BS"D
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Potomac Torah Study Center
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Tanis Esther is Thursday; Purim is Friday March 13-14

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 more than 50 years ago and was our family Rebbe and close friend until his untimely death.

Devrei Torah are now Available for Download (normally by noon on Fridays) at www.PotomacTorah.org. Thanks to Bill Landau for hosting the Devrei Torah archives.

May Hashem protect Israel and Jews everywhere during 5785. May Hashem's protection shine on all of Israel, the IDF, and Jews throughout the world. May the first phase of the agreement continue with the remaining hostages coming home, hostilities ending, and with a new era of security and rebuilding for both Israel and all others who genuinely seek peace.

Tetzaveh continues Hashem's conversation with Moshe (from Terumahj) in which He tells Moshe exactly how to construct the Mishkan, a structure that will become a "home" for Hashem's presence in the midst of B'Nai Yisrael. Because both Terumah and Tetzaveh are the same conversation, the Torah does not need to repeat Moshe's name. One result is that Tetzaveh becomes the only parsha from the beginning of Shemot through the end of Sefer Bemidbar in which Moshe's name does not appear. (I have discussed many aspects of the reasons for constructing a Mishkan and the absence of Moshe's name in this parsha in my messages in previous years.)

In a non-leap year, we always read Tetzaveh very close to the date of Moshe's birthday and yahrzeit (7 Adar). The Maftir reading of Zachor has many connections to Purim (the week after we read Zachor) and to Tetzaveh. For example, Hashem's name is hidden (does not appear) in the Megillah, and Moshe's name does not appear in Tetzaveh. The historical event that led to Purim (Haman's attempt to kill all the Jews in Persia) took place after the destruction of the first Temple in Jerusalem and before the rebuilding of the second Temple. After the Assyrian ruler Sancheriv defeated much of the Northern kingdom of Israel, exiled the Jews, and intermixed all the conquered tribes, it become impossible to identify most of the original tribes. After Nebuchadnezzar destroyed the first Temple, there were no more sacrifices. Even without the ability to identify all the tribes, the Megillah states that Mordechai and Esther still knew how to contact Jews in other parts of Persia, so not all the Jews from the remaining tribes had disappeared bu the time of Queen Esther. The historical events leading up to Purim were very close to the time when prophesy ended, and many Jews feared that God would no longer protect B'Nai Yisrael when there were no more korbanot and there was no prophet to relay Hashem's messages to B'Nai Yisrael.

Rabbi Dr. Katriel (Kenneth) Brander focuses on the importance of Zachor now, as we Jews face grave dangers from enemies throughout the world. The Maftir reading of Zachor is one of very few Torah readings that all Jews are obligated to read or hear being read in synagogue (on the Shabbat before Purim). Rabbi Brander observes that Amalek and the seven Canaanite nations from the time of the Exodus are all gone, either killed off or merged into ethnically different nations who are no longer ethnically distinct nations. Even so, the mitzvah of Zachor is eternal, so we must observe the mitzvah. The Talmud adds that all Jews must observe and participate in a war for the survival and security of the Jewish people. Rabbi Brander claims that we are in such a period now, with our enemies attacking our fellow Jews in every country in the world.

Rabbi Marc Angel observes that Mordechai was not universally popular among Jews even in Persia. Mordechai worked for the good of all Jews, spoke peace to all, and was a warm, conscientious, and thoughtful leader. As the Megillah states,

> *"For Mordecai was great in the king's house, and his fame went forth throughout all the provinces; for the man Mordecai waxed greater and greater* (Esther 9:4)."

Mordechai, from Rabbi Angel's description, sounds very much like Aharon, Moshe's brother, the most beloved Jew during the period of the Exodus.

My beloved Rebbe Leonard Cahan, z"l, reminded us often of the dangers we face from those who hate Jews – and always found a way to make Purim happy and interesting. (There is much that Hebrew School normally does not each us about Purim!).

Shabbat Shalom,

Hannah and Alan

Much of the inspiration for my weekly Dvar Torah message comes from the insights of Rabbi David Fohrman and his team of scholars at www.alephbeta.org. Please join me in supporting this wonderful organization, which has increased its scholarly work during and since the pandemic, despite many of its supporters having to cut back on their donations.

Please daven for a Refuah Shlemah for Moshe Aaron ben Leah Beilah (badly wounded in battle in Gaza but slowly recovering), Daniel Yitzchak Meir HaLevy ben Ruth; Ariah Ben Sarah, Hershel Tzvi ben Chana, Reuven ben Basha Chaya Zlata Lana, Avraham ben Gavriela, Mordechai ben Chaya, David Moshe ben Raizel; Zvi ben Sara Chaya, Reuven ben Masha, Meir ben Sara, Oscar ben Simcha; Miriam Bat Leah; Yehudit Leah bas Hannah Feiga; Miriam bat Esha, Chana bat Sarah; Raizel bat Rut; Rena bat Ilsa, Riva Golda bat Leah, Sharon bat Sarah, Kayla bat Ester, and Malka bat Simcha, and all our fellow Jews in danger in and near Israel. Please contact me for any additions or subtractions. Thank you.

Shabbat Shalom

Hannah & Alan

Shabbat Zachor: A Call to Our Collective Responsibility

By Rabbi Dr. Katriel (Kenneth) Brander * 5785 / 2025
President and Rosh HaYeshiva, Ohr Torah Stone

Dedicated in memory of Israel's murdered and fallen, for the refuah shlayma of the wounded, the return of those being held hostage in Gaza, and the safety of our brave IDF soldiers.

This week's Devrei Torah and Dvar Haftorah from Ohr Torah Stone are dedicated in loving memory of David Siegel z"l.

Amalek is no longer. The Mishna)Yadayim 4:4(teaches us that Sancheriv, the Assyrian emperor, through his military campaigns and conquests, created such upheaval among the various local nations – interspersing and intermixing them –

that Amalek and the seven Canaanite nations no longer exist today. Hence, the command in this week's Maftir regarding Amalek is and shall remain a dormant mitzvah.

Yet our tradition has preserved the mitzvah to remember Amalek, as practiced on Shabbat Zachor, because our memory of the past does not require Amalekites to still exist. It is as though the Torah itself has told us *"drosh v'kabel schar":* seek out the underlying messages embedded in this seemingly inactionable mitzvah and be rewarded with insight. What, then, are we meant to learn from this command that can still impact us today?

The story of Shaul, as recounted in the Haftarah for Shabbat Zachor, opens with the king assembling his army. *"Vayeshama Shaul et haam,"* – Shaul calls upon the people to report for duty, and hundreds of thousands respond. The term *vayeshama* is unusual, meaning to *'make heard.'* As the Radak astutely notes, it is similar to the opening line of Masechet Shkalim, which teaches that at the start of the month of Adar *"mashmi'im al hashkalim,"* or that every Jew is obligated to donate a half-shekel. In the haftarah, too, Shaul faces a situation that requires the full participation of the entire nation, a milchemet mitzvah, or a war that is a religious command. He issues the call to prepare to fight, and the people rally together.

Yet the Talmud)Sotah 42b(teaches that there is an even higher classification: a *milchemet chovah,* an obligatory war, necessary for the survival and security of the Jewish people in their land. In an obligatory war, the Talmud rules that *"even brides and bridegrooms must report for duty"* – every individual is responsible for ensuring the safety of the Jewish people. Indeed Maimonides codifies this ruling as law *)Mishneh Torah,* Melachim 7:4(, applying it to both a *milchemet* mitzvah and a *milchemet chovah.*

Today, we are in the midst of a *milchemet chovah* – an obligatory war for the safety and security of Israel and, I believe, for Jews worldwide. The Jewish people's standing army needs the full engagement of its citizenry – not only as a matter of necessity, but as a halakhic obligation. One of the silver linings amid the darkness of these past months has been the remarkable display of partnership, cooperation and mutual responsibility among so many sectors of Israeli society, as well as the active engagement of Jewish communities around the world.

Yet this war has also highlighted, more than ever before, the urgent need to ensure that the burden of security does not fall only on some communities while others remain unencumbered. Many soldiers are already on their fourth or fifth round of reserve duty, with some having served for over 400 days. The acute need to share the load across Israeli society has never been clearer.

This responsibility particularly extends to those who devote their lives to Torah study. If the Torah is what binds the Jewish people together, then the Torah itself mandates that we stand together in times of need, and step up to the duty to physically protect the nation..

As Rav Aharon Lichtenstein tz"l wrote in his monumental essay *"The Ideology of Hesder":*

> *"When, as in contemporary Israel, the greatest single hesed one can perform is helping to defend his fellows' very lives, the implications for yeshiva education should be obvious."*

Forty years after these words were written, the challenge remains: How do we integrate all sectors of Jewish Israeli society into the shared responsibility of defense? This is not just a question; it is a call to action. It is our duty to take concrete steps to make the Torah's vision a reality. We should act upon this as we read about Amalek on Shabbat Zachor.

* President and Rosh HaYeshiva of Ohr Torah Stone, a modern Orthodox group of 32 institutions and programs. Rabbi Dr. Shlomo Riskin is the Founding Director, and Rabbi Dr. Brander is President and Rosh HaYeshiva. For more information or to support Ohr Torah Stone, contact ohrtorahstone@otsyny.org or 212-935-8672. Donations to 49 West 45th Street #701, New York, NY 10036.

Purim: Our Story is History

By Rabbi Label Lam © 2007 (5767)

And the remaining Yehudim)Jews(that were in the province of the king they congregated and stood up for their life…)Megilas Esther 9:16(

What was the secret of the miraculous turnabout for the Jews in the Purim story? The answer is real simple and not simple at all!
The Zohar says, *"Israel and Torah and The Holy One blessed is He are one!"* It sounds unfathomably deep and it probably is but there is a practical value in knowing this hard to understand fact.

Even Haman was able to identify a certain weakness and vulnerability of the Jewish People. He declared in his appeal to Achashveirosh*, "There is a singular nation distributed and spread amongst the nations."* He recognized the lack of unity curiously of a singular nation.

There was also a diminished appreciation of the importance of Torah, as evidenced by their rejection of Mordechai's advice not to go to the grand party of Achashveivosh.

To top it off HASHEM's face was hidden! Ouch! It doesn't get worse! When the Jewish People are alienated from each other, they are distant from Torah, and they are simultaneously withdrawn from HASHEM. That's the three fold problem! How is it resolved?

A remarkable story circulated around Eretz Yisrael a number of years ago. Even if it is not confirmed as true, it still conveys a deep and relevant message that may help explain why we are made more vulnerable to an enemy attack when our business practices are less than honest.

It was during the time of when a young soldier whose last name was Wachsman was captured. His parents took an immediate and active role in rallying the entire nation to pray and light extra candles.

There were huge prayer rallies lead by the parents at the Western Wall, and there was a profound sense of unity and common purpose that crossed all kinds of ideological lines and stated philosophies of life.

The end of the story, however, is less pleasant. The young man, on whose behalf these forces were set in motion, was brutally murdered, and the momentary solidarity faded as fast.

Around that same time, a young man who had been in a coma awoke shortly afterward and asked to be brought to a certain luminary personality in our generation. He told the elder Rabbi that he had been visited in a dream by an elderly woman and was told to deliver a specific message. The Rabbi displayed a picture of his deceased wife and asked if that was the woman. He confirmed that it was.

She had asked him to relay the following: That the unity at the time of the incident of that young soldier's capture and the events that followed was so profound that Moshiach could have come at that very moment, if it had not been for the sin of theft and ill-gotten gains in the marketplace.

At the conclusion of the Megila, it states that the Jews *"gathered together and stood up for their lives…"* The Sefas Emes notes that the word for standing *"Amad"* is singular – not plural, similar to when the Nation of Israel camped by Mt. Sinai with a singular expression. There Rashi says, *"Like one man with one heart!"* The unity was powerful and real.

Afterwards, in the Megila, there was also a re-reception of Torah, and although still hidden, HASHEM's inclusion in every detail of our lives was revealed.

All three alienations were dissolved in one swift movement of unified purpose. The cure could easily come from a rededication to Torah learning or taking the time think very deeply about the reality of HASHEM's involvement in our lives and how **our story is History!**

Good Shabbos!

https://torah.org/torah-portion/dvartorah-5773-tetzaveh/

Purim Se'udah Going into Shabbat: Poreis Mapah – Guidelines

By Rabbi Dov Linzer *

QUESTION: New York, NY

Can one have a Purim Se'udah late in the day, and have it enter into the Shabbat meal? What special considerations are there if we want to do this in the shul as a community Purim/Shabbat dinner?

ANSWER:

This definitely may be done. It is based on the principle *poreis mapah umekadeish (Shulchan Arukh* OC 271:4), that if one is in the middle of the meal on Friday towards sunset, he or she can spread a cloth over the bread, make Kiddush, and continue eating. The following is a guide for how to do this.

SHORT VERSION:

(for the long version, with sources and discussion, see below)

One may begin the Purim se'udah in the late afternoon according to the following procedure:

A. Se'udah (Meal)

1. Wash and have bread before sunset. Ideally, you should have wine as part of your se'udah (this is unrelated to the fact that it is leading into Shabbat).

2. Stop eating before sunset

3. Bring out two loaves of bread

4. Spread a cover over all the bread.

5. Recite Kiddush

o Have you been drinking wine during the Purim se'udah (as is ideal)?

- Yes → Say Kiddush WITHOUT Borei peri hagafen but WITH holding a glass of wine
- No → Say Kiddush as normal, WITH Borei peri hagafen

o For Shul-Based meals

▪ If there is a desire from a communal perspective to have kiddush said with the Borei peri hagafen, you can ask someone who has not had wine or grapejuice yet to be the person to make the kiddush. On the other hand, this is a wonderful educational opportunity, so it might be best to not ask this person to do it, and to not say Borei peri hagafen and to explain why.

▪ There might be people who will not be coming for the Purim se'udah but will be coming for the davening and/or for the Shabbat meal. They would say kiddush normally and also say Homtzi. There should be wine, grape juice and rolls available for them to do so. If there will be people who will be coming just for davening, this would also be a reason to say Ma'ariv together with Kabbalat Shabbat (see below).

6. Eat Bread

o Do NOT make Hamotzi, but have two whole loaves. You may wish to hold them up together and say *"Li'kavod Shabbat kodesh,"* or something similar.

o Eat a kebeitzah (or kezayit, bedieved) of bread after Kiddush

o You can finish your bread immediately, even before Tzeit HaKokhavim.

▪ Some advise making sure you eat a kezayit after Tzeit. If you are not careful about this when you make an early Shabbat in the summer months, you don't have to be careful about it here, either.

7. Recite Birkat HaMazon

o If you have not davened Ma'ariv yet → Say Al HaNissim and Retzeih.

o If you have davened Ma'ariv → Say only Retzeih.

B. Davening

• Kabbalat Shabbat should be said BEFORE you do poreis maphah and before you recite kiddush.

• Regarding when to say Ma'ariv, you have 2 options:

1. BEFORE poreis mapah and kiddush. You would not say another HaMotzi or Borei Peri HaGafen when you return to the meal OR AFTER the Shabbat meal.

2. In the case of a se'udat Purim at home - the latter option might make more sense: Kabbalat Shabbat while at the table, and then to do poreis mapah and then Ma'ariv after the Shabbat meal. This could be a very nice experience, singing Kabbalat Shabbat with everyone seated at the table, and then leading into Kiddush.

3. In the case of a community, shul-based se'udat Purim – the first option might be better: doing Ma'ariv before the meal.

▪ In this case, there might be a desire to move to the sanctuary for Kabbalat Shabbat, regardless, which would then make it natural to flow into Ma'ariv and would allow for the normal shul Friday night experience. Doing Maariv at this time also gives everyone the easy opportunity to participate. In particular, if there will be people coming just for davening and who will be going home for their Shabbat meal, it would obviously be the best to say Ma'ariv now.

▪ If Ma'ariv is being recited at this time, do not recite kiddush after davening (as is the norm in shuls), as you will be reciting it momentarily at the meal.

▪ If you are moving to the sanctuary for davening, it would be ideal for at least one person to remain behind in the room where the meal is being held, although this is not strictly required.

▪ If you are remaining in the location of the meal, then for Kabbalat Shabbat, the men and women should sit in different locations, although no mechitza is required. For Ma'ariv, if you are doing it there and not in the sanctuary, there obviously needs to be a mechitza present.

* Rosh Yeshiva and President, Yeshivat Chovevei Torah.

https://psak.yctorah.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/Purim-Seudah-Poreis-Mapah-Guidelines-1.pdf

Note: The long form of this presentation follows the short version at the same web address.

Communication: Thoughts for Parashat Tetsaveh

By Rabbi Marc D. Angel *

"And you shall command the children of Israel…" (Shemot 27:20)

"And you shall bring near to you Aaron and his sons… (Shemot 28:1).

"And you shall speak to all who are wise-hearted…" (Shemot 28:3).

This week's Parasha opens with three different words alluding to three different means of communication.

Command: Sometimes the public (and individuals) need clear orders. A *"commander in chief"* must mobilize constituents and spell out specific responsibilities. If a major undertaking is at stake, forceful leadership is often required. Without the command, things might not get done properly…or at all. When Moses was dealing with the children of Israel, he frequently had to energize people by giving commands.

Bring Near: Sometimes commands don't work. The public (or individuals) are reluctant to take responsibility or simply do not like to be given orders. In such circumstances, it is best not to command but to draw near. Offer words of encouragement. Let them know you appreciate and value them and that you know they are up to the task at hand. Thoughtful words are more effective than cold commands. It is better to talk with…not at. When Moses instructed Aaron to begin his service as high priest, the Midrash suggests that Aaron was hesitant. He needed Moses to draw him near, to encourage and strengthen him.

Speak: Ideally, the way to move forward is with direct communication where people feel part of the process. When Moses spoke to the *"wise-hearted"* he was speaking with those who were self-motivated. They didn't need commands or encouraging words. They needed to have candid discussion about how to proceed; they needed to feel that they were valued partners in the work ahead.

Communication is not only about issuing a message; it requires that the message be received. Each context has its own dynamics. Each parent/leader/rabbi etc. must have the sensitivity to choose the right means of communication for each situation.

Whether one commands, brings near, or speaks, one must be attuned to the mindset of the recipients. A message, no matter how excellent, is only successful if it is received and acted upon appropriately.

* Founder and Director, Institute for Jewish Ideas and Ideals and rabbi emeritus of the historic Spanish and Portuguese Synagogue of New York City.

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Mordecai and His Critics: Thoughts for Purim

By Rabbi Marc D. Angel *

Who could be more successful, more beloved, more worthy of respect than Mordecai? He was a superhero who stood up for the dignity of the Jewish people, who was largely responsible for averting Haman's evil decree to annihilate the Jews, and who rose to be the king's viceroy.

He was not only successful and powerful. He also had fine moral qualities and good values. The Megillah informs us that Mordecai — in spite of his lofty position — was characterized by *"seeking the good of his people and speaking peace to all his seed (Esther 10:3)."* He was a warm, conscientious and thoughtful leader.

Who could possibly not like Mordecai?

Yet, the Megillah informs us that Mordecai was *"great among the Jews and agreeable to most of his brethren* (Esther 10:3)." Our sages noted: Mordecai was agreeable to MOST of his fellow Jews, most but not all! Mordecai had his enemies and detractors. What did these dissidents have against him?

One group may have thought: Mordecai was too *"Jewish."* If only he had not defied Haman, the crisis would not have happened in the first place. Mordecai should not have demonstrated his Jewishness in public. He should have tried to blend in, to stay under the radar. This group felt that Jews should camouflage their Jewishness to the extent possible. You can be Jewish at home, but not in public!

Another group may have thought: Mordecai was not Jewish enough! He was too close with the Persian powers. He dressed like a Persian viceroy and had to adopt the courtly ways of the nobles of the kingdom. Mordecai would not have had much time to study Torah or attend synagogue services. He was a *"court Jew"* who had to sell out on his religiosity in order to hold his high position.

Yet others disliked Mordecai — just because they disliked anyone who had more success or prestige than they had. Such people enjoy tearing others down as a means of artificially building themselves up. What fun it is to ridicule leaders, and pick away at their real or perceived flaws. Sitting in the grandstands, small-minded people enjoy criticizing those who are out on the playing field.

Mordecai's critics exist in every generation and in every community. There are still those who think Jews should hide their Jewishness, should assimilate to the extent possible so as to blend in with the larger society. These people cringe at public demonstrations of Jewish religious or national expression. If only Jews would be invisible…

There are still those who suspect others of being not sufficiently religious or sufficiently proud of their Jewishness. They criticize those who adopt modern dress or modern thought; the modernists are branded as assimilationists, as betrayers of Torah.

And there are inevitably people who criticize…because that's what they enjoy doing. No matter how good and true their leaders are, the critics will find fault. They will pontificate and pose as sages who know far better than the leaders. They do this because of their weak egos, their need to assert their own worthiness by tearing down the worthiness of others. Although these are weak and pitiful human beings, they continue to flourish without self-reflection and without the desire to improve themselves.

So Mordecai — like almost everyone of eminence! — could not please everyone. No matter what he did or didn't do, someone would be sure to criticize and harass him.

How did Mordecai deal with his critics? The Megillah suggests that he did not pay any attention to them! On the contrary, he kept seeking peace and speaking good for the benefit of all his people — including his detractors. Mordecai was not in a popularity contest, he was not interested in appeasing this group or that group. He would not lose focus on his mission as a leader dedicated to the peace and wellbeing of his people.

Bravo Mordecai!

> *"For Mordecai was great in the king's house, and his fame went forth throughout all the provinces; for the man Mordecai waxed greater and greater* (Esther 9:4)."

* Founder and Director, Institute for Jewish Ideas and Ideals and rabbi emeritus of the historic Spanish and Portuguese Synagogue of New York City.

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https://www.jewishideas.org/mordecai-and-his-critics-thoughts-purim

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Titzaveh -- Anonymous, but Very Present

By Rabbi Mordechai Rhine *

Dedicated in Memory of Mr. David Rhine Sholomo Dovid ben Avraham Yitzchak z.l.

May this Dvar Torah be a Zechus Refuah Shileima for Cholei Yisroel

This week's Parsha. Parshas Titzaveh, is a well-known anomaly. From the time Moshe is introduced to us, it is the only Parsha that does not contain his name. Interestingly, the way the Jewish calendar is structured, this Parsha corresponds with Zayin Adar (the seventh day of Adar), the Yartzeit of Moshe Rabbeinu. It seems to be somehow a eulogy, to have Moshe's name missing. What is the message of Moshe's missing name?

The commentaries point out that during the Eigel (golden calf) episode, Hashem declared His intent to destroy the people and make Moshe into a great nation. (Shimos 32:10) Moshe responded by pleading with Hashem to forgive the people. In fact, Moshe declared, *"If You don't forgive, erase me from your Torah."* (32:32) Thus, the suggestion is made, that the words Moshe uttered made an impact. Although his prayers were answered and the people were not destroyed, Moshe's name was *"erased,"* so to speak, from one section of the Torah.

When we reflect on the dialogue of Hashem and Moshe and its ramification, we realize that this was a moment which crystalized Moshe's greatness. Moshe was being offered that the Jewish people should come from him. He wasn't

interested. In fact, he declared, *"If the Jewish people fail, I have failed. This isn't about me,"* Moshe was saying, *"It is about seeing the Jewish people through to success."*

By saying, *"Erase me,"* Moshe was expressing his essence. *"I did not do this to be noticed or to have the limelight."* Moshe's missing name pays tribute to him and the great, discreet and devoted leader that he was.

By declaring *"Erase me,"* Moshe paved the way for all parents, teachers, and mentors who do their work of profound benevolence discreetly. Chinuch (education) isn't about espousing our views and imposing them on others. Chinuch is about using our wisdom and life-experiences to bring out the best in the student. The impact of parents, teachers, and mentors is everywhere, but, for the most part, they remain out of view. Their impact could easily be overlooked if we are not paying attention.

In the early 1900s, the Alter of Slabodka, Rav Nosson Tzvi Finkel, mentored many of the great men who would lead the rebirth of world Jewry after the Holocaust. A list of his students includes, Rav Yitzchok Hutner (Yeshiva Rabbi Chaim Berlin, Brooklyn, NY), Rav Yaakov Kamenetsky (Yeshiva Torah Vodaas in Brooklyn, NY), Rav Aharon Kotler (Beth Medrash Govoha, Lakewood, NJ), Rav Dovid Leibowitz (Yeshiva Chofetz Chaim, Queens, NY), Rav Yaakov Yitzchok Ruderman (Yeshivas Ner Yisroel, Baltimore, MD), Rav Yechezkel Sarna (Chevron Yeshiva, Jerusalem), and Rav Isaac Sher, (Slabodka Yeshiva, Bnei Brak).

It seems that somehow the Alter of Slabodka knew the momentous endeavor he was engaged in. When he was asked what his goals were, he replied, *"My goal is to mentor in a way that no one realizes what I have done."* He would mentor these precious people to reach their potential in personal greatness, fortitude, and leadership. He would be anonymous, but his impact would be felt everywhere.

This is the role of every dedicated parent, teacher, and mentor. Our effect is felt profoundly; our love and devotion are everywhere. But our presence can sometimes be overlooked because our goal was to help the child or student to become self-sufficient.

This dynamic is exactly what the Menorah symbolized. The Mitzva of lighting the Menorah was to hold the kindling to the wick, *"Until the flame on the wick is strong enough to burn on its own."* Similarly, this is the way of mentorship: To ignite children and students in a way that they are self-sufficient and can burn brightly on their own.

One of my treasured possessions is the Siddur I received in Pre-1A. To this day I use it each morning to recite the morning Brachos. It was given to me by Rabbi and Mrs. Erps, the husband-wife team who taught us at that tender age. In the front page they wrote my Hebrew name, as they did for each of the students, with love and with their great hopes for every child.

In all of my interviews for jobs and positions no one ever asked me who taught me Alef-Bais and mentored me with my first Siddur. This information never made it to my resume or LinkedIn page. But I know in my heart that the love with which they wrote my name represented the love and blessing that they felt for every child who passed through their classroom, helping each of us to put our best foot forward to a life of blessing.

Circling back to Moshe: Torah was given to us through Moshe. Moshe was the conduit, the intermediary between us and Hashem. In fact, we call him, *"Moshe Rabbeinu,"* Moshe, our teacher. But besides everything we can identify, it is the anonymity of Moshe that is also a great eulogy to him. He was ready to be erased to save us. His leadership wasn't about him, for fame or glory. His leadership was for us. At times he is anonymous, but he is felt by us forever.

With heartfelt blessings for a wonderful Shabbos.

* Rabbi Mordechai Rhine is a certified mediator and coach with Rabbinic experience of more than 20 years. Based in Maryland, he provides services internationally via Zoom. He is the Director of TEACH613: Building Torah Communities, One family at a Time, and the founder of CARE Mediation, focused on Marriage/ Shalom Bayis and personal coaching.

To reach Rabbi Rhine, his websites are www.care-mediation.com and www.teach613.org; his email is RMRhine@gmail.com. **For information or to join any Torah613 classes, contact Rabbi Rhine.**

Parshas Tetzaveh – Understanding Unity

by Rabbi Yehoshua Singer * (2021)

Unity is indisputably one of the foundational principles of Judaism. Unity was a prerequisite for the giving of the Torah at Sinai. Charity and caring for those in need is a fundamental element of every Jewish holiday. At the beginning of the Yom Kippur service, we make a public declaration allowing all to join the service, for a fast day is only complete when we include the sinners and wicked among us into our group. The primacy of unity is clear in the mitzvos of Purim, as well. The Megilla is ideally supposed to be read in a public fashion, maintaining a national awareness of our identity. The Purim festive meal is ideally shared with friends, and we are required to at least share food with friends through Mishloach Manos, and to spread the joy to those in need through *Matanos L'evyonim* – Gifts to the Poor.

It is equally indisputable that slander and hurtful speech are anathema to a Torah lifestyle as they are the basis for so much strife and destruction. Indeed, we find that one of the garments of the High Priest, the Me'il – the outer robe, was intended as an atonement specifically for these sins.)Erchin 16a(Rav Shmuel Greiniman quotes the Chofetz Chaim giving a detailed illustration of this atonement. The Me'il was made of techeiles, a bluish green thread, intended to remind us of the sky and G-d's Heavenly throne, where our words of slander would be judged, and that the slander itself is brought before G-d's Throne of Glory. The lip of the garment was folded inward, reminding us of the value of holding our words in, and how doing so can quell arguments before they explode out of control. There is a weaver's work around the lip, instructing us to utilize our power of imagination in controlling our desire to speak – we should imagine as if our lips are woven shut on the outside, using the visual imagery to calm the urge to speak freely without care. The lip was folded over to strengthen it so it shouldn't tear, reminding us that silence is the key to avoiding tears in our relationships. When we ignore barbs and insults, they slow down; when we respond in kind, they only increase. Pomegranate shapes of thread and ringing golden bells were woven along the bottom, indicating a time for silence and a time for noise. Speech of Torah and growth is to be lauded, but otherwise silence is best. Every aspect of the Me'il is intended to illustrate the evils of slander and the importance of care and concern in this area.

There is a well-known quip that the best place to hide something is in plain sight. In the introduction to the *Mesillas Yesharim* -- Path of the Just -- Rav Moshe Chaim Luzzato zt"l teaches us that this applies to philosophies, as well. Just as we don't look closely at items that are lying out in the open, so too we don't carefully study concepts that are widely accepted and known to be true. However, just as the item lying in public view may be more than it seems, so too, widely accepted concepts can be much more subtle and nuanced than they appear. With this in mind, it is worth considering why we find such a singular focus on the importance of unity and the evil of slander. While they are certainly significant and important, there are many important concepts. Why has this issue been chosen as a central theme of a Torah true lifestyle and a critical focus of a G-d fearing individual? Why of all sins is slander spoken of as rising up before G-d's Throne of Glory?

Perhaps part of the answer can be found in the mitzvos of Purim. In order to properly celebrate our survival and G-d's redemption and love, we need to share our joy with others. If we fail to properly share the joy, then it seems we are missing the essence of our celebration. On Purim, we are not simply celebrating our own existence, but rather the existence of our nation as a whole and the privilege of being part of that whole. Every member of our nation is a unique and critical part of that whole. If there are rifts between us, then we are all incapable of being who we truly are. Only when we put aside our individual pride or pain for the sake of communal unity and success are any of us able to achieve what each of us is meant to accomplish.

* Co-founder of the Rhode Island Torah Network in Providence, RI. Until recently, Rabbi, Am HaTorah Congregation, Bethesda, MD., and associated with the Savannah Kollel.

Tetsaveh

By Rabbi Haim Ovadia *

]I do not have a new Dvar Torah from Rabbi Ovadia for Tetsaveh. Watch this space for more insights from Rabbi Ovadia most coming weeks.[

Shabbat Shalom.

* Judaic faculty, Ramaz High School, New York; also Torah VeAhava. Until recently, Rabbi, Beth Sholom Sephardic Minyan)Potomac, MD(. Faculty member, AJRCA non-denominational rabbinical school(. **Many of Rabbi Ovadia's Devrei Torah are now available on Sefaria: https://www.sefaria.org/profile/haim-ovadia?tab=sheets** . The Sefaria articles usually include Hebrew text, which I must delete because of issues changing software formats.

Many Devrei Torah from Rabbi Ovadia this year come from an unpublished draft of his forthcoming book on Tanach, which Rabbi Ovadia has generously shared with our readers. Rabbi Ovadia reserves all copyright protections for this material.

Tetzaveh: Our Clothes Reflect Our Roles

By Rabbi Moshe Rube *

In the imaginative imagery of Jewish mysticism, we find the idea of the cosmos being "G-d's clothing."

Think about it this way. We all have different roles that we play in life usually demarcated by the clothes we wear. My rabbinical clothes would be dysfunctional and silly if I wore them at the gym, while my gym clothes would be unacceptable while performing rabbinic duties. That doesn't mean I am two separate people. But I, along with all other human beings, can inhabit many different roles with many different clothes.

G-d too is One. But He represents Himself in different ways and in different roles by putting on the various "clothes" or forms that we see in nature. That doesn't mean nature is G-d. But it does provide a metaphor for how we understand G-d's oneness within a world which has so much multiplicity and diversity.

In fact, our Torah commands that we preserve this diversity of roles. In our Torah portion, G-d commands the priests to only wear certain clothes while performing the Temple service. A Kohein on duty, who wears everyday clothes, would face severe penalties. The High Priest, during the Yom Kippur service, changes his clothes five times to account for all the different services throughout the day.

We are also coming up to Purim, when we wear costumes. In a way, this is our time to explore different roles we might wish to play in our lives, or a role that we would never play except as a joke. The reimagining of our roles took place during the Purim story, which told the story of the first Jewish efforts at diplomacy in the Diaspora. It's a role we had to invent and one we continue to do here in New Zealand.

As we approach this festival, let us hope that, through altering our clothing, we merit to become successful in all the roles we inhabit in our life -- and especially with the role of working with our local government to create a safe environment for the Jews in our corner of the world. Just like we did during the time of Purim.

Shabbat Shalom.

* Senior Rabbi of Auckland Hebrew Congregation, Remuera)Auckland(, New Zealand. Formerly Rabbi, Congregation Knesseth Israel)Birmingham, AL(. I reprinted part 1 last week for Mishpatim.

Rav Kook Torah
Tetzaveh: The High Priest's Clothes and the Convert

The Talmud)Shabbat 31a(tells the story of three Gentiles who wished to convert. In each case, they were initially rejected by the scholar Shamai, known for his strictness, but they were later accepted and converted by the famously modest Hillel.

The Convert Who Wanted to be High Priest

In one case, a Gentile was walking near a synagogue when he heard the Torah being read and translated:

> *"These are the clothes that you should make: the jeweled breast-plate, the ephod-apron...")Ex. 28:4(.*

His interest was piqued. *"For whom are these fancy clothes?"* he asked. *"They are special garments for the Kohen Gadol, the High Priest."* The Gentile was excited. *"For this, it is worth becoming a Jew. I'll go convert and become the next High Priest!"*

The Gentile made the mistake of approaching Shamai. *"I want you to convert me,"* he told Shamai, *"but only on condition that you appoint me High Priest."* Shamai rebuffed the man, pushing him away with a builder's measuring rod.

Then he went to Hillel with the same proposition. Amazingly, Hillel agreed to convert him. Hillel, however, gave the man some advice. *"If you wanted to be king, you would need to learn the ways and customs of the royal court. Since you aspire to be the High Priest, go study the appropriate laws."*

So the new convert began studying Torah. One day, he came across the verse*, "Any non-priest who participates]in the holy service[shall die"*)Num. 3:10(. *"To whom does this refer?'* he asked. Even King David, he was told. Even David, king of Israel, was not allowed to serve in the holy Temple, as he was not a descendant of Aaron the kohen.

The convert was amazed. Even those born Jewish, and who are referred to as God's children, are not allowed to serve in the Temple! Certainly, a convert who has just arrived with his staff and pack may not perform this holy service. Recognizing his mistake, he returned to Hillel, saying, *"May blessings fall on your head, humble Hillel, for drawing me under the wings of the Divine Presence."*

Shamai's Rejection and Hillel's Perspective

A fascinating story, but one that requires to be examined. Why did Shamai use a builder's measuring rod to send away the potential convert? What did Hillel see in the Gentile that convinced him to perform the conversion?

Shamai felt that the man lacked a sincere motivation to convert. By chance, he had overheard the recitation of the High Priest's special garments. The garments, beautiful though they may be, represent only an external honor. His aspirations were shallow and superficial, like clothing that is worn on the surface.

Furthermore, the chance incident did not even awaken within the Gentile a realistic goal. How could conversion to Judaism, with all of the Torah's obligations, be based on such a crazy, impossible fancy — being appointed High Priest?

The foundations of such a conversion were just too shaky. Shamai pushed him away with a builder's measuring rod, indicating that he needed to base his goals on solid, measured objectives.

Hillel, however, looked at the situation differently. In his eyes, the very fact that this man passed by the synagogue just when this verse was being read, and that this incident should inspire him to such a lofty goal — converting to Judaism — this person must have a sincere yearning for truth planted deeply in his heart. He was not seeking the honor accorded to the rich and powerful, but rather the respect granted to those who serve God at the highest level. The seed of genuine love of God was there, just obscured by false ambitions, the result of profound ignorance. Hillel was confident that as he advanced in Torah study, the convert would discover the beauty and honor of divine service that he so desired through the sincere observance of the Torah's laws, even without being the High Priest.

Both Traits Needed

Once, the three converts who were initially rejected by Shamai and later accepted by Hillel, met together. They all agreed:

> *"The strictness of Shamai almost made us lose our]spiritual[world; but the humility of Hillel brought us under the wings of God's Presence."*

Rav Kook noted that the converts did not talk about Shamai and Hillel. Rather, they spoke of the *"strictness of Shamai"* and the *"humility of Hillel."* These are two distinct character traits, each one necessary in certain situations. In order to maintain spiritual attainments, we need the traits of firmness and strictness. On the other hand, in order to grow spiritually, or to draw close those who are far away, we need the traits of humility and tolerance. The three converts recognized that it was Hillel's quality of humility that helped bring them *"under the wings of God's Presence."*

)Gold from the Land of Israel, pp. 152-154. Adapted from *Ein Eyah* vol. III, pp. 144-147.(

https://ravkooktorah.org/TETZAVEH60.htm

Tetzevah: The Counterpoint of Leadership (5774, 5781)

By Lord Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, z"l, Former Chief Rabbi of the U.K.*

One of the most important Jewish contributions to our understanding of leadership is its early insistence of what, in the eighteenth century, Montesquieu called *"the separation of powers"]*1[. Neither authority nor power was to be located in a single individual or office. Instead, leadership was divided between different kinds of roles.

One of the key divisions – anticipating by millennia the *"separation of church and state"* – was between the King, the head of state, on the one hand, and the High Priest, the most senior religious office, on the other.

This was revolutionary. The Kings of Mesopotamian city states and the Pharaohs of Egypt were considered demigods or chief intermediary with the gods. They officiated at supreme religious festivals. They were regarded as the representatives of heaven on earth.

In Judaism, by stark contrast, monarchy had little or no religious function)other than the recital by the King of the book of the covenant every seven years in the ritual known as hakhel.(Indeed the chief objection to the Hasmonean Kings on the part of the Sages was that they broke this ancient rule, some of them declaring themselves High Priests also. The Talmud records the objection: *"Let the crown of kingship be sufficient for you. Leave the crown of priesthood to the sons of Aaron.")Kiddushin* 66a(The effect of this principle was to secularise power.]2[

No less fundamental was the division of religious leadership itself into two distinct functions: that of the Prophet and the Priest. That is dramatised in this week's parsha, focussing as it does on the role of the Priest to the exclusion of that of the

Prophet. Tetzaveh is the first parsha since the beginning of the book of Exodus in which Moses' name is missing. It is supremely the priestly, as opposed to prophetic, parsha.

Priests and Prophets were very different in their roles, despite the fact that some Prophets, most famously Ezekiel, were Priests also. The primary distinctions were:

1. The role of Priest was dynastic, that of Prophet was charismatic. Priests were the sons of Aaron. They were born into the role. Parenthood had no part in the role of the Prophet. Moses' own children were not Prophets.

2. The Priest wore robes of office. There was no official uniform for a Prophet.

3. The priesthood was exclusively male; not so prophecy. The Talmud lists seven women who were Prophets: Sarah, Miriam, Deborah, Hannah, Abigail, Huldah and Esther.

4. The role of the Priest did not change over time. There was a precise annual timetable of sacrifices that did not vary from year to year. The Prophet by contrast could not know what their mission would be until God revealed it to them. Prophecy was never a matter of routine.

5. As a result, Prophet and Priest had different senses of time. Time for the Priest was what it was for Plato: the *"moving image of eternity,"*]3[a matter of everlasting recurrence and return. The Prophet lived in historical time. Their today was not the same as yesterday and tomorrow would be different again. One way of putting this is that the Priest heard the word of God for all time. The Prophet heard the word of God for this time.

6. The Priest was *"holy"* and therefore set apart from the people. He had to eat his food in a state of purity, and had to avoid contact with the dead. The Prophet by contrast often lived among the people and spoke a language they understood. Prophets could come from any social class.

7. The key words for the Priest were tahor, tamei, kodesh and chol: *"pure," "impure," "sacred,"* and *"secular."* The key words for the Prophets were tzedek, mishpat, chessed and rachamim: *"righteousness," "justice," "love,"* and *"compassion."* It is not that the Prophets were concerned with morality while the Priests were not. Some of the key moral imperatives, such as *"You shall love your neighbour as yourself,"* come from priestly sections of the Torah. It is rather that Priests think in terms of a moral order embedded in the structure of reality, sometimes called a *"sacred ontology."*]4[Prophets tended to think not of things or acts in themselves but in terms of relationships between persons or social classes.
8. The task of the Priest is boundary maintenance. The key priestly verbs are le-havdil and le-horot, to distinguish one thing from another and apply the appropriate rules. Priests gave rulings, Prophets gave warnings.

9. There is nothing personal about the role of a Priest. If one – even a High Priest – was unable to officiate at a given service, another could be substituted. Prophecy was essentially personal. The Sages said that *"no two Prophets prophesied in the same style"*)Sanhedrin 89a(. Hosea was not Amos. Isaiah was not Jeremiah. Each Prophet had a distinctive voice.

10. Priests constituted a religious establishment. The Prophets, at least those whose messages have been eternalised in Tanach, were not an establishment but an anti-establishment, critical of the powers-that-be.

The roles of Priest and Prophet varied over time. The Priests always officiated at the sacrificial service of the Temple. But they were also Judges. The Torah says that if a case is too difficult to be dealt with by the local court, you should *"Go to the Priests, the Levites, and to the Judge who is in office at that time. Inquire of them and they will give you the verdict"*)Deut. 17:9(. Moses blesses the tribe of Levi saying that *"They will teach Your ordinances to Jacob and Your Torah to Israel"*)Deut. 33:10(, suggesting that they had a teaching role as well.

Malachi, a Prophet of the Second Temple period, says: *"For the lips of a Priest ought to preserve knowledge, because he is the messenger of the Lord Almighty and people seek instruction from his mouth"*)Mal. 2:7(. The Priest was guardian of Israel's sacred social order.

Yet it is clear throughout Tanach that the priesthood was liable to corruption. There were times when Priests took bribes, others when they compromised Israel's faith and performed idolatrous practices. Sometimes they became involved in politics. Some held themselves as an elite apart from and disdainful toward the people as a whole.

At such times the Prophet became the voice of God and the conscience of society, reminding the people of their spiritual and moral vocation, calling on them to return and repent, reminding the people of their duties to God and to their fellow humans and warning of the consequences if they did not heed the call.

The priesthood became massively politicised and corrupted during the Hellenistic era, especially under the Seleucids in the second century BCE. Hellenised High Priests like Jason and Menelaus introduced idolatrous practises, even at one stage a statue of Zeus, into the Temple. This provoked the internal revolt that led to the events we recall on the festival of Chanukah.

Yet despite the fact that the initiator of the revolt, Mattityahu, was himself a righteous Priest, corruption re-emerged under the Hasmonean Kings. The Qumran sect known to us through the Dead Sea Scrolls was particularly critical of the priesthood in Jerusalem. It is striking that the Sages traced their spiritual ancestry to the Prophets, not the Priests)Avot 1:1(.

The Kohanim were essential to ancient Israel. They gave the religious life its structure and continuity, its rituals and routines, its festivals and celebrations. Their task was to ensure that Israel remained a holy people with God in its midst. But they were an establishment, and like every establishment, at best they were the guardians of the nation's highest values, but at worst they became corrupt, using their position for power and engaging in internal politics for personal advantage. That is the fate of establishments, especially those whose membership is a matter of birth.

That is why the Prophets were essential. They were the world's first social critics, mandated by God to speak truth to power. Still today, for good or otherwise, religious establishments always resemble Israel's priesthood. Who, though, are Israel's prophets at the present time?

The essential lesson of the Torah is that leadership can never be confined to one class or role. It must always be distributed and divided. In ancient Israel, Kings dealt with power, Priests with holiness, and Prophets with the integrity and faithfulness of society as a whole. In Judaism, leadership is less a function than a field of tensions between different roles, each with its own perspective and voice.

Leadership in Judaism is counterpoint, a musical form defined as *"the technique of combining two or more melodic lines in such a way that they establish a harmonic relationship while retaining their linear individuality."*]5[It is this internal complexity that gives Jewish leadership its vigour, saving it from entropy, the loss of energy over time.

Leadership must always, I believe, be like this. **Every team must be made up of people with different roles, strengths, temperaments and perspectives. They must always be open to criticism and they must always be on the alert against groupthink. The glory of Judaism is its insistence that only in heaven is there one commanding Voice. Down here on earth no individual may ever hold a monopoly of leadership.**

Out of the clash of perspectives – King, Priest and Prophet – comes something larger than any individual or role could achieve.

Footnotes:

]1[Charles-Louis Montesquieu, *The Spirit of Laws*)Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1952(.

]2[In Judaism, power, except that exercised by God, is not holy.

]3[Plato, *Timaeus* 37d.

]4[On this rather difficult idea, see Philip Rieff, *My Life Among the Deathworks*)Charlottesville, Va.: University of Virginia Press, 2006(. Rieff was an unusual and insightful critic of modernity. For an introduction to his work, see Antonius A.W. Zondervan, Sociology and the Sacred: *An Introduction to Philip Rieff's Theory of Culture*)Toronto, Ontario: University of Toronto Press, 2005(.

]5[American Heritage Dictionary, 5th ed., s.v. “Counterpoint”)Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2011(.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR TETZAVEH:

]1[What was so revolutionary about the institution of these three different leadership roles?

]2[Which of the 10 distinctions between Priest and Prophet illustrates their differences most acutely?

]3[How would you answer the question that was raised in this piece: Who are Israel’s prophets at the present time?

https://rabbisacks.org/covenant-conversation/tetzaveh/the-counterpoint-of-leadership/ Note: because Likutei Torah and the Internet Parsha Sheet, both attached by E-mail, normally include the two most recent Devrei Torah by Rabbi Sacks, I have selected an earlier Dvar.

Don’t Fade Before You Finish

By Yossi Goldman * © Chabad 2025

A factory hired a new production manager. He was a great motivator and everyone in the plant was enthusiastic. It didn’t take long for the manager to send an excited message to his bosses in the head office.

“Got production up to unprecedented numbers. We broke all our records yesterday!”

The message he got back in return read:

“What are you doing today?”
We can bemoan the insensitivity of business people, but at the end of the day, the nature of the beast is that business is guided not by sentiment but by the bottom line. Yes, it’s hard, often unfair, and certainly unsympathetic, but that’s the reality.

It’s also a lesson for life.

There are many who start out with great success. Their lights shine for a brief moment, then flicker and fade into oblivion. The secret to success goes beyond the initial enthusiasm. It requires persistence, commitment, and consistency.

Rashi1 teaches us this very message at the beginning of our weekly reading, Tetzaveh.

> *“And you shall command the Children of Israel that they should take for you pure, pressed olive oil for illumination, to kindle the lamp continually.”*2

The *"lamp"* refers to the Menorah in the Temple, and Rashi quotes the Talmudic3 teaching that the requirement is to light the Menorah *"so that the flame ascends of itself."* The Kohen who lights the Menorah must ensure that the flame is strong and stable and will not be extinguished when he walks away. Often, we light a candle, and it flickers briefly, only to go out as soon as we turn our backs. The instruction here is to make certain that the flame is properly lit and will keep burning long after we're gone.

This, too, is an instruction for life. It's not enough to light the candle. We must make sure it will last. There's got to be sufficient oil, wick, and whatever it needs to last.

In life, whether in business or in our relationships, we need to be there for the long haul.

There are sprinters who can break records over short distances, but marathon runners need stamina more than speed, and grit more than grace. It takes a lot of training and enormous determination to go the full distance.

Here in South Africa, we have the famous international Ultra Marathon called the *"Comrades."* It's twice the length of a normal marathon, some 90 kilometers! And every year many thousands of people from all over the world take up the challenge and do, in fact, complete the course in the required time. I marvel at their strength, courage, perseverance, and determination.)I also think they are a little meshuga, but that's for a different sermon.(

And as it is in life, so it is in Jewish life. We need not only starters, but finishers. Many people make resolutions and begin studying Torah or practicing a new mitzvah, and at first, it's new, fresh, and exciting. Too often, though, the enthusiasm wanes and peters out. We need the capacity for continuity. That initial burst of energy alone cannot guarantee long-term success. We may be fast, but we fade.

Yes, routines can become boring, and it's human nature to lose interest after a while. But those with staying power are in it for the long haul. The capacity for continuity, that sense of consistency, separates the faders from the finishers.

Many synagogues have a ner tamid, an *"eternal light,"* usually somewhere near or over the Holy Ark. It is a reminder of the Menorah in the Temple of old which was kindled daily, summer or winter, rain or shine. The Kohen and the flame were faithful, reliable, and constant.

The light of G d is eternal. Torah is truth and truth is forever. The Hebrew word for Truth is emet, which in Hebrew is spelled Alef, Mem, Taf. These three Hebrew letters are the first, last and middle letters of the Hebrew alphabet. First, middle, and last represents consistency. Truth is truth, now and forever.

Long ago, King David wrote in the Book of Psalms, *"Who may ascend the mountain of G d, and who may stand in the place of His sanctity?"*4

It's one thing to climb the mountain. It's another to maintain one's level. Please G d, may we keep climbing and sustaining our enthusiasm now and forever.

FOOTNOTES:

1.
Exodus 27:20

2. ibid.

3. Shabbat 21a.

4. Psalms 24:3.

* Founding Director of the first Chabad in South Africa; Life Rabbi Emeritus of the Sydenham Shul in Johannesburg; and President of the South African Rabbinical Association**.**

https://www.chabad.org/parshah/article_cdo/aid/5833027/jewish/Dont-Fade-Before-You-Finish.htm

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Tetzevah: Tourching the Divine

by Rabbi Moshe Wisnefsky *

> *For seven days you must make atonement for the Altar and sanctify it, thus making the Altar holy of holies. Whatever touches the Altar will become sanctified.*)Ex. 29:37(

Allegorically, we all, collectively and individually, constitute the world's *"Altar."* The Altar was the means by which material reality ascended to Divinity; similarly, each of us possesses the ability to elevate the material world by using it for holy purposes.

Anything that was fit to be offered up on the Altar became *"holy"* as soon as it touched the Altar, meaning that it had to be offered up; it could not be *"de-sanctified"* and used for mundane purposes.

Likewise, we should strive to imitate the Altar in this regard. We should aspire to be so saturated with Divine consciousness that anything that we *"touch"*)i.e., come in contact with(– provided that it is *"fit"*)i.e., permitted to us by the Torah(– will become irrevocably influenced by our holiness. We will thereby progressively transform the world into G-d's ultimate home.

— from *Daily Wisdom* 3

* An insight by **the Lubavitcher Rebbe** on parshat Va'eira from our *Daily Wisdom* Vol. 3 by Rabbi Moshe Wisnefsky.

May G-d grant strength and peace in the Holy Land.

Gut Shabbos,

Rabbi Yosef B. Friedman
Kehot Publication Society

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Gleanings of Divrei Torah on Parashat Hashavuah via the Internet

Purim Sameach

By Sari & Russell Mayer, Avi, Atara, and Arella
on the occasion of the 41st yahrzeit (11 Adar) of Sari's father,
Dr. A. Abba Walker, z"l (Avraham Abba ben Shlomo)

Shabbat Shalom - Purim Sameach

Volume 31, Issue 20 **Shabbat Zachor - Parashat Tetzave** **5785 B"H**

Covenant and Conversation
Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, z"l

God's Hidden Call

Chazal, our Sages, asked a strange question in the Gemara of Chullin (139b): Esther min haTorah minayin? "Where do we find a hint in the Torah to the Book of Esther?", the last book of Tanach to be canonised. The Gemara answers with the words, v'anochi haster astir panai, "I will hide my face on that day." Hashem's most fearful warning had always been that there would come a time when there would be hester panim, the concealed face of God, when it would look as if, God forbid, Hashem has stopped communicating with us.

That is how Chazal found a hint of Esther. We know that Esther is one of the only two books in Tanach which don't contain the name of Hashem, the other one being Shir HaShirim. But where as Shir HaShirim is a book about Hashem's love for us, Esther is a fearful book because it records the moment when it was resolved Lehashmid laharog ule'abaid et kol hayehudim mina'ar v'ad zakein taf v'nashim beyom echad, "to destroy, to slay, and to exterminate all Jews, young and old, children and women, in a single day," when the first warrant for genocide against the Jewish people was issued. Purim is the only festival in the Jewish year set entirely in Galut, in Exile.

Every other festival is either based on an event that happened in Israel or on the journey toward Israel. Purim alone is set in the place of hester panim, when we are out of Israel and where it is harder to feel the presence of God.

That is the Book of Esther. It comes from an almost secularised world, where we search for the presence of God in history and we fail to find it. Yet there is one line in the Megillah that cuts through me like a knife and represents the most powerful statement in Judaism I know that Hashem has not abandoned us.

Towards the end of the fourth chapter, we find Esther telling her Uncle Mordechai about all the problems there might be in interceding with King Achashverosh regarding the fate of the Jewish people. Mordechai listens and then responds to her with the famous words, Im haharesh tachrishi, ba'et hazot revach v'hatzlah ya'amod layehudim mimakom acher, "If you are silent and you do nothing at this time somebody else will save the Jewish people." U'mi yodeia im l'et kazot, higa'at lamalchut? "But who knows, was it not for just this moment that you became a Queen, with access to King Achashverosh in the royal palace?"

This, for me, is the ultimate statement of hashgachah pratit, that wherever we are, sometimes Hashem is asking us to realise why He put us here, with these gifts, at this time, with these dangers, in this place. Hashgachah pratit is our fundamental belief that God never abandons us, that He puts us here with something to do. Even in the worst hiding of God, if you listen hard enough, you can hear Him calling to us as individuals, saying U'mi yodeia im l'et kazot higa'at lamalchut? "Was is not for this very challenge that you are here in this place at this time?"

That is the essence of the first word of the third book of Torah [we started reading last Shabbat] – Vayikra. When you look in a Torah you will notice the word is written with a very small Aleph at the end. Commenting on this, Rashi draws a distinction between the phrases Vayikra el Moshe, "And He [Hashem] called to Moses" and Vayikar el Bilam "And He [Hashem] appeared to Bilam". The Hebrew language, says Rashi, has two words that sound the same, but are in fact completely different, even opposite, mikrah and mikreh. Mikreh is used to describe something that happens accidentally, that involves no Divine Providence. Mikrah, on the other hand, is used to describe a calling from Hashem, specific to you with a particular task involved.

Why, then, is the Aleph – a letter which makes no sound – written small? To teach us that sometimes it can be very hard to hear Hashem's call. It might even be a silent call. In Hebrew, this is a known as kol demama daka, a voice you can only hear if you are listening. Even in the worst hester panim, Hashem is always calling on us to do something.

One of my great heroes was a man called Victor Frankl, I write about him often. Victor Frankl was a psychotherapist actually working with university students in Vienna and was taken to Auschwitz during the Second World War. There never was in all history greater hester panim than in the Holocaust. Yet Victor Frankl was a man of faith, and he knew Hashem was calling on him to do something even there, even at the gates of Hell itself. He asked himself, what does Hashem want of me, a psychotherapist, in the middle of Auschwitz? He came to the answer, Hashem wants me to give my fellow prisoners, my fellow Jews, a will to live, because only if they have that will, will they have the strength to survive. So he went around to each prisoner that he thought was about to fall into despair, and gave them a role in life, one they had yet to fulfil. This sense of renewed purpose helped force these men, women and children to stay alive, survive Auschwitz, be liberated and then go and do their calling. That is what Victor Frankl heard, even in Auschwitz, a Vayikra with a tiny Aleph.

There is another story of a man named Eddie Jacobson. Eddie was an ordinary Jewish guy from the Lower East Side of New York. When Eddie was a child, his parents moved to Kansas City and there he met a child his own age. Soon they became close school friends, did military service together during the First World War, and decided that when the war was over, they would go into business together. They set up a clothing store in Kansas City, but the business was not a great success and soon they drifted apart. Eddie Jacobson went on being a travelling salesman selling clothes. His friend, Harry S. Truman, took a slightly different route and landed up as President of the United States.

In 1947-48, the Jews of the world needed the support of the United States of America for the state of Israel to be proclaimed and recognised. The State Department was against it and advised the President not to support the creation of the state of Israel. Jews and Jewish organisations tried their utmost to see the President in the White House, and every single attempt was refused. Even the leader of the Zionist movement, Chaim Weizmann, the man who would become the first President of the State of Israel, was refused a meeting.

As time became desperate, somebody remembered that Harry S. Truman had a childhood friend called Eddie Jacobson. So they reached out to Eddie and asked if he could get the President of the United States to meet with Chaim Weizmann. So Eddie phoned

up President Truman and said he had to come and see him. Truman's officials tried to block the meeting, but Truman said "This is my old friend, Eddie, from school, Eddie, from the Army, Eddie, from our shop together! How can I not see this man?"

When Eddie arrived at the White House, Truman said "Eddie, you can talk to me about anything, except Israel." "Okay", said Eddie and he stood in the Oval Office, in front of the President of the United States, and began to cry. "Eddie, why are you crying?" asked the President. Eddie pointed to a marble statue in the room and said "Who is that, Harry?" "That's my hero, Andrew Jackson", Truman replied. "You really admire this man?" asked Eddie. "Yes." "And he had an influence over you?" "Yes" said Truman. Then, said Eddie, "I have a hero. His name is Chaim Weizmann. Harry, for my sake, see this man." Harry looked at Eddie and he knew that he couldn't say no to his old friend. That is how Chaim Weizmann got to see President Harry S. Truman, and that is how America voted in favour of the creation of the State of Israel. If they had not voted, Israel would not have been brought into being. What's more, Harry S. Truman made the United States the first country in the world to recognise this State when David Ben Gurion pronounced it.

I don't know exactly how Hashem writes the script of history, but if it can happen to Eddie Jacobson it can happen to any one of us. U'mi yodeia im l'et kazot higa'at lamalchut? Hashem is calling on each of us, saying there is a reason why we are here, because He has something for us to do, something that only we can do. We can hear Hashem's voice even when there's hester panim, when He appears hidden, even when the call, Vayikra, is written with a very small Aleph that you can hardly see and hardly hear.

In the third chapter of Hilchot Teshuvah, The Laws of Repentance, Rambam teaches us how throughout the entire year, we should see ourselves as if we as individuals and the entire world collectively are evenly poised between merit and sin. Our next deed may tilt the balance of our life, it may tilt the balance of somebody else's life, it may even tilt the balance of the world. We never know when an act of ours will have consequences. Did Esther, growing up with Mordechai, know that one day, the entire future of the Jewish people will rest with her? You never know what significance one friendship or one little moment might have for you and for somebody else that might just change the world.

You don't have to change the world to change the world. Let me explain. If we really believe, as the Mishnah in Sandedrin, says Nefesh achat k'olam malei, that "A life is like a universe" then if you change one life, you can begin to change the universe the only way any of us can, one life at a time, one day at a time, one act at a time.

We must always ask ourselves, what does Hashem want of me in this place, at this time? Because there is always something Hashem wants of us, and we don't have to be anyone special to have a sacred task. We can just be a Jewish woman called Esther, or a Jewish man called Eddie, and yet, somehow or another, our acts might have consequences that we cannot even begin to imagine. Even though you may feel sometimes that this is a world and an age in which there is hester panim, where you look for Hashem and you can't find Him, He is still saying to us U'mi yodeia im l'et kazot higa'at lamalchut?, "Was it not for this moment that I placed you here on Earth?"

When Hashem calls, may each of us have the courage to say to 'Hineini, here I am, Hashem, tell me what to do and I will do it. 'May we go out into the world, walking tall as Jews, walking unafraid, as Jews, and may we be true to our faith and a blessing to others regardless of their faith. May we hear the call of Hashem and answer it. May we all bring blessing to the world.

Shabbat Shalom: Rabbi Shlomo Riskin

A Call to Our Collective Responsibility

Amalek is no longer. The Mishna (Yadayim 4:4) teaches us that Sancheriv, the Assyrian emperor, through his military campaigns and conquests created such upheaval among the various local nations – interspersing and intermixing them –that Amalek and the seven Canaanite nations no longer exist today. Hence, the command in this week's Maftir regarding Amalek is and shall remain a dormant mitzvah.

Yet our tradition has preserved the mitzvah to remember Amalek, as practiced on Shabbat Zachor, because our memory of the past does not require Amalekites to still exist. It is as though the Torah itself has told us "drosh v'kabel schar": seek out the underlying messages embedded in this seemingly inactionable mitzvah and be rewarded with insight. What, then, are we meant to learn from this command that can still impact us today?

The story of Shaul, as recounted in the Haftarah for Shabbat Zachor, opens with the king assembling his army. "Vayeshama Shaul et haam,"– Shaul calls upon the people to report for duty, and hundreds of thousands respond. The term vayeshama is unusual, meaning to 'make heard. 'As the Radak astutely notes, it is similar to the opening line of Masechet Shkalim, which teaches that at the start of the month of Adar "mashmi'im al hashkalim" or that every Jew is obligated to donate a half-shekel. In the haftarah, too, Shaul faces a situation that requires the full participation of the entire nation, a milchemet mitzvah, or a war that is a religious command. He issues the call to prepare to fight, and the people rally together.

Yet the Talmud (Sotah 42b) teaches that there is an even higher classification: a milchemet chovah, an obligatory war, necessary for the survival and security of the Jewish people in their land. In an obligatory war, the Talmud rules that "even brides and bridegrooms must report for duty" – every individual is responsible for ensuring the safety of the Jewish people. Indeed Maimonides codifies this ruling as law (Mishneh Torah, Melachim 7:4), applying it to both a milchemet mitzvah and a milchemet chovah.

Today, we are in the midst of a milchemet chovah – an obligatory war for the safety and security of Israel and, I believe, for Jews worldwide. The Jewish people's standing army needs the full engagement of its citizenry – not only as a matter of necessity, but as a halakhic obligation. One of the silver linings amid the darkness of these past months has been the remarkable display of partnership, cooperation and mutual responsibility among so many sectors of Israeli society, as well as the active engagement of Jewish communities around the world.

Yet this war has also highlighted, more than ever before, the urgent need to ensure that the burden of security does not fall only on some communities while others remain unencumbered. Many soldiers are already on their fourth or fifth round of reserve duty, with some having served for over 400 days. The acute need to share the load across Israeli society has never been clearer.

This responsibility particularly extends to those who devote their lives to Torah study. If the Torah is what binds the Jewish people together, then the Torah itself mandates that we stand together in times of need, and step up to the duty to physically protect the nation..

As Rav Aharon Lichtenstein tz"l wrote in his monumental essay "The Ideology of Hesder," "When, as in contemporary Israel, the greatest single hesed one can perform is helping to defend his fellows 'very lives, the implications for yeshiva education should be obvious."

Forty years after these words were written, the challenge remains: How do we integrate all sectors of Jewish Israeli society into the shared responsibility of defense? This is not just a question; it is a call to action. It is our duty to take concrete steps to make the Torah's vision a reality. We should act upon this as we read about Amalek on Shabbat Zachor.

The Person in the Parsha
Rabbi Dr. Tzvi Hersh Weinreb

Don't Rain On My Parade!

If you have raised a child, you have had this experience. Your little boy or girl came home from school with a sample of his or her artwork. To you it just looked like a hodge-podge of scribbles, random color smears. But your child exclaimed, "Look, Mommy, it is a picture of the trees and fields that we pass on the way to grandma's house." Or, "Wow, Daddy! I drew the sun and the moon and the stars in the sky!"

What do you do with the picture? What most of us would do, and certainly what my wife and I did many times with our kids, is to tell them how beautiful the picture is, how it looks just like what they describe it to be, and then post it on the refrigerator door or some other prominent place, then show it off for all to see.

Imagine how devastating it is, on the other hand, if the child gleefully brings his work of art to the parents attention only to have the parents say, "Ugh! What an ugly picture! It's just a bunch of smudges on paper! It doesn't look at all like a forest or field! Sun and moon and stars, no way!"

Such a parent has extinguished the poor child's exuberance. By cruelly scoffing at the youngster's attempt to produce a work of art, the parent has seriously harmed the child's self-esteem. The parents had an opportunity to deliver words of encouragement which would have had a long-term impact. Instead, they instilled in the child a lack of self-confidence which may very well have left a lifelong scar.

The Jewish tradition condemns the scoffer and sees in cynicism a powerful destructive force.

What, you may ask, does this have to do with this week's Torah readings? Let me explain. Although the primary Torah portion this week is Parshat Tezaveh (Exodus 27:2-30:10), we also will be reading an additional selection, and a very important one at that.

This week is one of the four special Sabbaths which precede the approach of Passover. Two weeks ago was Parshat Shekalim, which was discussed in this column. This week is Parshat Zachor, where we read the story of Amalek's treacherous attack upon the people of Israel as they marched through the wilderness (Deuteronomy 25:17-19).

Amalek's cowardly attack is to be remembered for all generations. There are many views as to what was so dastardly about his actions. Indeed, he is often portrayed in our tradition as the precursor to the genocidal murderers, the Hamans and Hitlers, of our tragic history.

But let me share with you a different view of the nature of Amalek's crime. Our Sages in the Midrash Tanchuma note that we encountered two "visitors" soon after we left Egypt, as we began our trek through the desert. One was Yitro, who ultimately joined us, and the other was Amalek who attacked us from the rear.

The Midrash Tanchuma draws upon the verse in Proverbs 19:25, which reads, "Beat the scoffer, but the simpleton will become clever." The simpleton, says the Midrash, is Yitro, who overcame his prior beliefs and became clever. The scoffer, on the other hand, Amelek, was blinded to the miracles of the Exodus by his cynicism, and his evil was unredeemable.

Amalek is the ultimate scoffer, the paradigm of cynicism. He is described as "asher karcha", usually translated as "the one who 'surprised you,' or 'happened upon you,' on the road as you left Egypt." (Deuteronomy 25:18)

But Rashi offers other explanations, one of which is quite fascinating. Rashi suggests that "asher karcha" can mean "he who cooled you off," and he offers the metaphor of a seething cauldron or tub of boiling water, which Amalek cooled off by jumping into it.

The seething cauldron can be a metaphor for either the fear with which the other witnessing nations were overcome, which was dissipated by Amalek's precedent. Alternatively, it can be a metaphor for the bubbling enthusiasm of the triumphant Jewish people, which was diminished, perhaps permanently, by the effects of Amalek's attack.

Rabbi Isaac Hutner, in his posthumously published essays on Purim, takes the latter approach. "The Jewish people," he writes, "were full of a spiritual energy and optimism that was dimmed by the scoffer Amalek." The scoffing cynic has the ability to burst the bubble of enthusiasm with a shrug and a "so what?" or "big deal!" Amalek rained on our parade.

Sensitive students of the psychology of religion know the effects of cynicism and sarcasm upon spirituality and soulful moods. One such student was the famed 18th century pietist, Rabbi Moses Chaim Luzzato, more commonly known as the Ramchal. This is what he writes in his masterpiece, Mesilat Yesharim (The Path of the Just), towards the end of the fifth chapter:

"Scoffing has a sinister and depraving effect. As a shield that is anointed with oil causes the arrows that strike it to glance off without touching the body, so scoffing renders reproof and chastisement ineffective. A single sarcasm or jest is liable to blight most of the spiritual zeal and enthusiasm which a man may have acquired from the experience that taught him to be particular and scrupulous in his actions. As a result of ridicule he is apt to cast off all that he has learned so that there is no sign of it left in him, not because it is not instructive, nor because he lacks understanding, but because mockery has the power to destroy every vestige of conscience and reverence."

When we observe Parshat Zachor and read the story of Amalek in the synagogue this Shabbat, we are commanded to forever remember what he did to our people. Of course, we will try to remember the primary lesson, namely to never forget the genocidal intentions of our enemies beginning with Amalek and continuing to this very day.

But it would also be instructive to remember Amalek as the cynical scoffer who would diminish our fervor and spirit. In remembering him in this manner, we would also do well to resolve that we ourselves are never guilty of mocking the accomplishments of others. We must be careful not to rain on the parade of other human beings, but rather to appreciate their accomplishments with neither envy nor disparagement.

We must find room on the doors of our refrigerators to proudly exhibit the childlike paintings of those who show them to us with enthusiasm.

Torah.Org: Rabbi Yissocher Frand

Aharon Became Kohen Gadol Because he was from Among the People

In this week's parsha, Aharon and his descendants are chosen to be the Kohanim: "Now you bring near to yourself Aharon, your brother, and his sons with him, from among the Children of Israel – Aharon, Nadav and Avihu, Elazar and Isamar, the sons of Aharon – to minister to Me." (Shemos 28:1) Forevermore, Aharon's descendants became the Kohanim, who did the Avodah in the Beis HaMikdash. They duchen (administer the Priestly Blessings). In the future, im yirtzeh Hashem, they will again do the Avodah in the future Beis HaMikdash. They will receive the matnos kehunah (priestly gifts). They are a privileged class.

The Medrash Rabbah connects the above-cited pasuk with the pasuk in Tehillim, "Had your Torah not been my preoccupation, then I would have perished in my affliction." (119:92) and makes the following comment: When the Ribono shel Olam told Moshe to make Aharon and his descendants the Kohanim, it bothered Moshe (that he and his descendants were not given this privilege). Hashem told Moshe, "The Torah had been Mine and I gave it to you. If not for the Torah, the world would be destroyed." In other words,

He told Moshe: "What is your problem that Aharon and his sons have the Kehuna? I had the Torah and I gave it to you!"

This Medrash is difficult on two points. First, it seems strange that Moshe was upset by hearing that Aharon and his sons would be the Kohanim. Why was he upset? Was he jealous of his brother? That is impossible to accept. If Aharon was not jealous of Moshe Rabbeinu, his younger brother, because of his own sterling middos (Shemos 4:14), certainly Moshe would not be jealous of his older brother. Moshe, too, had sterling middos! So what was Moshe upset about?

Second, how did the Ribono shel Olam try to mollify Moshe Rabbeinu? If Moshe Rabbeinu was, for some reason, bothered about the Kehuna, how does it help that Hashem had given him the Torah? What does one thing have to do with the other? Furthermore, the Torah was not given just to Moshe, it was given to the entire nation!

Rav Avraham Buxbaum, who is a rabbi in Miami, Florida, sent to me a Torah thought from the Yismach Moshe, Rav Moshe Teitelbaum (1759-1841; grandfather of Rav Yoel Teitelbaum, the 'Satmer Rebbe 'zt"l (1887-1979)). He says a beautiful pshat in this Medrash, explaining what was bothering Moshe Rabbeinu, and what Hasehm's response was that "I gave you the Torah."

The Yismach Moshe writes that Moshe Rabbeinu was not jealous of Aharon. He was perfectly happy for Aharon and his children to be the Kohanim. Rather, Moshe Rabbeinu was bothered that "If You did not make me the Kohen Gadol, it must be because there is something wrong with me." Moshe was perturbed: "What is my problem?" Truth be told, Moshe Rabbeinu had a closer relationship with the Ribono shel Olam than Aharon did. No human being in the history of the world had a closer relationship with Hashem than Moshe Rabbeinu (perhaps excluding Adam). Logic would have dictated that the role of "Ambassador of Hashem " (which is the role played by the Kohanim, and by the Kohen Gadol in particular) should be given to the person on Earth with whom Hashem is closest. "I am not jealous of my brother, but still, I wish to know, what did I do wrong?"

The Yismach Moshe says that Hashem answered Moshe: There is in fact nothing wrong with you – and that itself is the reason why you cannot be the Kohen Gadol! It is because you are too perfect!

We need to understand the role the Kohanim played in the time of the Beis HaMikdash. Who did the average Jew relate to? He brought his terumos and matnos kehunah to the Kohen, but more importantly, if he did something wrong, if he failed to fulfill a mitzvas asei (positive commandment), to whom did he go to bring a Korbon Olah? If he unintentionally desecrated the Shabbos, he needed to bring a Korbon Chatas. Who did the Jews go to when they needed someone to handle their ritual requirements? They went to the Kohen. Therefore, the Kohen must be the type of person who understands that people make mistakes. Sometimes people stumble. Sometimes people succumb to their passions. Sometimes people sin. The Kohen must appreciate that. Moshe Rabbeinu did not have that quality in his resume. Aharon HaKohen did have that quality in his resume because he himself stumbled in connection with the Egel Hazahav (Golden Calf).

Aharon knew what it meant to sin and he knew what it meant to have to bring an atonement. He knew what it meant to have to do teshuva (repenting). Therefore, Aharon was more fit for the job of Kohen Gadol because he could say, "I have been there and done that."

Therefore, says the Yismach Moshe, this is what the Ribono shel Olam answered to Moshe: "I gave you the Torah." Moshe, you can understand that a person may relate to some things and not to others. The Gemara (Shabbos 86b) records that when Moshe ascended Heavenward (to receive the Torah) the Malachei Hashares (Ministering Angels) asked Hashem, "What is someone born to a woman doing among us?" In other words, they asked, "Why are You giving the Torah to people?" The malachim claimed that the Holy Torah should stay in Heaven "here with us, with the Holy Angels." Hashem told Moshe to respond to this challenge.

Moshe answered: What does it say in the Torah? It says "I am the L-rd your G-d who took you out of Egypt." He turned to the malachim and asked, "Were you ever in Mitzraim?" What else is written in the Torah? "You shall have no other gods before Me." Moshe turned to the malachim and asked, "Do you malachim have a Yetzer Harah for Avodah Zarah? Do you dwell among the nations who still worship Avodah Zarah?" "Do you ever do work that you need to rest on Shabbos?" Etc., etc.

The point of the Gemara is that Moshe told the Malachei Hashares – You malachim do not need a Torah. We need a Torah because we are human beings. We have passions and evil inclinations. We have all the things that make us human. We are the people who need Torah. You angels cannot relate to a Torah.

The Yismach Moshe writes that this is what the Ribono shel Olam said to Moshe Rabbeinu. I gave you the Torah because you are a human being and you can relate to it. You can say about the Torah's mitzvos, "Yes. We have been there and done that. They all relate to us." Therefore, you, Moshe Rabbeinu, should comprehend my rationale for giving the Kehuna to Aharon. Aharon needs to deal with people who did aveiros. He knows how to handle that, because he himself sinned. Just as you convinced the malachim that you deserve the Torah because it relates to you, so too, you should understand that Aharon has the job of being mechaper for those who did aveiros because kapara is something to which he relates.

Using his approach here, the Yismach Moshe also explains a Rashi in Parshas Shemini (Vayikra 9:7). Rashi asks, why does Moshe Rabbeinu need to tell Aharon "Approach the Mizbayach?" Rashi answers that Aharon was embarrassed and afraid to approach the Mizbayach. He feared – I have shamed myself with the aveira of the Egel Hazahav and now you want me to be the Kohen Gadol? Moshe responded to him: "Why are you embarrassed? That is why you were chosen! (l'Kach nivcharta)."

This fits in beautifully with what the Yismach Moshe wrote. This is EXACTLY why Aharon was chosen to be the Kohen Gadol – BECAUSE HE HAD SINNED! He was experienced and knowledgeable about stumbling and doing teshuva. He was chosen for that reason. It is nothing to be embarrassed about.

Finally, the Yismach Moshe says, with this insight, we can better understand the pasuk at the beginning of Parshas Tetzaveh, quoted above: "Now you, bring near to yourself Aharon, your brother, and his sons with him, from among the Children of Israel…". Aharon and his sons were chosen precisely because they were AMONG THE PEOPLE. They are very human. They know how to do teshuva, so they are appropriate for the job of accepting korbonos in the Beis HaMikdash. Moshe, you are on a different level. You have your own job – but the Kehuna is not it. The Kehuna requires an understanding of failing and possessing a Yetzer Hara, of being human. That is why Aharon was chosen to be Kohen Gadol.

A "Kutzo Shel Yud" Differentiates the Daled from the Reish

The following thought on Parshas Zachor comes from the sefer Bnei Yisoschor, who often presents matters in a "Chassidic fashion".

The Bnei Yisoschor sums up the essence of Amalek with the words "M'dor dor" (which is the conclusion of the pasuk "…A war for Hashem with Amalek from generation to generation (m'dor dor)) (Shemos 17:16). This pasuk actually does not appear in Parshas Ki Seitzei, from which we read Parshas Zachor. It appears in Parshas B'Shalach – the first time the Torah describes the battle of Klal Yisrael with Amalek. (This section is read as the Krias haTorah on Purim morning.)

How do these two words contain the essence of Hashem's battle with Amalek and explain the essence of Amalek's hatred for Israel?

The Gemara (Chulin 139b) asks: "Where in the Torah (in the "Chumash") do we find an allusion to Haman?" This famous Talmudic passage cites the pasuk in Parshas Bereshis after Adam ate from the Etz Hada'as. Hashem questioned him: "Hamin (spelled Hay-Mem-Nun like Haman) ha'etz asher tze-vee-see-cha l'bil-tee echol mi-menu achalta?" (Did you eat from the tree from which I forbade you to eat?) (Bereshis 3:11)

The Bnei Yisoschor asks two questions. First, why do we need an allusion to Haman in the Torah? Second, this is not the only place where the letters Hay-Mem-Nun appear as a stand-alone word in the Torah. Actually, if we had to pick the most appropriate allusion to the wicked Haman in Chumash, we would not pick Bereshis 3:11 where the vowels make it into a different word (Hamin rather than Haman). Rather, we would pick Shemos 16:35 ("And the Children of Israel ate the Mann (es haman) for forty years…"). The word haman in that pasuk sounds exactly like the name Haman in the Megilla!

The Bnei Yisoschor says an amazing idea. He cites a Daas Zekeinim m'Baalei Tosfos, which in turn is from the Medrash Rabbah. In Parshas Bereshis (3:11), the Daas Zekeinim says on the above-cited pasuk (Hamin ha'etz…): Hashem told Adam haRishon not to eat from the Etz Hadaas and that on the day he eats from it he will die. However, they ask that on the day Adam ate from the tree, he did not die! The Medrash says that Hashem said to Adam: I was going to hang you on that tree, because you are chayav meesah. But instead, I am going to keep that tree (or perhaps another tree) and that will be the tree upon which I will hang Haman.

The Bnei Yisoschor says that we see from this Medrash that there must be some kind of connection between the aveira of Adam haRishon and Haman. He elaborates: When the Gemara in Chulin asks the question "From where is Haman seen in the Torah?" the Gemara is not merely asking for a word allusion – where is Haman alluded to in the Torah? There does not need to be a remez for Haman in the Torah. The Gemara wants to know: Amalek waged a war against Hashem that started there in the Wilderness; and continued through the time of Shmuel and Shaul; and continues to this very day.

Where did Haman get that koach harah (power of evil), which he uses for evil throughout the generations, throughout eternity, throughout all of history? It is an amazing thing—there is this perpetual power of evil in the world. Where did it originate? The answer is that it all started with the aveira of Adam haRishon. Because of the chet of Adam HaRishon, Amalek was given the power to exist and to do his evil.

How is that? (Here is where it gets very novel and interesting.) After Adam sins Hashem curses Adam and says "kotz v'dar-dar" (thorns and thistle) will grow for you" (Bereshis 3:18). The Bnei Yisoschor says that the word dar-dar is spelled Daled-Reish-Daled-Reish. What distinguishes a Daled from a Reish? The only thing that distinguishes between those two Hebrew letters is the "kotz" (literally thorn). The kotz is like the point at the right side of the roof of the Daled. The Daled comes to a point (as we say in Tractate Menachos (34a) "kutzo shel yud" – the "point" of the letter Yud).

What is the difference symbolically between the Daled and the Reish? The Daled is symbolic of the pasuk Shema Yisrael HaShem Elo-keinu Hashem EchaD, which ends with a large Daled in the Sefer Torah. The pasuk Lo Sishtachaveh l'el AcheR ends with a big Reish. The difference between the pasuk "Hear O Israel the L-rd our G-d, the L-rd is One" and the pasuk "You should not bow down to other gods" is the difference between the Daled and the Reish. And the difference between the Daled and the Reish is the Kotz.

The aveira of Adam HaRishon was that he mixed up the Daled and the Reish. When he didn't listen to the Ribono shel Olam, that was the beginning of the confusion between Hashem EchaD and el-acheR. That is where it all started – Amalek is about the confusion of knowing what is right and what is wrong. The thing that distinguishes the Daled and the Reish is that Kotz. Adam failed to make that distinction. From there began all the confusion that causes our aveiros.

That, says the Bnei Yisoschor, is what the pasuk means when it says "A war between Hashem and Amalek m'dor –dor." Hashem says that this war, which is going to go on forever, is about dor dor. It is about dar-dar, the inability to distinguish between right and wrong, the inability to distinguish between Hashem EchaD and el acheR.

Dvar Torah: Chief Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis

Every single one of us at some time or other, will have a Queen Esther moment. What do I mean by that? In the Megillah narrative, which we are all so familiar with, we read how Mordechai sent a message to Esther, 'umi yodea 'im-le'et kazot higga'at lammalchut – ' 'who knows, it is probably for this very moment, that you became Queen'.

There are occasions where one might be in a particular place at a particular time, with the potential to do something special and everything will depend on how one responds at that moment.

There are so many turning points in the Megillah story. Perhaps the most significant of all comes at the beginning of Chapter three of the Megillah, 'Achar haddevarim ha'elleh giddal hammelech achashverosh et-haman – ' After these things, King Achashverosh elevated Haman to a position of power in Persia.

'Achar – 'after these developments, what was the response going to be? From 'achar 'we have the word 'achrayut' – 'responsibility', in the same way as in English, a response needs to be responsible. Esther responded in her time, with the utmost responsibility.

This week I visited Israel in order to attend a very sad Shiva for Captain Daniel Perez z"l. He was certainly a person who found himself unexpectedly, facing a Queen Esther moment.

On the 7th of October, together with the rest of his tank crew, he was on the border with Gaza where a surreal sight lay before them. Hundreds of terrorists pouring over the border with the intention to kill, to maim, to inflict terror and to abduct as many as possible.

He responded at that moment instinctively, with extraordinary bravery, saving the lives of hundreds, if not thousands of Israelis.

In that Shiva house, amidst hundreds of people, I saw so much warmth, selflessness and altruism – incredible Chesed. And surely, that must be the antidote to the forces of evil and wickedness, which confront us.

On the festival of Purim, we engage in two primary acts. First of all, we recall the attempts to annihilate the Jewish people, reminding us of our responsibility to defend ourselves adequately.

And in addition, we engage in acts of Chesed, loving kindness, giving parcels of food to as

many people as possible, giving charity to the poor in order to ensure that ultimately, good will prevail over evil and light will fill a world of darkness.

At this time when we extend our condolences to the extraordinary Perez family, Rav Doron, Shelley and their entire Mishpacha, let us guarantee that all of us, at our Esther moments in life, just like Daniel, will respond with the utmost responsibility.

Ohr Torah Stone Dvar Torah

"For the commandment is a candle, and the Torah is light" (Mishlei 6:23)
Rabbanit Hila Naor

Anyone who has firsthand experience with sibling dynamics, or even one who has just been an observer of the intricacies of siblinghood, knows full well that siblings could easily be fighting it out one minute and be the best of friends the next. Sibling relationships are known to be quite challenging, and yet considered to be something we can always fall back on in times of need.

From that which is said explicitly, and from that which is omitted intentionally; from the text itself and from the insinuated subtext of the recent portions, one can sense that a unique relationship exists between the two brothers Moshe and Aharon. Each is a leader of the people in his own right; each has his own specific role to perform, and yet both must engage in a delicate dance of leadership, as it were, and keep to the fine tempo of dual leadership.

In most cases Moshe takes center stage vis-à-vis God as well as the People of Israel. However, there are instances when Moshe steps aside and Aharon ascends the stage as the lead player. One such instance is in our parsha, Tetzaveh.

"And thou shall command". Thus begins our portion, with a direct command to Moshe. Surprisingly enough, Moshe's name is not mentioned throughout the entire portion! From the beginning of the Book of Shemot up until the end of the Book of Bamidbar, Moshe is mentioned by name in every single parsha – except this one.

Many of the exegetes have pointed this out. Rabbi Yaakov ben Asher, also known as the Ba'al HaTurim, says that the fact that Moshe's name is missing from this portion can be attributed to Moshe's request of God following the Sin of the Calf: "…and if not [if You do not forgive their sin], blot me, I pray Thee, out of Thy book which Thou hast written" (Shemot 32:32).

The Vilna Gaon highlights the fact that the portion of Tetzaveh is most often read during the Hebrew month of Adar, the month in which Moshe passed away – on the 7th of Adar, to be precise – and the fact that his name is not mentioned in this portion alludes to his death, and the great hollow it left.

Other exegetes explain that because Moshe had repeatedly refused to take on the mission with which God had charged him, Moshe was not awarded with Kehuna (priesthood); instead, Aharon was appointed as the Kohen Gadol, the High Priest. Since the portion of Tetzaveh focuses on the role of the Kohanim, Moshe's name is omitted.

The focus of the parsha shifts from the connection between Moshe and the people of Israel to the kohanim and their sacred service. The kohanim take center stage from this point onwards. They serve as the basis for the worship of God. Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks z"l distinguishes between the role of the prophet and that of the kohen. Whereas the prophet is a lone figure, albeit charismatic, the kohanim work together, and their role is passed down from father to son. The kohen has unique garments which distinguish him from the people; the prophet does not. The prophet sits in the midst of the people; the kohanim remain distinct and separate and perform the sacred service in the sanctuary.

Moshe the prophet is the one who commands the kohanim to light the lamps [of the menorah] in the Mishkan; whereas the kohanim are the ones who actually kindle the Ner HaTamid, the light that burns perpetually in the Temple. As is written: "…it shall be a statute forever throughout their generation", which also hints to the fact that it is the kohanim that turn the worship of God into an eternal practice for the people of Israel, and it is they who preserve it generation after generation.

As mentioned earlier, in this portion, Moshe moves out of the limelight, letting his brother Aharon take center stage. As Rabbi Sacks so aptly puts it: "For whereas Moshe lit the fire in the souls of the Jewish people, Aharon tended the flame and turned it into 'an eternal light'."

In addition to kindling the flames, the kohen is also responsible for creating a bond between the Tribes of Israel. The precious stones on the efod (a type of apron worn by the Kohen Gadol) represent the Twelve Tribes of Israel, and rest upon his shoulders, representing the bonds that exist between all the various parts of the nation.

"And thou shall command", begins our parsha, and Rashi on the portion of Yitro explains the difference between the different Hebrew roots used to convey the act of speech. Whereas the root א.מ.ר [alef, mem, reish] denotes a soft-spoken tone, the root ד.ב.ר [dalet, bet, reish] expresses harsher language. In addition to these commonly used Hebrew roots, in our portion the word "tetzaveh" ["command"] is used. This is commonly used to convey a sense of urgency, i.e. urging one into action. However, the Sefat Emet [Rabbi Yehudah Leib Alter of Gur] says that the word tetzaveh is derived from the Hebrew word tzavta which means "togetherness". It is used here to convey the connection that exists between the present and future generations, as explained by the Midrash.

The Sefat Emet goes on to say that the bond that existed between Moshe and the People of Israel is also expressed through the pure olive oil [used for lighting the Menorah]. Pure olive oil has nothing in it that is superfluous or inhibiting. However, when waste or other impure substances are blended into the oil, there ensues a separation and a disruption of the pure composition. Interestingly, the mention of the special connection Moshe had with the People of Israel is mentioned in the very portion in which his name is not mentioned at all (for the first time since his birth). Although our parsha puts Aharon in the limelight and places Moshe backstage, it is still a portion that highlights numerous bonds and connections. Here are a few examples:

The tribes, which are represented by the precious stones in the shoulder straps of the efod as well as those on the choshen [breastplate], were connected to Aharon's garments and placed upon Aharon's heart. As is written: "And Aharon shall bear the judgment of the children of Israel upon his heart before God continually" (Shemot 28:30).

Moreover, the Kohen Gadol was not only bound to the people by means of his special garments, but also atoned for their sins in this manner: "And it shall be upon Aharon's forehead, and Aharon shall bear the iniquity committed in the holy things, which the children of Israel shall hallow" (ibid. 28:38).

The People of Israel are also able to connect to God through the sacred service of the kohanim and the sacrifices offered in the Mishkan. As is written: "And there I will meet with the children of Israel; and [the Tent] shall be sanctified by My glory" (ibid. 29:43).

It follows then that although Moshe's name is not mentioned in the entire portion of Tetzaveh, nonetheless the actions fulfilled by him and his brother Aharon in accordance with God's commandments are responsible for creating a connection between these two

leaders and the people of Israel, as well as the special bond between the people of Israel and God.

Furthermore, the menorah's flames, which burn eternal, symbolize the perpetual fire burning in the hearts of the people of Israel.

The Sefat Emet goes on to connect between the mitzvot of lighting the menorah and the garments of the kohanim and the two brothers, Moshe and Aharon. Moshe symbolizes the light of Torah; he is the soul. Aharon, on the other hand, is the one who tends to the flames of the menorah – the keeper of the light, as it were. Aharon kindles the soul with the fire that he lights. What the Sefat Emet is saying is that there are two components that come together in order to kindle the soul of Am Yisrael; both play a part in illuminating the path for the Israelites, first in the desert, and later, in the Land of Israel. These two complementary components are similarly interwoven in the commandment pertaining to the Sabbath: shamor and zachor – keep and remember. By the light of both we tread.

The two brothers, Moshe and Aharon, know when to step aside for one another rather than overstepping. They learn how to create a shared leadership, one which brings to light the unique strengths of each. The connections created between the people of Israel and its leaders, as well as the people of Israel and God, are expressed through the kohanim's special garments, the sacred service they perform, and the eternal fire which burns in the sanctuary. All of this teach us how important it is to forge partnerships, create bonds, be attentive to the other and conduct oneself with humility. All for the purpose of reaching the state in which God Himself proclaims: "And I shall dwell in the midst of the People of Israel and I shall be unto them a God" (ibid. 29:45).

Dvar Torah: TorahWeb.Org

Rav Doron Perez

Never Despair: The Eternal Lesson of Purim and The Fast of Esther

Despair. - If I had to pick one word which to my mind is the polar opposite of everything Judaism stands for, it would be despair. It is this very same sentiment of despair and hopelessness that the Fast of Esther and festival of Purim totally reject.

There is no such thing as despair in the Jewish worldview. Darkness and difficulty, pain and suffering, exile and anguish, struggle and challenge – unfortunately, yes. But dejection and despair? Never.

D-Day - The 13th of Adar – the most Diabolical and Dangerous Day of Destruction in Jewish history. - If ever there was a time that seemed completely hopeless, it was Haman's global plan for the genocide of the entire Jewish race. No day in all of Jewish history represents utter despair more than the 13th of Adar in the 12th year of King Achashverosh's rule. No day was more desperate and dangerous for all Jews than this day. Yet somehow, no day had the diametrically opposite outcome of any reasonable or rational assessment – the greatest threat ever of Jewish annihilation was transformed into the most astounding and unlikely salvation.

Indeed, never before or since has any enemy of Israel attempted with such diabolical precision to kill, Heaven forbid, every single Jew in the world at the same time – beginning and ending on one day.

Two factors make Haman's plan even more outlandish. First, the Jews were dispersed among all 127 countries of King Achashverosh's empire. The plan to destroy them involved meticulous planning – gathering of intelligence, precise execution and implementation. Second, this event took place over 2,500 years ago at a time predating the technological advancements of our modern era when the entire world is one global village.

The depth and depravity of Haman the Amalekite's bombastic and barbaric hatred and willpower resulted in the most diabolical plan of potential Jewish annihilation ever conceived. Not a 'Final Solution 'secretly planned in the not-so-well-known city of Wannsee to be executed over the course of years, but one planned publicly in the Persian capital of Shushan, decreed in every single spoken language throughout the entire empire, and to be implemented in one day.

The verses couldn't be clearer: "Haman sought to destroy all the Jews that were throughout the whole kingdom of Achashverosh… In the first month, that is, the month Nisan, in the twelfth year of King Achashverosh they cast pur, that is, the lot, before Haman from day to day, and from month to month, to the twelfth month, that is, the month Adar… And the king took his ring from his hand, and gave it unto Haman the son of Hamdata the Agagite, the Jews ' enemy. Then were the king's scribes called on the thirteenth day of the first month, and there was written according to all that Haman had commanded unto the king's satraps, and to the governors that were over every province, and to the rulers of every people of every province according to the writing thereof, and to every people after their language; in the name of King Achashverosh was it written, and sealed with the king's ring. And the letters were sent by couriers to all the king's provinces, to destroy, to kill, and to cause to perish, all Jews, both young and old, little children and women, in one day, upon the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, which is the month Adar, and to take the spoil of them for a prey" (Esther 3:6–13).

"VeNahafoch Hu" – The Remarkable Reversal - And then, in an unlikely and remarkable change of fortune, every element of this meticulously planned "Final Solution" was totally turned on its head, all on that very same day, the 13th of Adar. Haman unexpectedly fell out of favor with the king, and Mordechai and Esther convinced the king to send out an additional decree allowing the Jews to defend themselves against all who wished to destroy them. This decree was sent out in exactly the same way and designated the 13th of Adar as a day of defense and battle against the murderous Jew-haters across the empire. Instead of global Jewish annihilation, the Jews utterly defeated their enemies throughout the empire, killing 800 terrorists in Shushan, including Haman and his ten bloodthirsty sons, as well as 75,000 terrorists and accomplices throughout the empire.

As stated in the megillah: "Now in the twelfth month, that is, the month Adar, on the thirteenth day, when the king's commandment and his decree drew near to be put in execution, on the day that the enemies of the Jews hoped to have power over them, it was turned to the contrary, and the Jews had rule over them that hated them. The Jews gathered themselves together in their cities throughout all the provinces of King Achashverosh, to lay hands on those who sought their hurt: and no man could withstand them; for the fear of them fell upon all people… Thus the Jews smote all their enemies with the stroke of the sword, and slaughter, and destruction, and did what they would unto those that hated them" (Esther 9:1–5).1

The 13th of Adar was converted from a day of destruction to the great day of salvation. Since the battles were completed on the 14th of Adar in all cities and on the 15th of Adar in Shushan alone, Purim and Shushan Purim were instituted on these two days for future generations as eternal days of celebration and thanks for the miracle.

The pivotal day in the story is, without a doubt, the 13th of Adar itself. This is the day of the most remarkable reversal, the designated time of ultimate destruction which was transformed into the greatest day of deliverance and redemption in Jewish history. This is the day of "וְנַהֲפוֹךְ הוּא," when everything turned around. This remarkable day lives on in Jewish consciousness for posterity as the Fast of Esther.

Ta'anit Esther - Why do we fast on this day? What is the purpose of this particular fast?

After all, this is the Jewish people's only annual fast of the prophets which is unrelated to the destruction of the Temples.2 Additionally, the fast is not mandated anywhere in the megillah nor in the Talmud, but was only established in post-Talmudic times during the era of the Geonim.

Ta'anit Esther also has the unusual distinction of being the only fast which, when it falls on a Shabbat, is observed earlier. All other fasts which commemorate the destruction are always deferred to a later date.

Why indeed do we fast on this day and what is the nature of its commemoration?

The earliest source dealing with the Fast of Esther is that of Rabbi Achai Gaon who highlights a fascinating point.3 He opines that the purpose of this fast is to recall the fast that took place on this very day of the battle of the Jewish people against their enemies. The megillah refers to this day as "a time of gathering" (Esther 8:11), so much so that the Talmud refers to this day as a זְמַן קְהִילָה לְכֹל", a time of gathering for all," when the Jews gathered together for fasting, supplication and prayer.4 Rav Achai maintains that all the Jews fasted and prayed together for the defeat of their enemies on that day. The Fast of Esther is therefore a remembrance of that miraculous day when the Jews gathered as one to fast and pray, while those who could, fought for their lives.5 In short, the fast is an eternal reminder of our spiritual connection to Hashem and how the power of relentless advocacy and prayer can transform seemingly impossible and desperate situations.

The Fast of Esther is an everlasting testament to the remarkable power of reversal. A day destined for imminent annihilation can become the very day of immediate redemption. It is for this reason, Rabbi Achai Gaon says, that only this fast is observed earlier. This fast recalls miraculous redemption which we wish to hasten, whereas the others commemorate tragic destruction which we wish to defer. The fast recounts the profound power of activism and prayer to remake our reality, while the festival of Purim celebrates the triumph of hope over despair and salvation over dejection.

May our current war with Hamas, especially as we celebrate the month of Adar, elicit a miraculous turnaround leading to the release of all of our hostages and the destruction of our Haman-like enemy.

The message of the three days of the Fast of Esther, Purim and Shushan Purim is clear – in G-d's world, there is never room for despair, only for hope!

1 The verses describing the dispatching of the second decree are almost identical to the first one. The verses that follow state that 500 enemies were killed in Shushan on the 13th of Adar, an additional 300 the next day, and a total of 75,000 across the empire.

2 The other four fasts all revolve around the destruction of the Temple. The 10th of Tevet commemorates the beginning of the Babylonian siege, the 17th of Tammuz commemorates the breaching of the city walls, the 9th of Av commemorates the destruction of the Temple and the Fast of Gedaliah commemorates the murder of the last Governor of Judah, facilitating the final exile of Israel's remaining leadership.

3 Sheiltot of Rav Achai Gaon, 67.

4 Megillah 2a.

5 This is also the opinion of Rabbeinu Tam (cited in the Rosh, Megillah 1:1), in the Tur (O. Ch. 666) and the Mishnah Berurah, and is the majority opinion. The Shibolei HaLeket and Orchot Chaim believe that the Fast of Esther recalls Esther and the people's three-day fast before approaching Achashverosh (Esther 4:16), but most opinions reject this view in favor of the former.

Rabbi Zvi Sobolofsky: Looking at the World Through the Eyes of the Tzitz

The imagery of the Kohen Gadol wearing the bigdei kehuna is the model of a holy, exalted individual. Adorning his head is the tzitz which describes the essence of the role of the Kohen Gadol, as carved into this golden ornament are the words קדוש לה' - Holy for Hashem. Although the actual tzitz is only worn by the Kohen Gadol, what the tzitz symbolizes is significant for everyone.

There are several aspects of the tzitz that are strikingly similar to two mitzvos that are performed daily. The very name tzitz is related to the word tzitzis. Many interpret the word tzitz as being derived from the word describing a thread, referring to the blue thread that was connected to the golden plate of the tzitz. Not only in name are the tzitz and tzitzis related, but the blue colored string of both connect these two mitzvos as well.

Another mitzva that is similar to the tzitz is the mitzva of tefillin. The tzitz is worn on the head of the Kohen Gadol, and according to many opinions it is worn in precisely the same place that the tefillin shel rosh is placed. Chazal discuss the technical difficulty of how the Kohen Gadol was able to wear both the tzitz and the tefillin shel rosh simultaneously, and they conclude that in fact there was sufficient room for both. On both the tzitz and the tefillin shel rosh, a name of Hashem is present. On the tzitz the words "קדוש לה'" appeared, and the letter ש", which represents one of the names of Hashem, is carved on the tefillin, highlighting the similarity between these mitzvos. Chazal derive from this connection that one who wears tefillin must act in a way similar to the Kohen Gadol who is adorned with the tzitz. Concerning the tzitz the Torah says " והיה על מצחו תמיד" - "he always wears it on his forehead." Chazal observe that obviously there are times when the tzitz is not actually worn, so what does it mean that it is always worn? Chazal explain that the halcha requires that when the tzitz is worn, the Kohen Gadol must be cognizant of it and cannot be involved in thoughts that are antithetical to the sanctity of the tzitz. This halacha extends to tefillin and therefore when tefillin are worn one must be careful to retain the proper focus on thoughts that are appropriate for the holiness of tefillin.

What is the underlying message which the mitzvos of the tzitz, tzitzis, and tefillin are coming to teach us? There is one theme that permeates all three of these mitzvos. There is a question whether the tzitz was worn in exactly the same place as the tefillin or slightly below. According to both opinions it was situated either directly between the eyes or slightly below above. Although the Halacha is clear that tefillin are worn higher than eye level, the Torah describes tefillin as being situated " בין עיניך" - "between your eyes." Clearly, the tzitz and the tefillin are connected to the sense of sight. The very names for these mitzvos emphasize the significance of seeing. The word tzitz is related to tzitzis not only concerning the common blue thread but also the word tzitzis is related to the word "להציץ" - "to see." Rashi (Bamidbar 15:38) quotes two meanings of the word tzitzis - a thread and seeing. Tefillin shel rosh are referred to in the Torah as "טוטפות". Rashi (Shemos 13:16) interprets טוטפות as similar to a word describing speech. Rashi observes that when one sees the tefillin shel rosh being worn one speaks about the miracles of yetzias Mitzrayim described in its parshiyos. Chazal interpret the passuk (Devarim 28:10), " וראו כל־עַמי הארץ כי שם ה' נקרא עליך ויראו ממך" - "the nations of the world will see the name of Hashem upon you and fear you" - as referring to tefillin shel rosh wich is visible to all. The mitzva of tzitzis is linked to sight as the purpose of tzitzis is "וראתם אותו וזכרתם את כל מצות ה'" - "You should see it and remember all the commandments of Hashem" (Bamidbar 15:39).

These three mitzvos teach us how to look at the world. We can observe things in a way that distances us from Hashem, but we can also decide to look at everything around us as an opportunity to help us in our Avodas Hashem. We can strive to be קדוש לה' like the Kohen Gadol. We can place these words on our eyes and have them govern everything we see. We can look at our tzitzis and have them guide us in the challenge of, " ולא תתורו אחרי לבבכם ואחרי עיניכם". We can be inspired by the tefillin we wear and the tefillin worn by others and see the letter "ש" that represents Hashem's name. We can see the tefillin and choose to remember the truths contained inside them and live our lives of sanctity according to those lessons.

We look forward to once again seeing the Kohen Gadol adorned with the tzitz. The

spiritual leader of the Jewish people who is קדוש לה' serves as a role model to all. May we merit to learn the lesson of the tzitz, the tzitzis, and tefillin, and always look at the world through the holiness of these three mitzvos.

Torah.Org Dvar Torah
by Rabbi Label Lam

The Genesis of the Shmatta Business

You shall make holy garments for your brother Aaron, for honor and glory. (Shemos 28:2)

What was the very first invention explicitly mentioned in the Torah? I will give a hint! When people ask me what business I am in, I tell them, "The Shmata Business!" Of course, I mean, "U'Shmata B'Kolo" – "And you should listen to His voice!" There is a giant industry known affectionately as the "Shmatta Business", the world of clothing manufacturing and sales. Now, let's go back to the origin of that "garment business".

At the earliest point Adam and Chava were totally without the need for clothing. Like innocent children with no selfish desires or impulses they remained open and vulnerable. It's hard for us to even imagine.

A supernal holy radiance of Neshama shone through their skin like the glass of a light bulb. The Talmud tells us that a sage was exploring near the Maras HaMakpela where the patriarchs and matriarchs and Adam and Chava are buried and he uncovered the heel of Adam. He described it as being bright like the sun. Now that was just the heel of Adam, and after he is already dead, and after the sin. Now imagine how illuminated was the rest of his being, while he was still alive and prior to sinning with the fruit from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. Consider how lit up and obviously spiritual he and she must have been. They were truly unmistakably angelic, and G-dly in nature.

When that light was diminished and the clothing of skin became opaque, then they could too easily be mistaken, now, for an animal form. Muscles and reproductive organs are not unique to man alone. The sight of "these" to impure eyes became a trigger to selfish animal instincts conflicting with the noble soul. Adam and Chava took a defensive approach by immediately covering their private parts to shield this new and impure impulse.

However, The Almighty saw that it was not proper for the protagonist of creation to slink shamefacedly throughout history merely covering up while simultaneously revealing his folly and foible.

Why was the fig leaf insufficient for Adam and Chava? Why was The Almighty compelled to make for them more complete outfits? The original and ideal garment of the soul is the human body. Initially, Adam and Chava were perfectly suited for those clothes that both hid and revealed sufficiently the Divine light that was sewn into the heart of humanity. To dignify "Man" again, Hashem upgraded the first human invention and created proper clothing. Now, when a fully dressed person stands before us, we see only two uncovered areas. Only the most uniquely human and G-dly functions are framed by a complete set of clothing; A human face and dexterous hands. Proper clothing is meant to again reveal that which is great, pure, and creative within Mankind.

Tznius, modesty is not just a matter of covering up. It's a reflection of a true sense of intense inner beauty. "Kol Kavuda Bas Melelch Pnima", "The entire glory of the daughter of the king is inward!", Dovid HaMelech tells us in Tehillim. One who detects this has little need for outward validation and recognition from strangers. Like one who is really rich, knows they are and does not feel the need to show off their opulence to the world. Only the nouveau-riche and deeply insecure seek attention for their wealth.

Way back, when someone asked how many hits you got, it meant trouble. The fewer hits we got the better. Nowadays, it means something completely different. One may not know that he or she really exists unless their performance gets thousands and millions of hits. Shlomo HaMelech in Mishlei tells us the real truth. "Matan BaSeiser Yichpeh Af" – "A gift in private quiets anger". HASHEM is more "impressed", so to speak, by private actions. The more private something is the more real it is, to the person himself and to HASHEM.

Now, what was the original purpose and intent of clothing? To highlight and frame what is truly holy and G-dly about man and to keep the private, private and special, and to dignify relationships, as the verse explicitly states, "You shall make holy garments for your brother Aaron, for honor and glory", and thus is the Genesis of the Shmatta business!

Mizrachi Dvar Torah

Wisdom of the Heart
By Rabbi Shalom Rosner

And you shall speak to all the wise-hearted, whom I have filled with the spirit of wisdom, and they shall make Aharon's garments to sanctify him, [so] that he serve Me [as a kohen] (Shemot 18:3).

In this week's parsha, Moshe is instructed to speak with certain individuals who are to fabricate Aharon's garments. These individuals are referred to as wise-hearted people. Typically, wisdom is connected to one's brain, not their heart. The heart is associated with one's emotions. What is the Torah seeking to teach us by connecting wisdom to the heart?

Likutei Divrei Torah

Rabbi Norman Lamm z"l in his sefer Drashot L'Dorot offers a compelling idea, which he relayed in the 1950s but that holds true today. Man has a great quest for knowledge. He cites a New York Times article that states that we have so much knowledge, that even if all research would abruptly stop, we would have enough work ordering and utilizing the knowledge we have for the next century. This statement was made even before the internet was established which supplies us with unprecedented amounts of data on any topic desired.

Another fact cited by Rabbi Lamm is that more people have been killed by automobile accidents than in all the American wars combined. That does not lead to the conclusion that we are better off without automobiles. Rather it demands that along with modern technological advances man ought to engineer his conscience as well to take better care when driving and valuing human life. Wisdom without conscience yields to misuse of knowledge. The atom bomb was an ingenious invention, but it led to horrific destruction. Man was able to decipher the "nature of the atom but neglected the nature of the sons of Adam."

Today there is a debate as to whether certain limitations be placed on artificial intelligence due to the potential dangers that may ensue from misuse.

Perhaps what the Torah is teaching us is that to properly apply the wisdom we acquire, we are to ensure it does not remain the wisdom of the mind – but rather that it is transformed into the wisdom of the heart and soul, of feeling and faith and of reverence and ethical behavior.

It is no coincidence that each morning when we wrap ourselves in tefillin, we place one on our head and the other on our arm, adjacent to our heart, symbolizing the connection between the mind and the heart. As we live in a society overwhelmed with information, we ought to make sure that we apply the knowledge we obtain with our conscience – as a wise-hearted individual. Always taking into consideration how we utilize the information we acquire, so that it can enhance our lives and the lives of those around us.

Rabbi Dr. Norman J. Lamm's
Derashot Ledorot

The Inside Story of the Megillah

Who is the real hero of the Megillah? Of course, if we refer the question to the folk-consciousness of our people, there is no doubt that the answer is either Esther or Mordecai. Remarkably, however, if we refer to the Megillah itself, we discover that the name mentioned most frequently throughout the entire book is that of King Ahashverosh. One nineteenth-century Jewish scholar went to the trouble of counting the number of times that the term melekh, king, appears in this little

book. His study showed that the name appears no less than one hundred eight-seven times. King Ahashverosh is a central figure, the axis of the whole plot. All revolves about him, nothing occurs without him. At almost every point we are apprised of the feelings and emotions of Ahashverosh: the king is happy, the king is angry; the king is restless, the king is upset; the king is fuming, the king is drunk; the king commands, the king consents. Even the greatness of Mordecai is tied to the king. At the very end of the book, we read that "Mordecai the Jew was next unto King Ahashverosh."

Yet, despite the fact that nothing seems to happen in this book without the ubiquitous king, he appears as a man who is feeble, spineless, unimaginative, and powerless. In the ten chapters of Megillat Esther, not one single act of importance is initiated by Ahashverosh — except, of course, his merry-making at parties and his romantic adventures. Even in these he shows no originality. He is angry at Vashti — but it is Memukhan who suggests that she be punished. He looks for a new queen — but only after the young men of his court have recommended it. He makes the decision to commit genocide against the Jewish people only because Haman has proposed it. Soon he gives his royal ring to Haman, thus making him, for all practical purposes, the ruler of the realm. Later he will give the same ring to Mordecai, thus gearing the whole apparatus of government to a new policy. And when he is fuming against Haman, he hangs him only because the idea is planted in his mind by one of his ministers. The Book of Esther shows a remarkable paradox: On the one hand, the king is an essential figure; on the other hand, he is a mere follower, a weakling, a king who reigns but does not rule. He is, in the words of our rabbinic tradition, a melekh tipesh — a foolish and ineffectual sovereign. He is a royal puppet; others hold the strings.

How does one account for this paradox? If Ahashverosh is really a nonentity, why does everything seem to revolve about him? The answer is that the Megillah, as a document promulgated by Mordecai and Esther, was, of necessity, addressed to two separate audiences. Primarily, it was written to and for their fellow Jews both of that age and all ages. But secondarily, it was a document which had to satisfy, or at least not offend, Ahashverosh, his royal court, and especially the official religion of the empire. The Jews of Persia triumphed, they were victorious, but they could not afford to assert their independence as openly as were the Maccabees able to do in a later era. they were still in galut. Hence, the tale must be subdued. It must be written on two levels: revealed and concealed, open and hidden, an outer and an inner story. And hence, in the words of Mordecai himself, the Megillah was sent to the Jewish communities of one hundred and twenty-seven provinces as divrei shalom ve-emet — "words of peace and truth." To the Jews the story of the Megillah was emet — truth, the real story which they had to discover by a patient and careful perusal of the text. But the apparent story of the Megillah was not the same as the inner, true story for purposes of shalom, peacefulness and a desire not to offend the ruling circles and established religion. In other words, the Megillah is an unusually splendid example of a diplomatic document which tries to accommodate the competing demands of shalom and emet.

Let us try to analyze both levels, both stories. Look at the Megillah superficially, and you will notice that the royal court of Ahashverosh and the king himself are glorified, while the distinctively Jewish religious elements — which must have been offensive to Persian paganism — are subdued and only hinted at vaguely. Ahashverosh was probably proud of the praise of the melekh in the Megillah. He probably regarded it as a public relations coup, as a propaganda victory, as a worthy chronicle for the sovereign of one hundred and twenty-seven lands from India to Ethiopia.

Of the thirty-four times that the word mishteh (party or banquet) appears in all of Scripture, seventeen of them are in the Book of Esther. There is good reason for the elaborate description in the Megillah of the king's court and his lavish banquets. The royal party was evidently a status symbol for Persian kings. The bigger the king, the bigger and the better his parties. The one described at the beginning of Megillat Esther lasted for no less than one hundred and eighty days. Vashti's downfall occurred at a mishteh. Esther plans the destruction of Haman and the frustration of the pogrom at a mishteh. And when Mordecai and Esther declare for all generations the holiday of Purim, it consists, primarily, of a mishteh. These constant references to lavish parties, to the riches of Ahashverosh, to the extent of his realm, and attributing all actions to him, these are part of the attempt to appease the absolute monarch of this ancient empire. These are the words of shalom.

For the same reason, whatever there is of Judaism and Jewish religion in the Megillah is only in disguise. Thus, we are told that Mordecai refused to bow down to Haman. Our tradition tells us the reason — it was because Haman wore, around his neck, the statue of an idol. The Megillah itself, however, makes no mention of these religious scruples of Mordecai. A three-day fast assembly is declared by Esther and Mordecai. The Megillah mentions nothing about prayer, and certainly nothing about Him to Whom the prayers are directed. At the end we are told of the declaration of Purim as a holiday — but, aside from more parties, gifts, and charity, is there no thanksgiving? The Megillah tells nothing of this, or of Him to Whom thanks are given. There is only the vaguest hint: le-hiyot osim et shnei ha-yamin ha-elah — to "do" the two days of Purim. Those who know Jewish tradition will recognize that this refers to certain religious practices. But it is only a hint. It is certainly not explicit.

In the same manner, Haman's accusations against the Jews were no doubt far more elaborate than they appear in the Megillah. The Megillah has toned them down, and recorded that Haman accused us only of being dispersed and "different." In all probability, Haman told Ahashverosh that the Jews were dispersed and disunited — and that they were united only in their stubborn opposition to Persian paganism. Yet the Megillah does not mention this.

Finally, the clearest indication that we have here a "diplomatic" document with an inner story that is only hinted at, comes in the verses which describe Mordecai's message to Esther when he discovers the nefarious plans of Haman's program. Mordecai tells Esther that she must appear before the king to request his royal intervention lest succor come from another place (makom aher) and "who knows, u-mi yode'a," whether you have not come to royal estate for such a time as this. these expressions — "another place" and "who knows" — are euphemisms for God. The Name of God does not appear at all in this book — strange for a Biblical book, is it not? So that God and Judaism are hinted at, but nowhere are they spelled out clearly.

Thus, insofar as the apparent story of the Megillah is concerned, Ahashverosh is at the center, whereas Judaism is deemphasized and peripheral. It is an apologetic document calculated to satisfy any third-rate Persian super-patriot. Still, the Jews knew the real meaning of the Megillah. They saw the emet despite the attempt at shalom. They did not need an interpreter. For the real story of the Megillah is the one that is concealed, not the superficial tale. And here there is no need to mention the Name of God, for the whole story is Godly, providential, and holy. The real story, the emet of the story of the Megillat Esther, is, as in all of the Torah — especially the story of Joseph — that every individual lives and acts on two levels On the lower, conscious, human level, he makes free-will decisions for which he is fully responsible. But they appear out of context, seemingly as if man is the true sovereign of the universe and there is no God Who has larger designs. Yet on a higher level, all these free, single, individual decisions and acts fall into an overall pattern determined and predestined by God Himself. Here man acts out the role already written by God. The true story, therefore, is that man is both puppet and puppeteer, master and servant of his fate, molder of and molded by his destiny.

This is the inner, real story of the Megillah. It tells us to look at the grandiose figure cut by Ahashverosh, the Persian potentate. In reality he is a weakling, a despicably ineffectual piece

of putty in the hands of his underlings and especially the hands of his Creator. He thinks he directs the current of events when in fact he is swept along the mighty tides and swift streams of history like driftwood on a raging river.

Take each individual event of the Megillah's story and it may appear insignificant. But put them together, and you have the marvelous unfolding of the will of the Hashgahah — Divine Providence. No individual detail seems to make too much sense in and of itself. But when you finish the reading of the story, they all fit into their places and assume a meaning that surpasses what the individual actors could possibly have known at the time they were performing their normal deeds. And throughout the story, the king who might otherwise — insofar as shalom is concerned — appear as the Great Man, appears to us, in emet, as a pawn and a puppet. He plays only a minor role in which there are greater actors, and in which the director and producer is the Almighty.

No wonder that the Book of Esther is part of Kitvei Kodesh, Holy Scripture. And no wonder that the Rabbis, asking, "Remez le-Esther min ha-Torah minayin, where do we find a hint or reference to Esther in the Bible?" answer: With the verse "ve-anokhi haster astir panai, and I shall hide my face on that day" (Hullin 139b). The name of Esther is etymologically related to the word hastir, to hide or conceal. The story of Esther is a story that is concealed within the book. Behind the veil of mundane events, in which man arrogantly assumes that he is the sole master of his own destiny and that all that counts is power and might, God smilingly, but in His mysterious way, guides His universe and directs the flow of history. The Book of Esther is, indeed, the story of hastir.

Megillat Esther, the document of divrei shalom ve-emet, words of peace and truth, is most appropriate to our own day. For we, not only one day a year, but throughout the twelve months, live a life of Purim. We will recall that the derivation of the word "Purim" is from the pur, the lots that Haman threw. Purim therefore means "fateful days," and in these fateful days, with the imminent threat of cosmic catastrophe, all human beings, but especially Jews, must learn the two lessons of the Book of Esther. They are, first, that we must seek to accommodate the principles of shalom and emet; that it is possible for them to co-exist, to maintain the integrity of emet, or truth, and at the same time live a life of shalom, or peacefulness, as we have explained.

But even more important is the story of emet as such, the real, inner, concealed story of the Megillah. It is that, despite all appearances, nothing we do is insignificant or inconsequential in the eyes of God. Despite occasional feelings of inferiority and flashes of meaninglessness, we are all actors in a great, divine drama. Not all is as it appears to be. What sometimes appears as great might and overwhelming power is often only a mirage in the desert of life. And in that desert, the real oasis is the will of God, and the human aspiration to reach out for the Almighty and follow His ways. This is what Mordecai and Esther have taught us. And that is why, in the words of the Megillah, "their memories shall not vanish from their children" — nor from our children and our children's children unto the end of time. *[Excerpted from Rabbi Lamm's 'The Megillah: Majesty & Mystery,' co-published by OU Press and Yeshiva University PressMajesty Mystery Front Cover]*

[CS Late breaking addition:
Rabbi YY Jacobson <rabbiyy@theyeshiva.net>
Thu, Mar 6, 2025 at 6:52 PM
Reply-To: info@theyeshiva.net
The Truth About Anti-Semitism Is Hard for Jews to Accept
If October 7th Didn't Wake You Up, What Will?
By: Rabbi YY Jacobson
Dedicated by Daniel Penn to my children, Gabrielle, Adin and Elon who continuously help me to realize the potential G-d has blessed me.
In honor of the upcoming Purim holiday, please contribute to help us continue our work. Click here.
The Uniqueness of Jew-Hatred
Hatred of the Jew has been universal, permanent, and deep.[1] Death for the Jews has been desired and plotted by the tyrants of every age. Pharaoh, Sancheriv, Nebuchadnezzar, Antiochus, the Roman Caesars, the Turks, the Christians, the Muslims, Stalin, Hitler, and almost every great power that ever lived and flourished, defined the Jew as a target for abuse or complete annihilation. Jews have been expelled from nearly every country in which they resided—England, France, Hungary, Austria, Germany, Italy, Greece, Lithuania, Spain, Portugal, Bohemia, Moravia, Russia, Poland and the countries of the Middle East and North Africa, and of course, from their ancient homeland, Eretz Israel. It is estimated that every 22 years Jews have been exiled from another country.
Throughout the centuries, many millions of Jews were murdered, including millions of infants and children. The Babylonians and Romans killed three million Jews. The Christians and the Muslims in their Crusades, inquisitions, conversion decrees, blood libels, and general religious fervor over a span of 15 centuries slaughtered millions of Jews, often wiping out entire communities. Chmelnitzky and his bandits beheaded 300,000 Polish Jews during 1648-49, while Hitler put to death a third of our people, including one-and-a-half million children. In nearly every country, Jews have, at some time, been subjected to beatings, torture, and murder solely because they were Jewish.
And though many of us thought that the evil of anti-Semitism perished in a post-Auschwitz world, we have been rudely awakened during the last few years as it once again rears its ugly face, particularly among Arab nations and in Europe.
Then came October 7th, 2024. 1200 Jews were murdered brutally, Jewish children burned alive, Jewish women were tied down, raped, and beheaded during the horrific crime, and so many people here in America celebrated such unspeakable horrors, and are now blaming Israel for trying to avoid a second Holocaust, which Hamas would crave to commit.
Why such hatred and fear of a people who never constituted more than a small minority? Why did almost every great culture and civilization see us as their ultimate enemy? Are we such an evil people as to threaten the well-being of virtually every civilization for the past 4,000 years? Why is it that otherwise sophisticated and educated men and women of academia are filled with irrational hatred toward Israel for literally trying to defend its citizens from murder while ignoring the horrors perpetrated en masse by its Arab neighbors?
Most scholars and historians, including many Jews themselves, choose to view this ongoing obsession not as something uniquely connected to Jews or Judaism but rather as a multitude of isolated events erupting as a result of distinct circumstances.
For example, why do millions of Muslims hate Jews today? Why would the leader of Hamas speak about the need to murder every Jew alive? Because — the common explanation goes — we are occupiers occupying their country, and they yearn for liberation. If Israel would only grant the Arabs independence and hope, the venom would dissipate.
But why did they kill us before the "occupation" of 1967? Why did six Arab countries try to destroy Israel at a time when there were no settlements or settlers? Because during the War of Independence in 1948 between the newly created State of Israel and its Arab neighbors, hundreds of thousands of Arabs fled their homes and ended up in refugee camps in the West Bank and Gaza. The Arabs were seeking to return to their homes inside pre-1967 Israel.
But why did the Arabs initiate this war against Israel in 1948 and thus create, through their own error, the refugee problem? Why did they not accept the United Nations partition of Palestine and accept the reality of Jewish existence in the Jews' ancient homeland? And why were scores of Jews murdered during the 1920s and 1930s? For this, we must search for yet another explanation. The excuses go on and on.
The attempt removes the notion of anti-Semitism from anything distinctly Jewish. The Germans, we are told, hated the Jews because they were scapegoats for the humiliating defeat of Germany in World War I and a depressed economy, and so many Christians wanted the Jews dead because they claimed we killed their god. Stalin murdered Jews because he believed they were capitalists, while Europeans of the Middle Ages were repulsed by the Jew because of his economic success, and on and on.
Yet this approach is unconvincing. To deny that there is a single pervasive cause for anti-Semitism and to reject that an underlying reason has sparked the hatred of billions of non-Jews for four millennia contradicts both common sense and history. Anti-Semitism has existed for too long and in too many disparate cultures to intellectually maintain a claim that each culture hated the Jews because of some distinct factor disconnected from them being Jewish. To believe that Jew-hatred is just another form of racial or religious bigotry, lunacy, ethnic hatred, lack of tolerance, xenophobia, resentment of affluence, and professional success is to turn a blind eye to the core cause of this unique loathing. Of course, various factors may exacerbate anti-Semitism and cause it to erupt at a given time, but these factors do not explain the origin and genesis of this hatred. In "Why the Jews?" Authors Dennis Prager and Joseph Telushkin put it well: Economic depressions do not account for gas chambers.[2]
Haman's Attempt
The famous Purim story, recorded in the biblical Book of Esther and read during the upcoming Purim festival, relates one more attempt made some 2,400 years ago to exterminate the Jewish people, this time by a Persian minister named Haman.
Haman approached the then-king of Persia, Achashverosh, and offered him a tremendous sum in exchange for permission to arrange a "Final-Solution." He desired that every member of the Jewish nation, men, women, and children, be put to death. The king responded:[3] "The money is given to you (Haman), and the nation (of Israel) is yours to do with, as you see fit."
This interaction seems quite understandable. Achashverosh, no less a miserable anti-Semite than Haman, happily embraces the idea of a world devoid of Jews. Yet the Talmud feels it necessary to illustrate the situation employing a parable.
A Mound and a Ditch
Here is the Talmud's parable:[4]
"Achashverosh and Haman are compared to two people, one of whom had a mound of dirt in his field, and another one who had a ditch in his field. The owner of the ditch said to himself, 'How I wish the owner of the mound would give me his mound in exchange for money, so that I can fill my ditch.' And the owner of the mound said to himself, 'How I wish the owner of the ditch would sell me the use of his ditch, so that I can remove the mound of dirt from my field and dump it into his ditch.'
"After some time," relates the Talmud, "these two men encountered one another. The owner of the ditch said to the owner of the mound, 'Sell to me your mound!' The owner of the mound responded: 'Please, take it for free.'"
The Talmudic illustration is clear. Achashverosh is compared to the owner of the mound—the mound being a metaphor for the Jewish people who lived under his rule. He desperately seeks to get rid of it. Haman is seen as the owner of the ditch, eagerly attempting to obtain the

mound. When Haman offers to purchase the "mound" for money, Achashverosh gladly gives it to him for no payment at all, enthusiastically consenting to the annihilation of the Jews.

But here is the question: Parables quoted in Talmudic literature are never meant as entertainment, but rather as tools to clarify and crystallize an abstract or complex concept. But what is so difficult to understand about a story of two people who despise the Jews with similar intensity and eagerly cooperate to destroy them? Why do we need a parable about a mound and a ditch to clarify the situation between Haman and Achashverosh?[5] It is not like this is the first or last instance of a king craving to kill the Jews. Sadly, this has happened repeatedly, from Pharaoh to Achashverosh and subsequently. Did the Talmud find it to be so strange to require some parable?

And even if it is difficult to understand what transpired between Haman and Achashverosh, how is it explained by means of this seemingly simple and superficial parable of a mound and a ditch?

Moreover, the parable doesn't fit the story it attempts to illustrate. In the parable, the owner of the mound seeks to dispose of his mound, while the owner of the ditch craves to obtain the mound and fill it with it. In the actual story, however, both the owner of the "mound," Achashverosh, as well as the owner of the "ditch," Haman, wish to dispose of the "mound"—the Jewish people—and get rid of it completely. You can't fill a ditch with a mound you crave annihilating![6]

Two Layers of Anti-Semitism

What the Talmud is attempting to convey via this parable is an answer to the question of why. Why, nearly always and nearly everywhere, have Jews been hated? Why did Haman crave to kill every single Jew, down to an infant? Why would King Achashverosh be so eager to purge his country of all Jews? What have the Jews done to attract such profound universal animosity? Why are they obsessed with us? From the Russian Czars to the Christian Popes, from the Muslim rulers to the Third Reich, from Voltaire to Wagner, to Martin Luther, to Yasser Arafat, the great and perhaps only common denominator between all of the above was this: The Jew evoked the profoundest disgust.

It is this question — perhaps one of the great questions of history — that the Talmud is attempting to confront in this little passage.

Anti-Semitism, the Talmud is telling us, sees Jews as a "mound." The anti-Semitism harbored by many non-Jews throughout history sees the Jew as a stranger in world history, a foreign creep, a "mound" that obstructs one's free movement and enjoyment in his orchard. The Jew somehow "irks" him—and he is not even sure why. This Jew hater feels uncomfortable with the presence of the Jew. The Jew is a mound that does not belong here. The Jew may attempt to do everything possible to assuage the annoyance the anti-Semite feels toward him; he may try to do everything to eclipse his Jewishness. But it is usually to no avail: As long as the Jew is alive, he will remain, in many a non-Jewish eye, an irritable, cumbersome "mound."[7]

But why? Why can't they just see us as another ethnic group doing its own thing? This crude bigotry, says the Talmud, is born of a deeper and subtler space within the consciousness of the anti-Semite. Jewish existence opened a "ditch," a vacuum, in the heart of the human race, and every non-Jew, in one way or another, is aware of this void, causing him to look at the Jew either with admiration and affection, or with hate and repulsion, or with a mixture of the two.

Confronting a Ballad of Eternity

"What is the meaning," asks the Talmud, "of the term Mount Sinai? Sinai, in Hebrew, means hatred. Sinai is the mountain that gave birth to Jew-hatred." (Talmud Tractate Shabbat).[8]

Some 3,400 years ago, at the foot of a lone mountain, the Jewish people received a gift that transformed their lives and destiny for eternity. Whether religious, secular, or assimilated, that moment imbued Jewish life with a unique richness and nobility. The gift of Torah inculcated Jewish life with tremendous moral and spiritual responsibility, but it simultaneously granted the Jewish mind, the Jewish family, and the Jewish community—rich and poor alike— a taste of heaven. The day-to-day life of the Jew became imbued with a depth of meaning and a sense of purpose born of an appreciation of the Divine present in life, love, family, pain, values, and money.

When the non-Jew encounters the Jew, he is, consciously or subconsciously, struck by a grandeur of spirit, a depth of living, a resonance of eternity, an echo of the Divine, that is not easily described but very palpable. There is something about the Jew and Judaism that is larger than life, and the non-Jew feels it, sometimes more acutely than the Jew.

The Jewish presence, challenging the world with a call from the infinite living moral G-d, opened a hole, a "ditch," a mental and emotional void in the heart of humanity, craving the fullness and richness of life that the Torah has given the Jew. The Jewish people opened a profound wound in civilization, allowing it to experience its own meaninglessness. At Sinai, Jews redefined their lives by the notion that there is one G-d, who makes moral demands on all of humanity. Thus, at Sinai, the Jewish nation became the target of the hatred of those who could never forgive the Jew for creating the "void" that grows from a sense of inner guilt when you are living an empty life, an immoral life when you hurt your fellow man, or you worship yourself. Concepts such as basic human rights, the notion that the sick and the elderly should be cared for—not murdered or left to die—and the idea of society assisting the poor and disadvantaged are not easily embraced by the barbarian. The concept that we are all responsible to a moral G-d that there is right and wrong, limits to power, and that each of us has a duty to righteousness is toxic to the human-animal who cherishes the moral jungle. So the non-Jewish response to this "ditch," the void, and the guilt exposed by the Jewish presence came—and still comes—in two different forms.

Two Responses to Moral Guilt

Many non-Jews from various religions and cultures responded by elevating their lifestyles to a higher plateau. They saw the Jew and his Jewishness as a model that they could, in their own way, emulate. They assuaged the feelings of emptiness and moral guilt by creating a life and value system grounded in the Torah's weltanschauung. The American nation is a great example of that. Founded on the Judaic ethic of respecting the liberty and individuality of every human being formed in the image of G-d, most of the Founding Fathers and so many of its citizens were and are authentic Philo-Semites, cherishing and celebrating the Jew and his Jewishness.

John Adams wrote, "I will insist that the Hebrews have done more to civilize man than any other nation." He wrote as a Christian, but added that even if he were an atheist and believed in chance, "I should believe that chance had ordered the Jews to preserve and propagate to all mankind the doctrine of a supreme, intelligent, wise, almighty sovereign of the universe, which I believe to be the great essential principle of all morality, and consequently of all civilization."[9]

Leo Tolstoy wrote: "The Jew is that sacred being who has brought down from heaven the everlasting fire, and has illuminated with it the entire world. The Jew is the religious source, spring, and fountain out of which all the rest of the peoples have drawn their beliefs and their religions."[10]

This path, though, requires extraordinary discipline and sacrifice. Living with the G-d of the Torah is a tremendous burden. It demands that one challenge his or her ego, laziness, and selfishness on a daily basis; it requires one to surrender many instincts, cravings, lusts, and natural dispositions. It is rewarding and fulfilling, but not easy. Sadly, most non-Jewish cultures and civilizations in the past opted for an easier and more instinctive method through which to "fill" their mental and psychological "ditch": Rid the world of the Jew, they said, and the void will be gone. Many people simply can't cope with the burden of being good. However, when they act in bad ways, they can't cope with the resultant feelings of guilt. Try as they may, they can never cut themselves loose from the standards of absolute morality dictated by the Torah. Stuck in this "Catch-22" situation, people turn, with their mounting frustrations, against the Jews, whom they perceive as personifying humanity's collective conscience. Deep down, they know that Judaism got it right, but it is too difficult to embrace.

This is the "soul" behind anti-Semitism. It is a form of resentment and hostility directed toward the cause of a profound emptiness in life. Adolf Hitler once remarked that his mission in life was to "destroy the tyrannical G-d of the Jews" and His "life-denying Ten Commandments."[11]

Herman Rauchning had been Hitler's personal confidante, but he abandoned Nazism and attempted to alert the free world to the scope and danger of the Nazi threat. He wrote: It is against their own insoluble problem of being human that the dull and base in humanity are in revolt against anti-Semitism. Nevertheless, Judaism, together with Hellenism and Christianity, is an inalienable component of our Christian Western Civilization—the eternal "call to Sinai," against which humanity again and again rebels.[12]

This means that anti-Semitism is not only a "Jewish problem," it is a disaster for every moral and decent non-Jew as well. Watch how a nation, religion, or political movement treats Jews, and you will have an early and deadly accurate picture of that group's intention toward others. Anti-Semites wish to destroy the perceived embodiment of that higher call to the good, the Jews. But they do not hate the Jews alone. They hate whatever and whoever represents a higher value, a moral challenge. Anti-Semites begin with the Jews, but they never end with the Jews alone.

Haman's Rage

Not all anti-Semites were aware of the "soul" of their hatred. Some, like Achashverosh, were only cognizant of the outer component of their Jew-hatred, seeing the Jew as a "mound" that disturbs and obstructs. They were unaware of the underlying motives behind their hatred.

Haman, on the other hand, was aware of this truth. He understood that he despised the Jews because they generated a "ditch" in the depths of his heart. That is why when the entire Persian elite bowed to Haman daily, excluding one Jewish rabbi, Mordechai, the Bible tells us[13] that Haman "was filled with rage."

Why? Imagine thousands of people prostrating themselves before you on a daily basis, except one old ultra-religious man with a white beard. Big deal! Why was Haman so perturbed by the sight of one obstinate Jew not falling on his knees to worship him?

Because Haman, in a very deep place, knew that Mordechai had it right. Mordechai's behavior resonated in Haman's inner heart. It exposed the truth that Haman was not a demi-god.

He thus approached Achashverosh and said: I have a ditch in my heart, which I cannot bear anymore. I must rid the world from its Jewish presence. Achashverosh, a far less intelligent and complex person, responded: Great! The Jews, for some reason or another, always irked me regardless. I'd be more than happy if you could remove this cursed mound from my presence.

The Conclusions

History has proven that appeasing and trying to bend over backward to those who hate us will not supplant their hate with love. Why? Because the animosity stems from too deep a place for it to be transformed through money or appeasement. It may be hard for us to accept, but the real Jew hater is driven by deeply powerful forces; for him the Jew disturbs the core of his existence.

We can bend over backward, but it will not change a thing. We can shorten our noses, we can assimilate, we can compromise—yet as long as we are alive, the anti-Semites will remain restless. There is nothing we can do or not do to change the anti-Semitism. It is the anti-Semite who must change himself.

The proper method of dealing with Jew hatred in all of its manifestations is not to attempt to eclipse or deny one's Jewishness and the unique role of the Jewish people in history. The gentile, instinctively and accurately, feels the "otherness" of the Jew; the non-Jew innately senses the holiness embedded within the Jewish soul. When the Jew denies this holiness, when the Jew, embarrassed by his Judaism, tells the world, "I am just like you," the non-Jew senses a lie, a secret conspiracy. The world will forever dislike Jews who dislike themselves.

What can we do about anti-Semitism? We can and must stand guard against it. We must protect ourselves in every possible way. We must fight hatred with unwavering determination, resolve, dignity, and purpose. We must never duck or show weakness, which only intoxicates our haters into thinking they might prevail. We must never be ashamed of who we are and what we stand for, as it is not our evil triggering the animosity; it is our goodness and holiness that drive our haters mad. Israel must declare the truth that the entire land is an eternal Divine gift to the Jewish people, as the Bible states hundreds of times, and that every attempt to hurt a Jew will be dealt with in the most powerful way.

Most importantly, our primary and eternal hope remains in our relationship with G-d, the sole master of the universe. As long as we are connected with the core of all reality, our existence is guaranteed. Trying to eliminate anti-Semitism by appeasing them produces no results. The hate is simply too deep. And we are, as the Midrash puts it, "a lamb surrounded by seventy wolves." The lamb ought to be strong, decisive, powerful, and unapologetic, but we always need the protection of our Divine creator to deal with these odds.

That is why, when Mordechai and Queen Esther learned of Haman's decree, the first thing they did was engage in fasting, prayer, repentance, and good deeds. Only after three days of fasting and introspection did Esther use her position as the beautiful wife of the king and attempt to influence him, in the midst of a drinking party, to obliterate the decree against the Jews. Now, if Esther wished to impress her husband, she should have gone to a beauty parlor not fast for three days!

To answer this question, the Talmud offers the parable of the mound and the ditch. Mordechai and Esther both knew that this hatred was not coming from some misunderstanding or social malady. They keenly grasped that we were dealing with a mound and a ditch! No bending over backward will help the crisis. What we need most is the Creator of the world, who guarantees that as long as we remain connected to His truth, we will live and thrive. Esther knew, as every Jew knows deep down in his heart that salvation will not come from a man who sees the Jews as an eternal "mound." Salvation will come from G-d. Therefore, the first and foremost objective is strengthening her relationship with G-d. Only afterward are we called to follow the course of nature and attempt to influence world leaders to help secure the survival of the Jewish people. For G-d wants us to work through the venues of nature.

Once we have secured our relationship with G-d, through the Torah and its Mitzvos, can we hope that G-d will manipulate the hearts of the Jew-haters to assist rather than destroy the Jews.

When the non-Jew encounters a Jew who is proud of his otherness, who cherishes and embraces his Jewishness and its unique role in history, more often than not the non-Jew is overtaken by a sense of admiration and respect; he can begin to appreciate the Jew, learn from him and adore him.

(This essay is based on an address, a "sicha," by the Lubavitcher Rebbe presented on Purim 5725-1965.[14])

[1] For a comprehensive discussion of this subject, the history and dynamics of antisemitism, as well as a convincing refutation of many of the popular reasons given for antisemitism, see Why The Jews? (Prager and Telushkin, Simon and Schuster, 1983.) [2] Ibid. p. 21 [3] Esther 3:11 [4] Megilah 14a. [5] See Maharsha, Benayahoo to Talmud Megilah ibid. and Chasam Sofer - Toras Moshe L'Purim for their symbolic explanations of this parable. [6] Of course, one may answer that the parable is an imperfect one and it is just here to illustrate the point that the owner of the mound is willing to dispose of his mound without receiving payment. Yet anyone familiar with the Talmudic literature is aware of its extraordinary profundity and meticulousness. It is thus clear, that the comparison between Haman and an owner of a ditch seeking to fill it is precise and meaningful. Yet in the actual story, Haman's role is reversed, seeking to dispose of the mound and not have it remain in his territory? [7] Perhaps we can add: The Mound represents the significance and the dignity that Judaism confers upon all peoples; and that is why, as a dictator who wanted to subjugate his populace, he couldn't stand the Judaic disciple, which affords such tremendous rights to all peoples. [8] Shabbas 89a. See Eyon Yaakov to Ein Yaakov ibid. -- The explanation for anti-Semitism that follows has been articulated by Maimonidies in Igeres Taiman chapter 1. [9] Quoted in Why The Jews?

p. 30, see reference there. Cf Faith After the Holocaust (Eliezer Berkowitz, Ktav, 1973) pp. 114-127, where this point is brilliantly demonstrated. [10] Quoted in Why The Jews? p. 30, see reference there. [11] Quoted ibid. [12] The Beast From the Abyss, by Hermann Rauchning [13] Esther 3:5 [14] Sichos Kodesh 5725 pp. 444-454.)]

[CS late breaking addition:

from: **Rabbi Yissocher Frand** <ryfrand@torah.org>
to: ravfrand@torah.org
date: Mar 6, 2025, 1:36 PM
subject: Rav Frand - Avnei Miluim and Avnei Shoham: Stones of Empathy and Stones of Action

Parshas Tetzaveh

Avnei Miluim and Avnei Shoham: Stones of Empathy and Stones of Action

These divrei Torah were adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Tapes on the weekly portion: #1326 Wearing A Gartel? Are the Chasidim Right? Good Shabbos!

The pasuk in Parshas Tezaveh says, "You shall take the two shoham stones and engrave upon them the names of the sons of Israel." (Shemos 28:9). There were two types of stones, both of which had the names of the Tribes of Israel on them. One set were the Avnei Miluim, which the Kohen Gadol wore on his chest, and which had the names of each shevet (tribe) on one of the twelve stones. The other type of stones were the Avnei Shoham, which the Kohen Gadol wore on the two shoulder straps of the Ephod (Apron). The names of the shevatim (tribes) also appeared on these Avnei Shoham.

We might ask, once the Kohen Gadol has the names of the twelve shevatim on the Avnei Miluim, is it not superfluous to repeat these names on the Avnei Shoham, which rest on the shoulder straps? The Ramban here in Parshas Tezaveh says a very interesting thing: The names of the shevatim on the Avnei Miluim could not be engraved. The name Avnei Miluim implies that these stones need to be maleh (full). If they would carve or etch out the names of the shevatim with some kind of tool, it would negate the requirement of them being "Avnei Miluim." This is not the case with the Avnei Shoham, regarding which the Torah specifically commands: "…and engrave upon them…" (ibid). There, in fact, they did etch out the names.

The question is – if they couldn't etch out the names on the Avnei Miluim, how did they get the names onto those stones? The Talmud describes a unique creature called a Shamir, which somehow ate through the stone following a traced path of the letters, such that the names appear as if etched into the stone, and yet the stones were still considered "Avnei Miluim" (full stones).

This is the difference between the Avnei Shoham and the Avnei Miluim. The former were worn on the shoulders and had the tribal names engraved upon them and the latter were worn on the chest and had the names miraculously created by the Shamir.

But the question remains, why the duplication of these two sets of stones? Practically speaking, they could have used a couple of buttons rather than the Avnei Shoham to keep the shoulder straps of the Ephod in place.

The sefer Avir Yakov brings a very interesting idea from someone named Rav Aharon Willner: The Kohen Gadol was the spiritual leader of Klal Yisrael. A spiritual leader needs to worry about his flock, the tzibur. There are two types of problems in life. Some problems in life are solvable, but some problems are beyond the power of man to solve. The most a leader or counselor can do about this second category of problems is to listen, feel, commiserate, and empathize.

I have a very fine bochur in my shiur. He came to me this morning with a complaint: He has been going out for well over a year and he can't find the right shidduch for himself. He is pouring out his heart to me. I don't think he is being too picky. He has some valid considerations. Trips back and forth to New York from Baltimore are draining. It is debilitating. It is expensive. He is getting very frustrated and it is obviously having a negative impact on his learning.

He asked, "What can you tell me, Rebbi?" Of course, I can't solve his problem, other than telling him "Don't be too picky (which was not applicable in this case)." I can't find him the perfect shidduch. What am I supposed to do? I am supposed to listen and to offer comfort. I can tell him, "Listen, everyone has some tzores in life. G-d willing you will be yotzai with these tzores, and then you will have a life that goes more smoothly in the future." The only thing I can do for such a person is to provide a lev shomea (a heart that listens).

On the other hand, there are types of problems which people experience that can be helped and sometimes must be helped. There are situations where a person falls on hard times and can't pay his mortgage. Perhaps the gas and electric company will shut off his power or he will lose his health insurance. What are we supposed to do? We need to try to raise money for the person. Here there is something to solve, something to do. Likewise, if a person has some kind of medical condition, we can direct him to the right kind of doctor. We can make sure he gets the right kind of medical care. There is something we can do.

The Kohen Gadol had to deal with both of these types of problems – the type of problem that requires doing and the type of problem that requires feeling. Those are the two types of stones that the Kohen Gadol wore. The Kohen Gadol wore the Avnei Miluim, for which Klal Yisrael did not create the writing on the stones. They put the Shamir on the stones and the Shamir took care of the rest. The stones were not permitted to be engraved. The stones need to be Avnei Miluim. Those names sat on the Kohen Gadol's heart to represent the kinds of problems regarding which all you can do is give the troubled person your heart.

On the other hand, the Avnei Shoham were located on the shoulders of the Kohen Gadol. The shoulders are the place on a person's body where he bears the burden. Those are stones with which they did something – they engraved them. The problems that the Kohen Gadol needs to bear on his shoulders – that he can do something about – were represented by those stones to which they did something. They physically engraved the names upon them.

The is why the Kohen Gadol wore both types of stones, to represent both types of problems.

Transcribed by David Twersky; Jerusalem DavidATwersky@gmail.com
Edited by Dovid Hoffman; Baltimore, MD dhoffman@torah.org

This week's write-up is adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissochar Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Series on the weekly Torah portion.

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Home Weekly Parsha
Rabbi Wein's Weekly Blog
TETZAVE

The Torah ordains that the olive oil used to light the eternal menorah - candelabra - must be of the purest and best available. There is obvious logic to this requirement. Impure oil will cause the flames to stutter and flicker. Impure oil also may exude an unpleasant odor and make the task of the daily cleaning of the oil lamps difficult and inefficient. Yet I feel that the basic underlying reason for this requirement of purity of the oil positive things in life - the necessity to do things correctly, enthusiastically and with exactitude.

In' halachic' parlance this is called 'kavanah' - the intent to perform the commandment and deed properly and in the best possible way. That is the story of the pure container of oil that is the core of the miraculous story of Chanuka. The Hasmoneans could have used regular, even impure oil and still not have violated any strong 'halachic' stricture. Yet the idea of' kavanah', of doing the matter in the best way possible, introduces an element of special dedication and holiness into what

otherwise would be an event of rote and habit. This is what drives the spirit of holiness and eternity that accompanies the performance of 'mitzvoth.' So the requirement of the Torah for the purest possible oil to fuel the holy and eternal menorah - candelabra – is readily understandable when the concept of' kavanah' is factored into the value system of the Torah.

The light of the menorah has never been dimmed over the long history of the Jewish people. Though the menorah itself has long ago disappeared from the view of the Jewish public - it was no longer present even in Second Temple times - the idea of its light and influence has continued to be present in Jewish life. The flame is not a tangible item - it is, in reality, an item of spirit more than of substance.

It provides light and warmth and psychological support in very difficult times and circumstances. Yet, its influence and support is somehow directly connected to the investment into actually kindling it. That is the import of the words of the rabbis in Avot that according to the effort invested so is the accomplishment and reward.

All things spiritual are dependent upon the effort invested in creating that sense of spirit - the purer the oil, the brighter and firmer the flame. This simple yet profound message forms the heart of this week's 'parsha.' It also forms the heart of all values and commandments that the Torah ordains for us.

The 'parsha' of 'Tetzave' speaks to all of us in a direct and personal fashion. It encompasses all of the goals of Judaism and is, in itself the light of spirituality that lights our souls and lives.

Shabat shalom

Rabbi Berel Wein

Parshat Tetzaveh: Each Person a Priest; the Entire World a Sanctuary

Rabbi Dr. Shlomo Riskin is the Founder and Rosh HaYeshiva of Ohr Torah Stone

"And you shall bring forth your brother Aaron and his sons together with him from among the children of Israel, to serve as priests before Me…" (Exodus 28:1)In the portion of Tezaveh, Moses' name is not mentioned even once, while Aaron's name appears over thirty times. This is the week of Aaron, the song of praise of the priesthood.

But the truth is that it is the week of all Israel as well, not just those who claim Aaron as ancestor. After all, the entire nation of Israel was created to be a nation of priests, dedicated to God. At the revelation at Sinai, the entire nation was charged with the ideal of being a holy nation and a kingdom of priests (Ex. 19:6). To be sure, during the Sanctuary and Temple periods, there was a separate priestly class of the descendants of Aaron which maintained the unique obligations of this special family, of which we retain a remnant even today, when the descendants of Aaron rise to bless the congregation during the repetition of the Amida and when the kohanim are called first to the Torah. However, our eventual vision calls for a universal priesthood, when every Jew will dedicate their life to divine service.

We eternalize and emphasize the universal ideal of the priesthood in the most prosaic way possible: how we wake up in the morning. Before anything else, we fill a large cup or vessel with water. With the left hand we pour some water over the right hand, and with the right hand, some water over the left hand, for three cycles. Placing our hands directly under the faucet would save time, but this act, recalling the priestly ablutions in the Temple, is to be performed be-ko'ah gavra (from one's own vitality), and with the use of a special vessel. The blessing we make, netilat yadaim, literally means the "lifting of the hands":

"Blessed art Thou O Lord our God, king of the universe, who has sanctified us with His commandments and commanded us to uplift our hands [in divine service]." (Siddur, Morning Service)

This is the way the priests began their day of service to the divine in the Holy Temple, and this is the way every Jew begins their day of service to the divine in the world at large.

This ideal of "every person a kohen" continues into the daily prayers. Our prayers begin with two separate blessings that emphasize our relationship to Torah, the heart of every Jew 's existence. Commentators explain that the first blessing is for the Written Law and the second for the Oral Law. Following the blessing, every individual reads two passages, one from the Torah and one from the Talmud. After all, after making a blessing over a fruit, one must eat some fruit, and so after making a blessing over Torah, one must study a passage of Torah. It is fascinating that out of the entire written Torah the passage chosen by the Men of the Great Assembly (who are generally considered the original compilers of the liturgy) is the priestly benediction, the very words intoned by the kohanim when they bless the congregation with peace.

On Shabbat, the ritual of blessing one's children is performed each Friday evening, when the parent, placing both hands on each child, recites the priestly blessing. Once again every parent becomes a priest and priestess.

During Passover and Yom Kippur, the custom is for married adults to wear a special white robe, the kittel, like the sacred garb of the priests in the Temple. During the Temple periods, we all actually became priests on the festival of Passover, as the head of each family sacrificed the paschal lamb in Jerusalem. Even today at every Seder this priestly role is extended by the fact that we wash our hands before eating the vegetables that are to be dipped in the salt water. This act is intended to evoke the priestly custom of eating in special purity by washing before eating any vegetables touched by water. On Yom Kippur, one of the most dramatic parts of the synagogue service occurs when we fall prostrate during the Musaf Amida, and repeat the exact words which the priests chanted in the Temple.

Since the destruction of the Temple, the synagogue, with replicas of Temple furnishings such as the ark, the table, the menora, and the eternal lamp, functions as a mini-sanctuary devoted to prayer. Over the years what has evolved is that all Jews, not only priests and Levites, possess a feeling of equal opportunity inside the sanctuary in miniature.

Walk into a synagogue on a regular Shabbat, and the person leading the prayers may be the local butcher. Another individual, a pharmacist by trade, opens the ark. A third person, an architect, calls the people up to the Torah by name, and the person who actually chants the week's Torah portion may be a teenager. Many synagogues do not even have official rabbis.

Other religions have a clear demarcation between the laity and the ministry, while for us all such distinctions are blurred. We are all part of the service. We are a nation of priests. Ask a non-Jewish visitor who enters the synagogue when every adult male is bedecked in the prayer shawl, swaying, eyes closed, to distinguish between the laymen and the clergy. He or she will not be able to, because we all look like priests.

We have already seen how every home is to be a mini-sanctuary (see last week' commentary on Terumah), how the lighting of the candles by the woman of the house at the advent of Shabbat and festivals evokes the kindling of the Temple menora; the passing of the sweet smelling spices at havdala recalls the priestly offering of the Temple incense; the dispensing of the challa loaves reminding us of the Temple shewbread, and the table replete with food, song and prayer bringing us back to the Temple sacrificial meals led by the kohen-priests. Our tradition desperately wants us to express our truest calling, that we are to be a nation of priests and priestesses, dedicated to God and the humanity He created.

This dramatic idea expresses yet another message. If every person is a priest, then we must view the entire world as a sanctuary, a sacred cosmos in which the God of love may be truly comfortable dwelling within our midst. And if every Jew is a kohen-priest, and the priestly calling is that of a Torah teacher –" Teach your statutes to Jacob, Your Torah to Israel" (Deut. 33:10) – then every Jew must teach the gentile world the seven Noahide laws of morality, the vision of a God of love, justice and compassion who desires world peace. When every individual Jew realizes his or her true calling, the world will indeed be redeemed and humanity will not learn war any more…

Shabbat Shalom

The Aesthetic in Judaism
Tetzaveh

Rabbi Jonathan Sacks

Why is the Torah so specific and emphatic, in this week's Parsha, about the clothes to be worn by the Kohanim (Priests) and the Kohen Gadol (High Priest)?

"These are the vestments that they shall make: a breastplate [chosen], an apron [ephod], a robe, a knitted tunic, a turban, and a sash. Make them as sacred vestments for Aaron and his sons so that they will be able to be priests to Me."

Ex. 28:4

In general, Judaism is sceptical about appearances. Saul, Israel's first king, looked the part. He was "head and shoulders" taller than anyone else (1 Samuel 9:2). Yet though he was physically tall, he was morally small. He followed the people rather than leading them. When God told Samuel that He had rejected Saul, and that Samuel should anoint a son of Yishai as king, Samuel went to Yishai's home and saw that one of his sons, Eliav, looked the part. He thought he was the one God had chosen. God, however, tells him that he is mistaken:

But the Lord said to Samuel, "Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. The Lord does not look at the things people look at. People look at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart."

1 Sam. 16:7

Appearances deceive. In fact, as I have mentioned before in these studies, the Hebrew word for garment, begged, comes from the same Hebrew word as 'to betray' – as in the confession 'Ashamnu bagadnu', 'We are guilty, we have betrayed'. Jacob uses Esau's clothes to deceive. Joseph's brothers do likewise with his bloodstained cloak. There are six such examples in the book of Genesis alone. Why then did God command that the Kohanim were to wear distinctive garments as part of their service in the Tabernacle and later in the Temple?

The answer lies in the two-word phrase that appears twice in our Parsha, defining what the priestly vestments were to represent: le-kavod ule-tifaret, 'for dignity [or 'honour'] and beauty'. These are unusual words in the Torah, at least in a human context. The word tiferet - beauty or glory - appears only three times in the Torah, twice in our Parsha (Ex. 28:2, Ex. 28:40) and once, poetically and with a somewhat different sense, in Deuteronomy 26:19.

The word kavod - 'dignity' or 'honour' - appears sixteen times, but in fourteen (2x7) of these cases the reference is to the glory of God. The twice they appear in our Parsha are the only occasions in which kavod is applied to a human being. So what is happening here?

The answer is that they represent the aesthetic dimension. This does not always figure prominently in Judaism. It is something we naturally connect with cultures a world apart from the Torah. The great empires – Mesopotamia, Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Greece and Rome – built monumental palaces and temples. The royal courts were marked by magnificent robes, cloaks, crowns and regalia, each rank with its own uniform and finery. Judaism by contrast often seems almost puritanical in its avoidance of pomp and display. Worshipping the invisible God, Judaism tended to devalue the visual in favour of the oral and aural: words heard rather than appearances seen.

Yet the service of the Tabernacle and Temple were different. Here appearances – dignity, beauty – did make a difference. Why? Maimonides gives this explanation:

In order to exalt the Temple, those who ministered there received great honour, and the priests and Levites were therefore distinguished from the rest. It was commanded that the priest should be clothed properly with the most splendid and fine clothes, "holy garments for glory and for beauty" ... for the multitude does not estimate man by his true form but by ... the beauty of his garments, and the Temple was to be held in great reverence by all.

Guide for the Perplexed, III:45

The explanation is clear, but there is also a hint of disdain. Maimonides seems to be saying that to those who really understand the nature of the religious life, appearances should not matter at all, but "the multitude," the masses, the majority, are not like that. They are impressed by spectacle, visible grandeur, the glitter of gold, the jewels of the breastplate, the rich pageantry of scarlet and purple and the pristine purity of white linen robes.

In his book The Body of Faith (1983), Michael Wyschogrod makes a stronger case for the aesthetic dimension of Judaism. Throughout history, he argues, art and cult have been intimately connected, and Judaism is no exception.

"The architecture of the Temple and its contents demand a spatial thinking that stimulates the visual arts as nothing else does. It must be remembered that among the many artefacts past civilisations have left behind, those intended for ritual use almost are always the most elaborate and aesthetically the most significant."

Wyschogrod says that postbiblical Judaism did not, for the most part, make outstanding contributions to art and music. Even today, the world of religious Jewry is remote from that of the great writers, painters, poets and dramatists. To be sure, there is a wealth of popular religious music. But by and large, he says, "our artists tend to leave the Jewish community." This, he believes, represents a spiritual crisis.

"The imagination of the poet is a reflection of his spiritual life. Myth and metaphor are the currency both of religion and poetry. Poetry is one of the most powerful domains in which religious expression takes place. And the same is true of music, drama, painting, and dance."

Rav Abraham Kook hoped that the return to Zion would stimulate a renaissance of Jewish art, and there is a significant place for beauty in the religious life, especially in Avodah - service - which once meant sacrifice and now means prayer.

An immense body of recent research into neuroscience, evolutionary psychology, and behavioural economics has established beyond doubt that we are not, for the most part, rational animals. It is not that we are incapable of reason, but that reason alone does not move us to action. For that, we need emotion – and emotion goes deeper than the prefrontal cortex, the brain's centre of conscious reflection. This is where visual stimuli play a key role. Art speaks to emotion. It moves us in ways that go deeper than words.

That is why great art has a spirituality that cannot be expressed other than through art – and that applies to the visual beauty and pageantry of the service of Tabernacle and Temple, including the robes and sashes of the priests. There is a poem in the Reader's repetition of Musaf on Yom Kippur that expresses this to perfection. It is about Mareih Kohen, the appearance of the High Priest as he concluded his service and emerged from the Holy of Holies:

As the brightness of the vaulted canopy of heaven,
As lightning flashing from the splendour of angels,
As the celestial blue in the fringes' thread,
As the iridescence of the rainbow in the midst of clouds,
As the majesty with which the Rock has clothed His creatures,
As a rose planted in a garden of delight,
As a diadem set on the brow of the King,
As the mirror of love in the face of a bridegroom,
As a halo of purity from a mitre of purity,
As one who abides in secret, beseeching the King,
As the morning star shining in the borders of the East –
Was the appearance of the [High] Priest.

And now we can define the nature of the aesthetic in Judaism. It is art devoted to the greater glory of God. That is the implication of the fact that the word kavod, "glory," is attributed in the Torah only to God – and to the Kohen officiating in the house of God.

Judaism does not believe in art for art's sake, but in art in the service of God, giving back as a votive offering to God a little of the beauty He has made in this created world. At the risk of oversimplification, one could state the difference between ancient Israel and ancient Greece thus: that where the Greeks believed in the holiness of beauty, Jews believed in hadrat kodesh, the beauty of holiness. There is a place for the aesthetic in Avodah. In the words of the Song at the Sea: "Zeh Keili ve-anvehu," "This is my God and I will beautify Him." For beauty inspires love, and from love flows the service of the heart.

The Attitude of Halakha Toward Buddhism

Revivim
Rabbi Eliezer Melamed
Idolatry in Association
Most Buddhists in the Indian subcontinent also worship Buddha statues, which classifies them as practitioners of avodah zarah b'shituf (idolatry in association) * However, Buddhism itself primarily focuses on calming human desires and achieving a life of tranquility rather than addressing God * Therefore, many people in the West who adopt Buddhist concepts and practices do not view it as a religion and are not considered idol worshippers
After discussing the relationship between Judaism, Halakha, and Hinduism last week, I will continue to address the other Dharmic religions. The Dharmic religions originate from the Indian subcontinent and include Hinduism and the three religions that emerged from it: Buddhism, Jainism, and Sikhism.
Idolatry in Association
According to Halakha, Hinduism is considered avodah zarah b'shituf—idolatry in association—which is absolutely forbidden for Jews. However, according to most Halakhic authorities, it is permitted for Bnei Noach (non-Jews), although some say it is forbidden for them as well.
Idolatry in association refers to a belief that God is the supreme deity, the source of all powers, and the one who controls them. Nevertheless, adherents also believe that God created various forces that independently influence the world for better or worse. As a result, they worship the statues representing these forces and perform rituals before them, believing that these deities reward their worshippers and punish those who neglect them. This type of worship combines belief in God with belief in other divine powers.
Buddhism
Approximately 1,000 years after the emergence of Hinduism, about 2,500 years ago, Buddhism developed from it. According to Buddhist tradition, its founder was Siddhartha Gautama, an Indian prince who lived at the foothills of the Himalayas (circa 563–479 BCE). Upon encountering the pervasive suffering in human life, he embarked on a spiritual quest to find a solution.
Leaving his palace, he adopted ascetic practices and studied under Hindu teachers but found their methods ineffective in addressing suffering at its root. Through prolonged meditation, he achieved enlightenment and became known as the "Buddha"—the Enlightened One.
In his enlightenment, the Buddha realized that human suffering stems from desires and that liberation comes through relinquishing them. He advocated for a "middle path" between indulgence and extreme asceticism. Through meditation, one could suppress desires for wealth, honor, physical pleasures, and recognition, ultimately attaining a state of deep inner peace known as nirvana—eternal tranquility and liberation from suffering.
Differences Between Hinduism and Buddhism
Unlike Hinduism, which encourages its followers to experience life in all its fullness and imbues every aspect of life with spiritual meaning, Buddhism seeks to extinguish worldly desires and emotions. Instead of emphasizing the external world, it focuses on connecting to an absolute void, which is also the ultimate reality and light.
Hinduism emphasizes the empowerment of the inner self (atman) through meaningful life experiences, aiming to merge with the divine source. This belief holds that external misfortunes do not truly harm a person; rather, they serve as a path for self-empowerment and unity with the ultimate reality.
Conversely, Buddhism teaches that the self is an illusion, and attachment to this illusion causes suffering. For Buddhists, the ultimate truth is the non-existence of the individual self and its desires. By shedding these illusions, one can achieve peace and happiness. Consequently, Buddhist teachings view Hindu rituals as unnecessary since they reinforce harmful illusions.
The Buddhist Path
Devout Buddhists adopt monastic vows, withdrawing from worldly life to eliminate the ego and desires, thus striving for enlightenment and ultimate nirvana. Lay Buddhists, on the other hand, follow ethical guidelines: avoiding adultery, theft, harm to others, and intoxicants. They practice compassion, support monastics, and engage in meditation to cultivate detachment from desires and a calm, observant mindset.
Through meditation, Buddhists strengthen their identification with Buddhist values and reduce their attachment to material desires. This leads to emotional stability and an inner sense of peace. By consistently performing good deeds and following the correct path, they accumulate karma (spiritual merit), which improves their future lives through the cycle of rebirth.
Reincarnation and the Caste System in Hinduism and Buddhism
Influenced by Hinduism, Indian society developed a rigid caste system consisting of four main castes (varnas):
Brahmins (priests)
Kshatriyas (warriors)
Vaishyas (workers)
Shudras (servants)
Below these was an additional group—the "untouchables," who performed the most menial tasks and lived in severe poverty.
This system is rooted in the belief in reincarnation: a person's actions (karma) in past lives determine their birth in the present life. Misdeeds lead to rebirth in a lower caste or even as an animal, while good deeds lead to a higher caste and ultimately to liberation. Accepting one's social status and fulfilling its duties is considered essential for spiritual progress.
Buddhism also upholds the doctrine of reincarnation based on karma. However, it rejects the Hindu caste system as an illusory and harmful structure that causes suffering. For Buddhists, spiritual advancement depends on ethical living and personal choices rather than caste.
Those who follow the Buddhist path and accumulate positive karma can eventually escape the cycle of samsara (endless rebirth) and attain nirvana, a state of eternal peace.
Buddhism Today
More than half a billion people practice Buddhism globally (compared to over a billion Hindus). While fewer than one percent of Buddhists adopt a monastic lifestyle, many find inspiration in Buddhist teachings for a peaceful and ethical life. They strive for contentment in everyday life through self-improvement, kindness, and meditation.
Is Buddhism a Religion and Is It Idolatrous?
Fundamentally, Buddhism does not focus on God but on guiding individuals toward freedom from suffering and inner peace. In this sense, it can be described as a religion without a deity, which is why many Westerners are drawn to its ethical and meditative practices without committing to a theistic belief system.
However, since humans are naturally inclined to believe, most Buddhists worship Buddha statues, believing that divine powers manifest through them and bring blessings. This practice makes mainstream Buddhism avodah zarah b'shituf—idolatry in association—prohibited for Jews.
Nevertheless, Buddhists who reject idolatry and believe in a transcendent source beyond physical representations are not considered idol worshippers. Even if they honor statues, they do so as a gesture of respect rather than worship.

[cs – another late breaking addition:
from: **Alan Fisher** <afisherads@yahoo.com>
date: Mar 6, 2025, 9:02 PM
BS"D March 7, 2025
Potomac Torah Study Center
8 Adar, 5785; Tetzaveh, Zachor 5785;
Tanis Esther is Thursday; Purim is Friday March 13-14
May Hashem protect Israel and Jews everywhere during 5785. May Hashem's protection shine on all of Israel, the IDF, and Jews throughout the world. May the first phase of the agreement continue with the remaining hostages coming home, hostilities ending, and with a new era of security and rebuilding for both Israel and all others who genuinely seek peace.

Tetzaveh continues Hashem's conversation with Moshe (from Terumahj) in which He tells Moshe exactly how to construct the Mishkan, a structure that will become a "home" for Hashem's presence in the midst of B'Nai Yisrael. Because both Terumah and Tetzaveh are the same conversation, the Torah does not need to repeat Moshe's name. One result is that Tetzaveh becomes the only parsha from the beginning of Shemot through the end of Sefer Bemidbar in which Moshe's name does not appear. (I have discussed many aspects of the reasons for constructing a Mishkan and the absence of Moshe's name in this parsha in my messages in previous years.)

In a non-leap year, we always read Tetzaveh very close to the date of Moshe's birthday and yahrzeit (7 Adar). The Maftir reading of Zachor has many connections to Purim (the week after we read Zachor) and to Tetzaveh. For example, Hashem's name is hidden (does not appear) in the Megillah, and Moshe's name does not appear in Tetzaveh. The historical event that led to Purim (Haman's attempt to kill all the Jews in Persia) took place after the destruction of the first Temple in Jerusalem and before the rebuilding of the second Temple. After the Assyrian ruler Sancheriv defeated much of the Northern kingdom of Israel, exiled the Jews, and intermixed all the conquered tribes, it become impossible to identify most of the original tribes. After Nebuchadnezzar destroyed the first Temple, there were no more sacrifices. Even without the ability to identify all the tribes, the Megillah states that Mordechai and Esther still knew how to contact Jews in other parts of Persia, so not all the Jews from the remaining tribes had disappeared bu the time of Queen Esther. The historical events leading up to Purim were very close to the time when prophesy ended, and many Jews feared that God would no longer protect B'Nai Yisrael when there were no more korbanot and there was no prophet to relay Hashem's messages to B'Nai Yisrael.

Rabbi Dr. Katriel (Kenneth) Brander focuses on the importance of Zachor now, as we Jews face grave dangers from enemies throughout the world. The Maftir reading of Zachor is one of very few Torah readings that all Jews are obligated to read or hear being read in synagogue (on the Shabbat before Purim). Rabbi Brander observes that Amalek and the seven Canaanite nations from the time of the Exodus are all gone, either killed off or merged into ethnically different nations who are no longer ethnically distinct nations. Even so, the mitzvah of Zachor is eternal, so we must observe the mitzvah. The Talmud adds that all Jews must observe and participate in a war for the survival and security of the Jewish people. Rabbi Brander claims that we are in such a period now, with our enemies attacking our fellow Jews in every country in the world.

Rabbi Marc Angel observes that Mordechai was not universally popular among Jews even in Persia. Mordechai worked for the good of all Jews, spoke peace to all, and was a warm, conscientious, and thoughtful leader. As the Megillah states,

"For Mordecai was great in the king's house, and his fame went forth throughout all the provinces; for the man Mordecai waxed greater and greater (Esther 9:4)."

Mordechai, from Rabbi Angel's description, sounds very much like Aharon, Moshe's brother, the most beloved Jew during the period of the Exodus.

My beloved Rebbe Leonard Cahan, z"l, reminded us often of the dangers we face from those who hate Jews – and always found a way to make Purim happy and interesting. (There is much that Hebrew School normally does not each us about Purim!).

Shabbat Shalom,

Hannah and Alan

Much of the inspiration for my weekly Dvar Torah message comes from the insights of Rabbi David Fohrman and his team of scholars at www.alephbeta.org. Please join me in supporting this wonderful organization, which has increased its scholarly work during and since the pandemic, despite many of its supporters having to cut back on their donations.

Please daven for a Refuah Shlemah for Moshe Aaron ben Leah Beilah (badly wounded in battle in Gaza but slowly recovering), Daniel Yitzchak Meir HaLevy ben Ruth; Ariah Ben Sarah, Hershel Tzvi ben Chana, Reuven ben Basha Chaya Zlata Lana, Avraham ben Gavriela, Mordechai ben Chaya, David Moshe ben Raizel; Zvi ben Sara Chaya, Reuven ben Masha, Meir ben Sara, Oscar ben Simcha; Miriam Bat Leah; Yehudit Leah bas Hannah Feiga; Miriam bat Esha, Chana bat Sarah; Raizel bat Rut; Rena bat Ilsa, Riva Golda bat Leah, Sharon bat Sarah, Kayla bat Ester, and Malka bat Simcha, and all our fellow Jews in danger in and near Israel. Please contact me for any additions or subtractions. Thank you.

Shabbat Shalom Hannah & Alan]

Drasha

By Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky

Parshas Tetzaveh

The Heart Before the Force

It takes a lot to build a Sanctuary in the desert. And it takes perhaps, even more to adorn the Kohanim (priests) who serve, in beautiful vestments that both symbolize deep spirituality while depicting splendor and glory. You need more than golden threads and fine tapestry. You need more than the ability to weave and design ornate garments. You need devotion, and you need heart. Not ordinary heart. Not the heart that pennant winners have or athletic coaches call for. You need a special type of heart. You need a heart filled with wisdom — Divine wisdom. That is why Hashem commands Moshe to gather "all the wise-hearted people whom I have invested with a spirit of wisdom" to make the priestly garments (Exodus 28:1).

But the Torah is unclear. Were these select people Divinely ordained with a spirit of wisdom for this particular mission, or were intrinsic "wise-hearted" people imbued with an extra "spirit of wisdom"?

If the former is correct, then what did Hashem add? And if all their wisdom was divinely-gifted, then why didn't Hashem simply ask Moshe to "gather all the people in whom I have invested a spirit of wisdom"?

Rav Sholom Shwadron, the Magid of Jerusalem, of blessed memory, once told a story about the famed Dubno Magid, Rabbi Yaakov Kranz.

The Dubno Magid once spoke in a town and a few maskilim (members of the enlightenment movement) attended. After the talk one of the cynics, who was totally unaffected by the warm and inspiring message, approached the famed Magid. "The sages tell us," began the skeptic, "'that words from the heart, penetrate the heart.' Rabbi," he snickered, "I assume that you spoke from your heart. Your words, however, have had no impact on me whatsoever! How can that be? Why didn't your words penetrate my heart?"

Rabbi Kranz smiled. In his usual fashion, he began with a parable. "A simpleton once went by the workplace of a blacksmith, who was holding a large bellows. After a few squeezes, the flames of the smith's fire danced with a rage. The man, who always found it difficult to start a fire in his own fireplace, marveled at the contraption. He immediately went and purchased the amazing invention. Entering his home, he smugly announced, "I just discovered how to make a raging fire with the simple squeeze of a lever!"

He set a few logs in the cold fireplace and began to push the two ends of the bellows together. Nothing happened. The logs lay cold and lifeless. Embarrassed, the man returned to the blacksmith and explained his predicament. "I want a refund!" he shouted. This blower doesn't work!"

"You yokel," laughed the experienced blacksmith. "You were blowing on cold logs! You must start a small fire on your own! If you don't start with a spark, a fire will never erupt!"

The Magid turned toward the maskil and sadly shook his head sadly. "If there is no spark, the largest bellows will not make a fire."

In telling Moshe whom to choose for the sacred task of designing the Mishkan, the Torah tells us how G-d invests. He wants people that were imbued with a ruach chachmah – a sprirt of wisdom. But he prefaces the statement by telling us how one receives spiritual wisdom. The gift of spiritual wisdom does not go to just anyone. Hashem looks for those who have wisdom of heart. Those who understand what it means to be kind, compassionate, and loyal. Those who have the devotion to His will and the desire for more enlightenment get His ordination. The people who were imbued with Hashem's Divine spirit previously had a spark.

And from that spark grew a force – a Divine force – that propelled wise hearts into a Divine spirit of wisdom.
Hashem tells us that we must begin the process on our own. If we supply the heart, He will supply the power to have deep, spiritual, even holy insight. He will supply the force. We must make sure, however, that we put the heart before the force.
Dedicated by the Gluck Family in memory of Edith Gluck
Good Shabbos!

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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) B 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 Zevahim 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=ri 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 fomulaic 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 Hilkhot 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. AThe 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 Zevahim (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

AIt 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 Hilkhot 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 Hilkhot 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, Shoresh #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: Hilkhot 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 (Hilkhot 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 Asignposts@ 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 Arelationship 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 T=midin function as daily Apoles@ 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 Sh=ma; Awhen 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

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 (sacrifical service in the Temple): offeriing korbanot (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 diagnoze 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-Leviyyim 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 [pristhood] 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 (sacrifical 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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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 "dibur" doesn't begin until the opening pasuk of Parshat Ki Tisa. [See the new "dibur" 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 "dibur"! 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-**shachant**I 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 **olot** & **shlamim**, is similar to the **mizbeiach** that Bnei Yisrael built at the foot of Har Sinai, upon which they offered **olot** & **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
Moshe	**top** of mountain	Kodesh kodashim	**dibur**
Kohanim	mid-mountain	Kodesh (ohel mo'ed)	**meeting**
People	foot of mountain	Chatzer (courtyard)	**korbanot**

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 moed**],
- 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	**aron, kaporet, shulchan, menorah**	**mizbach ktoret**
Ohel Mo'ed	**yeriot, krashim**	machatzit ha-shekel le-avodat ohel mo'ed
Chatzer	**mizbach ha-ola**	**kiyor**
Dedication	bigdei **kehuna** & **milu'im** (to anoint the kohanim)	shemen ha-mishcha
Daily Offering	**korban tamid** on mizbach ha-ola	**ktoret ta**mid 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

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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 it 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.