royal garments, to be treated with the honor and respect worthy of a king. And Klal Yisrael at the time played along with this charade. They attended the party of Achashveirosh and they bowed to Haman. They were willing to pay homage to the majestic charlatans who were masquerading around in borrowed clothing and undeserved glory. They were taken by the glitz and glitter being displayed in Shushan, and they had lost their ability to strip away the superficial veneer of all that fake majesty, and to appreciate that Hakadosh Boruch Hu was the only one who truly deserved their respect and their attention.

Perhaps that is why when Mordechai hears of Haman's decree, he rips his clothing, not just as a sign of mourning and teshuva, but as a symbol of the lesson he wished to convey to Klal Yisrael. Mordechai wanted to teach them not to be taken by superficial impressions. Looks can be deceiving. Only by ignoring external appearances can we perceive the truth that is lying beneath the surface. Esther and her maidservants fasted for three days (4:16). They perfected themselves through introspection and tefillah, so that when Esther finally approached the king's chamber, she was not only dressed in royal garments, but she was infused with a spirit of ruach hakodesh (Megillah 14b). Her inner purity matched the splendor and majesty of her outer appearance.

Similarly, when Haman's decree is finally annulled, Mordechai emerges from the king's presence wearing royal vestments. This posuk is a turning point of the Megillah, and one that we read aloud, not only because it signals the complete reversal of fortune for Klal Yisrael (v'na'hafoch hu), but because it presents Mordechai as a model of true majesty, one whose inner humility, modesty and purity of spirit match the splendor of his regal attire. This is the image that Chazal wished to highlight at the end of the Megillah, to show the kind of people that are truly deserving of our respect.

On Purim, we masquerade in costume to demonstrate that we appreciate Mordechai's message. All too often people fail to realize that superficial appearances are just an illusion. Only by looking past the costume and penetrating to the inner nature of people and of situations, will we gain a more accurate perception of reality, and ensure that we stay focused on our spiritual mission in life.

More divrei Torah from Rabbi Koenigsberg

More divrei Torah on Parshas Tetzaveh

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from: Shabbat Shalom <shabbatshalom@ounetwork.org> date: Mar 5, 2020, 8:47 PM subject: Mishloach Manot via Amazon; The Sound of Murder; 100 Years of Purim Recipes  
ORTHODOX UNION INSPIRATION

**Purim, the Holocaust and the State of Israel**

**Rabbi Moshe Taragin**

March 2, 2020

The Purim miracle was a "milestone moment" in Jewish History as a nation, faced with almost certain annihilation, was rescued by Divine intervention. Unlike the Exodus from Egypt, the Purim experience unfolded without overt Divine involvement. It reminded us that G-d always manages history – sometimes in a manifest fashion while other times 'behind the scenes.' However, one cannot fully appreciate the impact of Purim without casting these events within a broader historical framework. According to the traditional timeline, Purim occurred around seventy years after the first phase of Jewish exile. This first stage, known as the exile of King Yechanaya, preceded the actual destruction of the Mikdash by approximately eighteen years. Purim occurs around seventy years after the



first wave of exile in the shadow of the catastrophic destruction of the First Temple.

Everyone reading this article was born into a world without a Mikdash and without full Jewish sovereignty. By contrast, the generations who lived in that world of miracles, prophecy and supernaturalism, were traumatized by the destruction of the Temple.

According to Chazal the one-hundred-and-eighty-day party in Shushan was pivoted upon drinking from the holy keilim or jugs of the Mikdash. One can only imagine the sting for those who still remembered the Mikdash ceremonies with those same vessels. Perhaps this is why Chazal were so critical of those who participated in this wanton party; regardless of the kashrus level, a Jew has no place at a party which contaminates these holy Mikdash remnants. Purim unfolds at a dark and despairing period of Jewish history. The depressed plight of the Jews was also noticed by Haman—a wise man who had risen to become the king's trusted adviser. How did he commit such a gargantuan mistake in plotting against the Jews? So many before him, from Paro to Nevuchadnezer, had tried and failed to defeat the people of G-d. How did this student of history commit such a foolish mistake?

Haman read the tea leaves: The Jews had indeed been chosen as G-d's children but were discarded because of their continuous infidelity. The period of the First Temple was marred by years of shameful paganism and brutal murder. The Jews were no longer G-d's children and they were now ripe for the picking. In many respects Haman was the first "Christian." Obviously he wasn't a religious Christian but he was the first to lodge the claim which Christianity would ultimately institutionalize and perpetuate—that G-d had discarded his rebellious former children while choosing another people.

In fact, Haman's historical gamble is latent in the conspiratorial plan he delivers to Achashverosh. He refers to the Jewish people as a nation that is "mefuzar u'meforad bein ha'amim" dispersed randomly amongst the general population. This contemptuous phrase showcases not merely their geographical scattering, but also Haman's opinion that they had been demoted to a "regular" nation status—diffused among the nations of the world. No longer possessing the unique status as G-d's children, they could now be vanquished.

The thousand-year period of prophecy and revelation had now ground to a halt and history was ready to "move on" from the Jews. Witnessing his lottery select the month of

Adar for his genocide, only reaffirmed Haman's convictions. The great era of Jewish selection began in Nissan but it was now slowly expiring, coughing its last breaths at the conclusion of the calendar year in Adar. The dramatic Purim turnaround revitalized the fallen Jewish spirit. It reminded the world but more importantly the Jewish nation—that the original selection of the Jews was immutable. Despite our disloyalty and religious lethargy, we remained "chosen" and were still protected, even in the fields of our enemies. Purim possesses a tone of Sinai because it reaffirmed the pact of Sinai formed centuries earlier. The Jews are, and will always be, G-d's people, chosen to represent Him in this world.

What occurred close to 2,500 years ago recurred seventy years ago. The historical rupture of the Holocaust dealt a potentially devastating blow to Jewish identity. How could our Father and Protector allow the systematic elimination of six-million Jews? Weren't we promised safeguarding and Divine protection? Of course, many Jews emerged from this nightmare with their faith intact but much of our nation faced a haunting question—were we still chosen? Just as He did then, G-d reminded us that we were still his chosen people. He collected us from across the globe and returned us to our homeland. This miracle reminded us that we still possess our special status. It rejuvenated Jewish identity and pride across the globe. The phenomenal growth over the past seventy years in Jewish culture, community building, economic influence, political activism and, of course, in Torah study would have been seriously hampered without the restored confidence which the renewed state of Israel provided.

Beyond national rejuvenation, there was a second historical function to the Purim miracle. Purim unfolds as the Jews had already returned to Jerusalem and had launched the construction of the second Mikdash. However, the project was stalled in the face of stiff and hostile opposition from locals in Israel opposed to Jewish expansionism. According to the Sefat Emmet, the Purim miracle was a pre-redemptive event to provide "thrust" for the ultimate redemption. Without the national energy provided by the Purim miracle the final return to Israel and construction of the second Mikdash would have been significantly delayed. Purim provided historical thrust for the final stages of Jewish redemption. Will the founding of the State of Israel function in our era in the same manner? Obviously, we aren't "fully" redeemed as we still lack so much in our beloved State. Will 1948 be recorded in history as the modern-day Purim? Will this serve as the pre-redemptive event which provides the thrust to achieve ultimate redemption? We certainly hope so and pray for this to be so. Purim samei'ach! The words of this author reflect his/her own opinions and do not necessarily represent the official position of the Orthodox Union.

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### **Extended Purim Seuda**

**Rabbi Daniel Mann**

Adar II 7 5779

Bemare Habazak - Rabbis Questions

The Laws of Purim

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Question: My family likes to have the Purim seuda toward the end of the day, and then we eat well into the night. What are the halachic implications (if any)?

Answer: According to the normal rules, we would think that this is not an optimal practice. Presumably, every moment and element of festivity of Purim adds to the mitzva (Rama, Orach Chayim 695). We do not find a halacha of tosefet (adding on to the day before and/or after Purim).

Therefore, it all should be during the day.

However, the Terumat Hadeshen (I:110) cites an early source and a broad minhag to start the meal late in the day and go into the night. His requirement that a (significant) part of the meal is during the day makes the matter more one of preferences than of basic fulfillment of the mitzva. After all, if one has a meal in honor of Purim, then even if the part that was eaten during the day was not elaborate, he still fulfills the mitzva, especially if part of the festive food is eaten during the day.

The way the Terumat Hadeshen paints the minhag, it developed based on trading off the preferences of one mitzva vs. another. The morning and even part of the afternoon is full with Kri'at Hamegilla, mishloach manot, and matanot la'evyonim. The latter two are open-ended mitzvot which are strongly recommended to be done on a large scale (Shulchan Aruch, OC 695:4 regarding mishloach manot; Rambam, Megilla 2:17 and Mishna Berura 294:3 regarding matanot la'evyonim). One should also daven Mincha before the big and sometimes incapacitating meal (see Shulchan Aruch, OC 232:2). Thus, allowing the meal to start later enables one not to rush the other mitzvot. One may also add that in order to enable the inclusion of others (which is desirable, family or not), including those coming from a distance, one must give time for them to finish their mitzvot and make it. The Terumat Hadeshen describes the minhag as having the main part of the meal in the evening, although, he also writes that he personally had his in the morning. The way the Rama (OC 695:2) sets out the minhag in the manner he considers acceptable, people should not start the meal too close to the end of the day; the main part of the meal should be during the day. It seems logical that he does not care how long one continues after nightfall but whether there was enough time to have the majority of what would have been a proper meal (including merriment and songs and words of inspiration).



Is the festivity into the next night worth anything religiously? There are three ways to explain how it can be. The Terumat Hadeshen seems to say that the two time periods of the meal form one unit, and thus the day-rooted meal was lavish, which is what is important. The Meshech Chochma (see Mikraei Kodesh (Frank) 53)) says that in the time of the Purim story, the celebrations started in the day and continued into the night (as do the laws of korbanot – see Y’mei Hapurim, p. 157) so that the night is an appropriate time for festivities. The Levush (OC 695:2) says that both days of Purim (14 & 15 Adar) are days of festivity, so that the night is appropriate as the second day of Purim. According to the Levush, this minhag should logically not be as desirable in Yerushalayim, where the evening after the seuda is the 16th. That being said, the minhag, at least for Ashkenazim (see Mikraei Kodesh (Harari), 13:5), is to allow extending the meal into the night – even in Yerushalayim.

In theory, there could be a practical consequence of this minhag. The Rosh (see Tur, OC 695) says that Al Hanisim can be said only if Birkat HaMazon is recited during the day. He says the same thing regarding R’tzei at seuda shlishit (Shut 22:6). On the other hand, the Beit Yosef cites a Hagahot Maimonit that Al Hanisim can be said at night if the meal started during the day, as we do in practice regarding seuda shlishit (Shulchan Aruch, OC 188:2). While the Shulchan Aruch elsewhere (OC 695:3) cites two opinions on the matter, his conclusion and that of the Rama is that Al Hanisim is to be recited in this case.

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from: Shabbat Shalom <shabbatshalom@ounetwork.org> date: Thu, Mar 9, 2017 at 7:41 PM subject: Megillat Esther: The Playbill; How to End the Palestinian Pay-for-Slay Laws; Judaism on Cynicism  
Purim: Remember to Forget Excerpted from Rabbi Norman Lamm’s Festivals of Faith  
**REMEMBER TO FORGET\***

Memory and forgetfulness are subjects for study by psychologists, neurologists, and cyberneticians. It is for them to learn and explain the “how” of these processes, the mechanisms, the dynamics. But these themes are also the substance of spiritual life. Many commandments of the Torah refer to remembering and forgetting. We are commanded to remember, amongst other things: the Sabbath; the day we left the Land of Egypt; what the Lord did to Miriam—and, thus, the teaching that no one is infallible; how we angered the Lord in the desert—and, therefore, to be aware of our own penchant for ingratitude.

Similarly, there are commandments concerning forgetfulness. Most prominent is the commandment of shikhhah—that if one has harvested his field and forgotten a corner, he should not return to it but must leave that forgotten corner for the poor (Deut. 25:19). Even more paradoxical is a commandment to forget (although it is not worded explicitly in that manner). We must forget grudges, insults, hurt. Lo tikkom ve-lo tittor—you shall not take revenge, you shall not bear a grudge (Lev. 19:18). Forgetfulness is even considered a blessing.

Our Rabbis teach us: gezerah al ha-met sheyishtakkah min ha-lev, “it is ordained that the dead be forgotten from the heart” (Bereshit Rabbah 84:19). R. Bahya ben Asher pointed out that this is a great blessing, for if man were always to remember the dead, he soon would be laden with such grief that he could not survive emotionally or spiritually (commentary to Gen. 37:35). But most often, and most usually, forgetfulness is regarded as an evil, as a sin. Thus, the Rabbis taught, Ha-shokheah davar ehad mi-mishnato ma’aleh alav ha-katuv ke-illu mithayyev be-nafsho, “If one forgets a single item from his studies, Scripture considers it as if he were guilty with his life” (Avot 3:10).

And, of course, the source of all these commandments is the one which gives the Shabbat before Purim its special distinction and its very name: Shabbat Zakhor. Zakhor et asher asah lekha Amalek . . . lo tishkah (Deut. 25:17–19)—remember what Amalek, that barbaric and savage tribe, did to you . . . you shall not forget.

But this commandment not to forget is problematic. After all, everyone forgets. Forgetting is natural, it is part of both our psychological and our physiological selves; it is not a volitional or deliberate act. How, then, can the Torah consider it a sin if we forget? Permit me to recommend to you an answer suggested by R. Yitzhak Meir, the Gerer Rebbe, known to posterity by the name of his great halakhic work, Hiddushei ha-Rim. Forgetfulness, he says, often depends upon man. For we are not speaking here of simple recollection of facts, but the kind of forgetfulness that implies the emptying out of the mind, the catharsis of the heart of its most basic spiritual principles, of the very props of its identity. And this kind of shikhhah is contingent upon ga’avah; it is a forgetfulness which has its roots in man’s arrogance.

When a man’s mind is preoccupied with himself, he has little place for what is really important—and he forgets it. Hence we read (Deut. 8:14): Ve-ram le-vavekha ve-shakhahta et Hashem Elokekha ha-motzi’akha me-Eretz Mitzrayim mi-beit avadim, “And thy heart shall be lifted up, and thou wilt forget the Lord thy God who taketh thee out of the Land of Egypt, out of the house of slaves.”

Similarly, we are commanded to remember and not to forget Amalek. Now, the numerical value of the Hebrew word Amalek is 240—the very same numerical value as the word ram, the heart being lifted, raised, exalted, supercilious! When man is filled with conceit, he falters and forgets. Too much ego results in too little memory. An absent mind is the result of a swelled head. A high demeanor results in a low recall. If ram, you will forget Amalek. It is the arithmetic of mind and character.

Indeed, this is a human, if not a specifically Jewish, weakness. Rav Kook has taught us in effect that the root of all evils is that we forget who we are, our higher selves. We turn cynical and act as if man is only an amalgam of base drives, of ego-satisfactions, of sexual and material grasping. We forget that, in addition, man is capable of noble action, of sublime sentiment, of self-sacrifice. When we forget that, we are in desperate trouble. (See Orot ha-Kodesh III:97.)

Most Jews who assimilate today, so unlike those of the early and middle parts of this century, do not do so primarily because of self-hatred, but because of a massive act of ethnic forgetfulness. And such national absent-mindedness, such forgetting of our higher identity, is often the result of ve-ram levavekha.

Our memory is weakened by excessive affluence and too much self-confidence. We American Jews act as if our liberties and successes are self-evidently our right. We act as if our good fortune is deserved. And so ve-ram levavekha leads to ve-shakhahta. And what do we most often forget? Amalek!

I read recently that a Swedish gentile woman, who has several times been proposed for the Nobel Peace Prize because of the hundreds of Jews she saved during the Nazi period, said in an interview that only once in her life did she entertain hatred for a fleeting moment. It occurred during a visit she paid to Yad Vashem, the Holocaust museum, in Jerusalem. She overheard an American Jew say to the guide: “I don’t understand why they didn’t fight? Why weren’t they real men?” She was seized with anger, and said to him: “You look fat and prosperous! Have you ever been hungry a day in your life? Do you have any idea what it is like to be starved almost to insanity, surrounded by powerful enemies, aware that no one in the world cares for you—and you have the unmitigated nerve to ask that question?” I confess that in reading the interview, I shared her hatred—but only for a fleeting moment. One cannot hate fools. One can only have contempt for them.

Certainly, we are subject to that weakness of forgetting time and again. Only a year ago Israelis—and Jews throughout the world—were afflicted by overconfidence, and the Yom Kippur War was the result. I should hope that we Jews are bright enough to have learned from this experience. Most important, one of the things we must never dare to forget is the contemporary Amalek, the Holocaust. The news that the younger generation of Germans does not want to be reminded of it, that they feel they did not



participate in it, comes as no surprise to me. But Jews must never fall into the trap of ve-ram levavekha and so forget Amalek. Remember and do not forget! The Holocaust must constantly be part of our education, commemoration, and motivation for further study and spiritual development. Conversely, too, if we remember Amalek, that will lead to a realistic assessment of ourselves, and we shall be able to avoid the pitfall of a "lifted heart."

The United States and all the Western world are today in the doldrums. We are all of us in a pessimistic mood about the economy, something which affects each and every one of us. If the Lord helps, and we all escape economic disaster—if it will be, as we say in Yiddish, afgekumen mit a shrek, "escaped with a scare"—then perhaps we will have learned to rid ourselves of the cultural and psychological and moral signs of decadence in our culture, all these corruptions the result of ve-ram levavekha, overconfidence inspired by affluence.

So the Hiddushei ha-Rim has given us an unforgettable Devar Torah about forgetfulness and arrogance.

It is a lesson worthy of our deep thought and meditation. Remember it, do not forget.

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<https://oukosher.org/halacha-yomis/>

Halacha Yomis

I ordered a food package on Amazon two days before Purim with guaranteed delivery to my friend on Purim day. Do I fulfill the mitzvah of Mishloach Manos with such an arrangement?

This is a matter of dispute among the poskim. Some hold that by doing so he does fulfill his obligation of Mishloach Manos (Be'er Heitev to OC 695:7, citing Yad Aharon; Da'as Torah in the name of Mahari Assad, and Rav Elyashiv, cited in Yevakshu Mipihu, Purim 1:31). However Aruch HaShulchan (695:17) held that one does not fulfill Mishloach Manos with this arrangement. The Ben Ish Chai (Teshuvos Torah Lishmah 188) explains the reasoning behind this dispute as follows: In the previous Halacha Yomis we learned that there is a dispute as to why Mishloach Manos are given. Is it to engender good will and camaraderie between people (Manos Halevi), or is it to ensure that poor people have sufficient food for their Purim Seudah (Terumas HaDeshen)? If Mishloach Manos are to foster good will – one must send the food on Purim itself because sending the food is part of the mitzvah. Those who hold that one is yotzei, take the position that the purpose of Mishloach Manos is for the recipient to have sufficient food for the seudah. Hence, as long as the food is received on Purim – even if it was sent prior to Purim – the sender has fulfilled his obligation of Mishloach Manos, as the recipient will now have sufficient food for his seudah.

<https://www.biu.ac.il/JH/Parasha/eng/purim/stern.html>

Bar-Ilan University The Faculty of Jewish Studies Daf Parashat Hashavua

#### **Laws and Customs of Purim**

A. Shabbat Parashat Zachor (Parshat Vayikra)

The Shabbath before Purim is called Shabbat Zachor. On this Shabbath two Torah scrolls are taken out of the Ark. Seven men are called up to the first Torah scroll, from which the weekly portion is read; then the Maftir is called and Parashat Zachor is read from the second:

Remember what Amalek did to you on your journey when you were leaving Egypt: how, undeterred by fear of God, he came upon you on the march when you were tired and weary, and struck down all those who were stragglers behind. And it will be when God has given you respite from all your enemies all around, in the land which the Lord, your God, has given to you as an inheritance to possess it, you shall erase the name of Amalek from under Heaven, do not forget (Deuteronomy 25: 17-19). Why do we read Parashat Zachor on the Sabbath prior to Purim?

- To link the elimination of Amalek to the elimination of Haman, who was a descendant of Amalek (Rashi, Megillah 29a).
- To remember (zachor) the deeds of Amalek before the observance of the commandments of Purim, as it is written: "And these days are commemorated (Nizkarim) and observed" (Esther 9:28), in order that their remembrance precede their observance (Yerushalmi, Megillah, chap. 3, halacha 4)

Kavannah (Intent): Since the reading of Parashat Zachor at its proper time is a positive commandment from the Torah, the one who reads it from the Torah must have intent to fulfill the commandment on behalf of the entire congregation. The congregation must have the intent to fulfill the commandment of remembrance upon hearing the reader as if they were reading it themselves.

A minor (i.e., one below the age of Bar-mitzvah, who is not yet obligated by the commandments ) may not be called up to the Maftir of Parashat Zachor, nor can he be the reader of Zachor responsible for fulfilling the commandment on behalf of those who listen. The reason is that since he himself is not obligated by the commandments - he cannot fulfill the mitzvah on behalf of others.

The obligation of women: Halachic authorities differ in their opinions whether women are obligated to hear Parashat Zachor or not. There are those who maintain that they are exempt since the commandment of Zachor is directed only to those who were commanded to destroy the descendants of Amalek in war, the Biblical period. Since women were not commanded to wage war, they are exempt from the commandment of verbal remembrance as well. However, there are Halachic authorities who maintain that women are also bound by law to hear the reading of Zachor, because in an essential war (Milchemet Mitzvah) even "a bridegroom from his chamber and a bride from her canopy" were conscripted to the war effort.

One cannot say that women are exempt because of the rule that "a positive commandment having a defined time" is not obligatory for women, since the Torah provided no specific time for the commandment of the elimination of Amalek or for the oral remembrance to do so. Therefore this is not a time-defined positive commandment. Today it is customary for women to come to the synagogue on Sabbath to hear the reading of Parashat Zachor, (however, nowadays this commandment has no practical meaning, since legally it is not possible to identify the descendants of Amalek any more).

Blessing: One does not pronounce a blessing on this commandment of remembering Amalek, since one does not make a blessing on destruction (even of the most evil of the peoples of the world), just as the Midrash tells us regarding the Exodus from Egypt, that the Almighty said to the angels: "The creations of My hands drown in the sea - and you sing ?!" (Megillah 10a). B. The Fast (Ta'anit ) of Esther The Fast of Esther takes place on the 13th day of Adar, the day before Purim.

This fastday is named for Esther because she began her activity with a fast, saying to Mordechai: "Go and assemble all the Jews who are in Shushan and fast on my behalf, and do not eat or drink for three days, night and day, and I and my maidens will likewise fast." (Esther 4:16).

Those fastdays occurred during Passover, according to the midrash: "And Mordechai passed (Hebrew: vay'avur, which can literally be translated: transgressed") - that he transgressed the first day of Passover by fasting" (Megillah 15a).

Commemorating those fasts, it was the custom of the sages of Eretz Yisrael to fast for three days. However, since the time of crisis passed, they forbade fasting on Passover and established those fastdays for all generations after Purim. "It was the custom of our Rabbis in the west (Eretz Yisrael) to observe the fastdays of Mordechai and Esther on separate (not continuous) days, after Purim, on Monday, Thursday and Monday..." (Masechet Sofrim, chap. 21, halachah 1).

The determination that the time of the Fast of Esther should be on the 13th of Adar is first found among the Gaonim in Babylonia and later in the writings of Rashi, Maimonides and the Tosafists. These authorities emphasize that the three days of the Fast of Mordechai and Esther were in Nissan, and the present fastday is no more than a commemoration of the event. Thus for example, Maimonides indicates in his Laws of Fasts, chap. 5 , halacha 4: "And the thirteenth of Adar [is] a commemoration of the fastdays observed in the days of Haman". The Fast of Esther in place of the Festival of Nikanor The thirteenth of Adar is also one of the festivals mentioned in Megillat Ta'anit: "On the thirteenth day in it (the month of Adar) is the day of Nikanor." When Megillat Ta'anit was annulled, after the destruction of the Temple, all those festivals were eliminated and the 13th of Adar , the Day of Nikanor, not only ceased to be a festival but became a fastday - the Fast of Esther, on which we commemorate the fasts that Esther kept. [Today we do not keep three days of fasting for one does not decree something upon the community which would be difficult to keep. However there are those who fast as described above for three days - Monday, Thursday and Monday - after Purim in remembrance of the Fast of Esther which lasted for three days].

We fast on the 13th of Adar, but if Purim falls on a Sunday (as it does this year) we move the fast up to Thursday, the 11th of Adar, in order to do honor to the Shabbath, for if we fast on Friday it would be difficult to make the proper preparations for the Shabbath or to taste the foods being prepared for Shabbath.

The Time of the Fast: The fast begins at dawn and not at the beginning of the previous night. It extends until the appearance of the stars. The Magen Avraham mentions a custom observed by some who fast on the Fast of Esther not only from dawn on that day but from the night before - commemorating that which is written of the Fast of Esther - "night and day" (Esther 4:16).

This fast is not included in the list of four fasts decreed by the prophets and is merely a custom. Therefore it is observed more leniently than the others. Pregnant women or nursing mothers and weak people do not fast. The laws of the Fast of Esther are identical to the laws of other communal fasts.



**The Half Shekel:** It is customary on the 13th of Adar, before the Minchah (afternoon) prayer, to donate three silver coins to charity in remembrance of the commandment to give a Half (Machatzit) Shekel which was customary in ancient times. It is well known that in the month of Purim an annual collection of contributions was held in the Jewish communities all over the world, to finance the activity in the Temple (Bet Hamikdash). Each person had to contribute one half shekel to this fund and the money was turned over to the temple treasury. Since the destruction of the Temple, this custom has survived as a remembrance of that collection; today, the money donated is directed toward communal needs: charitable organizations, synagogues, and the wages of those who serve the spiritual needs of the community. The giving of three coins is based on the passages in Exodus 30:12 in which the Children of Israel are told to donate the half shekel in order to make repentance for their sins. In these passages the word donation (terumah) occurs three times.

Oriental Jews customarily donate to charity one coin having the value of 10 grams of pure silver which was weight of the half shekel as it appears in the Torah. There are those who are careful to donate a half shekel for each member of the family including small children. (In actual fact, it is the custom to have these silver coins - silver dollars, or in Israel, special coins minted for the purpose - present in the synagogue. Each donor lifts the coins and re-deposits them together with his donation. In this way, he has "given" the mahatzit ha-shekel.) C. Purim Purim falls on the 14th of Adar. In the halakha, this Purim is called Purim Deprazim (i.e., Purim of places not surrounded by a wall), based on the verse "Therefore the Jews of the villages who dwell in unvalled towns observe the fourteenth day of the month of Adar as a day of feasting and holiday" (Esther 9:19).

Cities that were enclosed by a wall during the time of Joshua Bin Nun (even though they are not walled today) celebrate Purim on the 15th of Adar, called Shushan Purim, because the miracle occurred in the city of Shushan one day later than in all the other cities (Esther 9:18): "And the Jews who were in Shushan gathered on the thirteenth day of the month...and on the fifteenth day they rested". The Four Special Commandments of Purim 1) The Reading of the Megillah (Scroll) of Esther The reading of the Megillah is the primary commandment of the day. It is read on the night of Purim (between nightfall and dawn) and in the morning (from sunrise till sunset). The Megillah is read from a parchment scroll handwritten by a scribe. The Megillah must be unrolled and then folded in a manner similar to a letter, as it says: "to confirm this letter (iggeret) of Purim" (Esther 9:29). One must take care not to miss hearing even one letter of the reading of the Megillah. When pronouncing the blessings of the reading of the Megillah the reader and the listeners must stand but during the reading itself the congregation may be seated. The reader himself stands out of respect for the congregation.

**Blessing on the Megillah:**

The reader recites three blessings before the reading:

Blessed are You, Lord our God, King of the Universe Who has sanctified us with his commandments and commanded us to read the Megillah.

Blessed are You, Lord our God, King of the Universe Who created miracles for our forefathers in those days in this time.

Blessed are You, Lord our God, King of the Universe Who has sustained us and preserved us and enabled us to reach this moment.

A Megillah in an artistic silver case, Hungary, 17th century.

These three blessings are recited both at night and by day. When reciting the third blessing in the morning, one should have in mind all the other commandments of the day, such as gifts to the poor, gifts of food (mishloach manot), and the Purim Feast. However, it is the custom of the Sephardic communities not to recite the third blessing in the morning.

At the conclusion of the Megillah reading, the reader pronounces another blessing (only when the Megillah is read publicly but not when he reads it to himself).

Blessed are You, Lord our God, King of the Universe Who argues our cause, and carries out our justice, and takes our revenge, and repays all our enemies, and gives us repayment from our opponents, Blessed are You, Lord, Who gives His people Israel repayment from all their opponents, the God who is a Saviour.

A Purim noisemaker made of silver inscribed "Cursed be Haman who wished to destroy me", Vienna, 1826.

The Megillah includes four passages of redemption (Geulah):

1. "There was in Shushan the capital a Jewish man named Mordechai" (2:5)
2. "And Mordechai went out from the presence of the king in royal apparel" (8:15)
3. "The Jews had light and gladness and joy and honor..." (8:16)
4. "For Mordechai the Jew was viceroy to King Achashverosh..." (10:3)

It is customary that when the reader reaches these four passages he pauses and the entire congregation reads these four passages aloud and the reader then repeats them. It is also customary to read the names of Haman's ten sons aloud, saying the words "five hundred men" before them until the word "ten" afterwards in one breath.

When the reader reaches the words "On that night the king could not sleep" (ch.6) he raises his voice because precisely there, the story takes a turn for the better and the salvation is in sight.

The reading of the Megillah at its proper time and from a proper scroll is a positive commandment, a decree of the Prophets, and all must observe it - men and women - despite its being a time-determined commandment from which women are generally exempt. This is because women were also involved in the miracle of Purim (Megillah 48).

Since the Sages said that even the study of Torah is superceded by the reading of the Megillah, certainly all the other commandments of the Torah are put off in favor of reading the Megillah. An exception to this rule is the case of a deceased person who has no relatives to deal with his burial (Met Mitzvah). In such cases the commandment to bury the deceased precedes the reading of the Megillah.

The Megillah should rightly be read in the presence of a Minyan (10 adults) for "the glory of the King is in the multitude of the people" (Proverbs 14:28). Where there is no minyan an individual can read it for himself and pronounce the appropriate blessings (he does not say the blessing after it). One who has already fulfilled his obligation may read the Megillah for others, but in such a case it is preferable for one of the congregation to recite the blessings.

The Reader and the Listener: The reader must have intent to fulfill the commandment on behalf of those who hear him and they must intend to fulfill their obligation and must listen to his reading carefully.

A woman who cannot attend the synagogue may have someone else read the Megillah for her at home. However, if no one can read for her, she should read it herself from a proper scroll and recite the blessings, saying "To hear" the reading of the Megillah instead of "to read the megillah." Women who listen to the reading of the Megillah by a man who has already read for himself and is now reading for them should also say "To hear the reading of the Megillah" since some views maintain that a woman is obligated to hear the Megillah being read, but not to read it. A woman cannot read for a man and enable him to fulfill his obligation but she can do so for other women. 2) Sending Gifts of Food - Mishloach Manot Each person must send two portions of different foods to at least one friend, as it is written "... and sending portions (plural, minimum plural is two) each to his friend (singular)" (Esther 9:22). One who cannot afford to send such gifts to his friend should exchange with him, each sending his meal to the other (Maimonides, Hilchot Megillah, chap. 2, halacha 15). These gifts should be sent during the day and not at night - this is understood from what the Megillah says: "Days of feasting and gladness and sending portions..." etc. A woman should send portions to another woman and not depend on her husband to do the mitzvah for her. Giving money, clothing or jewelry does not fulfill this commandment - only giving edible items. 3) Gifts to the Poor - Matanot La-Evyonim One must give at least two gifts to two poor people (i.e., one to each) as it is written: "and gifts (plural, minimum plural is two) to poor people (also plural)" (Esther 9:22). Even a poor person who is dependent on charity for his livelihood must give gifts to the poor. Our Sages said: "One should not be too exacting about Purim donations", meaning that on Purim we do not investigate whether the recipient is truly poor; anyone who extends his hand is given a donation. It is better to donate more to the poor than to have an elaborate Purim feast or to send expensive gifts of food to friends. 4) The Purim Feast and Purim Rejoicing The days of Purim (14 and 15 Adar) are called "days of feasting and gladness", therefore we are commanded to have a great celebratory meal on Purim. This Purim meal should be held by day; if held on the previous night one does not fulfill the obligation. It is customary to hold it in the afternoon after the Minchah (afternoon) prayer is recited. In the blessing on the food after the meal (Birkat Hamazon) we recite the prayer Al Hanissim (For the Miracles) even if the feast extends past nightfall because we follow the time when the meal began - during the day. When the 14th of Adar occurs on a Friday the feast is held earlier, before noon, enabling us to eat the Shabbat meal that night with a hearty appetite.

Since wine was such a crucial part of the Purim miracle, wine is drunk liberally at the Purim feast. Excessive drinking is actually an obligation on Purim, to the point where one cannot distinguish between "Cursed be Haman" and "Blessed be Mordechai"! (Talmud). Some authorities say that is preferable not to get drunk but rather to drink somewhat more than usual - the amount would therefore differ for each individual - and then grow drowsy and fall asleep. He who sleeps would be unable to distinguish between the two phrases, thereby fulfilling that obligation. Whatever the quantity of wine which is drunk the important thing is to have the intention of fulfilling a commandment "for the sake of Heaven (L'shem Shamayim)" and not to drink for the sake of drinking.

D. Prayers and Torah Reading on Purim a. The Al Hanissim (For the Miracles) Prayer In the Shmoneh Esreh (18 Benedictions) prayer - in the evening, morning, and afternoon - we say "Al Hanissim" in the blessing of "Hodayah" (thanks). It is added before the words "Ve'al Kulam" (and for all these). If one forgets to say it in its proper sequence, and then remembers it, as long as he has not already pronounced the



name of God at the end of the blessing of thanksgiving he should go back and say it. After that point in the prayer he should not return to it but rather say it before the concluding paragraph "Elokai netzor leshoni" (My God, guard my tongue) in the form of a request: "The Merciful One will do miracles and wonders for us as He did for our forefathers in those days at this time, in the days of Mordechai and Esther...".

In the Grace after Meals (Birkat Hamazon) "Al Hanissim" should be recited as part of "Birkat Ha'aretz" (The blessing of the land) before the words "Ve'al hakol". Having forgotten to say it there, if he has already pronounced the name of God he should not return to it. However before the words "Harachaman Hu yezakeinu (The Merciful One grant us merit)" he should say: "The Merciful One will do miracles and wonders ...".

b. Yaaleh V'yavo: This prayer is not recited on Purim since the holiday is not mentioned in the Torah.

c. Hallel (Praise): Hallel is also not recited on Purim, even though it is one of the most characteristic expressions of joy in holiday prayers. Several reasons are given for this:

1. Since the time when the People of Israel entered the Land of Israel we do not recite Hallel for miracles which occurred abroad.
2. The Redemption from Egypt was a complete redemption since we became free men. The salvation of Purim was not complete because, though their lives were saved, the Jews of Persia remained as slaves to Achashverosh and the Children of Israel remained in exile.
3. The reading of the Megillah is itself the expression of praise (Hallel) on the day of Purim.

d. Tahanun: In the morning prayer (Shacharit) we do not say "Tachanun" or "Lamnatzeach".

e. Torah Reading: In the morning prayer three men are called up to the Torah and the verses of Exodus 17:8-16 (Vayavo Amalek) are read. After returning the Torah Scroll to the Ark the Megillah is read. The Tfillin (Phylacteries) are not removed until the end of all the prayers.

E. Other Topics

- 1) Doubts as to the Status of a Walled City

The ancient cities of Israel - Safed, Tiberias, Lod, Jaffa and Beersheba - may have been walled cities in the time of Joshua, therefore it is the custom in those cities to read the Megillah on the 14th and 15th days of Adar. However the blessings on the Megillah reading, the special reading of the Torah, and the "Al Hanissim" prayer are recited in those cities only on the 14th of Adar. The mitzvot of gifts of food, gifts for the poor and the Purim feast can be performed on both days.

- 2) A Threefold Purim

In a year when the 15th of Adar falls on Shabbat the order of the observance of the Purim commandments is changed in the walled cities (which for all practical purposes means "Jerusalem"). They observe a "Threefold Purim" in which the commandments are divided over three days in the following manner:

1. On Friday (14th of Adar) the Megillah is read and gifts are given to the poor. The reading of the Megillah is advanced since our Sages prohibited reading the Megillah on Shabbat, in order to refrain from carrying the scroll four cubits in a public thoroughfare (a violation of the Sabbath) to take the scroll to someone who knows how to read it properly. The reading is not delayed until Sunday since it says *ve'lo ya'vor* (and it shall not pass), which our Sages understood to mean: "You are forbidden to let the time of reading pass but you are permitted to advance it before its time" (i.e., to the 14th). The Gifts to the Poor are advanced too, so that the recipient can benefit from it as early as possible.
2. On Shabbat (15th of Adar) which is Shushan Purim itself, we take two Torah scrolls from the Ark. From the first the weekly portion is read and from the second the portion of "Vayavo Amalek" (Ex.17:8-16). On Shabbat we also recite the "Al Hanissim" prayer in the Shmoneh Esreh and Birkat Hamazon.
3. On Sunday (16th of Adar) we eat the Purim feast and send gifts of food. The Purim feast is not held on Shabbat because we do not combine two different types of celebration, Shabbat and Purim. The gifts of food cannot be delivered on Shabbat because of the prohibition against carrying in a public thoroughfare. Since the term *Ve'lo Ya'avur* does not refer to these commandments, they may be put off until Sunday so that the difference between Purim in open cities and Purim in walled cities remains recognizable as it is every year, (the "open" cities perform the entire Purim on Friday, 14 Adar, only).

c) Purim in a Leap Year

A leap year in the Jewish calendar is one in which a thirteen month is added to the usual twelve, in order to align the Jewish lunar year which has 354 days with the generally accepted year of 365 days. This is done in order to guarantee that Passover will always occur in the Spring, as the Torah says: "Guard the month of Spring". The Leap Year occurs seven times in every cycle of nineteen years, (in the 3rd, 6th, 8th, 11th, 14th, 17th, and 19th years). This year, 5757 [1996-97] is a leap year.

In these years the month of Adar which comes just before Nissan, the month of Passover, is doubled. The two months are then called Adar Aleph (or, Rishon = first) and Adar Bet (or, Sheni = second). All the commandments and customs normally observed in the month of Adar are observed in a Leap Year in Adar Sheni. These include Purim, memorial days, Bar Mitzvah, etc.

Purim Katan (Minor Purim): the 14th of Adar Aleph in a leap year is called Purim Katan - to differentiate it from the "real" Purim which is in Adar Bet. Some measure of celebration is observed on this day, as well. Eulogies and fasting are prohibited, Tachanun and Lamnatzeach are not recited in the daily prayers, but the mitzvot of Purim are not celebrated then.

Why do we put Purim off till Adar Sheni rather than celebrating it earlier in Adar Rishon? Two reasons are given in tradition: 1. According to tradition the year of Haman's decree was a Leap Year and salvation appeared in Adar Sheni. 2. In order to bring two incidents of Redemption closer to one another - the Redemption of Esther (Purim) and the Redemption from Egypt (Passover).

- 4) Traveling from City to City During Purim

1. Anyone who goes before the 14th of Adar from a place where Purim is celebrated on the 14th to one where it is celebrated on the 15th, or vice versa, intending to remain at his destination during the days of Purim, should celebrate Purim and observe all its commandments as is the custom of the place at which he arrived.
2. A resident of an open city, where Purim is observed on the 14th, who reaches Jerusalem on the night of the 15th (before dawn) should celebrate Purim on the 15th. However, he should not recite the blessing on reading the Megillah. A Jerusalemite who was in an open city on the 14th and celebrated Purim there and later returned to Jerusalem on the night of the 15th must observe all the commandments of Purim on the 15th. This is also true of a student who studies outside Jerusalem but returns for Purim to his parents' home.
3. A traveler crossing the desert or aboard a ship at sea or in an airplane should celebrate Purim on the 14th.
4. One whose travel began after the start of the night of the 14th of Adar, and whose intention was to return to his home before dawn on the 14th but who was forced to delay his return against his will, and someone who had originally intended to remain at his destination and changed his mind and returned home, or was forced to remain against his will - about all such cases there are disputes among the Poskim (Halachic authorities). The details are many and complicated and there are even certain cases in which the Purim commandments cannot be observed on either day and are lost entirely. One should consult with a Rabbi as to each individual case.
- 5) Purim Customs

Many diverse customs are observed in the various Jewish communities on Purim

- a. The Drinking of wine

It is customary to drink a lot of wine on Purim and even to become slightly drunk. The reason given for this is that wine was the source of the turn of events in the Purim story. The feast of Vashti and her drunkenness led to the crowning of Esther as queen and the drinking party to which Esther invited Achashverosh caused the downfall of Haman and the appointment of Mordechai.

- b. Costumes and Masquerading

The custom of masquerading on Purim originates in the Middle Ages. It is hinted at by the words of the Megillah: "but the reverse was true" (9:1).

The Poskim deal at length with the question of whether men may wear women's clothes and vice versa. The Rama in the Shulchan Aruch writes: "And that they customarily wear masks on Purim and a man wears a woman's dress and a woman the clothes of a man - there is no reason to prohibit it since they only intend to be joyful" (Orach Chaim 696:7).

Rabbi Yoel Sirkis (i.e., The Bach, who was a Rabbi in Cracow some 50 years after the Rama) doubts the propriety of this custom, but wrote: "Let the Jew be, for it is better that they sin unintentionally and not sin intentionally... but every God fearing person should warn his household and anyone else who will listen to his voice that they should not transgress the prohibited negative commandment on Purim (The Bach on Tur Yoreh De'ah 182).

Rabbi Shlomo Ephraim Lontshitz (one of the great rabbis of Prague at the time of the Rama) spoke out against the custom of cross-dressing in his book *Olelot Ephraim* (Article 309), seeing that on Purim "they change their nature by putting masks on their faces till they become someone else and no one knows them since they all have costumes and they become women since a man wears women's clothes and all the women put a mask on their faces so that those who see them do not recognize or know them or understand who's who ... should this be the nature of a day of festivity and favor before God? And what source have they for these improper customs?"

In our own time Rabbi Aharon Zakai, the head of the Ohr Yom Tov Yeshiva, in his book *Habayit Hayehudi* (In the section "Holidays", p. 159, Halacha 27) spoke out against this custom, writing: "It is forbidden for boys to wear women's clothes and also for girls to wear men's clothes even to celebrate Purim since the celebration of Purim does not permit the transgression of things prohibited by the Torah. Adults are commanded to watch over the youngsters and should not dress even a little boy in girls' clothes or vice versa" (see *Mishnah Brurah*, 696, 5).

- c. Special Delicacies

For the festive meal of Purim as well as for the other meals of the holiday, special dishes which somehow hint at the miracle of Purim, are customary.

1. "Haman Taschen" (Oznei Haman = Haman's Ears): In the Ashkenazi communities these triangular baked pockets filled with poppy seed or other sweet fillings are ever-present. The custom originates in Eastern Europe, Ashkenaz (Germany) and Italy.



They have become the most well known and widespread Purim delicacy in all communities the world over.

2. "Kreplach": chopped meat covered with dough, also triangular in shape. The name has received a popular etymology: "Kreplach are eaten only on days on which there is both hitting and eating: Yom Kippur eve - the custom of Kaparot, Hoshanna Rabba - the beating the willow branches, Purim - the (symbolical) beating of Haman".

3. Purim Challa: A special, large challah is baked for the Purim feast, decorated with raisins.

4. Seeds and Legumes: There is a custom to eat seeds and legumes in memory of Queen Esther, who, according to tradition, did not eat any non-Kosher food in the palace of Achashverosh, eating only seeds and legumes (see Daniel 1:1). Moreover: legumes are a customary food for mourners and we must not make our happiness complete as long as the Temple in Jerusalem has not been built.

5. Many Fish Dishes are eaten on Purim because Pisces (Fish) is the sign of the month of Adar.

6. There are some who eat Turkey (Tarnegol Hodu) on Purim commemorating King Achashverosh who ruled from India (Hodu) to Ethiopia (Kush). The Purim Rabbi : It is customary in many yeshivot to appoint one of the sharpwitted students as "Purim Rabbi". He takes his place at the head of the table and expounds a Talmudic lecture in a humorous fashion, imitating the Heads of the Yeshiva as he does so. This satire must be done in moderation, taking care not to embarrass anyone and to do no dishonor to the Torah. The Prohibition of Work : Both men and women should refrain from working on Purim so that the celebration will be complete. (This refers to work done specifically for the purpose of earning money. It is permitted to perform any kind of work in order to fulfill a commandment or for Purim-related needs and activities). Our Sages of Blessed Memory said: "Whoever does work on Purim will never see blessing (profit) from it". It is, however, permitted for those living in open cities to work on the 15th of Adar and for inhabitants of walled cities to work on the 14th. f. Mourning 1) Prohibition of eulogizing and fasting: The 14th and 15th of Adar are days of feasting and gladness, therefore eulogizing and fasting are forbidden to everyone, everywhere. In both open and walled cities it is forbidden to fast and to recite a eulogy for the deceased. In leap year this prohibition applies to the 14th and 15th days of the first Adar as well as the second Adar.

2) A mourner during the Shivah (first week) period should not show signs of mourning in public on the two days of Purim, the 14th and 15th of Adar whether in an open or a walled city. He should not sit on the floor or remove his shoes - but rather do only those aspects of mourning done in privacy, as on Shabbat. Despite the prohibition of mourning on Purim the day itself counts as one of the seven (shivah).

3) The Reading of the Megillah: If the mourner is able to assemble a Minyan (10 adult males) in his home for prayers and the reading of the Megillah, he should do so.

However if this is not possible or if he does not have a proper Megillah, or if he has one and does not know how to read it properly, he is permitted to go to the Synagogue to hear the reading of the Megillah, at night and in the day.

4) Gifts to the Poor and Sending portions of food: A mourner, even during the Shivah period, must observe the commandments of gifts to the poor and sending portions of food to a friend, but he should not exaggerate but rather send only what is necessary for the fulfillment of the commandment. In any case he should not send things which cause joy. One does not send portions of food to a mourner on Purim during the entire year of mourning. If there are only two Jews in a town and one is in mourning they may send portions to each other in order to observe the commandment . g. Purim Shenai - A Second Purim The term Purim Shenai is applied to local days of celebration and feasting which were observed to commemorate miracles which occurred to a particular Jewish community or family which was saved from some decree or imprisonment similar to what occurred in the time of Mordechai and Esther. On several such local "Purim" days celebrations are held and a special "Megillah", composed for the occasion, is read. It tells of the events which brought about the establishment of the local holiday.

Sometimes a special version of the "Al Hanissim" (For the Miracles) prayer is recited in the prayers of Purim Shenai. In some communities the days before "Purim Shenai" is a fastday on which special prayers of supplication and repentance are recited as they are on the Fast of Esther.

A list of "Purim Shenai" dates in Diaspora communities can be found in: a. Jewish Encyclopedia , Vol. X, pp .280-283; b. Encyclopedia Judaica (1971), Vol XII, pp. 1395-1400. h. The Difference Between Chanukah and Purim On Purim we place emphasis on the many material aspects of the celebration: the Purim feast is itself a commandment, we send portions of food, and there is even an obligation to drink to excess. All these relate to man's physical, bodily enjoyment. In contrast, on the days of Chanukah our Sages of Blessed Memory emphasized the spiritual side of man and therefore the main commandment is "to thank, to praise and to glorify"; on each of the eight days we recite the "Hallel" (Prayer of Praise) and there is no obligatory festive meal or the sending of portions of food to friends.

Wherein does the difference lie? It appears that the source of the difference is in the nature of the threat on the two different occasions in history. Haman aspired to destroy, kill, and eliminate the entire Jewish people - physical destruction. Antiochus, on the other hand, desired the cultural assimilation of the People of Israel. To commemorate the different goals of the adversaries of Israel in each case, the different natures of the holidays were established. On Purim when the goal was physical destruction we are commanded to celebrate, in ways related to our physical, corporeal natures - eating and drinking even to excess. On Chanukah, however, the aim of Antiochus was to bring the People of Israel to deny the Almighty and his Torah, therefore we praise and glorify God in prayer, and emphasize our faith in Him.

Naftali Stern

Department of Talmud The weekly Torah portion is distributed with the assistance of the President's Fund for Torah and Science.

<https://www.jewishpress.com/judaism/holidays/going-dry-going-to-grape-juice-prohibition-wine-and-hilchos-kiddush/2019/04/18/>

### **Going Dry, Going To Grape Juice: Prohibition, Wine, and Hilchos Kiddush By Rabbi Shlomo Zuckier**

We are all used to people using grape juice to make kiddush. But it's actually not so clear that grape juice qualifies as the "wine" necessary for kiddush al ha'kos. The story of how grape juice became acceptable for kiddush is fascinating and intersects with Prohibition, which is marking its centennial anniversary this year.

The story starts in the Gemara (Bava Basra 97a), which asserts that for wine to be acceptable for kiddush, it must also be acceptable for wine libations in the Beis Hamikdash. In this context, the Gemara discusses yayin mi'gitto – wine straight out of the press, before it has time to ferment, i.e., grape juice – and rules that it is valid for kiddush. The Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chayim 272:2) records this ruling as halacha.

However, modern-day grape juice – the one we know and love – is not only unfermented; it is pasteurized (mevushal) and includes additives such as sulfites that don't allow it to ferment into wine. The Rambam (Shabbat 29:14) rules that yayin mevushal is not acceptable for kiddush.

The Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chayim 272:8) cites both the Rambam's opinion and a more permissive one, ruling like the latter opinion. However, the Magen Avraham (1635-1682) maintains (Orach Chayim 272:3) that using old wine is preferable and the general practice was to try to be stringent in accordance with this position.

Moving from halacha to American history: The Eighteenth Amendment and the associated Volstead Act – both passed 100 years ago in 1919 – prohibited the consumption of alcoholic beverages. This legislation allowed for certain exceptions, including religious usage. The primary activity Congress had in mind presumably was the distribution of wine at Catholic mass. But kiddush seemed to be covered as well. Some unexpected developments, however, then took place. Religious ministers – rabbis and priests – were allocated a certain number of barrels of wine to disburse to their congregations. As one might guess, such an arrangement led to abuse. Multiple cases occurred of both rabbis illegally disbursing alcohol for non-religious purposes and pseudo-rabbis somehow receiving permission to distribute wine. In some cases, non-Jews joined synagogues to reap the alcoholic benefits of Judaism under Prohibition!

This state of affairs led to great embarrassment for Jewish communities that simply wished to drink wine for legitimate religious reasons. A great deal of pressure was thus exerted upon American rabbis to find a way out of having to rely on this exception to the Volstead Act. And so the halachic question of using grape juice for kiddush was revived.

Reform and Conservative rabbis were inclined to embrace grape juice. Rabbi Stephen Wise, for one, thought it ill-advised for Jews to continue to drink wine and thus be seen as less moral than other Americans: "No fundamental rights of life and liberty are endangered by Prohibition," he wrote, "and the Jewish attitude must become one of active opposition to alcohol. Always a moral pioneer, the Jew must not in this case be a moral laggard. Not to prohibit the use of liquor is to sanction it."

In 1922, Rabbi Louis Ginzberg of the Jewish Theological Seminary wrote that even the Magen Avraham would approve of using grape juice for kiddush considering the chillul Hashem of being associated with criminals abusing the ritual exception to Prohibition.

Orthodox rabbis, however, generally took a different approach. For example, Rabbi Herbert Goldstein, president of the Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations (the OU), wrote that abuse of the ritual use exception does not mean observant Jews should stop following the position of the Magen Avraham.

Addressing the potential for abuse, Rabbi Moshe Zevulun Margulies, an OU founder after whom the Ramaz school is named, successfully lobbied government officials to designate the OU as the only legitimate Orthodox Jewish purveyor of wine.



In 1926 Rabbi Isaac Simha Hurewitz of Hartford, Conn., included a response to Rabbi Ginzberg's justification for using grape juice in his sefer on Hilchos Shabbos. The response featured polemical attacks on Rabbi Ginzberg as well as incredulity that the Magen Avraham's position could be set aside so easily. Rabbi Hurewitz argued that grape juice is not even valid bedi'eved since it does not ferment the way the Talmudic yayin mi'gitto does.

Prohibition ended in 1933, but not the prevalence of using grape juice for kiddush. Interestingly, even the most Orthodox of poskim ended up permitting grape juice for kiddush. The Chazon Ish was said to use grape juice instead of wine for several decades, and the posek Rav Menashe Klein (in Mishneh Halachos X:67) argues that one need not follow the Magen Avraham's position; if one prefers grape juice, one can use grape juice.

While some authorities still maintain that one should not use grape juice for kiddush, clearly it no longer is the mainstream position.

Using grape juice for the Arba Kosos, meanwhile, raises a separate set of halachic hurdles, as some poskim assert that the Arba Kosos demonstrates freedom and should gladden the drinker, which grape juice arguably fails to do. Poskim continue to debate the matter.



## **Parshat Tetzaveh: Kohenization**

by Rabbi Eitan Mayer

[Just a quick footnote to last week's shiur: besides Ibn Ezra, whom I mentioned, Ramban (35:1), Abravanel (35:1), and Cassuto all understand that the worship of the Egel results in the cancellation of the plan to build the Mishkan.]

### **PARASHAT TETZAVEH:**

Parashat Tetzaveh continues Hashem's description to Moshe of the structure of the Mishkan (portable Temple) and its accoutrements, but moves from the topic of the structure of the Mishkan and the details of the Kelim -- the topic of Parashat Teruma -- to the topic of the Kohanim, the Priests. The Priestly section (not to be confused with what Bible critics call "P") splits into three subsections:

- 1) Introduction: The command to select Aharon & sons as Kohanim.
- 2) Part I: Clothing of the Kohanim.
- 3) Part II: Initiation process of the Kohanim.

In the 'Kohenic context,' I want to deal with two basic questions:

1) Function: the Kohen has many specific jobs. But what is behind all of his responsibilities? What is the function of a Kohen in Bnei Yisrael? Does the Kohen work for God or for the people? We will approach this question by breaking it down into two smaller questions:

- a) What are the jobs of the Kohen?
- b) How do these jobs express the basic function of a Kohen?

2) Orientation: how does the Kohen's function -- his role in the nation -- affect his orientation toward God and toward the people? When he takes on all of the jobs included in being a Kohen, does he remain the same person with a new job, or does the new job redefine him? This is a question every religious leader has to answer for himself or herself: What is the relationship between one's function as religious leader and one's personal religious identity? Is there any room left for the religious leader's personal religious fulfillment and creativity? In looking at this question, we will look at two processes in the creation of a Kohen:

- a) "Depersonalization"
- b) "Repersonalization"

### **THE FUNCTION OF THE KOHEN:**

What are all of the Kohen's jobs? (We will focus on the Kohen Gadol in particular, since we have the most information about him and since the Kohenic qualities are most sharply expressed in him.) For those which are well known, we will leave out the sources:

1) AVODA (sacrificial service in the Temple): offering korbant (sacrifices), burning the ketoret (incense), lighting the Menora (candelabrum), maintaining the Shulhan (table) and its bread.

2) BLESSING Bnei Yisrael with the Birkhat Kohanim (Priestly blessing).

3) TEACHING:

a) VaYikra 10:8-11 -- "God spoke to Aharon: '. . . Distinguish between holy and unholy, between pure and impure, and . . . teach the Bnei Yisrael all of the laws which God has told them through Moshe.'"

b) Malakhi 2:6-7 -- (in context, the Navi [prophet] is criticizing the corrupt Kohanim of his time and reminding them of the Kohanim of old, whose exemplary qualities he describes): "The teaching of truth was in his [i.e., the priest of old] mouth; no evil was found on his lips. In peace and uprightness he walked with Me, and he returned many from sin; for the lips of the Kohen shall keep knowledge, and they [Israel] shall seek teaching at his mouth, for he is a messenger ["malakh"] of the Lord of Hosts."

4) JUDGING:

a) Tzara'at: the Kohen is empowered to diagnose Tzara'at, the disease described by the Torah in detail in Sefer VaYikra (ch. 13-14) which, according to Hazal (Arakhin 15b), comes as a punishment for slander and other sins.

b) Sota: the Kohen is instrumental in the process of investigation and trial when a woman is caught sequestered with a man other than her husband, and is accused by her husband of infidelity.

c) Deciding difficult questions of halakha: Devarim 17:8-9 -- "When a matter of law escapes you, whether of blood, civil law, ritual lesions, or matters of strife in your gates, you shall get up and go up to the place which God, your Lord, will choose [referring to the future Temple]. You shall come to the Kohanim-Leviyim and to the judge of that time, and seek [the law], and they will tell you the



judgment."

d) Decisions of national importance: the Urim ve-Tummim (Shemot 28:30), the divine oracle, is operated by the Kohen.

5) REPRESENTING BNEI YISRAEL before God. Some examples from our parasha:

a) Efod: 28:6-13 -- the Kohen Gadol wears the Efod (a sort of apron) as part of his uniform; significantly, the Efod bears two special stones, one on each shoulderpiece, each of which has the names of six of the tribes of Bnei Yisrael carved into it. The Torah stresses that Aharon is to wear the Efod and thereby bring these names before God "as a remembrance": Aharon appears before God as the representative of the people whose names are carved into the stones he bears.

b) Hoshen: 28:15-30 -- the Hoshen, or breastplate, bears twelve stones in which are inscribed the names of the tribes; the Torah stresses also here that Aharon carries them "as a "remembrance" before God, like the stones of the Efod.

c) Tzitz: 28:36-38 -- the Tzitz is a sort of headband made of gold which Aharon wears on his forehead; the words "Kodesh la-Shem," "Holy to God," are inscribed on it. Its function is to atone for all of the sacrifices the people bring under improper conditions (such as when the sacrifice has become ritually impure). The Tzitz 'insists' (see Rashbam) that despite the shortcomings of the people's korbanot, all of the offerings are ultimately "Kodesh la-Shem," dedicated wholly to God, and should therefore be accepted by God.

6) The Kohen creates the backdrop for God's "Kavod" to appear to the people: In VaYikra Perek 9, the inauguration of the Mishkan takes place. Its climax is when Aharon completes 'setting up' the Korban on the Mizbe'ah so that the 'Kavod' (glory) of God can be revealed to the people, who are assembled to watch. Aharon finishes his duties, and then the Kavod appears as a fire from heaven which descends and consumes the korban on the Mizbe'ah. This is a pattern which appears in several places in Tanakh (perhaps most notably in the story of Eliyahu's challenge to the prophets of Ba'al on Har ha-Carmel).

**Now that we have all of the Kohen's jobs in front of us, we can deal with the next question: What is the function of the Kohen?**

The Kohen mediates between God and the people; the Kohen is a bridge over which traffic moves in both directions. He represents God to the people and the people to God:

1) Kohen acting as God's representative to the Bnei Yisrael:

a) Teaching: he is a "malakh Hashem Tzevakot," an angel/messenger bearing God's word.

b) Judging, especially using the Urim ve-Tummim, which express God's instructions.

c) Creating the stage for God's revelation to the people.

d) Birkhat Kohanim: passing down God's blessing to the people.

2) Kohen acting as the people's representative to God:

a) Avoda: the Kohen conducts the national worship of God by bringing Korbanot Tzibbur (collective offerings from the entire nation) and maintaining the various functions of the Mishkan, the national center of avodat Hashem (service of Hashem). He facilitates individual worship/avoda by bringing the korbanot of individuals before God.

3) Wearing Bigdei Kehuna: the stones on the Hoshen and Efod with the names of the tribes represent the nation's coming before God; the Tzitz insures that even when the people's korbanot are not perfect, they are accepted by God.

## **ORIENTATION OF KOHEN:**

We now come to our second basic question about the Kohanim: how does the function of being a bridge between God and Bnei Yisrael impact on the orientation of the Kohen toward his own identity? Is there still a person under all of the Bigdei Kehuna (is there a man under that rabbinical beard), or does the office of Kohen overwhelm the Kohen's personal identity?

Part of the Torah's answer is communicated by the structure of Parashat Tetzaveh. The 'Kohanim' section, which takes up most of Parashat Tetzaveh, is surrounded by 'Mishkan' sections:

I: Instructions for Aron (Ark), Shulhan (Table), Menora (Candelabrum), Mizbah ha-Nehoshet (Brass Altar), Mishkan (portable Temple)

II: The "Kohanim" material of Parashat Tetzaveh

III: Instructions for Mizbah ha-Ketoret (Incense Altar), Shemen ha-Mishhah (oil of anointing), Ketoret (Incense), and Kiyyor (Washing-Cistern).

In other words, the Kohanim section appears to interrupt the Mishkan section. Why not first finish talking about the Mishkan and Kelim before starting with the Kohanim? The point of putting the Kohanim section here may be to show us that it is not an "interruption," that the Kohanim share something very basic with the Kelim of the Mishkan: becoming Kohanim means that Aharon and his sons are transformed by their function into Kelim, in a sense. Their personal identity is overcome by their function as bridges between God and Bnei Yisrael.



Imagine you're trying to get from Manhattan to New Jersey, and you want to take the bridge. If the bridge starts to dance as you try to cross it, twisting into different shapes, swaying to its own rhythm, bucking up and down, you'll never get across! Aharon and his sons have become this bridge: since they function as bridges between God and the people, their own identity must be subordinated to their function as mediators. Inserting their own personalities, their own religious orientations, their own spontaneity into their function as Kohanim would interfere with the 'traffic' trying to cross the bridge. Instead of representing God to the people and the people to God, they would be taking advantage of their powerful position to represent only themselves to the people and to God. A Kohen must become depersonalized; he must become objectified, almost dehumanized, in his function of Kehuna.

Now we can take a look at the parasha and see how this theme plays out: how the Torah depersonalizes the Kohanim and objectifies them so they can perform their function properly.

## DEPERSONALIZING THE KOHANIM:

### 1) "THE CLOTHES MAKE THE MAN": Kohen as the carrier of begadim (clothes):

a) The Torah gives detailed instructions for the construction of the Efod, Hoshen, and Tzitz; in fact, the Torah focuses so much on the clothing that the Kohen who is to wear them seems secondary to them! The Kohen is to wear the Efod and Hoshen with the names of the tribes on the stones so that the people will, symbolically, come before God. His function, then, is to be the wearer of the Begadim, the carrier of the people before God. The clothes are the point; the Kohen merely carries the clothes on his body. The Urim ve-Tummim, carried inside the Hoshen, also put the focus on the beged and point away from the individual inside: the Urim ve-Tummim is an oracle of sorts, consulted on important issues, and the Kohen is merely a mediator for the expression of God's will through the oracle. He carries around this source of revelation. The Tzitz as well, with its message of "Kodesh la-Shem" ("dedicated to God"), relates not to \*Aharon's\* dedication to God, but to the \*people's sacrifices\* dedication to God. Aharon's clothing communicates to God and communicates to the people, but he himself is merely the nexus for this communication. He is secondary to it; instead of taking an active, participatory, human role, he is objectified, passive, facilitative.

b) Besides the appointment of the Kohanim and the creation of their clothing, the Torah also communicates a succession plan for the Kehuna Gedola. Here again, the Torah spends most of its space describing the transfer of the begadim, not the wearer and his qualities (29:29-30). One gets the sense that what is being created in Parashat Tetzaveh, and passed from father to son when the time comes, is an "office" of Kohen Gadol, an office which transcends (perhaps even ignores) the importance of its holder. This perspective is also implicit in the Torah's description of Aharon's death (BeMidbar 20:23-28), which takes pains to describe how Aharon's Bigdei Kehuna are removed and put onto his son before he dies. The passing of the office is expressed most sharply by the passing of the begadim, not the passing of personal authority or honor, because the begadim truly express the character of the Kohen's function: carrier of the begadim, facilitator of a relationship.

c) In Shemot 28:35, the Torah says: "It [the Me'il, a robe with bells on it] should be upon Aharon for serving, so that its sound is heard when he enters the Holy, before God, and when he goes out, so that he will not die." Rashi comments, "'So that he will not die' -- from the negative you can infer the positive: if he has them [the begadim], he will not incur the death penalty; but if he enters [the holy area] without one of these pieces of clothing, he is condemned to death at the hand of Heaven." Ramban disagrees with Rashi that this particular pasuk expresses the general prohibition of the Kohen's serving without the requisite begadim, but he agrees that there is such a prohibition, derived from a different pasuk. He says: "... We learn this [i.e., the prohibition of serving without the requisite begadim] from ... Sanhedrin (83a) and Shehitat Ha-Kodashim (Zev. 17b): 'One [a Kohen] missing clothing who serves [i.e., performs sacrificial service in the Temple], how do we know that he suffers death? Rav Avahu said in the name of Rav Yohanan ... 'Gird them with the belt, and put the turbans on them, and their Kehuna should be a law to them forever' (29:9) -- when their clothing is upon them, their Kehuna [priesthood] is upon them; when their clothing is not upon them, their Kehuna is not upon them, and they are 'Zarim' [the halakhic term for non-kohanim]; and the Master has said, 'A Zar who performs sacrificial service, suffers death ...'."

In other words, according to this Gemara, a Kohen without all of his begadim is not a Kohen! He is a "Zar," a "stranger," the Torah's term for a non-Kohen, and he suffers the same fate a Zar would suffer for illegally performing the Avoda: death by the hand of Heaven. For our theme, the point is clear: the focus is completely on the begadim; the Kohen is merely the carrier.

### 2) PARALLELS BETWEEN THE KOHANIM AND THE KELIM (vessels of the Mishkan):

In several contexts, the Torah draws parallels between the Kohanim and Kelim. This contributes to the theme of depersonalization and objectification, especially since many of the parallels appear in the initiation process of the Kohanim. The Kohanim's initiation objectifies them and depersonalizes them, perhaps to express to them what their orientation to their Kehuna should be. Examples of these parallels (besides the inclusion of the 'Kohanim' section inside the 'Mishkan' section, mentioned above):

a) God commands Moshe to "take" Aharon and his sons as Kohanim: "Bring close to you Aharon, your brother, and his sons ... Aharon, Nadav, Avihu, Elazar, and Itamar, the sons of Aharon." This list of people sounds a lot like the lists of materials which we find in profusion all over the parshiot of the Mishkan. Usually, we find a command to build a certain Keli and then a list of materials: for example, the Torah commands the creation of Bigdei Kehuna and then lists the materials out of which they are to be made: "... The gold, blue, purple, red, and fine linen" (28:5). There are Kelim to be created -- the Bigdei Kehuna -- and the materials are gold, blue,



purple, red, and fine linen. In parallel fashion, there is a Keli to be created -- the Kehuna -- and the 'materials' are Aharon, Nadav, Avihu, Elazar, and Itamar.

b) The Kohanim are anointed with oil, just as the Kelim are (see 30:25-33, 29:7, 29:21, and 40:9-16).

c) The Kohanim are anointed with blood, just as the Mizbe'ah (altar) is, and in fact, the blood used for the Kohanim is from the same animal as that sprinkled on the Mizbe'ah (see 29:12, 29:16, 29:20-21).

d) "Kiddush": the Kohanim are sanctified, as some of the Kelim are (see 29:37, 29:1, 29:21, 28:41).

e) Passivity: throughout the period of their initiation, the Kohanim are completely passive while Moshe does all of the Avoda (sacrificial service). Moreover, they remain passive while Moshe performs various functions on them! (See VaYikra 8:6-14.) Moshe is "makriv" (brings close) the raw human pre-kohen material to the Ohel Mo'ed; Moshe washes the kohanim; Moshe dresses them; Moshe anoints them with oil; Moshe sprinkles them with blood. They stand, passive, like the lifeless, personality-lacking kelim of the Mishkan.

f) Parallels between Kohanim and korbanot: Moshe is "makriv" the Kohanim, the same word used with regard to korbanot (and actually the root of the word "korbanot"!); see 28:1, 29:4, 29:8, 29:10; Moshe is "rohetz" (washes) them, a function also performed on some of the korbanot in the same context (see 29:4, 29:17).

3) REPRESSION OF HUMANITY: In several contexts, the Torah expresses the idea that the Kohen, particularly the Kohen Gadol, is not allowed the 'luxury' of expressing his emotions at the expense of the Avoda to which he is bound. Even when a close relative dies, he must remain in the Mikdash, before God, doing the Avoda, rather than leaving the Mikdash to mourn his loss. For him, the religious and national responsibility of the Kehuna must always supersede the personal and human.

This is most painfully and dramatically expressed by Aharon's reaction to the death of his sons, Nadav and Avihu, when they bring a "foreign fire" before God and are consumed in His fire. Moshe instructs Aharon that he is not to mourn, not to interrupt his duties as Kohen, not to leave the Mikdash. He tells Aharon that God has said, "Through those who are close to Me I am sanctified; I am honored in front of the entire congregation"; in response, Aharon is simply silent (VaYikra 10:3).

Many mefarshim understand God's statement -- "Through those who are close to Me I am sanctified" -- as a reference to Nadav and Avihu; as sanctified kohanim, chosen servants of God, they are the ones "close to God." By killing them for their slight disobedience, God inspires the awe of the people, hence, "I am honored in front of the entire congregation." But Rashbam disagrees. He paraphrases Moshe's command to Aharon after the death of his sons:

RASHBAM:

"Moshe said to Aharon, 'Do not mourn, do not cry, do not stop doing the Avoda, because what I am telling you is the word of God, that 'I will be sanctified through those close to Me' -- 'through the Kohen Gadol, who is close to Me to serve Me, I wish to be sanctified, and I do not wish that My name be profaned along with My Avoda,' for this is what God has told me [Moshe], that 'the Kohen Gadol . . . should not undo his hair or remove his priestly clothing, and not leave the Mikdash, and not profane thereby the Mikdash of his God' -- so if you do not leave the Mikdash, it remains holy" . . . . Therefore, "Do not abandon your Avoda, for you are the Kohen Gadol, and do not leave [the Mikdash], and do not profane, but instead let God and His Avoda be sanctified through you. As a result, "Before the entire congregation shall I be honored" -- the honor of the Shekhina is that he [Aharon] sees his sons die, yet he puts aside his mourning for the service of his Creator. "Aharon was silent" -- silenced his mourning: he did not cry and did not mourn . . ."

According to Rashbam, the function of the Kohen, especially the Kohen Gadol, is to remain always dedicated to God and to prioritize God over all personal needs. Aharon responds by silencing his mourning; he maintains his Kehuna and suppresses his humanity, as the Kohen must.

[There is also the inhumanity of Shevet Levi's vengeance against the worshippers of the Egel, even when they are his own relatives (see Shemot 32:26-29 and see Devarim 33:8-10, where Moshe praises their "inhuman" fealty to God), but we will leave that for another time.]

### "REPERSONALIZATION":

The 'depersonalization' of the Kohanim brings us to something we touched on last week: the potential danger in doing the Avoda. Evidence of this danger is all over the Torah: the Kohanim are warned to wear the Me'il, to wash from the Kiyyor, and to wear the Mikhnasayyim (pants), all "so that they do not die" (!!); the Kohanim (and others) at Har Sinai are warned not to go up the mountain so that God does not "destroy them"; a Zar who does the Avoda suffers death at the hands of Heaven, as does a Kohen who serves without the proper begadim.

The function of the Kohen is to act as a bridge between God and the human community of Bnei Yisrael. This means that the Kohanim have to surrender their personal identity and humanity to a significant degree. What happens if a Kohen fails to surrender to his kohenic function, if he stubbornly insists on expressing his own personality and achieving his own spiritual goals through his privileged access to Hashem? Perhaps a look at Parashat Pekudei, several weeks ahead of us, will provide an answer:



Many have pointed out the pattern of the repeated phrase, "Ka'asher tziva Hashem et Moshe" ("Just as Hashem had commanded Moshe") in Parashat Pekudei; this phrase appears there about fifteen times, describing how Moshe and the people built and prepared the Mishkan and each of its appurtenances exactly as instructed by God: "Just as Hashem had commanded Moshe." But the pattern of "Ka'asher tziva Hashem et Moshe" does not end at the end of Parashat Pekudei. Parashat Pekudei is followed by a 'parenthetical' section, a "Manual for Korbanot" (AKA Parashat VaYikra and the first part of Parashat Tzav). This parenthetical section ends in the second half of Parashat Tzav, where the Torah picks up the Mishkan narrative once again, describing the eight-day process of the initiation of the Mishkan and the Kohanim. Tellingly, this narrative picks right back up with the "Ka'asher tziva Hashem et Moshe" pattern we note in Parashat Pekudei; fifteen additional repetitions of this phrase appear here, describing how all of the events of the initiation take place "exactly as Hashem had commanded Moshe." What is it all about? What is the Torah trying to communicate with this pattern?

In all, the Torah repeats the pattern of "Ka'asher tziva Hashem et Moshe" thirty times, with slight variation, though Pekudei and then Tzav and Shemini. The people do exactly what God commands -- to the letter, to the "T," exactly, exactly, exactly. But then the pattern comes to a sudden end:

Shemot 38:22 -- ". . . Asher tziva Hashem et Moshe"  
 Shemot 39:1 -- ". . . Ka'asher tziva Hashem et Moshe"  
 Shemot 39:5 -- ". . . Ka'asher tziva Hashem et Moshe"  
 Shemot 39:21 -- ". . . Ka'asher tziva Hashem et Moshe"  
 Shemot 39:26 -- ". . . Ka'asher tziva Hashem et Moshe"  
 Shemot 39:29 -- ". . . Ka'asher tziva Hashem et Moshe"  
 Shemot 39:31 -- ". . . Ka'asher tziva Hashem et Moshe"  
 Shemot 39:32 -- ". . . Ke-khol asher tziva Hashem et Moshe"  
 Shemot 39:42 -- ". . . Ke-khol asher tziva Hashem et Moshe"  
 Shemot 39:33 -- ". . . Ka'asher tziva Hashem"  
 Shemot 40:16 -- ". . . Ke-khol asher tziva Hashem oto"  
 Shemot 40:19 -- ". . . Ka'asher tziva Hashem et Moshe"  
 Shemot 40:21 -- ". . . Ka'asher tziva Hashem et Moshe"  
 Shemot 40:23 -- ". . . Ka'asher tziva Hashem et Moshe"  
 Shemot 40:25 -- ". . . Ka'asher tziva Hashem et Moshe"  
 Shemot 40:27 -- ". . . Ka'asher tziva Hashem et Moshe"  
 Shemot 40:29 -- ". . . Ka'asher tziva Hashem et Moshe"  
 Shemot 40:32 -- ". . . Ka'asher tziva Hashem et Moshe"  
 VaYikra 8:4 -- ". . . Ka'asher tziva Hashem oto"  
 VaYikra 8:5 -- ". . . Asher tziva Hashem . . ."  
 VaYikra 8:9 -- ". . . Ka'asher tziva Hashem et Moshe"  
 VaYikra 8:13 -- ". . . Ka'asher tziva Hashem et Moshe"  
 VaYikra 8:17 -- ". . . Ka'asher tziva Hashem et Moshe"  
 VaYikra 8:21 -- ". . . Ka'asher tziva Hashem et Moshe"  
 VaYikra 8:29 -- ". . . Ka'asher tziva Hashem et Moshe"  
 VaYikra 8:35 -- ". . . Asher tziva Hashem be-yad Moshe"  
 VaYikra 8:36 -- ". . . Asher tziva Hashem be-yad Moshe"  
 VaYikra 9:6 -- ". . . Asher tziva Hashem"  
 VaYikra 9:7 -- ". . . Ka'asher tziva Hashem"  
 VaYikra 9:10 -- ". . . Ka'asher tziva Hashem et Moshe"

The pattern crashes to a catastrophic and tragic halt with VaYikra 10:1 --

VaYikra 10:1 -- "ASHER \*\*LO\*\* \*\*TZIVA\*\* OTAM."

The Torah sets up the pattern of "ka-asher tziva Hashem," reporting Bnei Yisrael's strict, unwavering obedience to Hashem's exact instructions for the Mishkan, in order to shatter the perfection with the report that Nadav and Avihu bring an offering of ketoret (incense) which God did NOT command - "asher LO tziva Hashem." For this crime, they die.

A Kohen qua Kohen must forfeit his identity, his humanity, his search for ways to express and experience his own spirituality; he does exactly "Ka-asher tziva Hashem" -- because he is a faithful Keli Mikdash, merely a bridge. The moment the Kohen's personal, self-representing religious identity returns -- the moment he uses his position as Kohen to pursue personal religious aspirations -- at that moment, he negates the process of depersonalization and objectification which made him a Kohen. Repersonalized, representing only himself, he is a Zar, a non-Kohen, and what he brings is Zara, "Eish Zara" (a "foreign fire").

Shabbat Shalom



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Shiurim in Chumash & Navi by Menachem Leibtag

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### PARSHAT TETZAVEH

Order in the 'court-yard'? Certainly that's what we'd expect to find when the Torah presents the laws of the mishkan; and that is exactly what we do find - most of the time.

However, there is one glaring exception - that relates to the placement of the laws of the **mizbach ha-ktoret** at the end of Parshat Tetzaveh (instead of at the beginning of Parshat Teruma).

In the following shiur, we will first clarify our question; afterward we will offer an explanation that relates once again to the thematic connection between the mishkan and Ma'amad Har Sinai.

#### INTRODUCTION

Recall, from last week's shiur how Parshat Tetzaveh forms part of the larger unit (chapters 25 thru 31), which we referred to as **tzivui ha-mishkan** [the commandment to build the mishkan]. This unit contains a complete set of laws in which God explains to Moshe how the mishkan is to be built and how it will operate.

In that shiur, we discussed the controversy concerning when and why this set of laws was first given to Moshe Rabeinu. In the following shiur, we analyze the internal structure of this unit, to show how (and why) it actually contains **two** distinct units - that overlap in a very special manner.

#### A VERY LONG 'DIBBUR'

Before we begin, we must make one general observation concerning why parshiot Teruma and Tetzaveh (i.e. Shmot 25:1-30:10) should be considered a distinct 'sub-unit'. Note how Parshat Teruma begins with God's commandment to Moshe to "speak to Bnei Yisrael and tell them..." (25:1) - followed by a lengthy set of instructions that continues all the way until the end of Parshat Tetzaveh (i.e. 30:10). To prove this, simply note how the next "dibbur" doesn't begin until the opening pasuk of Parshat Ki Tisa. [See the new "dibbur" in 30:11, while noting that there has not been any similar opening statement since 25:1. However, from 30:11 till the end of chapter 31, every parshia in a separate "dibbur"! We'll return to this observation later in the shiur.]

Therefore, we begin our study with an analysis of this first 'sub-unit' (i.e. 25:1 thru 30:10). Afterward, we will discuss how the six short 'parshiot' in Parshat Ki Tisa (30:11 thru 31:18) that follow, even though they are outside this unit, complete the larger unit of "tzivui ha-mishkan" - the commandment to build the Mishkan.

#### AN OUTLINE OF TERUMA/TETZAVEH

The following outline summarizes the topic of each parshia within this unit of parshiot Teruma/Tetzaveh. Study it carefully, noting how it appears to follow in a rather logical order (at least until the very end). It will clarify our opening question.

[Follow this chart with a Tanach Koren at hand.]

**Introduction** - Donation of the **materials** (25:1-7)

& the purpose of this project:

"Ve-asu li mikdash ve-shachanti betocham" (25:8-9)

**Vessels in the Kodesh Kodashim** (innermost sanctuary)

**Aron** - the ark to house the "luchot" (25:10-16)

**Kaporet** - the special lid for the ark (25:17-22)

**Vessels in the Kodesh** (main sanctuary)

**Shulchan** - the table for the show-bread (25:23-30)

**Menora** - the candelabra (25:31-40)

**The Ohel Mo'ed** [The tent housing these vessels] (26:1-37)

**Yeriot** - The canvas of the tent - from cloth & goatskins

**Krashim** - the wooden beams supporting this tent

**Parochet** - the curtain to partition the Kodesh Kdoshim

**The Chatzer** [The outer courtyard & its vessels]

**Mizbeiach Ha-Ola** (the altar / 27:1-8)

**Chatzer** - the outer courtyard

its curtains and poles (see 27:9-19)

**Oil For The Menora** (27:20-21)

[A priori, we would have expected to find this commandment with the **menorah**. See further *iyun*.]

**The 'Bigdei Kehuna'** - (28:1-43)

Six parshiot describing the priestly garments

**The Seven-Day Inaugural Dedication Ceremony** (29:1-37)

**Olat Tamid** (29:38-46)

The daily offering on the altar (after its dedication)

**The Mizbach Ha-Ktoret** - the incense altar (30:1-10)

[This seems 'out of place', as we will discuss.]

As you review this outline, note the logical order of its progression. It begins by describing the 'aron' - the most sacred object in the mishkan, situated in the 'kodesh kodashim'; then continues with the vessels located in the 'kodesh', followed by the 'ohel mo'ed' [Tent of Meeting], which houses these vessels. Afterward we find the 'mizbach ha-ola' - which is located outside this tent - and the courtyard ['chatzer'] that surrounds it. This unit concludes with the 'bigdei kehuna' - the special garments for the kohanim who will officiate in the mishkan, followed by the details of its seven-day dedication ceremony (and the daily sacrifice that will be henceforth offered).

However, the final parshia describing the "mizbach ha-ktoret" appears to be totally 'out of place'. After all, this golden altar is one of the three vessels situated in the kodesh. Clearly, this parshia should have been recorded in chapter 26 together with the laws of the "shulchan and menorah - the other vessels located in the ohel mo'ed.

To verify this point (that the mizbach ktoret is recorded out of place), simply note the parallel mention of these vessels in Parshat Vayakhel (see 35:13-15, 37:10-29, & 39:35-39). There the laws of the mizbach ktoret are consistently recorded together with the laws of the menorah and the shulchan.

Furthermore, this 'displacement' of the mizbach ha-ktoret is only half the problem. We will now explain how the psukim that precede this parshia place this golden altar in even greater 'isolation'!

#### OUT OF 'PLACE' and 'OUT' OF PLACE

Review the above outline once again, noting how the parshia of the olat tamid (29:38-46) forms what 'should have been' the conclusion of this unit. Let's take a closer look at this parshia, noting how its concluding verses forms a beautiful summary for this entire unit (see 29:42-44):

"Olat tamid for all generations, in front of the ohel mo'ed - the place where we will meet to speak to you from there."

[note how this pasuk 'matches' 25:22!]

And I will sanctify the **OHEL MO'ED** (& its vessels),

[summarizing chapters 25 & 26]

the **MIZBEIACH** (i.e. the **chatzer**),

[summarizing chapter 27]

and the **KOHANIM**... (i.e. their garments & dedication)

[summarizing chapters 28 & 29]

(see 29:44)

As you review these psukim, note how the words in **CAPS** correlate to the primary topics in the above outline! But that's not all, for the next pasuk forms almost a perfect 'bookend' for this entire unit: "ve-shachanti betoch **bnei Yisrael**..." (see 29:45) - matching: "ve-asu li mikdash ve-shachanti betocham" (see 25:8) - the opening commandment of this entire unit - found at the beginning of Parshat Teruma!



Finally, to top it off, this parshia concludes with its 'grand finale' - that connects the purpose of this mishkan to the very purpose of the entire process of Yetziat Mitzrayim:

"And they shall know that I am their God who took them out of Egypt - **le-shochni betocham - in order** to dwell among them; I am the Lord their God" (see 29:42-46).

Thus, chapters 25 thru 29 form a clearly defined unit with 'matching bookends'. But this only magnifies our opening question regarding the placement of the laws concerning the **mizbach ha-ktoret** (in the next parshia / see 30:1-10) - for it is not only 'out of place' - it is totally isolated - outside this 'shechina' unit!

This total isolation of the mizbach ha-ktoret forces us to search for a thematic reason for the Torah's intentional placement of these laws after the closure of the shechina unit.

## BACK TO HAR SINAI

To suggest an answer to this question, let's return once again to the conceptual parallel between the mishkan and Har Sinai, as discussed in last week's shiur, and as explicated by Ramban:

"... the hidden purpose ['sod'] of the mishkan is for God's **glory** which dwelled ('shachan') on **Har Sinai** to dwell upon it..." (Ramban on 25:1, see TSC shiur on Teruma).

According to Ramban, the very purpose of the mishkan was to serve as a vehicle that could perpetuate the Sinai experience! This purpose is reflected in the numerous parallels that exist between Ma'amad Har Sinai and the mishkan. For example:

### \* The **aron**:

contains the **luchot ha-eidut** (25:21), the everlasting testimony of the covenant forged between God and bnei Yisrael at Har Sinai (see 24:3-12).

### \* The **keruvim**:

situated above the **kaporet** (on top of the **aron**), serve as the site from where God will continue to speak to Moshe. There, Moshe will receive the remaining mitzvot, just as he had received the dibrot from God on Har Sinai.

### \* The **mizbach ha-ola** -

where Bnei Yisrael will offer their **olat & shlamim**, is similar to the **mizbeich** that Bnei Yisrael built at the foot of Har Sinai, upon which they offered **olat & shlamim** (see 24:4-8).

Following this train of thought, we should expect to find a parallel as well between the mizbach ha-ktoret and Ma'amad Har Sinai - a parallel that may shed light on why the Torah places the mizbach ha-ktoret after the Shechina unit of the mishkan was completed. To find it, we must first consider a more general parallel between Har Sinai and the mishkan.

## THREE MECHITZOT

One of the most striking parallels between the mishkan and Har Sinai relates to the concept of '**mechitzot**' - boundaries. At Har Sinai, the **people** are instructed to remain at the **foot** of the mountain while the **kohanim** are permitted to come a bit closer (see 19:22; 24:1-2 & 24:9). Only **Moshe** is granted access to the **top** of the mountain (see 19:20-24 & 24:2 & 24:12).

In regard to the mishkan, we find a very interesting parallel. The **people** are permitted to proceed only as far as the outer courtyard of the mishkan (where the **mizbach ha-ola** is located). The **kohanim** are allowed into the "**kodesh**" (where the **shulchan & menorah** are located), and only Moshe (and Aharon) can enter the "**kodesh ha-kodashim**" (where the **aron & keruvim** are located).

[Additionally, Bnei Yisrael may enter the courtyard only after first purifying themselves (i.e. they must be "tahor"), just as a purification process was required in preparation for Ma'amad Har Sinai (see 19:10-15).]

The following table summarizes this parallel:

GROUP	HAR SINAI	THE MISHKAN	FUNCTION
<b>Moshe</b>	<b>top</b> of mountain	Kodesh kodashim	<b>dibur</b>
<b>Kohanim</b>	mid-mountain	Kodesh (ohel mo'ed)	<b>meeting</b>
<b>People</b>	foot of mountain	Chatzer (courtyard)	<b>korbanot</b>

So how does the **mizbach ha-ktoret** fit into all this?

In our shiur on Parshat Yitro, we discussed the dialectic nature of the encounter between God and Bnei Yisrael at Har Sinai. Ideally, Bnei Yisrael should have heard the commandments directly from God [**panim be-panim**']. However, as mortal man is incapable of withstanding God's Presence (see Devarim 5:4-5, 20-25), God found it necessary to 'buffer' this encounter. due to this tension, God found it necessary to cover Har Sinai with a **cloud** before revealing himself:

"Behold I am coming to you **be-av** he-**anan** - in the **thickness** of a **cloud** - in order that they can hear as I speak to you..." (see 19:9)

"... And Har Sinai was full of **smoke** ['ashan'], for God had come down upon it with fire..."

(see 19:16-18 and the TSC shiur on Parshat Yitro).

In this manner, the **anan** (cloud) on Har Sinai effectively served as a **buffer** between:

- Bnei Yisrael at the **foot** of the mountain, and
- God's revelation at the **top** of the mountain.

One could suggest that the **mizbach ha-ktoret** serves a similar function. When the **ktoret** [incense] is offered on the coals of this small altar, it creates a cloud of smoke (see Vayikra 16:13) in the "kodesh". In this manner, this "anan" [cloud of smoke] forms a buffer between Bnei Yisrael, who stand outside in the **chatzer** - and God, whose presence dwells in the "**kodesh ha-kodashim**".

## THE AXIS: -Aron -- Mizbach Ktoret -- Mizbach Ola

This interpretation is supported by two key psukim that describe the relationship between the **mizbach ha-ola**, **mizbach ha-ktoret**, and the **kodesh kodashim**.

The first pasuk stresses the connection between the **mizbach ha-ola** and the **ohel mo'ed**. As you study this pasuk, note how redundant it appears to be:

"**olat tamid** [the daily offering on the mizbach ha-ola]

- for all generations,
- in front of the entrance to the **ohel mo'ed** -
- before God [lifnei Hashem]
- from where **I will meet you**
- to **speak** to you there" (see 29:42).

Surely, the Torah could have explained where this public offering is brought in half the words; yet for some reason the Torah wishes to emphasize a thematic connection between the "olat tamid" and the place where God will speak to Bnei Yisrael.

Then, in the next 'parshia', the Torah provides explicit instructions concerning where to place the **mizbach ha-ktoret**. Note once again the 'wordiness' of this pasuk, and how it relates to the pasuk above:

"And you shall **place** it [the mizbach ktoret]

- in front of the **parochet**,
- which is over the **aron ha-eidut**,
- in front of the **kaporet** which is upon the **eidut**
- from where **I will meet with you**." (see 30:6).

It is for this reason that the Torah emphasizes that the mizbach ktoret must be located between these two focal points, i.e. along this very same **axis** that connects the **mizbach ha-ola** with the **kodesh kodashim**.

In fact, later on in the same chapter, when the Torah explains how the ktoret was made, it emphasizes this point once again:

"...and you shall grind it very fine, and **put it**:

- before the testimony [lifnei ha'**eidut**]
- in the tent of meeting [**ohel mo'ed**],
- where **I will meet with you**; - it shall be for you most holy." (see 30:36)



## A 'PROTECTED' DIVINE ENCOUNTER

In a manner very similar to what took place at Har Sinai, God 'comes down' from the heavens, as it were, to the **kodesh kodashim**; while Bnei Yisrael come from their camp, to stand before God in the **chatzer** of the mishkan.

Hence, the main section of the **ohel mo'ed** serves as a buffer between God and Bnei Yisrael. There, the **ktoret** must be offered each time the **kohen** enters to perform his service, which creates an **anan** [cloud of smoke] to 'protect' the **kohen** when he enters the **kodesh**:

"And Aharon shall offer the **ktoret** daily, in the morning before tending to the **menorah**, and when lighting the **menorah** in the evening..." (30:7-8).

[Note also Vayikra 16:2, where Aharon must also offer ktoret to create a similar cloud of smoke to protect himself before entering the kodesh ha-kodashim on Yom Kippur!]

With this background we can answer our opening question. One could suggest that by placing the commandment to build the **mizbach ha-ktoret** after the summary psukim at the very end of this unit, the Torah alludes to its unique function as a 'buffer' in this covenantal encounter. As - 'realistically' - Bnei Yisrael may not be worthy of this encounter, the Torah commands Bnei Yisrael to place the **mizbach ktoret** in the kodesh to serve as a buffer, to protect them for the Shechina that dwells in the kodesh kedoshim.

[Note the similarity between the nature of this 'protected encounter' in the mishkan and what we referred to in our shiur on Parshat Yitro as '**plan A**,' by which God speaks to Moshe while 'covered by a cloud' so that the people can only overhear their conversation. See Shmot 19:9! See also Devarim 5:5.]

Furthermore, the dialectic nature of this encounter is highlighted by the placement of the laws of the mizbach ha-ktoret outside this Shechina unit, yet within the same dibur!

## THE KTORET UNIT

Up until this point, we have treated parshiot Teruma/Tetzaveh as one, integrated unit, as indicated by the single **dibur** that introduces these two parshiot. Now we must consider the remaining parshiot (in Parshat Ki Tisa) that form the final six paragraphs of the greater **tzivui ha-mishkan** unit.

Take a minute to review the beginning of Ki-Tisa (i.e. 30:11-31:17), noting how it describes several other mitzvot concerning the mishkan that were also 'left out' of the **Shechina unit**.

When we list these parshiot in order, we find once again a set of 'bookends':

30:1-10 **mizbach ha-ktoret** (\* bookend 1 \*)  
(as explained above)

30:11-16 **Machatzit ha-shekel** -  
money collected to fund the **ohel mo'ed**

30:17-21 **Ki'yor**  
the faucet for the kohanim to wash their hands

30:22-33 **Shemen ha-mishcha**  
special oil to anoint the mishkan's accessories and the kohanim

30:34-38 **Ktoret** (\* bookend 2 \*)  
the incense for the **mizbach ktoret**

[At this point, the **laws** concerning the mishkan end. Chapter 31 discusses the appointment of Betzalel to build the mishkan and the prohibition to work on **Shabbat** (to preclude the possible, mistaken notion the work for the mishkan on shabbat is permissible). Whereas these do not involve laws directly relating to the construction of the mishkan and its accessories, we have omitted them from this table.]

The above table shows how (1) the **mizbach ktoret** and (2) the mitzvah to make the **ktoret** delineate a second unit, which contains several peripheral commandments regarding the mishkan.

## A PARALLEL STRUCTURE

As your review these parshiot, note how a rather amazing parallel structure emerges; pointing to the direct connection between this **Ktoret** unit and the previous **Shechina unit**. Note how each of these peripheral commandments in the **Ktoret unit** corresponds (in the same order!) to a related topic in the **Shechina unit**!

The following table illustrates this parallel:

TOPIC	SHECHINA UNIT	KTORET UNIT
Accessories in the mishkan	<b>aron, kaporet, shulchan, menorah</b>	<b>mizbach ktoret</b>
<b>Ohel Mo'ed</b>	<b>yeriot, krashim</b>	machatzit ha-shekel le-avodat ohel mo'ed
<b>Chatzer</b>	<b>mizbach ha-ola</b>	<b>kiyor</b>
<b>Dedication</b>	bigdei <b>kehuna</b> & <b>milu'im</b> (to anoint the kohanim)	shemen ha-mishcha
<b>Daily Offering</b>	<b>korban tamid</b> on mizbach ha-ola	<b>ktoret tamid</b> on mizbach ha-ktoret

The mitzvot found in the **Shechina unit**, which focus on God's 'hitgalut' in the mishkan, are complemented by the mitzvot in the **Ktoret unit**, which focus on the need to protect Bnei Yisrael in this special encounter.

Note as well how all of the mitzvot in the Ktoret unit emphasize either kapara (see shiur on Yom Kippur, where we explained how kapara involves protection from God's hitgalut) or warn of impending death if not performed properly (see 30:10; 30:12; 30:21; 30:33; 30:38; relate to Devarim 5:21-23!). Protection is required from the potential punishment enacted should man not prepare himself properly for this encounter with God in the mishkan.

In this manner, the laws of the mizbach ktoret can serve as an eternal reminder of how man must not only value his ability to enjoy a relationship with God, but also remain aware of the natural limits of this encounter.

shabbat shalom,  
menachem

## FOR FURTHER IYUN

A. Be sure to see Ramban on 30:1, where he explains why the mizbach ha-ktoret is at the end of the unit. See also Seforno & Chizkuni. Relate these approaches to our analysis of this unit in the above shiur.

B. In our discussion of the overall structure, we noted that (B) comprises the complete unit of **tzivui ha-mishkan**. Note that this complete unit includes **seven** dibur's. [A dibur is each time the Torah introduces God's speech to Moshe with, "Va-yedaber Hashem el Moshe leimor" or "va-yomer ...", etc.

[See 25:1, 30:11, 30:17, 30:22, 30:34, 31:1, and 31:12.]

One could view these dibur's as allusions to the seven days of creation. The first **dibur**, covering the entire **Shechina unit**, may reflect the concept of God's creation of **light / Shechina** (see Rashi on Breishit 1:3). The next four deal with other mitzvot of the mishkan. [Admittedly, they don't work out as good as the rest.] The sixth **dibur** describes the appointment of Betzalel to build the mishkan. This may parallel God's creation of man on the sixth day. Just as man in Creation [**perek aleph**] was to master the material world and utilize his God-given talents towards a divine purpose, so must Betzalel organize the materials collected and use his God-given talents to oversee the construction of the mishkan. To do so, he requires 'ruach Elokim' (31:3/ relate to the creation of man 'be-tzelem Elokim').

The seventh **dibur** is the mitzvah to keep **Shabbat**! (See 31:15.) This may serve as the basis for the many Midrashim that describe the mishkan as the pinnacle of the creation process. This reflects, once



again, the biblical theme that the natural world needs to be directed towards a divine purpose. This is the duty of man not only in the mishkan, but also throughout his daily life, as well.

### C. A FULL TIME JOB

Recall from our original outline how the first two psukim of Parshat Tetzaveh (i.e. the mitzvah to light the menorah /see 27:20-21) also appears out of place. If we follow the logic of the structure of the **Shechina unit**, it should have been recorded together with the mitzvah to build the menorah (just as the mitzvah to offer the **lechem ha-panim** is included with the mitzvah to build the **shulchan** / see 25:30).

Nevertheless, the Torah transfers these psukim from chapter 26 and juxtaposes them with the mitzvah to make the **bigdei kehuna** (in chapter 28). Why?

One could suggest that in doing so, the Torah alludes to a more important role of the **kohanim**. Aside from the honor and glory of their position, as reflected by their special garments, their primary job is to 'spread the light' of Torah - the message of mishkan, as represented by the **aron ha-eidut** at its focal point - to Bnei Yisrael.

It is this mitzvah of the **kohanim**, to disseminate the Torah, which may explain why it referred to as a "chukat olam le-doroteichem - an everlasting law for all generations" (see 27:31). Even when the mikdash lay in ruins, this mitzvah forever remains the obligation of our religious leaders.

### D. ADDITIONAL SOURCES & RESEARCH

Re: The 'displacement' of the mizbach ha-ktoret

We explained that the Torah 'transferred' the discussion of the mizbach ha-ktoret to the end of the mishkan unit to emphasize its role as a 'buffer', protecting Bnei Yisrael from the 'hashra'at ha-Shechina' that occurs in the mishkan. This general idea appears in the Vilna Gaon's "Aderet Eliyahu". The Gaon explains that neither the ktoret nor the machatzit ha-shekel (which the Torah discusses immediately following its discussion of the mizbach ha-ktoret) was indispensable for 'hashra'at ha-Shechina'. They come into play once the Shechina has already descended, in order to bring kapara for Bnei Yisrael. Though the Gaon does not mention the 'buffer' idea developed in the shiur, his explanation does feature the concept of a need for kapara when the Shechina descends and the mizbach ha-zahav as filling that role. Like the Gaon, the Seforno also writes that the mizbach ha-zahav is not necessary for the Shechina to descend. However, rather than pointing to atonement as the ktoret's primary function, the Seforno views it as an expression of kavod to Hashem, and hence a prayer of sorts asking the Almighty to accept the korbanot offered on the other mizbeiach. The Ramban also writes along the lines, describing the mizbach ha-zahav as an expression of kavod rather than a means of bringing the Shechina.

This point, whether or not the ktoret is required to bring the Shechina, appears to be subject to dispute. The Midrash Tanchuma, Tetzaveh 15, writes clearly that the Shechina would not descend into the mishkan until after the ktoret was offered. This is also the view of the Da'at Zekeinim mi-Ba'alei ha-Tosafot on Shmot 25:6. This view would oppose the position of the Seforno and Vilna Gaon.

Several different answers to the question of this parsha's location appear in other mefarshim. Some Acharonim, including the Meshech Chochma (30:1), view the location of this parsha as an allusion to the halacha allowing the offering of ktoret even without the mizbach ha-ktoret. The Or Ha-chayim (25:9) also sees here a subtle allusion to a technicality, that Shlomo Ha-melech built his own mizbach ha-ktoret rather than using Moshe's. (This assumption is somewhat controversial - see Torah Shleima, milu'im to Parshat Tetzaveh, 29.) The Tzror Ha-mor (30:1) writes that the Torah places this parsha last to indicate the unique stature of the mizbach ha-ktoret as the most important of all the klei ha-mikdash. A similar theory is advanced by Rav Dov Rabinowitz ("Da'at Sofrim"), who claims that Bnei Yisrael are worthy for the ktoret, the most exalted of all the offerings, only after they have loyally executed all the commands of the previous chapters and the Shechina has taken its residence in the mishkan. Rav Zalman

Sorotzkin (Oznayim la-Torah 30:1) suggests precisely the opposite: lest one afford too much importance to the mizbach ha-zahav over the mizbach ha-nechoshet, the Torah extracted the former from the discussion of the klei ha-mikdash in order to emphasize that the mizbach ha-nechoshet actually constitutes the primary altar. The Netziv understands the Torah's structure as intended to underscore the distinct themes symbolized by the two mizbachot. The mizbach ha-nechoshet - along with the menorah - represents Torah, whereas the mizbach ha-ktoret symbolizes gemilut chasadim. The Torah emphasizes their symbolic distinction by separating them; their coexistence in the heichal points to the need for the two to work in tandem. The Malbim, who develops an elaborate system of symbolism with regard to the mishkan and its accessories, views the mizbach ha-ktoret as representing the spiritual result of the avoda performed in the mishkan. It is therefore presented last and apart from the rest of the mishkan's components, as it represents that which is attained as a result of that was discussed beforehand.



# Parshas Tetzaveh: A Continual Offering

By Rabbi Yitzchak Etshalom

## I. A CONTINUAL OFFERING

Over these few weeks, we are reading about the command to construct the Mishkan (Sanctuary) and the fulfillment of that command by the B=nei Yisra=el. After being commanded to build the Mishkan, all of its vessels and accouterments, the B=nei Yisra=el were adjured to sacrifice the Olat haTamid -the continual burnt offering. The Olat haTamid is offered up twice daily:

AThe one lamb you shall offer in the morning; and the other lamb you shall offer between the evens (between noon and the end of the day).@ (Sh=mot 29:39) The Olat haTamid claims primacy not only as the first sacrifice mandated (besides the Pessach); its significance is alluded to in many Parashiot relating to the sacrificial order: Ybesides the Olat haTamid and its libation appears fourteen (14!) times in Bamidbar (chapters 28-29). Every sacrifice brought is to be offered up Ybesides the Olat haTamid i.e. after the daily Acontinual@ sacrifice. It is from these verses that the dictum AFrequency causes precedence@ is derived:

Kol haTadir meHavero Kodem et Havero (That [ritual] which is more frequent than another precedes that other.) (Mishna Zevachim 10:1) An example of the application of this concept is found in the eighth chapter of Berakhot (and its parallel Sugya in the last chapter of Pesachim) where Beit Shammai and Beit Hillel disagree about the order of the two B=rakhot recited at Friday night Kiddush. The Gemara explains Beit Hillel=s position (that the blessing over the wine is recited before the blessing over the Shabbat), by applying the rule of frequency generates precedence. Since the recitation of the blessing over wine (YBorei P=r Haggafen) is perforce more frequent than the recitation of the blessing over Shabbat (YM=kaddesh haShabbat), the blessing over wine precedes the blessing over Shabbat.

## II. DEFINITIONS OF \*TAMID\*

I would like to raise two questions about the Olat haTamid; one formulaic and the other fundamental. The formula used to describe the daily sacrifices: Tamid, is somewhat misleading here. In other usages in Tenakh, the term Tamid indicates unceasing presence or action. For example:

The fire shall be Tamid (constantly) burning on the altar, it shall never go out.@ (Vayyikra 6:6 B see MT Hilkhos T=midin uMusafin 2:1).

The fire is always to be burning on the altar B this constitutes Tamid. The well-known prayer of David:

I have set God before me Tamid (constantly)@ (T=hillim 16:8) expresses David=s unceasing awareness of the Divine Presence.

In our case, however, the constancy of the daily offerings is much more limited, indeed occasional. ATThe one lamb shall you offer in the morning, and the other lamb shall you offer between the evens.@

How can the Torah describe these offerings as Tamid when they are brought at two separate junctures of the day?

One might argue that the meaning here of Tamid is not the same as in the verses quoted above; that here it indicates that the practice is to be constant, i.e. day in and day out (without missing a day). This could be termed Arelative constancy@- relative to the demands of the ritual, it is practiced constantly. For instance, we would describe someone who keeps Shabbat regularly as one who Aalways keeps Shabbat@, even though there are six days out of seven when this is impossible. Relative to the Mitzvah of Sh=mirat Shabbat, however, he fulfills them regularly; this justifies the appellation AShomer Shabbat.@

One might argue that B except for R. Yose. (BT Menahot 99b): The Lehem haPanim (showbread) is to be before God ATamid@. The old loaves were replaced each week with the new loaves. According to the first opinion in the Mishna, four Kohanim slid the old loaves off of the table as four others slid the new loaves on to the table; this in order to fulfill the requirement of Tamid. R. Yose disagreed, saying that even if one set of loaves was removed totally and the other then put in its place, this still fulfilled the requirement of Tamid. In the Gemara, a more detailed opinion of R. Yose=s is quoted:

R. Yose says: Even if they removed the old set of loaves in the morning and set up the new set of loaves in the evening, this is Tamid.

R. Yose could have argued Arelative constancy@ and explained that as long as the bread was there every week, it is considered Tamid. R. Yose=s refusal to use this argument indicates that the demand of Tamid is not relieved via relative constancy; we must redefine constancy for each case individually.

## III. GENERATING PRECEDENCE

Kol haTadir meHavero Kodem et Havero (That [ritual] which is more frequent than another precedes that other.) This legal concept is derived from the law of the Olat haTamid. A fundamental question, shooting its curious arrows of inquiry beyond the formula of Tamid, begs to be answered here. Why does frequency translate into precedence in Halakhah? Conventionally, occasional and unusual occurrences are more exciting, exotic and inspiring. That which is constant is mundane, humdrum and usual; the religious psyche seeks and thrives on the occasion, the festivity; that which removes us and helps us to transcend our everyday existence. How can we compare an everyday sunset to Halley=s comet? Isn=t the Sh=ma Yisra=el of Nei=la [at the end of Yom haKippurim] a hundredfold more inspiring than the Sh=ma Yisra=el of a midwinter=s Tuesday evening?

One answer that is tempting utilizes a reversal of assumption: Precedence itself does not indicate significance; contrariwise, precedence indicates a lack of significance. That which is more common goes first B in order to build up to the less common, more exciting event or ritual. This sense of ordering practice with the intent of creating a spiritual climax is inviting; it appeals to our dramatic and suspenseful entertainment mentality. This answer, however, cannot withstand the test of the juxtaposed Halakha.

Following the formulation of the rule that AFrequency generates precedence@, the next Mishnah in Zevachim (10:2), asserts a comparable principle: ASanctity generates precedence.@ Kol haM=kudash meHavero Kodem et Havero (That [ritual] which is holier than another precedes that other.) Clearly, the precedence of that which is holy is comparable to the precedence of that which is frequent. Since we would not assume that the holier ritual is practiced first in order to build up to one less holy; our theory of spiritual climax which



explains the precedence of that which is frequent is apparently disproved.

We now have two problems to solve: Why does frequency generate precedence; and how can we refer to the daily offerings as Tamid when they are not an unceasing practice?

#### IV. RAMBAM=S APPROACH

Alt is a Mitzvat >Aseh to offer in the Sanctuary two lambs of the first year every dayY@ (Sefer haMitzvot, Mitzvat >Aseh #39; Mishneh Torah: introduction to Hilkhhot T=midin uMusafin, Mitzvah #1).

Rambam defines the two daily T=midin as one Mitzva. This is similar in formula to Rambam=s definition of the Mitzvah of Reading the Sh=ma. (Sefer HaMitzvot, Mitzvat >Aseh #10; Mishneh Torah: introduction to Hilkhhot K=ri=at Sh=ma; see, however, Sefer haMitzvot of R. Sa=adia Ga=on where K=ri=at Sh=ma is counted as two Mitzot, morning and evening separately; see also Ramban=s critique on Sefer haMitzvot, Shores #9). The two daily offerings (as well as the two daily readings of the Sh=ma) are not two separate Mitzvot; each pair constitutes one Mitzvah. This presentation is itself difficult; how can two separate actions, each defined separately (at the very least, each has its own time parameter. For another distinction, see B.T. Menahot 50a and MT T=midin uMusafin 1:12) be considered one Mitzva?

One possible avenue of response is that of >Ikkuva (interdependence). We find other Mitzvot which are composed of various actions; since each one is necessary for the fulfillment of the Mitzvah, each is regarded as an Ikkuva to the performance of the Mitzvah; it therefore becomes part of the same Mitzvah. By way of example, each of the four species taken on Sukkot is an Ikkuva to the performance of the Mitzvah (Mishna Menahot 3:6; Mishneh Torah: Hilkhhot Lulav 7:5). Therefore, if one lacked an Etrog, and took the Lulav, Hadas and Aravah, it would be (from an Halakhic standpoint) a meaningless action. Since all four species are an Ikkuva B a necessary component B to performing the Mitzvah, they must be considered one Mitzvah (one could, of course, define causality in the inverse direction thusly: Since all four comprise one Mitzva, each then becomes a necessary component to its fulfillment). Applying Ikkuva to the T=midin would have to work as follows:

Since each offering (morning and afternoon) is necessary for the fulfillment of the Mitzvah, they must be defined as one Mitzvah. The same rule would have to apply to the morning and evening readings of the Sh=ma=, in order to defend Rambam=s grouping of these two readings into one Mitzvah. The Halakhah, however, does not bear this out. Rambam (Hilkhhot T=midin uMusafin 1:12) following the Gemara in Menahot (50b), rules that if the morning Tamid was not brought, even if this neglect was intentional, the afternoon Tamid is still brought. The one exception to this rule (Rambam, BT Menahot ad loc.) is rooted in a concern extrinsic to our problem. Similarly, regarding the reading of the Sh=ma=, if one neglected to read the Sh=ma= in the morning, this does not exempt him from the obligation to read the Sh=ma= in the evening, neither does neglecting the evening reading prevent the morning reading from being a complete obligation (see BT Berakhot 26a).

Clearly, Ikkuva is not Rambam=s reason for considering both T=midin (and both readings of the Sh=ma=) as one Mitzva. How very frustrating! Instead of answering the two questions above, we have compounded the problem by adding a third. Why does Rambam count the two daily T=midin (and, correspondingly, the two daily readings of the Sh=ma=) as one Mitzva? We can answer this by returning to the Gemara=s discussion of the demand for Tamid in the fulfillment of the Mitzvah of Lehem haPanim B a section we referred to above (end of Section II).

#### V. THE \*LEHEM HAPANIM\*

The Torah states:

You shall take choice flour, and bake twelve loaves of it; two-tenths of an ephah shall be in each loaf. You shall place them in two rows, six in a row, on the table of pure gold. You shall put pure frankincense with each row, to be a token offering for the bread, as an offering by fire to YHVH. Every sabbath day Aaron shall set them in order before YHVH Tamid as a commitment of the people of Israel, as a covenant forever. They shall be for Aaron and his descendants, who shall eat them in a holy place, for they are most holy portions for him from the offerings by fire to YHVH, a perpetual due. (Vayyikra 24:5-9) The Lehem HaPanim (showbread), which rested on the Shulhan (table) Tamid was replaced with the new set of loaves every Shabbat. According to the Mishnah (Menahot 11:7) , there are two opinions of how the bread was replaced while maintaining the constancy of Tamid. According to the first opinion, as the new bread was placed on the Shulhan, the old bread was slid off.

R. Yose, however, was of the opinion that such temporal proximity was unnecessary. In a Baraita (quoted in BT Menahot 99b), R. Yose is quoted as saying that even if the old bread was removed in the morning and the new bread replaced in the evening, this still constitutes Tamid.

R. Ami (ibid) derives the following rule from R. Yose=s statement:

Even if one only read one chapter [of T=nakh] in the morning and one chapter in the evening, he has fulfilled >The scroll of this Torah shall not disappear from your mouth= [and you shall study it day and night] (Yehoshua 1:8).@ R. Yohanan, quoting R. Shim=on b. Yohai, states: AEven if one only read the Shema= in the morning and in the evening, he has fulfilled >It shall not disappear= @ (BT Menahot ibid)

#### VI. TWO DEFINITIONS OF CONSTANCY

There are two ways of defining constancy. The simplest, most common way is Aconstancy = continually recurring@ (American Heritage Dictionary). Rambam=s formula in the enumeration of the Mitzvot, counting both daily T=midin as one Mitzvah helps us (and even forces us) to reevaluate the definition of constancy. A less common, but possibly more valid definition within the oeuvre of Halakha is: AConstancy = frequent expression of an unceasing relationship.@

By way of example, a happily married couple is endlessly in love. Nevertheless, the expression of their mutual affection must, perforce, be limited by the other demands and manifestations of their lives. Each member works, studies and perhaps plays separately. By delegating birthdays, anniversaries, certain holidays and the like, the frequent Aromantic interlude@ serves as an indication of their



unending love for each other. These days function as signposts in the relationship; the mood and spirit of such occasions helps to define the ongoing nature of the relationship (Within the pale of the Shir haShirim model, this can serve as an analogy for the relationship between God and the Jewish people. Shabbat is a beautiful example of a relationship signpost which helps define the relationship during the rest of the week).

All three questions which we asked can be answered as one: The daily offering is called Tamid, for it is the symbol of constant devotion to God. Since the daily Tamid function as daily signposts to the relationship (the morning Tamid is the first sacrifice of the day. Except for the Pessah, the afternoon Tamid is the last), they are one Mitzvah; a continuous Mitzvah of Olah which has its expression at the extremes of the day. So, too, is the reading of the Shema; when you lie down and when you rise up is a way of assigning special times to that relationship- instructively, these times are, once again, at the extremes of man's day, just as the times for the Tamid are at the extremes of the Sanctuary day (there are no sacrifices offered at night; MT Ma'aseh haKorbanot 4:1).

Kol haTadir meHavero Kodem et Havero (That [ritual] which is more frequent than another precedes that other) is now understood. All Mitzvot are a symbol of the covenant between the Jewish people and God; that Mitzvah which is more frequent indicates that it represents a more significant element in that relationship (much as we remain in closer contact with close friends and family than with mere acquaintances); therefore it demands precedence. QED

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**MEGILLAT ESTHER, ITS 'HIDDEN' MESSAGE**

Is the Megilla a satire? It certainly contains many strange details that beg interpretation. But if so, why would a satire be included in the Tanach. In the following shiur, we attempt to 'unmask' Megillat Esther by considering its historical and prophetic setting.

**INTRODUCTION**

We begin our study with one of the most well known psukim of the Megilla:

"Ish **yehudi** haya be-Shushan ha-bira - u-shmo **Mordechai**" (see Esther 2:5).

Even though this pasuk is proudly read aloud by the entire congregation, most people do not appreciate its prophetic 'sting'. However, an ear tuned to the prophecies of Zecharya and familiar with Tanach immediately catches its irony, as:

**ish yehudi** - implies more than simply someone who is Jewish;  
**ha-bira** - implies more than just 'the capital city'; and  
**Mordechai** - is not a Jewish name!

\* The phrase **ish yehudi** is mentioned only one other time in the entire Tanach - in Sefer Zecharya 8:23. There it describes a devout Jew in the city of Jerusalem - leading a group of non-Jewish followers in search of God.

\* the word **ha-bira** in Divrei Ha-yamim (see 29:1 & 29:19) is used by King David to describe specifically the bet ha-mikdash (the Temple). Prior to the time period of Megillat Esther, the Hebrew word bira finds no other mention in Tanach.

\* The name **Mordechai** is probably the most provocative word in the entire Megilla for it stems from the name of the Babylonian deity -Marduk (see II Kings 25:27 & Yeshayahu 39:1!). Prior to the Babylonian exile, no one would have dared give his son such a 'goyish' name.

[This does not imply that Mordechai was assimilated, rather his name may reflect the assimilation of his generation.]

And this may be only one of many psukim of the Megilla that are filled with irony and possibly satire. Yet, if this conclusion is correct, we must explain why the Megilla would employ satire to deliver its prophetic message. Furthermore, we must also determine more precisely what that prophetic message is, and how it relates to our celebration of Purim.

To answer these questions, our shiur will take the following steps:

- I. Base our above assumption that the Megilla should contain a prophetic message, related to its historical setting.
- II. Review both the historical and prophetic setting of the time period of the Megilla.
- III. Search for a thematic connection between this setting and the story in the Megilla, and support it with both textual and thematic parallels from other books in Tanach.
- IV. Explain why the Megilla employs this unique style.
- V. Explain how the celebration of Purim, as defined in the Megilla, relates to this theme.

**PART I - 'HESTER PANIM'**

As every book of the Tanach contains a prophetic message, Megillat Esther should be no different. It is commonly understood that the Megilla teaches us how to see the 'hidden hand' of God behind the events that ultimately lead to Bnei Yisrael's salvation from Haman. Some even suggest that the Megilla's use of the name Esther (from the Hebrew verb 'lehasiti' - to hide) instead of her real name - Hadassa (see 2:7) teaches us this very lesson.

However, if the Megilla wants to show us how God saved His people, why isn't this message explicit? Furthermore, why isn't God's Name ever mentioned? Most every other sefer in Tanach expresses this point explicitly. Why is Megillat Esther different?

Furthermore, most all other seforim in Tanach explain not only how God saves Am Yisrael, but also why they are being punished. This theme of divine retribution is explicit in the Torah in the tochachot (Vayikra 26:3-46, Devarim 11:13-17, 28:1-69, etc.) and reiterated over and over again by all of the prophets. In fact Chazal's explanation of the name Esther reflects this very same concept:

"Esther min ha-Torah minayin?"

[What is the source in Torah for the story of Esther?]

"ve-Anochi haster aster panai ba-yom ha-hu"

[I will surely hide my face from you on that day.]

(Devarim 31:18 / See Chullin 139b).

However, if we take a closer look at that pasuk in Devarim, we find that its message is significantly different. Rather than explaining how God 'saves' Am Yisrael in a 'hidden manner', it explains how God 'punishes' them:

"And God told Moshe, after you die... this nation will leave Me and break My covenant...And My anger will be kindled against them on that day and I will forsake them, ["ve-histarti panai"] and I will hide My face from them... and many evils and troubles shall befall them - & they will say on that day, these evils are because God is not among us.

- Ve-anochi haster astir panai ba-yom ha-hu -

and I will hide My face from them on that day because of all the bad that they have done... [Therefore,]

- Write down this song and teach it to Bnei Yisrael, so that it will be My witness..." (see Devarim 31:16-18).

In these psukim, God warns Bnei Yisrael that should they betray His covenant, great evil will befall them. Even though it may appear to Bnei Yisrael that God has left them, these psukim teach them that God only appears to be 'hiding His face' ['hester panim'] from them. Nonetheless, Bnei Yisrael are expected to realize that their punishment is from God. Therefore, Moshe is to teach Bnei Yisrael Shirat Ha'azinu in order that they recognize this. The shira will teach Am Yisrael to contemplate their predicament and relate their punishment to their wayward behavior. To verify this point, simply read Shirat Ha'azinu [note especially 31:19-20.]

Above all, Shirat Ha'azinu explains how we are to determine why we are being punished. In that song, we are told:

"Zechor yemot olam, binu shnot dor va-dor..." (Devarim 32:7).

[Remember the days of old; consider the years of ages past.]

The shira teaches us to contemplate our history, especially how and why we were chosen (see 32:8-9), in order to realize why we are being punished. It reminds us that when something does go wrong, it is our fault, not God's (see 32:4-6!).

Even though God may hide His face, Shirat Ha'azinu does promise that God will ultimately redeem His people, however, not necessarily because they deserve redemption. Rather, God will have mercy on our pitiful predicament (see 32:26-27, also 32:37-38) and save us at the 'last minute'.

Most all of the prophets deliver a very similar message. They explain to Bnei Yisrael what they have done wrong, and hence why they are being punished. Prophecy teaches man not only to thank God for salvation, but also to recognize his faults and correct his mistakes.

Therefore, the Megilla should be no different, and especially because its name alludes to the pasuk in Chumash that commands us to search for a reason why we are punished.

[This supports the Gemara's question in Masechet Megilla 12a (middle) "sha'alu talmidav et Rashb"i: mipnei ma nitchayvu..."]

Even though the Megilla does not provide an explicit reason for this impending punishment, this background and its name suggest that we search for a 'hidden' (or implicit) one. To find that reason, we must consider prophetic and historical setting of that time period.



## PART II - HISTORICAL AND PROPHETIC SETTING

The opening psukim of the Megilla immediately point us to its time period (see 1:1-3). Achashverosh is a Persian king who reigns from India to Ethiopia in the city of Shushan. Considering that Cyrus (=Koresh) was the first Persian king, the story in Megillat Esther takes place during the Persian time period and thus after the time period when the Jews had an opportunity to return to Jerusalem.

Even though there is a controversy concerning precisely which Persian King Achashverosh was, he most certainly reigned after Koresh (the first Persian king), and thus, after Yirmiyahu's seventy years were over.

[Note: If you are not familiar with this time period, it is highly recommended that you review Kings II 23:31-25:12, Ezra 1:1-10 and 3:1-4:7, and Yirmiyahu 29:1-15. As you read Ezra 1:1-9, note how the Jews who did not make 'aliya' were encouraged to send 'money' instead! Seems like not much has changed in 2500 years!]

For those of you unfamiliar with this time period, here is a quick overview:

In the first year of his reign, Koresh issued his famous proclamation allowing and encouraging all of the Jews of the Persian Empire to return to Jerusalem and rebuild the Temple. The prophets clearly understood this historic decree as the fulfillment of Yirmiyahu's prophecy (see Ezra 1:1-9, II Divrei Ha-yamim 36:20-23). As God had promised, the time of redemption from the Babylonian Exile had come.

## YIRMIYAHU'S SEVENTY YEARS

To appreciate the prophetic importance of this opportunity, we need only quote Yirmiyahu's final message to the Babylonian Exile in regard to what was 'supposed' to happen when these seventy years were over:

"Thus said the Lord, when the 70 years are complete, I shall remember you and keep my promise to return you to this land.... [At that time.] you shall call out to Me - you shall come and pray to Me - and I will hear you...and you will ask for Me and find Me; if you will search for me with all your heart. Then I will be there for you, and I shall turn away your captivity and gather you from all the nations wherein you may be dispersed... and I will return you to the land from which you were exiled ..." (29:10-14).

According to Yirmiyahu, the return of the Exile would not be automatic. Rather, it was God's hope that their return would be catalyzed by sincere repentance and a yearning to return. In other words, God intended for the Babylonian Exile [as the word 'exile' implies] to be temporary. People don't stay in 'exile' unless they are forced to be there. Exile implies that one cannot return to his own land. [Otherwise the translation of 'galut' would be 'diaspora' instead of 'exile' / hey, not a bad idea!]

Note as well how Yirmiyahu's message is congruent with a primary theme of Chumash, i.e. God's desire for the Jewish people to become His 'model' nation - a vehicle through which all nations will come to recognize God (see Devarim 4:5-8 & Shmot 19:4-6). Recall as well that in that ideal setting, the bet ha-mikdash in Yerushalayim was to serve as a symbol of this national purpose.

[See previous shiurim on Parshiot Re'eh, Noach, and Vayetze.

Recall that the mikdash is referred to as: "ha-makom asher yivchar Hashem le-shaken **shmo** sham" / see Devarim 12:5-14.]

God's decision to destroy that Temple and exile his people was for a rehabilitative purpose. According to Yirmiyahu, God's hope was for the Exile to 'learn its lesson' during these seventy years in Bavel. Afterward, God hoped that the nation would be spiritually ready and anxious to return to their homeland, and to reconstruct their symbolic shrine - the Temple in Jerusalem.

Precisely as Yirmiyahu had predicted (seventy years after Bavel had risen to power), the opportunity to return arose when the Babylonian empire fell to Koresh (= Cyrus the Great), the first king of the Persian Empire (see Yirmiyahu 25:11-12, Ezra 1:1).

## A MISSED OPPORTUNITY

Unfortunately, the response of the Exile to this historic opportunity was less than enthusiastic. A group of some forty thousand did return; however, the majority of Am Yisrael remained in Bavel. For an insight into the tragedy of the missed opportunity we need only quote the explanation given by Rav Yehuda Ha-Levi in Sefer Ha-Kuzari (II.24):

"Had the entire nation enthusiastically answered the divine call to return to the Land, the idyllic prophecies of the return to Zion would have been fulfilled and the Shchina would have returned. In reality, however, only a small portion returned. The majority remained in Bavel, willfully accepting the exile, as they did not wish to leave their homes & businesses etc." (sounds familiar...)

Even those who did return lacked enthusiasm. The apathy of the returnees is echoed in the prophecies of Chagai and Zecharya, the prophets of this time period (see Chagai 1:1-3; 2:3 see also Zecharya 4:10; 6:15; 7:4-7; 8:6).

How does all of this relate to Megillat Esther?

How could it not relate!

Could the fact that Am Yisrael remained scattered among the 127 provinces of the Persian Empire, while they could have returned a generation or two earlier to Jerusalem, not relate to the prophetic message of the Megilla?

Considering that Yirmiyahu's seventy years are over, why are so many Jews living in Shushan and all over the Persian empire during the time period of Achashverosh?

Could not this fact alone supply sufficient reason for God to consider Am Yisrael negligent of their covenantal responsibilities?

With this in mind, we must now take a second look at the Megilla in search of at least a 'hint' of this theme.

## PART III - THE THEME OF THE MEGILLA AND ITS SATIRE

Based on this historic and prophetic setting, one could suspect that the impending destruction of Am Yisrael by Haman may be a Divine punishment for their apathy. After all, the Jews living in the Persian empire appear to have:

- \* preferred Shushan over Yerushalayim;
- \* opted to subjugate themselves to Achashverosh rather than respond to God's call to return to their land;
- \* Replaced the bet ha-mikdash with the palace of Achashverosh! ["ve-nahafoch hu"]

Even though this prophetic message is not explicit in the Megilla, we will now show how it may be hidden in its satire.

[Note: Before we continue, it is important to clarify a problematic issue. We are about to relate many elements in the story of the Megilla to a satiric commentary on Persian Jewry. This does not mean that these events did not actually occur. The story of the Megilla is true and based on historic facts. However, its prophetic message is conveyed through the use of literary tools, such as satire and irony. Often, criticism is more poignant when delivered implicitly rather than explicitly. (Lehavedil, take for example George Orwell's criticism of the Russian revolution in 'Animal Farm'.)]

## TEXTUAL AND THEMATIC SUPPORT

For a start, we will bring two examples where there appears to be an 'echo' of God's voice behind certain statements in the Megilla.

For example, the story of Vashti may reflect God's utter disappointment with Am Yisrael for not returning to Israel to fulfill their divine purpose, to become God's 'model' nation:

"[Vashti was called to] come to the king and show all the nations her beauty... but she did not come as the King commanded, and he became very angry..." (see Esther 1:9-12).

Is not Vashti's behavior similar to that of Am Yisrael? Is not the King's conclusion similar to God's? Is not the fear that all the women in the Persian kingdom will now disobey their husbands ironic? If Am Yisrael (destined to be an 'or la-goyim') does not respond to its divine call, what could God expect from other nations?

[Note that in earlier prophecy, Am Yisrael is often compared to God's wife - see Hoshea 2:4,16-18. See also Zecharya 1:1-3, note 'shuvu elai...' and 'va-yiktzo', compare 1:12.]



Furthermore, who is the real king in the Megilla? Chazal raise the possibility that the word 'ha-melech' [the King] in the Megilla may be 'kodesh', as it often [in a hidden manner] may be referring to God and not to Achashverosh.

Even Haman's petition to Achashverosh to destroy Am Yisrael may echo a similar complaint that God may have against His own nation:

"There is a certain nation scattered among the nations whose laws are different than any other nation, but the laws of the King they do not keep, and it is not worthwhile for the King to leave them be" (3:8).

In a certain way, Haman's accusation is similar to God's threat in Shirat Ha'azinu to destroy Am Yisrael for not keeping His laws (32:26). After all, what purpose is there for God to keep His people if they refuse to obey Him and fulfill their divine goal?

Even though these first two examples may appear a bit 'stretched', a more convincing textual proof is found in the parallel between Achashverosh's palace and the bet mikdash. This parallel is significant for it reflects the fact the Bnei Yisrael had neglected the bet ha-mikdash in Yerushalayim, preferring instead to be dependent on the palace of Achashverosh. We begin by comparing the overall structure of each:

#### **KODESH KODASHIM - CHATZER PNIMIT**

The Megilla refers to the most inner chamber of the king's palace as the 'chatzer ha-pnimit' (5:1), where entry to anyone is forbidden under threat of death - unless called to enter (as Esther feared in 4:11). Here we find an obvious parallel to the kodesh ha-kodashim in the mikdash (Purim - kippurim!).

#### **KODESH - CHATZER CHITZONA**

The 'waiting area' outside the inner chamber is called the 'chatzer ha-chitzona' (6:4). Here 'ro'ei pnei ha-melech' (1:14) like Haman himself are allowed to enter freely. This is parallel to the kodesh where kohanim are permitted to enter.

[See description of the Temple in Yechezkel 40:18-19.]

#### **AZARA - SHA'AR BET HA-MELECH**

In front of the palace is 'sha'ar bet ha-melech' where people like Mordechai are permitted to stand (2:18,21). However, here one must dress properly ('aveilut' is not permitted), therefore he cannot be there dressed in sackcloth (see 4:2!). This area is parallel to the azara in the mikdash.

#### **YERUSHALAYIM - REHOV HA-IR SHUSHAN**

This is the area 'lifnei sha'ar ha-melech' (4:2) or 'rechov ha-ir' (4:6) where Mordechai can dress in sackcloth. This is parallel to the city of Yerushalayim surrounding the mikdash.

This parallel is strengthened by the Megilla's use of the word bira to describe Shushan. As we explained in our introduction, in Divrei Ha-yamim, the only other time in Tanach prior to Megillat Esther where this word is mentioned, bira describes specifically the bet ha-mikdash, and in the context of its purpose to serve as a national center and symbol of God's Name. [See DH I 29:1 & 19, you should read from 29:1-25 to see the context. (You'll find there a familiar passage from davening, which maybe you will now understand a little better.)]

[See also Masechet Middot I:9, where the Mishna refers to the bet ha-mikdash as the bira.]

Other parallels to mikdash are found in the use of key words such as 'yekar ve-tiferet' (1:4); 'tekhelet, butz, ve-argaman' (1:6) in the Megilla's description of the king's party.

[Based on these psukim, the gemara (Megilla 12a) claims that Achashverosh donned the 'bigdei kohen gadol' at his party!]

Even the 6-month party followed by a seven-day special celebration may parallel the six months that it took to build the mishkan (from Yom Kippur till Rosh Chodesh Nissan) followed by

the seven-day 'milu'im' ceremony. Likewise, Chazal explain, 've-keilim mi-keilim shonim' (1:7) as referring to the vessels of the bet ha-mikdash.

Chazal even suggest that Haman's decree may have been Am Yisrael's punishment for drinking from these keilim or alternately for their participation in and enjoyment of the royal party (see Megilla 12a).

[Note that according to pshat, the keilim had returned with Sheshbatzar during the time of Koresh (see Ezra 1:7-8).

However, the Midrash emphasizes the thematic connection between the party and Bnei Yisrael's lack of enthusiasm to build the mikdash.]

Hence we can conclude that the Megilla's satire suggests that during this time period Am Yisrael had replaced:

- \* God with Achashverosh;
- \* God's Temple with Achashverosh's palace; and
- \* Yerushalayim ha-bira with Shushan ha-bira! ['ve-nahafoch hu']

#### **70 DAYS / 70 YEARS**

Another seemingly unimportant detail in the Megilla concerning when the two decrees were sent might also allude to this prophetic backdrop.

Recall that the original decree calling for the destruction of the Jews was sent out on the 13th day of Nisan (3:12). Several days later Haman was hanged and Esther pleaded from the king to repeal this decree (8:3-6). Achashverosh agreed; however, the actual letters were not sent out until the 23rd of Sivan - some two months later (8:9)! What took so long?

By carefully comparing these two dates, we again find an amazing reminder of Yirmiyahu's prophecy of the seventy years. Between the 13th of Nisan until the 23rd of Sivan - 70 days elapsed (17+30+23). During these seventy days, all of the Jews throughout the Persian empire were under the tremendous peril of impending destruction, thinking that their doom was inevitable. Could this be an ironic reminder to the Jewish people that they had not heeded Yirmiyahu's prophecy of what he expected from Bnei Yisrael once the seventy years had expired (see 29:10-14)?

A similar concept of suffering for a sin, a day for a year (and vice versa), is found twice in Tanach in related circumstances. After the sin of the 'meraglim', the forty days are replaced by the punishment of forty years of wandering. Here, too, the nation opted not to fulfill their divine destiny, preferring a return to Egypt to the conquest of Eretz Yisrael. Yechezkel, too, is required to suffer 'a day for each year.'

[For 390 days followed by an additional 40 days, he must lie on his side and repent for the sins of Israel and Yehuda that led to the destruction of Yerushalayim (Yechezkel 4:1-14!).]

A similar claim is made by the Midrash which suggests that Achashverosh threw his 180 day party in celebration of the fact that Yirmiyahu's seventy years were over and the bet ha-mikdash was not rebuilt. In pshat, this explanation is unreasonable. Why should the most powerful king of civilization worry about the prophecies of Yirmiyahu, while the Jews themselves do not listen to him? However, on the level of drash, this explanation is enlightening. Chazal, in the spirit of the Megilla - 've-nahafoch hu' - put into Achashverosh's mind what should have been in the mind of Am Yisrael, i.e. the fulfillment of Yirmiyahu's prophecy of seventy years and the desire to return.

#### **PESACH AND PURIM**

Based on our understanding thus far, it is also understandable why Israel's salvation from Haman's decree comes only after Am Yisrael collectively accept a three day fast. This fast takes place on the 15, 16, & 17th of Nisan. Interestingly enough, the events that led to the repeal of Haman's decree take place 'davka' during the holiday of Pesach - the holiday on which we celebrate our freedom from subjugation to a foreign nation and the beginning of our journey to the Promised Land.



## PART IV - WHY SATIRE?

We have shown that the Megilla is laced with allusions to the fact that Am Yisrael does not answer its divine call during the Persian time period. But the question remains, why is this message only hinted at but not explicitly stated by Chazal? Most probably for the same reason that it is not explicit in the Megilla.

This is the power of satire. In order to strengthen the message, a powerful point is not explicitly stated, but only alluded to. The direct approach used by the other 48 nevi'im of Tanach had not been very successful.

[See Masechet Megilla 14a (top) - "gedola hasarat ha-taba'at shel Haman yoter mi-48 nevi'im..."!]

One could suggest that Anshei Knesset Ha-gdola, in their decision to write (see Bava Batra 15a) (and later canonize) Megillat Esther, had hoped that a satirical message would be more powerful than a direct one. Hence, Midrashim of Chazal that comment on the Megilla may follow a similar approach.

[Note how the prophet Nathan's message to David ha-melech in regard to his sin with Bat-sheva was much more powerful because he used the 'mashal' of kivsah ha-rash" (see II Shmuel 12:1-7!).]

## PART V - THE MINHAGIM OF PURIM

Up until this point we have explained how the satire in the Megilla may reflect a prophetic censure of Am Yisrael in Bavel for not returning to Yerushalayim when the opportunity arose during the time of Koresh. However, if our assumptions are indeed correct, then we would expect the outcome of the Megilla, or at least the celebration of Purim for future generations to reflect this theme.

Instead, we don't find any 'mass aliya' movement after our salvation. Nor does the celebration of Purim (with 'mishteh' and sending 'mishloach manot') appear to reflect this theme in any manner.

However, with a 'little help' from the prophecies of Zecharya, we can suggest an answer for these questions as well. To do so, we must first identify who the specific Persian King Achashverosh was.

## SOME MORE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The topic of the history of the Persian time period is very complicated and the subject of a major controversy between most Midrashei Chazal and the historians (& a minority opinion in Chazal). To explain this controversy is beyond the scope of this shiur, instead we will simply present the two conflicting opinions concerning when Achashverosh reigned.

According to Seder Olam (and hence the majority opinion in Chazal), Achashverosh was the Persian King immediately after Koresh, but before Daryavesh, and thus the story of the Megilla takes place after 'shivat tzion' (the return to Zion during the time of Koresh) but before the second bet ha-mikdash is actually built.

According to this opinion, the events of the Megilla had a tremendous affect on the situation in Yerushalayim. Only two years after the story of Megilla, King Darius, son of Esther gives the Jews permission to return and build the Second Temple. Construction began during the second year of Darius (= Daryavesh).

The events of the Megilla also appear to have catalyzed a major aliya movement. According to Chazal, Ezra's aliya from Bavel took place only a few years afterward, during the seventh year of his reign of Daryavesh (who Chazal identify with Artachshasta / see Ezra 7:1-9).

Thus, according to Seder Olam's opinion, the events of the Megilla indeed had a major effect on the rebuilding of the Temple and shivat tzion - the return to Zion.

According to most historians (and a minority opinion in Chazal / see Targum ha-shiv'im & Pirkei de-Rabbi Eliezer chapter 49), Achashverosh was the Persian king who succeeded Darius (486 - 465 BCE), and thus the story of the Megilla takes place some forty years after the second Temple was built, and thus after Chagai & Zecharya's plea to return and fulfill the potential of Bayit Sheni. [Its construction began in 521 BCE / in the second year of Darius the Great; hence the story in the Megilla takes place in 474 BCE.]

According to this opinion, no major event takes place

immediately after the events in the Megilla. In fact, over two decades pass before a new wave of olim come with Ezra and Nechemya to help strengthen the city of Yerushalayim. [The historians identify Artachshasta with Artaxerxes, not the same king as Darius.]

If our assumption concerning the satire of the Megilla is correct, why don't we find a mass aliya movement immediately after the miracle of Purim. [Jews of the twentieth century could ask themselves a similar question!]

Furthermore, according to either opinion, shouldn't the manner by which we celebrate Purim relate to this theme and satire?

Finally, why is it necessary to celebrate Purim for all generations? Purim is not the only time in our history when Bnei Yisrael are saved from terrible enemies. Chazal go even one step further. They claim that Purim will be the only holiday kept at the time of the final redemption! (See Rambam Hilchot Megilla, Esther 9:28 and commentaries).

## THE MEGILLA AND SEFER ZECHARYA

If we follow the opinion of the 'historians' in regard to the time period of Megillat Esther, then the prophecies of Zecharya concerning the potential of Bayit Sheni precede the story in the Megilla. If so, then we posit that numerous textual parallels between the Megilla and Sefer Zecharya are intentional. In other words, when 'anshei knesset ha-gedola' wrote Megillat Esther (most likely during the time period of Ezra / see Bava Batra 15a), they assumed that anyone reading the Megilla was familiar with Sefer Zecharya, and hence would understand the implicit meaning of these parallels.

We will now show how the Megilla may suggest that Am Yisrael's predicament during the time period of Achashverosh was caused because of Zecharya's prophecies (a generation earlier) were not taken seriously! To appreciate this message, we must study Zecharya chapters 7-8.

For a background, review the first six chapters of Sefer Zecharya, noting how they focus on one primary theme - the return of the Shchina to Yerushalayim. However, Zecharya warns numerous times that the Shchina's return will be a function of Am Yisrael's covenantal commitment (see 6:15). Redemption is indeed possible; however, Zecharya insists that the 'spiritual' return of Am Yisrael was no less important than their physical return:

"Shuvu eilai.. ve-ashuva aleichem" (1:3, see also 8:7-8).

[It is highly suggested that you read at least the first two chapters of Zecharya (note 'hadassim' and 'ish rochev al sus' in chapter 1, and 'prazot teshev Yerushalayim' in chapter 2) and then chapters 7-8 before continuing.]

## SHOULD WE FAST ON TISHA BE-AV?

According to Chagai 2:18, construction of the Temple began on this same year, i.e. during the second year of Daryavesh. Zecharya chapter seven opens two years later when an official delegation from Bavel arrives in Jerusalem to ask Zecharya a very fundamental question:

"Ha-evkeh be-chodesh ha-chamishi?" Should we continue to fast in the 5th month (i.e. the fast of Tisha Be-av)? (see 7:3)

The question appears to be quite legitimate. After all, now that the Temple is rebuilt, there no longer appears to be a need to fast. However, Zecharya's lengthy and official reply (7:4-8:23) to this question contains an eternal message that relates to the very nature of the ideal redemption process.

In Zecharya 7:4-7, God appears to be quite disturbed by the people's question regarding the need to fast. Instead of showing their interest in the greater picture of the redemption process, the people seem only to be interested in whether or not they have to fast. In the eyes of the prophet, their question reflected a general attitude problem in regard to the entire redemption process.

God's answer implies that the fast of Tisha Be-av is not a divine commandment - rather it was a 'minhag' instituted by Chazal to remember not only the Temple's destruction, but also the reason why the churban took place (see 7:5-6). Thus, God explains, feasting or fasting is man's decision, while God is interested in



something much more basic - that Bnei Yisrael keep the mitzvot which they had neglected during the first Temple period (see 7:5-14).

Zecharya continues his answer with two chapters of 'musar' (rebuke) in which he emphasizes the most basic mitzvot that Bnei Yisrael must keep in order for the Shchina to return:

"EMET u-mishpat shalom shifto be-sha'areichem, ve-chesed ve-rachamim asu ish et achiv. Almana, ve-yatom ve-ani al ta'ashoku..." (7:8-10).

- Truth, social justice, helping the poor and needy, and thinking kindly of one's neighbor, etc.

God is anxious for His Shchina to return, but in order for that to happen, Yerushalayim must first become a city characterized by truth (8:1-3). God foresees the return the exiles from lands in the east and west. With their return, God and His nation will become once again covenantal partners, through "emet & tzedaka" (see 8:7-8).

Finally, after many words of encouragement and repeated 'musar' (see 8:11-17), God finally answers the original question concerning the fast days. Should Am Yisrael return to Israel and keep "emet ve-shalom, the four fast days commemorating the destruction of Yerushalayim will become holidays:

"tzom ha-rvi, v'tzom ha'chamishi... [The four fast days] will be instead for Yehuda days of celebration... [on the condition that] they will love **emet & shalom**" (see 8:18-19 / note parallel to Megilla 9:30-31!)

After two chapters of rebuke, Zecharya finally answers the people's original question. Should Bnei Yisrael indeed show their devotion to God, i.e. if they practice 'emet u-mishpat shalom', then the fast days, the days of crying for Jerusalem, will become holidays instead.

Should Bnei Yisrael indeed love keeping emet & shalom (these two words simply summarize the primary points raised by Zecharya in this perek), then the redemption process will be complete.

## ISH YEHUDI

Zecharya concludes this prophecy with his vision of numerous people from many great nations will one day come to Yerushalayim in search of God. They will gather around the ish yehudi, asking for his guidance, for they will have heard that God is with His people (8:20-23).

Had Am Yisrael heeded this prophetic call in the time of Koresh and Daryavesh, then they would not have been scattered among 127 provinces during the time of Achashverosh. One could suggest that instead of celebrating with the Persians at the party in Shushan, the Jews could (& should) have been celebrating with God at His bet ha-mikdash in Yerushalayim.

The ish yehudi would have been in the bira in Yerushalayim, making God's Name known to other nations; instead, the Megilla opens as an ish yehudi is found in the bira of Achashverosh in Shushan, ironically carrying the name of foreign god.

[One could also suggest that Mordechai's institution of the yearly celebration of Purim relates specifically to this prophecy. First of all, note how this day is described as one that turns around from 'yagon' to 'simcha', from 'mourning to holiday' (see Esther 9:22). Purim may symbolize the manner in which the fast days for Jerusalem will one day become holidays.]

This parallel to Zecharya could explain the reason for the special mitzvot that Mordechai instituted for Purim in his first letter (see 9:20-22). They reflect Zecharya's repeated message of helping the needy (matanot le-evyonim/ note 7:10) and thinking nicely of one's neighbors (mishloach manot ish le-re'eihu / note 8:16-17!). Once a year we must remind ourselves of the most basic mitzvot that we must keep in order that we become worthy of returning to Yerushalayim and rebuilding the Bet ha'mikdash.

Certain halachot instituted by Chazal may reflect this message. Interestingly, Shushan Purim is replaced with Yerushalayim Purim for the walled cities from the time of Yehoshua bin Nun replace the walled city of Shushan! [See Yehoshua 21:42 and its context,

compare to Esther 9:2.]

## SHALOM VE-EMET

Although this explanation for certain minhagim of Purim may seem a bit 'stretched', textual proof is found in the closing psukim of the Megilla (9:29-32 / read it carefully!).

Mordechai and Esther need to send out a second 'igeret' (letter) explaining and giving authority ('tokef') to the minhagim of Purim explained in the first igeret. What was the content of this special second letter? To our surprise, one short phrase:

"Divrei shalom ve-emet"! [See 9:30, read carefully.]

These two key words point us directly back to Zecharya's prophecy about the fast days becoming holidays (read Zecharya 8:18-19 again)! They explain not only when, but also why the fast days will become holidays - i.e. if Bnei Yisrael keep shalom and emet! The second igeret may simply be an explanation of the purpose of the minhagim of Purim - Mordechai and Esther use this letter to explain to Am Yisrael why Purim has been established - a yearly reminder of the prophecies of Zecharya which remain unfulfilled.

The continuation of this igeret strengthens this interpretation. Under what authority (tokef) does Mordechai institute these halachot?

"Ka'asher kiymu al nafsham divrei ha-tzomot ve-za'akatam" (9:31) [Compare these psukim carefully to Zecharya 8:18-19.]

Recall, God had told Zecharya that fast days and feast days are up to man to decide. Now, according to the second igeret, just like ('ka'asher') the prophets instituted four fast days in order that we remember Yerushalayim, Mordechai institutes a 'feast day' to remember Yerushalayim.

[Note that this pasuk cannot be referring to our Ta'anit Esther, for if it refers to the three day fast, that fast was a one time event and was not "al nafsham ve-al zar'am". Likewise, it cannot be the fast of the 13th of Adar, as that custom only began during the time period of the Ge'onim. Therefore, it must refer to the four fast days on Jerusalem.]

So why didn't everyone return immediately afterward to Israel?

Most probably, after the events of the Megilla, a mass return to Yerushalayim was not realistic. Nonetheless, Mordechai wanted to institute a holiday that would remind Am Yisrael that should such an opportunity arise (once again), that they will know how to relate to it properly. Sefer Zecharya and its theme of shalom ve-emet serve as the spiritual guide.

[This interpretation may help explain why the celebration of Purim will remain even after our final redemption.]

Purim, therefore, has deep meaning for all generations. Its message may have been 'hiding' behind the costumes, the drinking ("ad de-lo yada"), the 'purim Torah', and 'shalach mannos'. It may have been lost within our ignorance of Tanach. Its message, however, remains eternal, just as our aspirations for Yerushalayim and the establishment therein of a just society - remain eternal.

purim sameiach,  
menachem



# **Megillat Esther: She'Asah Nissim La'Avoteinu**

by Rabbi Yitzhak Etshalom

## **I. WHERE IS GOD IN THE MEGILLAH?**

Every year on Purim, Jews all over the world fulfill the Mitzvah of K'riat haMegillah – reading the complete Book of Esther from a proper scroll. Before beginning, the reader/leader recites three B'rakhot – the middle of which is Birkat haNes (the blessing recited at the commemoration of a miracle): Barukh...she'Asah Nissim la'Avoteinu baYamim haHeim baZ'man haZeh (Who performed miracles for our ancestors in those days at this time [of year]). Considering that, unlike the Exodus (and all other Biblical miracles), God's hand is nowhere to be found in the text of the story of Esther and Mordechai, we have to wonder which miracle is the focus of this thanksgiving to God? For which Nes are we praising God? (Parenthetically, the same question could be asked in reference to Hanukkah, where the most central "miracle" we celebrate is a military victory which did not, from the accounts we have, include any miraculous intervention in the conventional understanding of the word. To whatever extent this shiur answers the question vis-a-vis Purim, that answer should carry the same validity for the Hanukkah question. Significantly, Purim and Hanukkah are the two occasions when this B'rakhah is recited.)

A second question, certainly related to the first, focuses on one of the unique features of the Megillah. As is well known, Esther is the only book in T'nakh with absolutely no mention of God (by any Name). Much as the Midrash interprets some occurrences of "the king" in Esther (e.g. 6:1) as a reference to God, this is certainly not p'shat. Why is this story even included in the Biblical canon?

Before moving on, it is prudent to note that some approaches within Rabbinic literature see "hidden Nissim (miracles)" throughout our story; these are, however, not evident from the p'shat. In keeping with the general approach of this shiur, we will try to identify the Nes/Nissim within the text of the Megillah.

In order to provide satisfactory answers to these two questions, we will have to address two issues – the nature of a Nes and a new understanding of the story line in Megillat Esther.

## **II. NES L'HITNOSES**

The root of Nes is N-S-S – which means "banner". See, for instance, the verse in T'hilim (60:6): "You have given those who fear You a Nes l'hitNoses – (a raised banner), to rally to it out of bowshot."

A miracle (i.e. deliberate suspension of the laws of physics in order to save the righteous individual or people) is a raising of the banner of God's Name in the world – hence the word Nes. (See also B'resheet 22:1 and see if this approach explains Avraham's "trial" – see also Midrash Rabbah ad loc.)

There is more than one way in which God's Name becomes glorified in this world. Besides an overt intervention, it is possible for human beings to make His Name manifest by demonstrating the most noble of traits. Keep in mind that we are all created in God's "Image" (whatever that may mean...conscience, free will etc.). When we demonstrate the most noble side of human existence and utilize those traits in the most productive manner possible, this is another (certainly more subtle) demonstration of God's power and glory. It is possible for a Nes to take place within the realm of human valor; although it should be stated that unless the people in question take the next step and utilize this experience to enhance their direct relationship with God, it may be that the whole enterprise would be considered a vain effort.

I would like to suggest that the two most noble human traits, each of which is a reflection of the Tzelem Elokim (Image of God) which sparks all of us, are Wisdom and Courage. I am not talking about wisdom or courage in the usual sense; rather about a special kind of wisdom, a unique type of courage and a special synthesis of the two. We will explore these two characteristics throughout the story and clarify how each was utilized in the most productive and positive manner to bring about the successful salvation of the Jews.

Instead of focusing on one or two passages in the Megillah, we're going to read through the whole story and point out the key "Nes-points" along the way. You'll need a copy of the text – all citations, unless otherwise noted, refer to chapters and verses within the Book of Esther.

As we read through, I will point out several other "layers" of the story – or, alternately, several other ways to read the story and the various messages embedded in the text. As usual, we will be reading the text alone; I will point out various Rabbinic interpolations and interpretations as needed for support and illustration.

## **III. CHAPTER 1**

### **A) THE PARTY (1:1-1:8)**

One other "layer" of the story is satiric; especially when viewed within the context of the rest of T'nakh (as will be explained later), the text is a clear parody. Of what...we will see.

As the story opens, we meet our first player: Achashverosh. Although he is described as a powerful king, ruling over 127 provinces from Hodu (India?) to Kush (Ethiopia?) – we soon find that his power is more illusion than reality.

First of all, the party about which we read in the first chapter (1:3-8) seems to be his inauguration ball (see v. 2); yet it only takes place in the third year of his rule. This seems to indicate that the transfer of power into his hands was not so smooth. We will soon see that plots abound in and around his court and that his control over the realm is not very secure.

The description of the party brings three issues to the fore:

The many allusions to the Mishkan (Tabernacle) / Mikdash (Temple). Keep in mind that the Ba'al haMegillah (author) expects every reader to be familiar with T'nakh and will pick up any word-associations made here. Among the materials described here are several which are prominent in the Mishkan: T'khelet (royal blue), Argaman (purple), Kesef (silver) and Shesh (marble). Indeed, the Midrash posits that the vessels which Achashverosh used at this party were the vessels of the Mikdash – this interpretation was probably motivated by the many Mikdash-associations in the description of the party.



(Rav Menachem Liebttag has a fascinating shiur on exactly this point – with many more illustrations. You can find it at his Tanach Study Center Website: it comes highly recommended!)

Achashverosh seems to be very insecure – both personally and politically. He spares no expense to show off his wealth – and specifically invites the governors, ministers and soldiers of the Persian and Medean armies. It seems that he is trying to consolidate his power and bring the military into his good graces. At the end of his six-month party (!), he invites all the citizenry of Shushan to his gala bash. This insecurity will increase and become a prominent feature in the events of the Megillah. The image of Achashverosh's kingdom, a monarchy governed by protocol. Note how often the word *Dat* – a Persian word meaning "custom" or "protocol" – shows up in the Megillah: 20 times! (Save for one verse in Daniel, it doesn't appear in any other books of the T'nakh). This would seem to indicate that everything in Achashverosh's realm was done "properly" and that the system was orderly and just. We soon find that this kingdom of *Dat* is just as illusory as his power.

## **B) VASHTI (1:9-22)**

Vashti is not, properly speaking, a "player" in this narrative. She is much more of a foil, presented as the set-up for the story to unfold. Even after she is gone (dead? exiled?), her shadow hangs over the palace – but more on that later.

The first indication that Achashverosh's power is a lot of fluff is when he decides to show off his beautiful queen (presumably to outshine the beauty of their wives) – and she refuses to come out! This great king, protector of the realm, defender of the empire, ruler of Persia, etc. etc. controls nothing! His own queen refuses him and is not obeisant to his wishes. (Although in modern times this would seem to prove nothing about his political power – in Persia of 2500 years ago, this "failing" was quite telling – as we see from the tone of the letters sent out at the end of the first chapter).

We soon learn something else about the king. For all of his power – he never makes any decisions (is he passive-aggressive?). As a matter of fact, he doesn't ever say "no" to any of his advisors! A strange king – a classic "yes-man" sitting on the throne.

We get some insight into how his advisors have learned to "play him". Memuchan (who the Gemara identifies as Haman) knows that if he advises the king to kill (or banish) Vashti on account of her defiance of the king – the drunk monarch may wake up on the morn and feel foolish and humiliated that he had to exile the queen for his own honor – and take out his anger on Memuchan. In order to get the king to "get rid" of Vashti, Memuchan appeals to Achashverosh's sense of justice. He is the defender of men's rights throughout the kingdom and must act decisively on behalf of all the poor princes and governors throughout the Empire whose wives will surely rebel, following Vashti's (unpunished) lead. By appealing to Achashverosh's sense of nobility, the wise advisor allows the king to do what he wants without feeling a sense of humiliation.

Two more notes about the first chapter. First of all, as the Gemara points out, this first set of letters (v. 22) seems to be quite foolish. The king sends out letters to every province, announcing that every man rules in his own house!!!! (According to the Gemara, this caused the second letters – announcing the "loosing" of Jewish blood – to be taken less seriously by the citizenry who already case a jaundiced eye on this king's pronouncements).

Second, as R. David Hentschke points out (Megadim vol. 23), the king has to send these letters to each province in their own language (v. 22 – this phrasing shows up several times in the Megillah). As powerful as the king may be, he hasn't been successful in establishing Persian as the language of the realm; perhaps his rule is not so ironclad as it might seem (reminds us a bit of the USSR???)

## **IV. CHAPTER 2**

### **A) A NEW QUEEN (2:1-4)**

We are quickly reminded of Achashverosh's inability to decide anything for himself. It takes his servants to suggest finding a new queen by gathering all of the maidens to Shushan for a "tryout" with the king.

As any student of T'nakh remembers, such a call went out once before – when David was old and near death. As we read in the beginning of Melakhim (Kings), they searched for a young maiden throughout Yisra'el – and found Avishag haShunamit. Note the contrast – whereas the one girl was found (although many undoubtedly would have wanted to be chosen); here, all the girls have to be forcibly brought to Shushan (note the wording in v. 3). And why not...who would want follow Vashti?

There is another interesting allusion in v. 3: The phrase *v'Yafked haMelekh P'kidim v'Yik'b'tzu* reminds us of a nearly similar phrase used in the first "Jew in the foreign court" story. When Yosef successfully interprets Pharaoh's dreams, he advises that Pharaoh appoint officers to collect the wheat of the seven plentiful years – *Ya'aseh Pharaoh v'Yafked P'kidim...v'Yik'b'tzu...* (B'resheet 41:34-35). This allusion is not for naught; the Ba'al haMegillah is showing us how Achashverosh and his servants viewed these young girls – just like wheat to be collected and brought to the palace.

### **B) MORDECHAI AND ESTHER (2:5-20)**

We are immediately introduced to our two heroes – Mordechai and Esther. It is critical to note that both of these names are not only Persian (and not Hebrew) – they are both pagan names related to various gods of the pantheon! The Esther-Ishtar-Astarte connection is well-documented (besides the fact that the Megillah explicitly gives her "real" name – Hadassah); our heroine is named for the goddess of fertility. The Gemara (BT Menahot 65) gives Mordechai a more "Jewish" name – Petah'ya – and, again, the Mordechai-Marduk (god of creation in many mythologies throughout the Near East) connection has been extensively written up.

Why do these two righteous people, through whom God saves His people, have such names?

[note: Jews taking – or being given – non-Jewish "alternate" names when in the foreign court is the norm in T'nakh. Note Yoseph, who is named "Tzoph'nat Pa'a'ne'ach" by Pharaoh; Daniel, who is named "Belt-Shatzar" by N'vuchadnetzar, as well as Daniel's three companions. Note that Jews were occasionally given names which were associated with pagan gods – compare Daniel 1:7 with 4:5. Mordechai and Esther seem to be two examples of the same phenomenon. Note that according to the Gemara (BT Megillah 13a), the name "Esther" was given to her by the non-Jews, in response to her beauty.]

Even more curious is Mordechai's insistence that Esther not reveal her identity (as a Jewess) while in the palace (v10, 20). As we shall



soon see, even Mordechai's identity was not obvious; he was not distinguished in any external way from any other citizen.

There are a couple of verses which are telling within the scope of Esther's successful entrance into the palace.

(v. 16) – Esther was finally chosen in the seventh year of Achashverosh's reign – in other words, the selection of a queen took four years. (One very tired king! – See 2:12; even in his hedonistic behavior, he followed Dat!).

(v. 17-19) Compare the royal feast in honor of his queen (ironically – “in place of Vashti” – the dead (or exiled) queen's shadow hangs over the palace and Esther is likely aware that her fate may be no better than her predecessor's) with v. 19. As much as the king loves Esther – his servants are bringing more virgins into the palace! Insecure is the best description of anyone with a position of power in this court.

### **C) THE PLOT (2:21-23)**

As we all know, this little paragraph is critical to the later success of our heroes. Note, however, that it is Achashverosh's own guards – who are charged with defending him – who are plotting against him. This kingdom is, indeed, unstable and always ready for a shake-up.

## **V. CHAPTER 3**

### **A) ENTER HAMAN (3:1-7)**

Suddenly – and very much out of the blue – Haman is elevated to a position of importance in the kingdom. This again demonstrates – despite the appearance of Dat – the helter-skelter way in which power and impotence, success and failure – even life and death – are handled most capriciously in the palace.

As much as we know about Achashverosh's terrible insecurity – we quickly learn about Haman's personal devil – his ego. Imagine that the king of the greatest empire on earth has just appointed a relative nobody (as it seems Haman was beforehand) to be grand vizier and that all citizens should pay him homage. Wouldn't he be too enthralled with the sudden attention and respect to care about one or two people who don't bow down? Not Haman – his ego just takes him right past all the knee-benders and focuses his attention on the one person who refuses to bow – Mordechai. As much as we would expect him to be happy with the new position – he is merely enraged (and seemingly obsessed with that rage) at Mordechai.

Note that it isn't obvious to Haman that Mordechai is Jewish – Haman has to find that out from someone else in order to figure out which nation to destroy (as he wants to annihilate all of Mordechai's people. By the way, this paints Haman as much less of an ideological anti-Semite than we are used to thinking – but that belongs to another shiur.) Evidently, Mordechai's behavior – or, at least his dress and external demeanor – did not mark him as a Jew. Just like his niece, he seems to have been quite assimilated (see the Book of Ezra for more background on this phenomenon).

Now – Haman, the grand vizier of the kingdom of Dat, decides to wipe out an entire nation due to the slight to his ego. How does he decide when to do it? By lottery (Pur)! What a joke this Dat proves to be!

### **B) ACHASHVEROSH AND HAMAN (3:8-15)**

There isn't a whole lot to say here; the dialogue between these two speaks for itself. Although everything is done properly, the reader instinctively feels that a king who is willing to condemn a people without even finding out who they are (read 3:8-11 carefully) is not doing a good job of running his empire.

In order to keep an eye on the story, let's put together the chronology of events. The king's party (Vashti's farewell bash) took place in the third year of his reign. Esther was crowned – and Mordechai saved the king's life – in the seventh year. Haman had the letters (allowing the anti-Semites to kill the Jews) sent out on Nissan 13 in the twelfth year of the king's reign. In other words, Esther has been queen for a bit more than four years by this time – and her identity was still a total secret.

## **VI. CHAPTER 4**

### **A) ESTHER AND MORDECHAI (4:1-17)**

Mordechai finds out about this plot – and begins to demonstrate signs of “Teshuvah” (repentance). (Compare 4:1,3 with Yonah 3:5,6,8) He does not, however, do this in front of the palace gate, where he seems to retain his composure. He does, however, get the message in to Esther as to what is going on and he pleads with her to go to the king and have Haman's order overturned.

We are immediately reminded of how capricious this king really is. The beloved queen hasn't seen the king in thirty days (v. 11) (and probably wonders in whose arms he sleeps tonight) – and even she is subject to death if she comes to him unbeckoned unless he agrees to see her (shades of Vashti again)!

At this point, Mordechai sends the message which turns Esther around – and she begins to demonstrate not only her tremendous commitment and courage to her nation; but also an amazing type of wisdom – those very characteristics which reflect her Tzelem Elokim in the most powerful way.

For if you keep silence at such a time as this, relief and deliverance will rise for the Jews from another quarter, but you and your father's family will perish. Who knows? Perhaps you have come to royal dignity for just such a time as this. (4:14)

Mordechai told her about the B'rit (covenant) between God and the B'nei Yisra'el. We are promised that we will outlive all of the Hamans – but that B'rit only applies to the nation as a whole, not to individuals or families. Esther – you may make it through this next upheaval – and you may not. In any case, the Jews will be saved, as God always has His ways of keeping the B'rit.

Esther realizes the wisdom and truth of this argument and acquiesces to Mordechai's plea. Now, she plans her strategy...let's take a peek behind the scenes. First, a few words about this remarkable type of wisdom.

It is natural to see everything in life through the eyes of our experience. This is why honest people often find it difficult to disbelieve



others or question their motivations; they cannot recognize the lie in the other person's words because they have no such possibility inside of their own hearts. In the same way, kind people often ascribe positive motives to questionable behavior of others – because they could never recognize mean thoughts in others as they have no such thoughts in their own persona.

It takes a tremendous type of wisdom to separate yourself from what you instinctively feel and how you usually view the world and to see it from the other person's perspective. While this may be easy in a sympathetic conversation (although not nearly as easy as it seems); it is most difficult when deciding how to fight an enemy. The trick is to learn how to think like the enemy – without becoming the enemy.

This was perhaps the greatest miracle of Hanukkah – that the Maccabees were able to think like Greeks (it certainly took great strategy to outfox that mighty army with a small band) – without becoming Greeks (well, not for a couple of generations at least).

In the same way, we will see how Esther manipulates Achashverosh and Haman into a fateful (and, for Haman, fatal) collision course – simply by playing them according to their own personalities and weaknesses.

## **VII. CHAPTER 5**

### **A) ESTHER AND ACHASHVEROSH (5:1-5)**

Let's keep in mind that Esther is risking her life to come into Achashverosh's throne room – and she knows that the king knows this. In other words, she is aware that Achashverosh will consider her request to be very important – important enough to risk her life. We would think that when the king favors her and agrees to grant nearly any request – “even until half the kingdom” – that she would seize this opportunity and ask for salvation and for Haman's orders to be rescinded.

Instead, she invites Achashverosh and Haman to a special party she has prepared for that very evening. Why didn't she ask for salvation at this point?

Esther understood a great deal about politics. Remember – she hasn't seen the king for thirty days. Even if she is still his favorite – she is still not on the “inside” right now. Haman, on the other hand, has just had a drinking party with the king (3 days earlier), celebrating their letters sent out to kill the Jews. If she were to accuse Haman, the king might not believe her and the whole effort would be lost.

She invites the two of them to a party. As disgusting as the prospect sounds, it is the first step in a brilliant plan of psychological warfare.

Let's consider how each of them would react to this invitation:

Haman, as the consummate egotist, has his ego blown up even bigger than before (as we will soon see). He alone is invited to sup with the king and queen!

Achashverosh, on the other hand, must be suspicious. There has already been (at least) one plot on his life – now, Esther risked her life just to invite him and Haman to a party? Is something going on between the two of them (more on this later)? Are they plotting against me?

### **B) THE FIRST PARTY (5:6-8)**

At this party, the king expects to find out what Esther really has on her mind – maybe his suspicions were for naught? Instead, she surprises him by asking him to return – with Haman – for another party the next night!

Following the psychological makeup of our two party guests – each of the states of mind described above became exacerbated.

Esther knew that Haman's ego would continue to grow – and she also knew that he would leave the palace via the gate – and see Mordechai sitting there. Just feed his ego – and he will self-destruct.

### **C) HAMAN AT HOME (9-14)**

Indeed, Haman becomes so enraged when he sees Mordechai that, after a short bragging session with his family, he runs back to the palace to ask Achashverosh to allow him to hang Mordechai immediately. He cannot wait eleven months to kill his arch-nemesis – he needs satisfaction right away (ah, the impetuous egotist.)

## **VIII. CHAPTER 6**

### **A) HAMAN AND ACHASHVEROSH (6:1-10)**

Why couldn't the king sleep? The Gemara provides the obvious answer – he had thoughts of plot and coup on his worried mind. Why did he call for his chronicles to be read? It seems that this powerful king, ruler over 127 provinces – had no friends. There was no one he could trust or turn to. Esther had planted a terrible bug in his mind – two parties in a row with Haman – what are the two of them planning to do? Indeed – what have they already done?

Just as the king discovers that he owes Mordechai a favor from over four years ago – and decides that the way to gain the allegiance of the citizenry is to publicly demonstrate the rewards of loyalty to the crown – Haman turns up in the outer courtyard of the palace. The king had to wonder what Haman was doing there so late at night (!?!). The king summoned Haman for some advice – and for a chance to take him down a peg or two. Now, the king demonstrates some acumen of his own.

In 6:6, the king asks Haman what to do for someone he really favors. Haman, that old egotist, is so caught up in his own power, that he describes a truly regal parade which he assumes will feature him as the honoree. How very surprised he is when the king orders him to take the self-same Mordechai and lead him on the king's horse.

(Note that the phrase to be called out while leading this honoree: Kakhah ye'Aseh la'Ish Asher... shows up in one other place in T'nakh. This is the beginning of the formula of Halitza – the refusal of Levirate marriage, which accompanies the woman's disdainful spit. [D'var[D'varim 25:9]ur own conclusions about the satiric effect accomplished by the Ba'al haMegillah).



## **B) HAMAN AND MORDECHAI (6:11-14)**

Haman returns to his house “in mourning”. The Rabbis have a lot to say about the events of this morning – but, even on a p’shat level, it is clear that Haman’s fortunes have taken a significant turn for the worse. He is quickly rushed to the second party – and, in his case, his own farewell.

## **IX. CHAPTER 7**

### **A) THE SECOND PARTY (7:1-9)**

This is the denouement of the story as far as we are concerned. Haman still doesn’t know who Esther is – but he is clearly shattered and his ego is as fragile as ever. Achashverosh is equally disturbed and must be getting more confused by Esther’s repeated parties without asking for what she really wants (it is clear that the king knows she wants something more – which is why he keeps asking her).

Now, she pulls out all the cards. The king thinks that she and Haman are hatching a plot against him (and have been having an affair?) – and suddenly Haman is revealed as the villain who is plotting against her. Haman thinks that he is still on the road to satisfaction in the matter of the Jews; he’ll just need to wait until Adar. He has no idea that Esther is one of “them”.

Esther points to Haman and all is lost. The confusion and anger of the king, the confusion and fear of Haman – create an emotional jumble which ultimately leads to the king’s explosion when he finds Haman lying on Esther’s divan, begging for mercy. Haman is erased and (here we go again) Mordechai takes his place (compare 8:2 with 3:10). The capricious king has (for the meantime) elevated the Jews and they are saved. We all know, however, that the happy ending of the story isn’t permanent and that the rocky shores of existence in exile (which is probably one of the sub-messages of the Megillah) are not safe for Jews.

## **X. POSTSCRIPT**

We have taken a cursory look at some of the events as described in the Megillah and found that Esther displayed extraordinary wisdom and courage in her successful effort to save her people. We are very right to regard this as a Nes as it is a reflection of God’s Image as found within our heroine. God’s Name is not found – because, unlike Pesach, this is not a story about the suspension of the laws of nature. It is, rather, a story about human strength and nobility used in the most positive and productive effort imaginable – the salvation of Am Yisra’el. (That and a really great satire of the Persian Kingdom)

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