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Rabbi Mayer Twersky

Surrender and Victory - The Mitzvah of Mechiyas Amalek

The haftorah of Shabbos Zachor opens with Shmuel's prophetic charge to Shaul to fulfill the mitzvah of utterly destroying Amalek. Thus the connection between the haftorah and Shabbos Zachor is obvious. Upon reflection, however, a second very important connection emerges as well.

Hakadosh Baruch Hu informs Shmuel that He has decided to punish Shaul's disobedience by stripping him of his kingship. Shmuel's reaction: "vayichar l'Shmuel vayiz'ak el Hashem kol halayla - Shmuel was very agitated and cried out to Hashem all night." Hakadosh Baruch Hu does not accept Shmuel's tefillah.

The following morning Shmuel forcefully, emphatically delivers Hakadosh Baruch Hu's message of reproach and punishment to Shaul. "Ya'an mo'asta es dvar Hashem v'yim'ascha mi'melech - because you have spurned the word of Hashem, He has spurned you as king." Shmuel does not betray the slightest trace of the previous night's advocacy for Shaul and profound agitation. His tefillah having been declined, Shmuel completely surrenders to the perfect, absolute moral will of Hakadosh Baruch Hu.

This provides the second connection between the haftorah and parshas Zachor. More than any other mitzvah, that of mechiyas Amalek calls for our surrender to the [at times] inscrutable will of Hakadosh Baruch Hu. The requirement to destroy Amalek mei'olel v'ad yoneik, from young child to suckling, is morally counter intuitive. And yet, like Shmuel, we unconditionally surrender to Hakadosh Baruch Hu. He is the exclusive source of morality[1], and His will (in the words of Rav Soloveitchik) is self-

validating. We can, as Shmuel did, attempt through the merit of tefillah to have a decree rescinded. We can and should attempt to understand Hakadosh Baruch Hu's mitzvos to the best of our ability[2]. It is, however, heretical hubris to question His morality.

"Ein shemo shaleim v'ein kis'o shaleim ad she'yimche shemo shel Amalek - Hakadosh Baruch Hu's name and throne are not whole until the name of Amalek is obliterated." Chazal link the establishment and revelation of Malchus Shomayim in the world [i.e., the ultimate redemption] to the destruction of Amalek. But, as illustrated by the haftorah, we will not destroy Amalek unless we first surrender to Hakadosh Baruch Hu's will and accept the mitzvah. Thus on a deeper level Chazal are teaching that the geulah will not come until we completely, unconditionally surrender to His will and moral judgment, bemehirah beyameinu amen.

[1] See Natural Law, TorahWeb Vayera 2002 [2] See Rambam end of Hilchos Me'elah

<http://www.koltorah.org/ravj/taanitesther.htm>

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Taanit Esther

by Rabbi Chaim Jachter

Introduction This week we shall analyze the character of Taanit Esther. We will begin with a discussion of the dispute among the Rishonim regarding the source of the obligation to fast and the nature of the obligation. Then we will discuss five implications of the dispute among the Rishonim regarding the source and nature of Taanit Esther. Our discussion will be based on Rav Yosef Dov Soloveitchik's analysis of Taanit Esther as recorded in Harerei Kedem (pp. 316-317).

The Source for Taanit Esther - Raavad, Rashi, and Rabbeinu Tam The Raavad (cited by the Ran, Taanit 7a in the pages of the Rif, s.v. Aval) asserts that the source for Taanit Esther is found in Megilat Esther. The Megila (9:31) relates that Esther and Mordechai sent letters to the Jews throughout the world to observe Purim and "the matter of the fasts." The Raavad believes that "the matter of the fasts" refers to Taanit Esther. According to this approach, our observance of Taanit Esther is not a mere custom; rather, it is a rabbinical obligation based on a source in biblical writings (Divrei Kabbala). Moreover, the Raavad states that Taanit Esther is an integral component of the enactment to observe Purim. The Rambam (Hilchos Taanios 5:5) also cites Esther 9:31 as the source for observing Taanit Esther.

The Bait Yosef (Orach Chaim 686 s.v. Katuv B'Shibolei Haleket) cites the Shibolei Haleket, citing Rashi, who disagrees with the Raavad. Rashi asserts that our observance of Taanit Esther is neither a biblical nor a rabbinical obligation: it is merely a custom. He explains that Esther 9:31 refers to the fasts that the Jews engaged in the wake of Haman's decrees. Rashi (unlike Rabbeinu Tam, as discussed in the next paragraph) seems to imply that Taanit Esther commemorates the fasting of the Jewish People in preparation for Esther's speaking to King Achashveirosh about saving the Jews.

Rabbeinu Tam (cited by the Rosh, Megila 1:1) adopts a middle approach. He believes that Taanit Esther is a rabbinical obligation. He believes that the source for Taanit Esther is the Gemara (Megila 2a), which describes the thirteenth of Adar as "a time for all to gather." Rashi interprets this phrase as referring to the historical event of the Jews gathering to defend themselves from those expected to implement Haman's decree. Rabbeinu Tam, on the other hand, interprets the Gemara that all gather to observe Taanit Esther to commemorate the fast that the Jews engaged in before the battle against those who were prepared to implement Haman's decree. Rabbeinu Tam writes that the Gemara in Megila is the sole source for Taanit Esther. Rabbeinu Tam implies that he does not believe that Esther 9:31 is the source for Taanit Esther.

The Character of Taanit Esther Rav Soloveitchik notes that according to the Raavad, Taanit Esther is an integral part of the Purim enactment. Indeed, the Raavad writes that Taanit Esther "is unlike all other fast days as it

commemorates the miracle that occurred on that day." Thus, Taanit Esther is an expression of joy as it celebrates a very happy occasion: the overwhelming success of the Jews over their enemies. We celebrate by fasting because our ancestors fasted in anticipation of war. Fasting is a form of beseeching Hashem for success in battle, and we rejoice that Hashem granted our request. Thus, Taanit Esther is part of the enactment of rejoicing on Purim. The Raavad believes that Taanit Esther is not a mournful fast.

Rav Soloveitchik notes, though, that those who disagree with the Raavad do not perceive Taanit Esther as rooted in the enactment to rejoice on Purim. Rashi and Rabbeinu Tam do not state (as the Raavad did) that Taanit Esther differs from all other fast days. It seems that they view Taanit Esther as they view all other fasts. The Amoraim (according to Rabbeinu Tam) or the Geonim (according to Rashi) instituted Taanit Esther as a fast just like all other fasts. Thus, it appears that Rashi and Rabbeinu Tam believe that Taanit Esther parallels all other fasts and is a mournful fast. Rabbeinu Tam explains that on Taanit Esther we recite Selichot because the Jews in Mordechai and Esther's time needed mercy from Heaven. Taanit Esther is mournful because it is designated to recall the precarious position the Jews found themselves in on the thirteenth of Adar as they prepared themselves for battle.

Five Implications of the Dispute There are at least five ramifications of this dispute among the Rishonim. The first is how strict we must be regarding the observance of Taanit Esther. We treat a rabbinical obligation stricter than a custom. We also treat a rabbinical obligation rooted in the words of the prophets more strictly than a conventional rabbinical obligation (Mishna Berura 692:16). We would therefore be much more reluctant to grant permission to someone to eat if he is experiencing difficulty fasting, if the obligation to fast on that day is rabbinical than if it is merely a custom.

The Rama (Orach Chaim 686:2) rules that "this fast is not an obligation; therefore, we may be lenient regarding the fast in case of need such as a pregnant or nursing woman or a sick individual." Accordingly, the Rama accepts Rashi's assertion that Taanit Esther is merely a custom. The Mishna Berura and the Aruch Hashulchan do not record any objection among the Acharonim to this ruling of the Rama. Thus, the Rama's ruling represents normative Halacha.

The Mood on Taanit Esther The Rambam (Hilchot Taanot 1:14) rules that during any fast "one should not engage in Idunim (entertainment or delicacies)." He should neither act in a light-hearted manner nor be happy and in good spirit. Rather, one should be in an apprehensive and mournful mood. The Shulchan Aruch (O.C. 568:12) rules in accordance with the Rambam. Interestingly, Rav Yehoshua Hoffman told this author that Rav Soloveitchik once stated in a lecture at Yeshiva University that movies are a type of Idunim that the Rambam and Shulchan Aruch believe should be avoided on a fast day.

Rav Soloveitchik observes that according to the Raavad, this rule does not apply to Taanit Esther since it is not a mournful fast. However, Rashi and Rabbeinu Tam would not agree with this, as they view Taanit Esther as a mournful fast. The aforementioned Rambam and Shulchan Aruch emphasize that on every fast we must be in a mournful mood. They do not mention that Taanit Esther is an exception to the rule. Again, we see that the Halacha follows Rashi and Rabbeinu Tam's approach to Taanit Esther.

When the Thirteenth of Adar Falls on Shabbat When the thirteenth of Adar falls on Shabbat, we observe Taanit Esther on the prior Thursday (Shulchan Aruch 686:2). This practice seems problematic in light of the Gemara's rule (Megila 5a) that "we do not hasten [the commemoration of] tragic events." Indeed, we observe Tisha B'Av and other fasts on Sunday when these fast days fall on Shabbat. Why is Taanit Esther different?

The Maggid Mishna (commenting on Rambam Hilchot Taanot 5:5) explains that we cannot observe Taanit Esther on Sunday (the fourteenth of Adar) because that is the day we observe Purim. We can hardly observe Purim properly if we are fasting. Rav Soloveitchik notes that according to the Raavad, one may simply answer that Taanit Esther is not a commemoration of suffering. Therefore, hastening our observance of Taanit

Esther does not violate the rule that "we do not hasten [the commemoration of] of tragic events."

Fasting on the Day before Purim The Gemara (Taanit 18a) concludes that one may not fast on the day preceding any of the observances mentioned in Megilat Taanit (a work that lists the days of celebration of the miracles that occurred during the Second Temple period). Elsewhere, the Gemara (Rosh Hashana 19b) concludes that observance of the holidays listed in Megilat Taanit is defunct, except for Chanuka and Purim. Accordingly, Rishonim are troubled by the fact that we observe Taanit Esther on the day before Purim. Rishonim offer a variety of answers to this question. Tosafot (Taanit 18a s.v. Rav Amar), for instance, answers that the prohibition to fast the day before Purim elapsed when we discontinued observing Megilat Taanit. Although we observe Purim, the prohibition to fast the day before Purim is defunct.

The Raavad answers, though, that we are prohibited only to engage in a mournful fast on a day before a "Megilat Taanit holiday." We are permitted to observe Taanit Esther on the day before Purim because Taanit Esther is not a mournful fast.

Observance of Taanit Esther During the Messianic Era Rav Soloveitchik notes that another ramification of the debate between the Raavad and Rashi is whether we will observe Taanit Esther after the arrival of Mashiach. The Rambam (Hilchot Megila 2:18) writes that "although we will no longer commemorate national tragedies after the arrival of the Mashiach, the days of Purim we will observe." The Rav argues that according to the Raavad we will observe Taanit Esther during the Messianic Era, since observance of Taanit Esther constitutes an integral part of the Purim holiday. On the other hand, Rashi and Rabbeinu Tam would say that we will not observe Taanit Esther after Mashiach arrives, since Taanit Esther is not an integral component of the Purim holiday. Moreover, it is a commemoration of the tragedy that Haman placed our ancestors in such an extremely vulnerable situation. We will not commemorate such tragedies during the era of Mashiach.

Conclusion Different theories of why we observe Taanit Esther appear in the Rishonim. These theories impinge on how we perceive Taanit Esther and how we observe Taanit Esther. Rashi's theory seems to be accepted as the Halachic norm. back to Rabbi Jachter's article list

RIETS The Benjamin and Rose Berger CJF Torah To-Go Series 5775

Mordechai and Esther: The Evolution of a Relationship **Rabbi Yosef Blau**

Senior Mashgiach Ruchani, Yeshiva University • RIETS '61 There was a Jew in Shushan the capital whose name was Mordechai ... And he raised Hadassah, who is Esther. Esther 2:5-7 Esther did not reveal her nationality or her lineage because Mordechai commanded her not to reveal it. Esther 2:10 From the first mention of Mordechai's name it is clear that he is the hero of the story. Our custom is for the entire congregation to recite the verse describing Mordechai. Hadassah, who is Esther, is mentioned in terms of her relationship to him. She is totally submissive to him and follows his instructions without question. When she is taken to the king's palace, Esther, as commanded by Mordechai, does what Hagai, who is in charge of the women, tells her. Even when chosen as queen, what is important is what Esther doesn't do. Listening to Mordechai, she doesn't reveal her nationality or background. The pattern is clear: active Mordechai and passive Esther. When Esther does speak to the king about the plot to kill him, she does so on behalf of Mordechai. Mordechai discovers the plot and is the only one courageous enough to refuse to bow down before Haman. The Talmud, Sanhedrin 74b, justifies Esther living with a non-Jewish king by seeing her role as passive (רתסא איה מלוע ערק). Esther said to respond to Mordechai ... And Mordechai left and did exactly as Esther had commanded him. Esther 4:15-17 At the critical moment when Mordechai turns to Esther and admonishes her for doing nothing for the Jewish people, the roles begin to shift. Initially, Esther is removed, apparently personally safe, since Haman does not know that she is Jewish. Mordechai challenges Esther to respond as

the Queen of Persia. Based on the earlier parts of the Megillah, we would have expected Mordechai to outline the strategy that Esther should employ to influence the king. Yet there is no indication that he played any role in advising her. In fact, Esther gives instructions to Mordechai. Once Esther agrees to act, she alone has to determine how to reduce the power and influence of Haman. Esther is no longer passive. She emerges as the heroine of the story. Strikingly, at the turning point, when Haman goes to the king to gain approval to hang Mordechai, the reversal does not include any action by Mordechai. Haman was forced to dress Mordechai in royal clothing and make a proclamation about him, but Mordechai is the object and the Megillah doesn't record anything he said. From that moment Esther and Mordechai are partners in the leadership, with each having a different role to play. It is Esther's intervention that leads to the king giving authority to Mordechai. In the dialogue between Achashveirosh and Esther it is clear that she has mastered the art of getting him to listen to her instructions while not threatening his authority. And Mordechai wrote these things and he sent letters to all of the Jews ... And Esther the queen, daughter of Avichayil, and Mordechai the Jew wrote all of the acts of power to confirm the second letter of Purim. Esther 9:20, 29 After the victory, Mordechai, the religious leader of the community, proclaims the holiday of Purim. For unclear reasons a second letter is needed to gain full acceptance of Purim. This second letter has to come from the two of them with Esther's name appearing first. One can view this transformation from two equally correct perspectives. One can focus on Esther's growth and ability to take on a leadership role. She emerges as a model for Jewish women. Her commitment extends beyond the story as she sacrifices her desired way of life by remaining married to Achashveirosh, a gentile and a foolish king. The survival of the Jewish people depended on her and she rose to the occasion. Alternately, one can focus on the mentor-student relationship. Mordechai is clearly Esther's mentor. Initially, the pupil depends totally on the teacher. But Mordechai and Esther understand that the goal has to be for the pupil to become independent. Esther faces a challenge where she must initiate to be successful. There was no direct lesson that could be applied. When one reads the Megillah for the first time one expects Esther to plead for her people at the first party. Her insight into the character of her husband, realizing that it was necessary to increase his apprehension in order to ensure that he would turn against Haman, is brilliant. The emergence of a woman and a pupil as a savior of the Jewish people is a lesson that should motivate us to bring out the hidden potential that is within us. This article is dedicated to the memory of Herbert Smilowitz, a quiet yet strong leader, a gentleman who was a model of integrity.

**RABBI DOVID MILLER –
Gruss Institute Jerusalem
Parshas Tetzaveh**

There is a fascinating medrash that says the following:
Ben Zoma said that the pasuk that expresses the most fundamental principle of the Torah is "Shema Yisrael....".
Ben Nanas said there is a pasuk that expresses a broader principle, "Ve'ahavta lerayacha kamocho".
Ben Pazi said there's a pasuk that expresses an even broader principle; "Es hakeves ha'echad ta'aseh ba'boker, v'es hakeves hasheini ta'aseh ben ha'arbaim"- "You shall offer one lamb in the morning and the other lamb you should offer in the afternoon".
Rav Ploni stood up and said that the halacha is like Ben Pazi, as it says, "K'chol asher ani mareh oscha bahar es tavnis hamishkan... v'chein ta'asu"- meaning- "According to all that I show you, the structure of the mishkan, so shall you make it".
We generally view Parshas Tetzaveh as the parsha of Aharon and his sons containing the detailed description of the bigdei kahuna, the holy garments worn by them, the special karbanot brought for the consecration of the mishkan (karbanot milu'im) and the description of the mizbayach

hazahav. The parsha is now thrown into the limelight for containing the pasuk ruled to be the most basic principle in the entire Torah. What is the meaning of this medrash?
Everyone would understand the opinion of Ben Zoma that Shema Yisrael is the credo of a Jew, proclaiming allegiance to HKB"H and proclaiming His oneness. This is the pasuk recited as our final statement before leaving this world, on our death beds.
This is the pasuk cried out by Jewish martyrs throughout our history before they were murdered at Kiddush Hashem.
We can also easily understand the opinion of Ben Nanus. We all know the story of the non-Jew who approached Hillel and asked him to teach him the entire Torah while standing on one foot. Hillel's response was that "V'ahavta lerayacha kamocho" is the entire Torah, everything else is merely commentary to the practical application of that.
What, however, is the meaning of the opinion of Ben Pazi and why was it chosen in the medrash as the most correct of the options? What is the unique principle underlying the mitzvah of bringing the korban tamid, the daily sacrifice?
The Maharal suggested that its uniqueness lies specifically in its lack of grandeur and specialness. Shema and ve'ahavta lerayacha, respectively, represent spiritual peaks of religious ecstasy and human empathy. There are individuals who succeed in rising to the occasion but this is not the overriding principle which leads to spiritual growth. Rather, it is to be found in the daily sacrifice, the routine, the small increments, the continuous, steady, consistent commitment that cements a true relationship with HKB"H.
The question can still be raised- there are many mitzvot that are daily commitments; even Shema itself is recited two times a day. Why then did Ben Pazi choose the specific mitzvah of the korban tamid as his paradigm of the importance of the maintenance of the daily routine?
Rav Aharon Lichtenstein offered the following explanation:
The korban tamid is mentioned twice in the Torah in almost identical pisukim: in Parshas Tetzaveh and Parshas Pinchas. In Parshas Pinchas it is mentioned in the context of all the time related korbanos including those of Shabbos, Rosh Chodesh and Yom Tov. In our parsha, it is written in the context of the building of the Mishkan. There is deep significance to this doubling. The daily sacrifice as a mitzvah, as one of the 613, is found in its context in Parshas Pinchas. In that context it is no different than many daily commitments. In Parshas Tetzaveh, however, we find the daily sacrifice as a necessary component of the structure of the Mishkan. It is not enough to have walls and vessels. The building of the Mishkan is not complete without the korban tamid. Ben Pazi posits that if the daily sacrifice is that which gives ultimate meaning and completion to the structure of the Mishkan, it can serve as the paradigm of that which will give ultimate meaning and fulfillment to the structure of a Jew. Thus, the consistency and routine of the korban tamid is the model for that which will mold a Jewish personality, namely performing all mitzvot with a sense of consistency and routine.
Perhaps this explains why Rav Ploni used the text of "kechol asher ani mareh oscha...v'chein ta'asu. The stress is in "v'chein ta'asu"- "like so you should make it"- the blueprint, the structure of the Mishkan is the blue print and the structure for man. The daily sacrifice that is the center of the Mishkan has to be replicated in man, "v'chein ta'asu" - like so, should you make yourself. Man's spiritual growth is not determined by the unusual, but by the day to day; not by the peaks, but by the routine.
It is important, however, to recognize the danger in stressing the importance of routine. The daily commitment, the continuous repetition, the consistency, can easily turn into rote. One must stress retaining a sense of freshness and excitement within the consistency. Perhaps this is why the Torah, while stressing the importance of the korban tamid, placed these pisukim immediately following the pisukim describing the korban milu'im, the one time sacrifices that inaugurated and consecrated the Mishkan. Just as those korbanot were full of excitement, joy and awe, so should the same emotions accompany the korban tamid for generations!

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Weekly Blog :: Rabbi Berel Wein

It Is Our Fault – Really?

The Israeli ambassador to Sweden was interviewed this week on a radio station in Stockholm. He was being interviewed in connection with the recent killing of a Jewish security guard outside of the synagogue in Copenhagen. The charming woman interviewer, after the ambassador expressed his horror and disgust over the matter, asked him: "Don't you think that the Jews also have to shoulder some of the blame for these anti-Semitic attacks?"

The ambassador said that he resented the question and that classic anti-Semitism always places the blame for its existence on Jewish faults and sins without stopping to be introspective about its own destructive and pernicious beliefs and behavior.

I have thought about the question that that Swedish woman asked the ambassador.

There have been numerous proposals and plans advanced over the many centuries of Jewish existence to attempt to explain the phenomenon of anti-Semitism. Anti-Semitism is irrational, based on false premises and conspiracy theories and in many cases a truly psychological and pathological disease that infects individuals and nations. It is almost natural, in the absence of any logical or rational explanation for this never-ending destructive attitude and behavior, to turn one's gaze away from the perpetrators and fix it instead upon the victims. Franklin Roosevelt once said that Hitler had a point when he publicly complained that there were too many Jewish doctors in Germany. The inability to call a spade a spade, to face up to the reality of evil ideological violence and the moral and social failings of the dominant societies always forces a search for the causes of anti-Semitism to focus upon the Jews who are its victims rather than upon those who perpetrate and perpetuate it.

Of course, all of us know that Jews are not perfect people and that Jewish society has often times been sinful. Even the public practice of its faith in that society is lacking in perfect morality and absolute justice. Perfect morality and absolute justice are goals of Judaism and Jewish life but they are not always the reality. Given that, there always have been great and righteous people in the Jewish world that have attained lofty levels of morality and spirituality.

There is a drive within Jews to demand perfection from themselves, from their leaders and from their general community and society. This drive, admirable as it is, causes the Jewish world to engage in constant introspection, self-criticism and even eventual alienation from the beliefs and practices of Jewish life. Jews who are openly and bitterly dissatisfied with the Jewish people, the Jewish state and the shortcomings of the practice of the Jewish religion communicate this, whether consciously or otherwise, to the general world.

Since Jews obviously demand perfection from their society it is not untoward for the general non-Jewish society to also somehow raise the bar as far as the Jewish society is concerned and to expect perfection from it. It has ironically been said that the Jews are the only ones in the Western world who attempt to be good Christians. Since, invariably, Jews, Jewish practice and Jewish society will be found falling short of perfection, there is always fertile ground for the seeds of anti-Semitism to be planted and to flourish.

Anti-Semitism is not our fault. On the relative scale of human behavior over the past many millennia, the record of the Jewish people is an exemplary one. While we should always attempt to improve our standards and behavior of social justice and morality, we should never allow ourselves to believe that anti-Semitism is our fault.

Even asking that question to the Israeli ambassador to Sweden was itself an expression of the innate anti-Semitism that exists within the Scandinavian countries and in fact throughout Europe. It would be the height of racism to advance the theory that blacks are discriminated against in the United States because of the faults of individual blacks or even black society as a whole. Yet when it comes to Jews, people are willing to use such logic and ask such questions.

And it is always painful and ironic that many times it is Jews themselves that are the questioners and the perpetrators of anti-Semitic attitudes and even behavior. It is to be noted that the United States, the United Nations and many other countries worldwide always find Jews to carry out their anti-Israel and anti-Jewish policies. The choice of these Jews provides the fig leaf that protects them from charges of blatant anti-Semitism. I advance no solutions that will lead to the eradication of anti-Semitism. But I can categorically state that this is not our fault nor is it justified by the behavior and state of Jewish society the world over.

Shabbat shalom

Weekly Parsha Blog:: Rabbi Berel Wein

Tetzaveh

If clothes make the man, the garments of the ordinary priests and the High Priest of Israel certainly grant them the authority and holiness of their offices. One of the major disqualifications that affected the priest's ability to perform services in the Temple was that he lacked the proper clothing that characterized and identified him. We find generally in Jewish life that clothing plays an important societal and religious role.

Modesty in dress, special clothing for the Sabbath and holidays and acceptable attire have always been the norms in Jewish society. The clothing of Jews was always affected by the influence of the countries and societies that they lived in. One need only look at the paintings of the Dutch masters of the seventeenth century portraying the Jews and rabbis of Amsterdam at their synagogue services and homes in order to realize how acculturated Jewish dress was, even amongst the most rigorously pious rabbis of the time. The Church sought to regulate the colors of dress that Jews would be allowed to wear in the Middle Ages. It was the Church that made black the main color motif of Jewish dress. It seems that the Jews in Europe before the time of the Crusades wore brightly colored clothing as did their non-Jewish neighbors. It was only after the official medieval persecution of Ashkenazic Jews by the Church that restrictions were made on the color and type of clothing that could be worn by Jews.

Jews were also forced to wear ludicrous looking hats and badges of shame on their clothing. However, Jews made their forced shameful clothing items of Jewish pride and long after the decline of the Church and the abolition of such degrees (though they were restored by the Germans in World War II) Jews continued to wear informal peasant dress, strange hats and caps and mainly black clothing. The rule regarding all clothing was that it be modest and presentable.

The garments of the High Priest of Israel were ornate, unique and very luxurious in manufacture and appearance. In contrast, the garments of the ordinary priests of Israel were simple, sparse and sparkling white. If the garments of the High Priest represented majesty, grandeur and power of leadership, the garments of the ordinary priests represented holiness and service.

Not everyone could aspire to achieve majesty and grandeur – there was only one High Priest present at any one given time during the periods of the First and Second Temples. However purity of life and devotion to service of God and of Israel was something that many could achieve. This truth was reflected in the different clothing of the High Priest and of his fellow, but ordinary, priests.

It is to be noted that the High Priest himself also always wore the vestments of the ordinary priests. He had four additional garments that he wore that were of precious metal and fabric and unique to him. But before one could don the garments of majesty, power, grandeur and importance, one had to first learn the lessons of humility, holiness, purity and service to others and to God as represented by the clothing of the ordinary priests of Israel.

Though we no longer have priestly vestments present in our Jewish society today, the lessons that they taught us should be remembered and followed. Shabbat shalom

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Ohr Somayach :: Torah Weekly :: Parshat Tetzaveh

For the week ending 28 February 2015 / 9 Adar I 5775

by Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair - www.seasonsofthemoon.com

Insights

Fancy Dress

"For glory and for splendor" (28:2)

In light of the economic situation here in Israel, the government has been cutting back on renewing visas for foreign workers and sometimes deporting those who are here illegally.

Some years ago we had a cleaning lady from Romania called Valerica. Her mode of dress was the standard Romanian generic stonewashed Levis topped with a T-shirt that proclaimed the megatour of some Heavy Metal Band like Blind Widow or some other denizen of the musical illiterati.

Recently, my wife happened to be walking down Shmuel Hanavi Street when she saw a lady who bore a striking resemblance to Valerica. However, this lady was dressed in a long skirt, a modest blouse and her hair was covered with a beret. My wife looked again and said, "Valerica? Is it you?" "Yes, it's me" she replied. My wife's curiosity was piqued, "But what? What happened? Did you become Jewish?" With a malignant snort she replied, "Of course not! It's only for show. If I don't dress up like this, the police will spot me and kick me out of the country!"

I couldn't help but be struck by the irony: Some seventy years ago Jews were afraid to walk the streets of Bucharest unless they were dressed as conspicuous Romanians, and some seventy years later this Romanian was afraid to walk the streets of Jerusalem (obviously with far more benign consequences) unless she was dressed like a Jew. Clothes conceal, but they also reveal.

This week's Torah portion starts with a description of the clothes of the kohanim. The Torah uses two abstract nouns to define the purpose of these garments: "for glory and for splendor."

The Malbim says that the glory of the garments of the kohanim was that they revealed the innate holiness that G-d had given to the kohanim. However, these clothes were also for the splendor that would come from the efforts of the kohanim.

"Glory" refers to the gifts G-d gives man. "Splendor" refers to what we can achieve by ourselves.

The reading of this week's Torah portion comes just before Purim. On Purim there is a widespread custom to dress up in masquerade costumes. What is the connection between Purim and costumes?

In Tractate Megillah (12a), the students of Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai asked him why the Jews of Persia at the time of Purim were judged to be worthy of destruction. He said to them, "You tell me." They said, "Because they had pleasure from the feast of that evil man (Achashverosh)." He replied, "If that was true, only the Jews of Shushan who participated in the feast should have been culpable, not every Jew in Persia." So they said back to Rabbi Shimon, "You tell us." He said, "Because they bowed to the idol of Nevuchadnetzar." The gemara concludes, "But they only did it for show." They only bowed out of fear of being put to death, not because they were really worshipping idols. Therefore, "G-d also only did it for show" — meaning that G-d allowed Haman's genocide plan to proceed as far as it did only in order to frighten the Jews into repenting and mending their ways.

Our dressing up on Purim is to remind us that this whole world, in a sense, is "just a show". That this whole world is a mask that hides the existence of G-d. The word for "world" in Hebrew, *olam*, has the same root as *ne'elam*, which means "hidden."

What we "see" is not necessarily what "is". It's our job to pry the mask from the face of the world and reveal Who is behind it.

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subject: Peninim on the Torah by Rabbi A. Leib Scheinbaum

Peninim on the Torah by Rabbi A. Leib Scheinbaum

Parshas Tetzaveh

They shall take for you pure, pressed olive oil for illumination. (27:20)

The Midrash Tanchuma questions the fact that pure, pressed olive oil is required for illumination - although it is not ingested. Yet, the oil used for the Korban Minchah, Meal-offering, which is consumed, does not require such a degree of purity. Horav

Eliyahu Meir Kovner explains that there is a difference whether one is acting for himself or when one is acting on behalf of others. The Korban Minchah is a personal offering, which is eaten by the one who offers it. It is a personal "thing". When it concerns oneself, one's own comfort zone, the Torah does not demand that the oil must be of the highest quality.

The Menorah, however, shed its light outward; its designation being to illuminate the world. The oil used for the Menorah is oil that serves a purpose for others. When one seeks to brighten the hearts and lives of others - he must use the clearest, purest and finest quality "oil". Indeed, he must carefully introspect his own motives to determine their purity level. "Am I really doing this to help others; or am I just seeking an opportunity to promote my ego?" When dealing with others, there is no room for personal "sediment" (person himself must be above reproach). To be effective, one's motive must be all pure. Furthermore, when reaching out to others, not only must it be pure, it should be real. All too often, we empathize emotionally with those in need, but we do very little about bringing our heartfelt emotions to reality. The Torah states, *V'lo yizach haChoshen mei'al ha'Eiphod*, "And the Breastplate shall not be detached upon the Eiphod" (Ibid. 28:28). The Breastplate wa

s worn by the Kohen Gadol over his heart. Since the Breastplate bore the names of the Tribes on it, the Kohen Gadol was inspired to pray for the Jewish People - who were always close to his heart. The Eiphod was a garment that the Kohen Gadol wore over his Tunic and Robe. It was similar to an apron, extending over his shoulders by means of straps. The Torah admonishes us not to permit the Breastplate from being disconnected from the Eiphod.

The Mishkoltzer Rebbe, Shlita, offers a homiletic reason for this. The names of the Tribes were inscribed on the Avnei Shoham, stones, which were at the top of the Eiphod straps. Likewise, the names of the Tribes were engraved on the Avnei Choshen, stones of the Breastplate. The lesson, explains the Rebbe, is that the stones representing Klal Yisrael which are over the heart, should not be separated from the stones worn over the shoulders. Why? We often feel in our hearts for our fellow Jews, but are we ready to carry him on our shoulder?

It is not enough to just empathize and feel bad. We must lift him up over our shoulder and do something about expressing our empathy.

You shall make vestments of sanctity for Aharon, your brother, for glory and for splendor. (28:2)

Much of the Parsha is devoted to describing the Bigdei Kehunah, Holy Vestments worn by the Kohanim, their construction and materials. Clearly, great significance is attributed to the manner in which the Kohen presents himself. Veritably, it is not only the Kohen - indeed, every Jew must maintain a dress code in which his attire is modest and does not call attention to the person's body but rather to his personality and character. In order for one's personality to be noticed, he/she should not be detracting others by having them focus on his/hers clothes - or lack thereof. Jewish People also have a religious uniform: A yarmulke/kippah/head-covering, indicates our respect for Hashem. Tzitzis are the fringes that are attached to a four-cornered garment, and bespeak a Jew's affiliation with mitzvah observance. In addition, we are not permitted to wear clothing made of *shatnez*, a mixture of wool and linen.

Moreover, there is even a specific sequence to the manner in which one dresses, designating what one puts on first. The Kohen Gadol donned his Holy Vestments sequentially, with the clothing that covered the lower half of his body being put on first, then followed by the garments that covered his upper body. The final article of clothing that the Kohen Gadol put on was the Tzitz HaKodesh, Holy Golden Plate which bore on it the Name of Hashem. I once heard that this sequence teaches us an important lesson: One should not make use of Hashem's Name until after he has addressed the areas of physicality and the mundane, which are represented by the lower half of his body. Too many are ready to accept the mantle of G-dliness upon themselves, even though their personal "house", their private activities, are far from in order.

The Tzitz had the power to effect forgiveness for Klal Yisrael's public indiscretion. It could also return the *kedushah v'taharah*, holiness and purity, to the Sanctuary. Likewise, this is the function of those who represent the epitome of spiritual leadership - those who wear the spiritual Tzitz. They too, must be circumspect in keeping the ethical and moral discipline expected of a Jew. One who seeks to wear the mantle of the Tzitz must prepare himself for the personal and communal demands of this position.

While clothes certainly do not make the man, the concept of proper attire, in addition to the Jewish code of dress - attire that brings both honor and glory to the wearer and to Heaven - is central to Jewish life and values. The following "clothing" episodes each convey an important lesson, which I will leave for the readers to decide.

The first story takes place in Heathrow Airport as two Jews - one observant and one who was not - yet - observant, and who was sitting there having his donut and coffee. He was not wearing a yarmulke and made a point of informing his fellow traveler that

his son in Yerushalayim was fully Torah-observant, studied in a Kollel, and had a large family all of whom were deeply committed to Hashem.

The observant Jew was obviously taken aback by this information. How did a Kollel fellow emerge from such a home, as represented by the father's unaffiliation with Torah observance? "It all happened because of clothes!" began the father. "My son was a top student in undergraduate school, where he excelled and seemed to gravitate to the study of law. He was wooed by a number of universities and in the end, settled on a prestigious school that granted him a hefty scholarship. Following graduation, he served a year of internship at the Justice Ministry.

"This was a wonderful experience. Our son excelled in all areas, and developed an impressive reputation. He seemed to have a very bright future ahead. Then Rosh Hashanah came along. You see, despite the fact that our family was unobservant, we did observe one tradition: our family got together Rosh Hashanah night for a festive meal. This event meant very much to our son. It was his family time. It was also his sole expression of a relationship with Judaism. When my son asked permission to take off from work, he was told, 'Listen, we have never had a Jew work here before. We will allow you to take the evening off, but please keep it to yourself!'

"When my son returned from his furlough, he discovered to his chagrin that his office had been moved. He was now in a small cubicle facing the alley, with no other view other than the garbage bins in the back. It was clearly a retaliation for "being" Jewish. He knew that they would never fire him because of religious reasons. They would just make his life miserable until he quit.

"Well, my son was not giving in, he would force the issue another way. He went to a store that sold Chassidic clothes and purchased the most attention-seeking garments he could find. You can imagine how his boss must have felt when he saw my son's refusal to bend and conform to his regulations. The next step was to grow a beard and payos, earlocks. Finally, at a certain point, the High Justice called him over and asked him to explain what it was that he was wearing. The response was that it was the garb of a Jew. "What is a Jew - and why does he wear these specific garments?" was his immediate question. My son began to do research and learned the reason for, and significance of, every garment. His research led him to deeper introspection of his life, values and future aspirations. In short, he became observant, moved to the Holy Land, met a lovely girl from a similar background. Today, they are living happily ever after - all because of the Jewish clothes that he was compelled to wear."

The second story occurred at the Displaced Persons Camp where the Klausenberger Rebbe, zl, was interned following World War II. It was home to thousands of survivors of Hitler's diabolical assault on Judaism. The Klausenberger understood that even the staunchest believer would be hard-pressed to retain his heretofore unshakable belief. This was a cataclysmic destruction that not only took its toll on the physical body of the Jewish People; it had wreaked havoc with the spiritual/emotional compass of many survivors as well. Taking everything into consideration, the Klausenberger went about his business reaching out with love to all those who would listen.

One day, while walking in the camp, he chanced upon a young teenage girl who was walking barelegged. The Klausenberger made it his goal to minister to the spiritual as well as physical needs of the survivors. He looked at the girl and, in a pleasant, soothing voice, asked her why she was not wearing stockings. The girl cried out that she had none. Therefore, she was relegated to walk around barelegged. The Klausenberger was of the opinion that this was a tznius issue that required immediate resolution. He immediately took off his shoes, then removed his long black socks - the only pair that he possessed - and gave his socks to the girl! He explained to her that for a man to walk around without socks was not an infringement on tznius. For a bas Yisrael to walk barelegged was unbecoming.

She never forgot this incident with the Rebbe. Indeed, she saved those socks for years. They represented to her the message: "Someone cares about my neshamah, soul." As a result of this heartfelt act of caring, the girl remained observant, raising a beautiful family devoted to our Torah heritage. More than half a century passed before she removed those socks from their special place. The Klausenberger Rebbe had passed away in Eretz Yisrael. No longer a teenager, and beset with health issues, she made the trip to the house of the Rebbe, where his family was sitting shivah, seven-day period of mourning. With tears streaming down her face, she presented the socks to the family - and related the story to them. They did not know who she was - but, now they would never forget her.

A gold bell and a pomegranate, a gold bell and a pomegranate on the hem of the Robe, all around. (28:34)

There is a debate between Rashi and Ramban concerning how the Paamonim and Rimomim, pomegranates and bells, were placed at the hem of the Meil. There were seventy-two pomegranates and seventy-two bells, which allude to the seventy-two possible shades of white which could render someone a metzora, spiritual leper. The

Baal HaTurim explains that since the Meil, Robe, atoned for the sin of speaking lashon hora, slanderous speech, the number was appropriate, in that it reminded people of the evils of, and the penalty for gossiping. Rashi posits that each bell was followed by a pomegranate next to it. Ramban contends that the bells were actually sewn into the pomegranate. The above pasuk, Paamon zahav, paamon zahav v'rimon, "A gold bell and a pomegranate, a gold bell and a pomegranate," implies that the sequence follow Rashi's position. However, in Parashas Pekudei (Shemos 39:25) the Torah writes, Va'yitnu es ha'paamonim b'soch ha'rimonim, "And they placed the bells amid the pomegranates" that seems to support Ramban's position. How do we reconcile these two descriptions of the hem of the Meil?

In his commentary to the Torah, the Chasam Sofer suggests that perhaps both Rashi and Ramban are correct in their understanding of the pesukim and the way the pomegranates and bells were stitched to the Meil. He explains that there was a paamon, bell, without a pomegranate in it, followed by a pomegranate with a bell in it, then followed by a single bell, followed by a pomegranate with a bell inside, etc. Thus, Rashi's commentary which posits that the bells followed pomegranates, and Ramban's position that the bells had within them a pomegranate, is also realistic. They are both correct; the Meil's hem had both: filled bells and empty bells. There was however, no individual pomegranate. They were either embedded with a bell, or not there. Every rimon, pomegranate, had a bell embedded within it. Accordingly, the number of pomegranates was less than the number of bells. Thus, the number seventy-two must apply to the amount of bells that were at the hem of the Robe.

The Chasam Sofer suggests a profound lesson to be implied from the bells and pomegranates. One should not think that lashon hora applies only with regard to the negative speech one speaks about another person. One who speaks positively about himself, aggrandizing and expounding his many good deeds, is also subject to the exhortation of lashon hora. By publicly lauding his good deeds, he is insinuating the faults of others - for not acting accordingly! We are being taught a new dimension to the sin of lashon hora. Unknowingly, by promulgating our own positive traits, our good deeds, our mitzvah performance, we are intimating the faults of others whose track record of performance is less than glowing. We do not realize how every action that we perform has an impact on those around us. This is especially true if one is blessed with a distinguished position. People look up to him and follow his every word. Without thinking, one can hurt others. It goes without saying that when one

speaks about himself, his exploits, the successes of his children and grandchildren, he might unwittingly be hurting someone in his proximity - who is not as fortunate as he is. Our lives are public. The Steipler Gaon, Horav Yaakov Yisrael Kanievsky, zl, went out to purchase a Lulav and esrog for Succos. He was escorted by one of his close students, who had often accompanied his revered Rebbe in the past. The various dealers were acutely aware of the students' ability to steer the Steipler in their direction. He understood the business and did not want to waste his Rebbe's time. Aware of his power, each dealer vied for him to visit their establishment. Obviously, whoever had the good fortune to sell a Lulav and Esrog to the Steipler would be besieged with customers seeking to buy his product. There was no greater endorsement than the Steipler buying his Lulav and Esrog from a specific vendor. The young man chose a certain dealer whom he knew was meticulous in selecting the finest quality Esrogim. This would shorten the time the Rav spent searching for the right esrog.

As soon as the Steipler entered the shop, everything seemed to come to a halt. All eyes were on him. The shop was filled with customers, so the Steipler was immediately ushered into a back room where he could inspect the merchandise in peace. The nervous proprietor had selected a group of Esrogim which he felt were the finest in his possession. This would hopefully hasten the Steipler's choice. Time was a very special commodity for the Steipler. The Steipler began the process of inspection, picking up the first Esrog, inspecting it, and then putting it down. It seemed that it was not up to his standards. He then went to the second Esrog and did the same thing, putting it down after inspecting it. He went through quite a number of Esrogim - the same way: picking it up; inspecting it; then placing it back in the box. He then returned to the very first esrog that he had inspected, and asked the proprietor to "wrap it up." He would purchase the first Esrog that he had inspected.

This was the Esrog that he had originally, quickly dismissed. The proprietor was perplexed, but, he was not asking questions. He had made a sale - and that was all that counted to him.

The student, however, was not so dismissive: he wanted to understand what his Rebbe had just done - and why. If this Esrog was not "top drawer" he could have easily gone to another store in search of the perfect Esrog. The Steipler was not one to acquiesce when it concerned mitzvah observance. Why had he seemingly settled now?

The Steipler's reply taught the young man an important lesson concerning a Jew's service to Hashem and to what limits one should go in performing a mitzvah. "You are correct," the Steipler began, "I could go to any number of shops and quite possibly find a Lulav and Esrog that will be out of this world. But, at what price? I do not mean

money. Let me explain. Had I left the shop without purchasing an Esrog, word would have immediately spread throughout the street that I had left the store without purchasing an Esrog. Can you imagine how this would have affected his bottom line? Indeed, perspective buyers would have begun not to frequent this establishment. To cause another Jew to lose customers is a high price to pay for an Esrog - one that I refuse to pay. A mitzvah at the expense of someone else's livelihood is not my idea of the mitzvah of Lulav and Esrog."

The Altar shall be holy of holies. (29:37)

The Torah refers to the Mizbayach HaChitzon, Outer Altar, as Kodesh Kodoshim, "holy of holies," while the Mizbayach HaPenimi, Inner Altar, which was used for burning the Ketores, Incense, and situated within the Heichal opposite the Aron HaKodesh, is referred to as kodesh, "holy" (only). The kedushah, sanctity, of the Mizbayach HaPenimi was greater than that of the Outer Altar. Why then is it referred to only as "holy." The Mizbayach HaChitzon, Outer Altar, was also called Mizbayach Adamah, because its inside was filled with dirt; yet, it is called the "holy of holies." What is the Torah teaching us?

Horav Moshe Feinstein, zl, focuses on this anomaly and derives a number of ethical lessons from these seemingly "misplaced" designations. The Mizbayach HaChitzon was designated as holy of holies because it was outside, for all of Klal Yisrael to see. Thus, its influence on the ha'mone am, general Jewish population, was exponentially greater than its counterpart within the Heichal. Whoever beheld the Outer Altar became (or, should have become) suffused with greater potential for kedushah. The Mizbayach HaKetores was not exposed in such a manner for everyone to see. Thus, its kedushah, holiness, was restricted.

Rav Moshe analogizes this concept, connecting it to the talmid chacham, Torah scholar, Rav, Rosh Yeshivah - anyone whom people look up to with respect - listening to his words, observing his actions, interacting with him. Such individuals who are in the public arena serve as an example for others to emulate. Their influence is far-reaching; their actions worthy of emulation. Thus, they must exert greater care upon coming in contact with people. They are being watched and scrutinized. They could positively influence those on the outside. But, if they manifest insensitivity, are deficient in their ethical behavior, and too engrossed in themselves - they will make a negative impression, thereby creating an adverse influence which impugns the very underpinnings of their Torah study.

Rav Moshe adds that parents are also included in the designation Mizbayach HaChitzon, because their actions have a direct impact upon their children's behavior and ethical/moral development. Children absorb what they see - and emulate this behavior as well, figuring if its good enough for my parents, it is good enough for me. Since a parent's responsibility is so great, it makes sense that the slightest deviation from what is appropriate, will be misconstrued, extrapolated and developed out of proportion. A slight error on the part of the parents can grow and have a negatively compelling effect on their child. We derive another important lesson from the Mizbayach HaKetores, on which the Incense was burned within the Heichal, concealed from the public eye. Nonetheless, its odor wafted throughout, far away from the environs of the Sanctuary. Furthermore, this odor endured for centuries! The Talmud relates (Yoma 39b), that centuries later, one could smell the odor of the Ketores from within the walls of the Sanctuary.

We see that a *davar sheh'b'kedushah*, holy endeavor, even if it is executed in a concealed, covert environment, will exert its influence far beyond its place of endeavor. Kedushah, holiness, spreads; it is far-reaching, enduring and comprehensive. It is not bound by its restrictive location.

Early impressions are long-lasting. Yosef HaTzaddik was saved from committing a sin with Potifar's wife, as a result of the early education he experienced in Yaakov Avinu's home. At the very last moment, he perceived his father's image - a vision which emboldened him to reject her allurements. The foolish experiences of childhood are forgotten. However, as Horav Moshe Stern, zl, remarks, when a child sees *kiyum ha'mitzvos*, the proper observance of mitzvos, it leaves a lasting impression. When children grow up in a home where Torah and mitzvos are a sincere priority, the impression will endure and accompany them throughout life. Rav Stern once gave a *shmuess*, ethical discourse, to the sons of *gedolei Yisrael*, distinguished *roshei yeshivah* and *rabbanim*, and he asked them if they could recall their childhood. These young men were now all *talmidei chachamim*, Torah scholars, of note. They replied that what remained in their mind from their youth, was, that upon waking up in the middle of the night, they would always observe their fathers studying Torah by a small lamp. They saw the pleasantness of their fathers' learning and it penetrated their bones. They absorbed this scene and then returned to bed.

The Chafetz Chaim, zl, once remarked that a person is what he hears and what he sees. With this in mind, Rav Stern relates that Horav Yisrael Salanter, zl, was once in the city of Zembrow, where he stayed at the home of the town's Rav. Once people heard that the

gadol ha'dor, preeminent Torah leader of the generation, was in town, all the mothers - literally hundreds of women - waited outside the Rav's home with their children, so that they could have their children blessed by Rav Yisrael. The Rav was acutely aware that Rav Yisrael was not the type of Rabbi for whom people wait in line to obtain a *brachah*, blessing. Rather, he was a private, modest person who did not care for attention. Therefore, the Rav did not permit these women to enter his home.

They remained outside his home. One can imagine that hundreds of women and many more children milling around in one place will create a loud cacophony, which can be disturbing. Upon hearing the noise, Rav Yisrael inquired of the Rav, "What is happening outside?" The Rav explained that the women wanted to have their children blessed by Rav Yisrael, and he did not allow them to enter. Rav Yisrael said, "Let them in. Let the children leave with the impression that an old man once gave them a blessing. They will remember that he put his hands on their head and said a few words. Though they do not understand what is being said, the impression will remain with them." Rav Yisrael understood that the impression absorbed by a young child can last a lifetime.

In loving memory of MRS. GLIKA SCHEINBAUM BOGEN by her family

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Rabbi Weinreb's Parsha Column

Tetzaveh and Parshat Zachor, "The Stigma of Fame"

People are motivated by many things. The search for pleasure is certainly one of the great motivators of human beings. So are the search for power and the search for riches. There are also those among us who seek to be liked by others, to the extent that the search for adulation is their primary motivation in life.

Others, and this is particularly true with religious people, hope for a place in the World to Come. For them, a vision of eternity is a major motivation.

Still, others devote their lives to the search for meaning, wisdom, or spiritual enlightenment.

For me, while all of the motivations listed above are interesting and deserve study, there is yet another human motivation that is more noteworthy: the search for fame.

We all know individuals who are devoted, sometimes even obsessed, by their urge to become famous. For them, just to be mentioned in a newspaper article or to be glimpsed on television for a fraction of a minute is a powerful reward.

This particular motivation is hard to understand. Fame does not necessarily bring material rewards. Not every famous person is rich, nor is he powerful. Famous people are often not popular people; indeed, they are often disliked. And there are certainly no spiritual or intellectual achievements that come with fame. Furthermore, fame is notoriously fleeting. Yesterday's famous person often dwells in oblivion today.

Since the beginning of the Book of Exodus, we have been reading about Moses. Surely he is the most famous person in the Jewish Bible. Yet for him, fame was of no consequence whatsoever. He was not motivated by a need to make headlines, to be immortalized for all eternity, or even to be popular and well-known. He would be the last to be concerned if a weekly Torah portion did not even contain his name.

This week's Torah portion, Parshat Tetzaveh, is the only one, since we are introduced to the newborn Moses, in which he is not mentioned by name. Tetzaveh, a Torah portion rich in all sorts of particulars and details, fails to mention Moses.

Long ago, some keen Torah scholar noted this fact and attributed it to a verse in the next week's parsha, Ki Tisa. There, we read of how Moses pleads to God to forgive the Israelites who worship the Golden Calf. He says, "If You will forgive their sin; but if not, erase me from the book which You have written."

“Erase me from the book!” I have no need for fame. Insightfully, this keen scholar found Tetzaveh to be the book from which Moses was indeed erased. I suggest that Moses learned how unimportant fame is from his personal experiences with stigma. For you see, just as fame is no indication at all of the genuine worth of the famous person, so too negative stigma do not reflect the genuine worth of the stigmatized individual.

One of the most perceptive observers of human relations was a writer named Erving Goffman. Almost fifty years ago, he authored a classic work entitled *Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity*. There, he describes the psychology of stigma and of how society assigns negative labels to people, spoiling or ruining their identities as valuable members of that society.

A person who has suffered from being stigmatized learns how meaningless the opinions are that other people have of him. Should he shed these stigmas and gain the positive opinions of others, he would know full well how meaningless those opinions are.

Moses was a stigmatized individual earlier in his life. Goffman distinguishes three different varieties of stigma, and all three were experienced by the young Moses.

The first of these conditions, Goffman termed “abominations of the body.” Physical deformities result in such a stigma. Moses had such a physical deformity; he stammered and stuttered.

The second condition, Goffman called “blemishes of individual character.” In the eyes of the world, Moses was a fugitive, a criminal on the run, who was wanted by the pharaoh for the murder of an Egyptian citizen.

Finally, the third source of stigma: “tribal identities.” Moses was a Hebrew, a member of an ostracized minority.

In contemplating what the life of Moses was like in the many decades he spent as a refugee before returning to Egypt as a redeemer, it’s clear that he suffered from a triple stigma: fugitive, stutterer, and Jew.

I suggest that one of the greatest achievements of Moses, our teacher, was his ability to retain a sense of his true identity, of his authentic self-worth, in the face of the odious epithets that were hurled at him.

This is how, in his later life, when fame and prestige became his lot, he was able to retain his self-knowledge and eschew fame. This is what enabled him to say, “Erase me from the book...” This is why he was able to not only tolerate but to value this week’s portion, where his name is not mentioned.

“The man Moses was humbler than all other humans.” (Numbers 12:3) The deeper meaning of Moses’ humility was his ability to understand himself enough to remain invulnerable to the trials of stigma and insult, and to remain equally unaffected by the temptations of glory and fame.

When we refer to Moses as Rabbenu, our teacher, it is not just because he taught us the law. Rather, it is because he told us how to remain impervious to the opinions of others and to value our own integrity and character. Would that we could be his disciples in this teaching.

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Orthodox Union / www.ou.org

Britain's Former Chief Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks

The Ethics of Holiness

With Tetzaveh something new enters Judaism: torat cohanim, the world and mindset of the priest. Rapidly it became a central dimension of Judaism. It dominates the next book of the Torah, Vayikra. Until now, though, priests in the Torah have had a marginal presence.

For the first time in our parsha we encounter the idea of a hereditary elite within the Jewish people, Aaron and his male descendants, whose task was to minister in the sanctuary. For the first time we find the Torah speaking about robes of office: those of the priests and the high priest worn while officiating in the sacred place. For the first time too we encounter the phrase,

used about the robes: lekavod ule-tiferet, “for glory and beauty.” Until now kavod in the sense of glory or honour has been attributed only to God. As for tiferet, this is the first time it has appeared in the Torah. It opens up a whole dimension of Judaism, namely the aesthetic.

All these phenomena are related to the mishkan, the sanctuary, the subject of the preceding chapters. They emerge from the project of making a “home” for the infinite God within finite space. The question I want to ask here, though, is: do they have anything to do with morality? With the kind of lives the Israelites were called on to live and their relationships to one another? If so, how? And why does the priesthood appear specifically at this point in the story?

It is common to divide the religious life in Judaism into two dimensions.

There was the priesthood and the sanctuary, and there were the prophets and the people. The priests focused on the relationship between the people and God, mitzvot bein adam la-Makom. Prophets focused on the relationship between the people and one another, mitzvot bein adam le-chavero. The priests supervised ritual and the prophets spoke about ethics. One group was concerned with holiness, the other with virtue. You don’t need to be holy to be good. You need to be good to be holy, but that is an entrance requirement, not what being holy is about. Pharaoh’s daughter who rescued Moses when he was a baby, was good but not holy. These are two separate ideas.

In this essay I want to challenge that conception. The priesthood and the sanctuary made a moral difference, not just a spiritual one. Understanding how they did so is important not only to our understanding of history but also to how we lead our lives today. We can see this by looking at some important recent experimental work in the field of moral psychology.

Our starting point is American psychologist Jonathan Haidt and his book, *The Righteous Mind*. Haidt makes the point that in contemporary secular societies our range of moral sensibilities has become very narrow. He calls such societies WEIRD – Western, educated, industrialized, rich and democratic. They tend to see more traditional cultures as rigid, hidebound and repressive. People from those traditional cultures tend to see Westerners as weird in abandoning much of the richness of the moral life.

To take a non-moral example: A century ago in most British and American (non-Jewish) families, dining was a formal occasion. The family ate together and would not begin until everyone was at the table. They would begin with grace, thanking God for the food they were about to eat. There was an order in which people were served or served themselves. Conversation around the table was governed by conventions. There were things you might discuss and others deemed unsuitable.

Today that has changed completely. Many British homes do not have a dining table. A recent survey showed that half of all meals in Britain are eaten alone. The members of the family come in at different times, take a meal from the freezer, heat it in the microwave, and eat it watching a television or computer screen. That is not dining but serial grazing.

Haidt became interested in the fact that his American students reduced morality to two principles, one relating to harm, the other to fairness. On harm they thought like John Stuart Mill who said, that “the only purpose for which power can be rightfully exercised over any member of a civilized community, against his will, is to prevent harm to others.” For Mill this was a political principle but it has become a moral one: if it doesn’t harm others, we are morally entitled to do what we want.

The other principle is fairness. We don’t all have the same idea of what is fair and what not, but we all care about basic rules of justice: what is right for some should be right for all, do as you would be done to, don’t bend the rules to your advantage and so on. Often the first moral sentence a young child utters is, “That’s not fair.” John Rawls formulated the best known modern statement of fairness: “Each person has an equal right to the most extensive liberties compatible with similar liberties for all.”

Those are the ways WEIRD people think. If it’s fair and does no harm, it is morally permissible. However — and this is Haidt’s fundamental point —

there are at least three other dimensions of the moral life as understood in non-WEIRD cultures throughout the world.

One is loyalty and its opposite, betrayal. Loyalty means that I am prepared to make sacrifices for the sake of my family, my team, my co-religionists and my fellow citizens, the groups that help make me the person I am. I take their interests seriously, not just my own.

Another is respect for authority and its opposite, subversion. Without this no institution is possible, perhaps no culture either. The Talmud illustrates this with a famous story about a would-be proselyte who came to Hillel and said, "Convert me to Judaism on condition that I accept only the Written Torah, not the Oral Torah." Hillel began to teach him Hebrew. The first day he taught him aleph-bet-gimmel. The next day he taught him gimmel-bet-aleph. The man protested, "Yesterday you taught me the opposite." Hillel replied, "You see, you have to rely on me even to learn the aleph-bet. Rely on me also about the Oral Torah." [1] Schools, armies, courts, professional associations, even sports, depend on respect for authority.

The third arises from the need to ring-fence certain values we regard as non-negotiable. They are not mine to do with as I wish. These are the things we call sacred, sacrosanct, not to be treated lightly or defiled.

Why are loyalty, respect and the sacred not how liberal elites think in the West? The most fundamental answer is that WEIRD societies define themselves as groups of autonomous individuals seeking to pursue their own interests with minimal interference from others. Each of us is a self-determining individual with our own wants, needs and desires. Society should let us pursue those desires as far as possible without interfering in our or other people's lives. To this end, we have developed principles of rights, liberty and justice that allow us peacefully to coexist. If an act is unfair or causes someone to suffer, we are prepared to condemn it morally, but not otherwise.

Loyalty, respect and sanctity do not naturally thrive in secular societies based on market economics and liberal democratic politics. The market erodes loyalty. It invites us not to stay with the product we have used until now but to switch to one that is better, cheaper, faster, newer. Loyalty is the first victim of market capitalism's "creative destruction."

Respect for figures of authority – politicians, bankers, journalists, heads of corporations – has been falling for many decades. We are living through a loss of trust and the death of deference. Even the patient Hillel might have found it hard to deal with someone brought up on the creed of "We don't need no education, We don't need no thought control."

As for the sacred, that too has been lost. Marriage is no longer seen as a holy commitment, a covenant. At best it is viewed as a contract. Life itself is in danger of losing its sanctity with the spread of abortion on demand at the beginning and "assisted dying" at the end.

What makes loyalty, respect and sanctity key moral values is that they create a moral community as opposed to a group of autonomous individuals.

Loyalty bonds the individual to the group. Respect creates structures of authority that allow people to function effectively as teams. Sanctity binds people together in a shared moral universe. The sacred is where we enter the realm of that-which-is-greater-than-the-self. The very act of gathering as a congregation can lift us into a sense of transcendence in which we merge our identity with that of the group.

Once we understand this distinction we can see how the moral universe of the Israelites changed over time. Abraham was chosen by God "so that he will instruct his children and his household after him to keep the way of the lord by doing what is right and just" (tzedakah umishpat). What his servant looked for when choosing a wife for Isaac was kindness, chessed. These are the key prophetic virtues. As Jeremiah said in God's name: "Let not the wise boast of their wisdom, or the strong of their strength, or the rich of their wealth but let one who boasts, boast about this: that they have the understanding to know Me, that I am the Lord, who exercises kindness, justice and righteousness (chessed mishpat u-tzedakah) on earth, for in these I delight" (Jer. 9: 23-24??).

Kindness is the equivalent of care which is the opposite of harm. Justice and righteousness are specific forms of fairness. In other words the prophetic virtues are close to those that prevail today in the liberal democracies of the West. That is a measure of the impact of the Hebrew Bible on the West, but that is another story for another time. The point is that kindness and fairness are about relationships between individuals. Until Sinai, the Israelites were just individuals, albeit part of the same extended family that had undergone exodus and exile together.

After the revelation at Mount Sinai the Israelites were a covenanted people. They had a sovereign: God. They had a written constitution: the Torah. They had agreed to become "a kingdom of priests and a holy nation." Yet at the golden calf they showed that they had not yet understood what it is to be a nation. They were a mob. The Torah says, "Moses saw that the people were running wild and that Aaron had let them get out of control and so become a laughing-stock to their enemies." That was the crisis to which the sanctuary and the priesthood were the answer. They turned Jews into a nation.

The service of the sanctuary performed by the cohanim in their robes worn le-kavod, "for honour," established the principle of respect. The mishkan itself embodied the principle of the sacred. Set in the middle of the camp, the Sanctuary and its service turned the Israelites into a circle at whose centre was God. And even though, after the destruction of the Second Temple, there was no more sanctuary or functioning priesthood, Jews found substitutes that performed the same function. What Torat cohanim brought into Judaism was the choreography of holiness and respect that helped Jews walk and dance together as a nation.

Two further research findings are relevant here. Richard Sosis analysed a series of voluntary communities set up by various groups in the course of the nineteenth century, some religious, some secular. He discovered that the religious communes had an average lifespan of more than four times longer than their secular counterparts. There is something about the religious dimension that turns out to be important, even essential, in sustaining community.

We now also know on the basis of considerable neuro-scientific evidence that we make our choices on the basis of emotion rather than reason. People whose emotional centres (specifically the ventromedial prefrontal cortex) have been damaged can analyse alternatives in great detail, but they can't make good decisions. One interesting experiment revealed that academic books on ethics were more often stolen or never returned to libraries than books on other branches of philosophy. [2] Expertise in moral reasoning, in other words, does not necessarily make us more moral. Reason is often something we use to rationalise choices made on the basis of emotion. That explains the presence of the aesthetic dimension of the service of the sanctuary. It had beauty, gravitas and majesty. In the time of the Temple it had music. There were choirs of Levites singing psalms. Beauty speaks to emotion and emotion to the soul, lifting us in ways reason cannot do to heights of love and awe, taking us above the narrow confines of the self into the circle at whose centre is God.

The sanctuary and priesthood introduced into Jewish life the ethic of kedushah, holiness, which strengthened the values of loyalty, respect and the sacred by creating an environment of reverence, the humility felt by the people once they had these symbols of the Divine presence in their midst. As Maimonides wrote in a famous passage in *The Guide for the Perplexed*, [3] We do not act when in the presence of a king as we do when we are merely in the company of friends or family. In the sanctuary people sensed they were in the presence of the King.

Reverence gives power to ritual, ceremony, social conventions and civilities. It helps transform autonomous individuals into a collectively responsible group. You cannot sustain a national identity or even a marriage without loyalty. You cannot socialise successive generations without respect for figures of authority. You cannot defend the non-negotiable value of human dignity without a sense of the sacred. That is why the prophetic ethic of

justice and compassion, had to be supplemented with the priestly ethic of holiness.

[1] Shabbat 31a. [2] Haidt, 89. [3] Guide, III: 51.

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Rabbi Yissocher Frand - Parshas Tetzaveh

Brotherly Love at Its Best: Moshe and Aharon

Parshas Tetzaveh contains the mitzva to create the priestly garments for Aharon and his sons. The regular Kohen's uniform consisted of four garments and the uniform of the Kohen Gadol [High Priest] consisted of eight garments. One of these eight garments was a breast plate known as the Choshen HaMishpat. The Talmud teaches in the name of Rav Simlai [Shabbos 139] that Aharon merited wearing the Choshen HaMishpat on his chest by virtue of the fact that "he rejoiced in his heart" [Shmos 4:14] when he saw his younger brother Moshe return to Egypt as the newly-appointed leader of the Jewish people. Moshe Rabbeinu was hesitant to accept the Divine Mission of leading the nation out of Egypt. Our Rabbis say that this hesitancy was due in large part to not wishing to "upstage" his older brother. To allay his fears, the Almighty told him that Aharon would greet him upon his return to Egypt and he would be happy for him -- rejoicing in his heart at Moshe's ascension to leadership.

The Drashas HaRa"n (Drasha 3) seeks out the deeper symbolism of this teaching. Why was this privilege of wearing the Choshen HaMishpat the appropriate reward for being happy in his heart at the fact that Moshe became the designated leader of the people? The Drashas HaRa"n explains that the Almighty both rewards and punishes in a "measure for measure" fashion (meedah k'neged meedah) in order to demonstrate Divine Providence and to show that reward and punishment are not mere happenstance but reflect Divine Justice.

The Drashas HaRa"n says that the fact that the Choshen HaMishpat was worn on Aharon's chest was a "measure for measure" reward for the happiness he demonstrated upon his brother's return to Egypt. How so? The Choshen HaMishpat contained the Urim V'Tumim. Technically speaking, the Urim V'Tumim is not part of the Eight Priestly Garments. The proof of this fact is that in the Second Bais HaMikdash [Temple], the Kohen Gadol still wore 8 Priestly Garments even there was no Urim V'Tumim!

What was the Urim V'Tumim? If Klal Yisrael had some type of question of national import, they would go to the Kohen Gadol, he would pose the question to the Urim V'Tumim, and the lights of the letters on the Choshen haMishpat (spelling out the names of the Tribes) would illuminate in such a way as to spell out the miraculously communicated answer. The Urim V'Tumim was not used for trivial matters, but for critical questions -- such as whether or not to go out to war. The Urim V'Tumim served as a conduit to provide such communication between the Almighty and His Nation.

The Drashas HaRa"n points out that this method of inquiry and response was basically just a drop below the level of prophecy in terms of the Kohen Gadol receiving the Word of G-d. This would not seem to be part of the Kohen Gadol's job description. The Jewish people had Kings, Prophets, and Priests who each served a unique function within the nation. There was a certain division of labor, such that prophecy belonged to the prophets, not to either the Kings or the Priests. Why is the Kohen Gadol suddenly

communicating with G-d via the Urim V'Tumim in a form of pseudo-prophecy?

The Drashas HaRa"n responds that it is because when Moshe Rabbeinu became the master of all prophets in Israel (the 'Adon haNeviim'), Aharon was not jealous of his younger brother. On the contrary, Aharon demonstrated true happiness when he greeted Moshe after Moshe's assumption of leadership and prophecy amongst the nation. Aharon received the "measure for measure" reward that the Kohen Gadol received prophecy as well! He received prophecy through his control of the Urim V'Tumim. It is interesting that just as Aharon subjugated himself to his younger brother Moshe Rabbeinu, in the very same parsha, Moshe Rabbeinu acted in the same way towards Aharon.

One of the famous questions we have discussed over the years is why is it that Moshe Rabbeinu's name is not mentioned in Parshas Tetzaveh. His name is mentioned in every single parsha in the last 4 books of Chumash with the exception of this week's parsha!

When Moshe Rabbeinu initially declined to take Klal Yisrael out of Egypt, the pasuk says, "The L-rd was angry with Moshe (vaYichar Af Hashem b'Moshe)" [Shmos 4:14]. Rabbi Yishmael teaches [Zevachim 102] that every time the Torah uses the expression 'Charon Af' [the Anger of the Almighty] there are consequences. The only exception to this rule, he says, is the above quoted pasuk, expressing G-d's anger towards Moshe. There is not any apparent punishment received by Moshe for bringing G-d to anger in this way. Rav Yossi points out to Rabbi Yishmael that here too there is a consequence. Moshe Rabbeinu did not walk away from this 'Charon Af' unscathed.

Rav Yossi says that in Hashem's original plan, Moshe and his children were destined to be the High Priests and Priests in Israel. Aharon was destined to remain merely a Levi. However, as a result of Moshe's initial refusal to take Klal Yisrael out of Egypt, their roles were reversed. Moshe was punished in that Aharon became the Kohen Gadol and not Moshe Rabbeinu. The story does not end here. When Aharon participated -- albeit reluctantly -- in the sin of making the Golden Calf, the pasuk says that the Almighty wanted to take away the priesthood from Aharon. Anyone who participated in the sin of the Golden Calf lost the right to be a priest. The firstborn were destined to be the priests, but they lost that right because they participated in the sin of the Golden Calf. Aharon too was on the verge of losing this privilege, but Moshe Rabbeinu pleaded with the Almighty that He not take the priesthood away from Aharon. It was only because of this intervention and this plea on behalf of his brother that the Kehunah remained with Aharon and his sons.

Let us put ourselves into Moshe's shoes. Would we not have argued: "I was supposed to be the Kohen before I was punished. So it was given to Aharon, but now he did something wrong so he lost it. Let the Kehunah come back to its rightful place. Now it is my turn again."

Yet that is not what Moshe did. Moshe negated himself totally on behalf of Aharon and pleaded with the Almighty that Aharon should not be punished. "Aharon should keep it. It belongs to Aharon. That is the Kehunah's proper place."

This is why this parsha, which speaks of the elevation of Aharon and of the garments of the High Priest, never mentions Moshe Rabbeinu. Moshe Rabbeinu made himself as if he did not exist when it came to his brother's honor and his brother's right to ascend to the High Priesthood. Moshe is the anonymous, behind the scenes player, here. In the Parsha devoted to the Kohen Gadol, Moshe Rabbeinu does not want to be seen. He wants his older brother to have the limelight all to himself.

The classic pasukim in the Torah describing two brothers who love each other are in Tehillim: "A Song of Ascents to David: Behold how good and how pleasant is it when brothers dwell together in unity. Like the precious oil upon the head running down upon the beard, the beard of Aharon, running down over his garments." [Tehillim 133:1-2]. The phrase "brothers dwelling together in unity" (sheves achim gam yachad) refers to Moshe and

Aharon. They are the quintessential "sheves achim gam yachad". Aharon was happy for Moshe's success and his elevation to leadership status and then when Moshe Rabbeinu saw that Aharon faltered, he nullified himself to ensure that Aharon retained the glory due him. Moshe and Aharon's relationship is what we would all like to see among brothers — among our children and our siblings, namely the state of "Behold how good and pleasant is it when brothers dwell together in unity."

Purim: The Paradigm of "Hope For Each And Every Generation"

I saw the following beautiful insight in a Sefer -- Yemei HaPurim.

Following the Megillah reading, we sing the prayer "Shoshanas Yakov," which includes the statement "You have been their eternal salvation and their hope throughout the generations". What does this phrase -- v'tikvasam b'chol dor v'dor -- mean?

Prior to singing Shoshanas Yakov, we actually recite a blessing to conclude the Megillah reading: "Blessed are You, Hashem, our G-d, King of the universe, Who takes up our grievance, judges our claim, avenges our wrong; exacts vengeance for us from our foes, and Who brings just retribution upon all enemies of our soul. Blessed are you Hashem, Who exacts vengeance for His people Israel from all their foes, the G-d Who brings salvation." The language of this blessing is in the present tense (haRav es riveinu, haDan es dineinu, v'haNokem es nikkameinu, etc.)

On Chanukah, the Al HaNissim prayer contains similar language except it is in the past tense: He fought our fight; He judged our claim; He avenged our wrong (ravta es rivam, danta es dinam, nakamta es nikmasam). The change of tense in these two similar prayers must be significant. Why on Chanukah are the verbs in the past tense and on Purim they are in the present tense? The Vilna Gaon says regarding the pasuk, "To speak of Your Kindness in the morning, and of Your Faithfulness at night" [Tehillim 92:3] that morning (boker) connotes days of redemption. Redemption is bright like the morning sun. When Klal Yisrael are redeemed, when they are in Eretz Yisrael at peace in their land, then things appear to us like morning. Likewise, evening and nighttime are metaphors for exile. When we are in exile, it is a time of "Your Faithfulness at night," meaning we do not see the Hand of G-d, which is hidden. At such times, it appears as if we are abandoned, Heaven Forbid. The quality that sustains us through the night of our exile is our "Emunascha ba'Leylos" -- we have faith that despite our exile, the Almighty is still interested in us and still cares about us.

The paradigm of the quality of "Emunascha ba'Leylos" is the holiday of Purim. Purim is the holiday of exile, the Yom Tov of Galus. During the Persian exile, it looked for a time as though Divine Providence abandoned them. ("The decree went forth to destroy and eradicate every Jew from young to old in a single day.") The attribute of "Your Faithfulness at night" that kept them going. Purim is a paradigm of an event in history when Klal Yisrael thinks they are abandoned but then discovers that the Almighty is still interested and He still loves us. He is still fighting our battles even in the exile.

That is why the text of the Purim prayer is in the present tense -- who fights our battles, who judges our claims, who avenges those who wrong us. Even in the Galus, when it appears so many times that things are lost -- until this very day we are surrounded by people who want to destroy us -- even now He is still -- in the present -- fighting our battles.

Chanukah is a miracle that occurred when we had a Beis HaMikdash. We know that the Master of the World is involved at such a time in history. That era is in the past, so we speak of the Chanukah narrative in the past tense. However, on Purim while we are still in exile, we need to hear that the Almighty not only DID IT for us in the past, but he DOES IT for us in the present as well.

Purim is OUR holiday and that is why the Sages enacted in the prayer of Shoshanas Yakov the words "And their hope throughout the generations." Our hope is that what happened on Purim will keep happening for us even

now. Our hope is not only for then but also for every generation (including the present) where they "stand up against us and attempt to destroy us". Transcribed by David Twersky Seattle, WA; Technical Assistance by Dovid Hoffman, Baltimore, MD
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Rav Kook List

Rav Kook on the Torah Portion

Tetzaveh: Moses and the Priestly Garments

Where was Moses?

The commentaries noted an unusual fact about the Torah portion of Tetzaveh - it is the only parashah, from when we first read of Moses' birth in the book of Exodus, in which Moses is not mentioned.

The Ba'al HaTurim (Rabbi Jacob ben Asher, 1269-1343), explained that this was a consequence of Moses' defense of the Jewish people after the Sin of the Golden Calf. At that precarious juncture, Moses pleaded with God to forgive the Israelites; and if not, then "please remove me from Your book that You have written" (Ex. 32:32).

The Sages taught that "The curse of a sage comes true, even if it was contingent on a condition [and that condition was not met]" (Makkot 11a). Thus, even though God did forgive the Jewish people, Moses' vow was partially fulfilled, and his name was removed from the portion of Tetzaveh. The question arises: why was this parashah, which describes the special garments of the kohanim, chosen as the one in which Moses is not mentioned? Also, why was Moses punished for valiantly defending the Jewish people?

Concession for Weakness

According to the Midrash, God originally intended to appoint Moses and his descendants to be kohanim. God, however, became disappointed with Moses due to his repeated refusal to lead the Israelites out of Egypt, and He transferred the priesthood to his brother Aaron (Zevachim 102a on Ex. 4:14). But while Moses lost the priesthood, he still retained the potential to be a kohen.

In fact, when the Tabernacle was dedicated, Moses did serve as the kohen, bringing the dedication offerings (Ex. 29). It is surprising that Moses did not wear the special garments of a kohen during his one-time service. If a kohen does not wear these special clothes while serving in the Temple, his service is rendered invalid (Zevachim 17b); and yet Moses performed the dedication service just wearing a white robe (Avodah Zarah 34a). Why didn't Moses need to wear the priestly garments?

In general, clothing is a concession for human weakness. The Hebrew word 'begged' ('clothing') comes from the root 'baggad', meaning 'to betray.' In the Garden of Eden, there was nothing wrong with being naked. It was only after Adam and Eve ate from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil that they needed to hide behind clothes - a necessary but tragic betrayal of their natural purity.

The same is true for the priestly garments. Each of the eight garments, the Sages taught, comes to atone for a particular transgression: arrogance, slander, improper thoughts, and so on (Zevachim 88b). Were it not for these sins, the kohanim would have no need for these special clothes.

Beyond Clothing

The Talmud relates that the white robe that Moses wore when he served in the Tabernacle had no seams. In other words, his robe had no clear and distinct boundaries, nothing to emphasize its separation from his body. It was almost as if Moses needed no clothing at all.

Moses was not tainted by the Sin of the Golden Calf, a sin that the Midrash (Shemot Rabbah 32:1) links to the sin of Adam. Therefore Moses did not

need the extra clothes of the kohanim. He understood that, due to the Sin of the Golden Calf, the kohanim would need to wear special garments. Therefore he asked God: "Please remove me from Your book" - please remove me from the portion of Your book that commands the kohanim to wear special clothes. I was not involved in the Sin of the Golden Calf, and I have no connection with the need for these clothes.

What is so terrible about the priestly garments? These clothes indicate that the kohanim suffer from a fundamental dissonance. While they wear their special clothes, the kohanim are shluhei dedan and shluhei deRachmana, our emissaries to God and God's emissaries to us. But when they remove the priestly garments, they become private individuals once again.

Moses, on the other hand, was a "servant of God" (Deut. 34:5). This was not an honorific title, but a description of his very essence, regardless of what clothes he wore. Divine service was not a duty that Moses took upon himself during certain hours of the day. It was his defining quality.

God heeded Moses' request and removed his name from the portion of Tetzaveh. And indeed Moses had no need for these clothes, but performed the Divine service wearing only a seamless white robe.

(Sapphire from the Land of Israel. Adapted from Shemuot HaRe'iyah Tetzaveh (1929), quoted in Peninei HaRe'iyah, pp. 175-176).

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By Rabbi Yirmiyohu Kaganoff

From Cairo to Frankfurt

Purim Cairo and Purim Frankfurt

By Rabbi Yirmiyohu Kaganoff

Is there a halachic basis for the various local observances, such as Purim Frankfurt, Purim Cairo and Purim Ancona?

Answer: Local Purims

In the course of Jewish history, there have unfortunately been numerous occasions when communities suffered from major crises that threatened their lives. Upon surviving these travails, many communities chose to commemorate the event by creating a Yom Tov with special observances to thank Hashem for His salvation. Many of these observances were called "Purim," and in the course of the last several hundred years there were dozens of recorded local Purims, some that were celebrated by the Jewish community of a town or city, and others that were observed by families. Some of these commemorations included that the festival was preceded by a fast day, similar to Taanis Esther preceding Purim.

As the events of the last seventy years have emptied many of these communities of their Jews, most of these celebrations and the miracles they commemorate have become forgotten. This article will be concerned primarily with the halachic sources and controversies concerning these celebrations. But first, let me share some of the background events of a few of these local observances.

Purim Cairo

One of the earliest recorded local holidays is a festival that was celebrated in Cairo on the 28th of Adar, which bears a strong similarity to the original Purim. In 5284 (1524), the Governor of Egypt, Ahmed Pasha, became a very powerful ruler, although he was officially responsible to the Ottoman Empire and Sultan Suleiman the Magnificent. Pasha craved the wealth of many of the Egyptian Jews and, in order to seize their possessions, he arrested twelve prominent leaders of the Jewish community, including the community's rav, the Radbaz. Pasha demanded an exorbitant ransom, far more than the community could ever raise, to be paid by the 28th of Adar, or he would execute the captives and exile the rest of the community.

On the day set for the ransom deadline, Pasha was assassinated by some of his servants who knew that he was plotting to overthrow the sultan. The 28th of Adar was joyously proclaimed a local festival and was observed for as long as a sizable Jewish community existed in Cairo.

Purim Frankfurt

The rogue of the Purim Frankfurt story (5374/1614), Vincent Fettmilch, actually called himself the "new Haman of the Jews." He was a fiery agitator whose hordes attacked the Jewish quarter of Frankfurt. After two years of anti-Semitic disturbance, he angered the Holy Roman Emperor, who had Fettmilch hanged. The Jewish community commemorated these events by creating a fast day, similar to Taanis Esther, on the 19th of Adar, and a festival on the 20th, which was called Purim Frankfurt. A special megillah was written, known as Megillas Vinz (for Vincent), to commemorate the occasion.

Tunis

Purim Kidebuni was a festival observed in parts of North Africa. In 5465 (1705), the governor of Tunis, warlord of one faction of the barbary pirates, laid siege to Tripoli, threatening to decimate the population should he conquer the city. Fortunately, disease broke out suddenly among his followers, and the siege failed. A festival was declared for the 24th of Teiveis.

Another North African Purim

On the 4th of Marcheshvan, 5302 (1541), Charles V of Spain attempted to seize Algiers, where many Jews had taken refuge fifty years earlier when fleeing during the Spanish expulsion. The Spaniards landed, but their fleet and army were destroyed by a storm because of the prayers of Rav Shelomoh Duran, a descendant of the Tashbeitz. Thus the Jews were spared facing expulsion a second time and the inquisition that the Spaniards would have brought with them. For obvious reasons, they called the holiday they established Purim Edom.

Shiraz

On the 2nd day of Marcheshvan, the Jews of Shiraz (Iran) celebrate a festival called "Moed Katan." According to an old manuscript written in the Jewish-Persian language (similar to what Yiddish is to German, and Ladino to Spanish), a Jew who was supposed to have been both a shocheit and a kosher retail butcher was caught selling non-kosher meat. The criminal converted to Islam, changed his name to Abu al-chasan, and then became a moseir, accusing the Jews of many crimes. The Shiite rulers gave the Jews of Shiraz the choice between death and conversion to Islam. Suddenly and mysteriously, Abu al-chasan died on the 2nd of Marcheshvan, leaving behind a retraction that all his accusations were false. The evil decree against the Jews was rescinded. The incident was commemorated via a local festival called "Moed Katan."

These are a few examples of the kinds of local festivals that were established to thank Hashem for His kindness. The first question we have is whether we can find a halachic source for a community establishing its own local festival.

Who introduced Hallel?

One source for the observance of local festivals is based on the following passage of Gemara (Pesachim 117a, as explained by Rashbam; cf. Rashi ad locum). The Gemara asks: "Who originally declared the Hallel?" The Gemara proceeds to mention several instances in Jewish history when Hallel was recited spontaneously to thank Hashem for His salvation (Rashi ad loc.). Among the specific situations mentioned are:

- In addition to singing Az Yashir upon surviving keriyas yam suf, Moshe and the Bnei Yisrael also sang Hallel (Rashbam).
- Yehoshua and the Bnei Yisrael sang Hallel after their victory over the 31 kings.
- In addition to the song of Devorah, she and Barak recited Hallel after their victory over Sisra.
- Chizkiyah sang Hallel when he survived Sancheiriv.
- Chananyah, Misha'el and Azaryah sang Hallel when Hashem saved them from the fiery furnace.
- Mordechai and Esther recited Hallel when they were in control of the city of Shushan.

Chananyah, Misha'el and Azaryah

The reason for the reciting of Hallel by Chananyah, Misha'el and Azaryah is somewhat different from the other events recorded in the Gemara. In all the other instances, the entire Jewish nation was imperiled and saved, whereas, in their situation, Chananyah, Misha'el and Azaryah were saved as individuals. One may have thought that Hallel should be recited only to thank Hashem for the saving of the entire nation. However, we see from Chananyah, Misha'el and Azaryah that reciting Hallel is an appropriate way of thanking Hashem even for a salvation that affected only individuals. In his halachic commentary on this Gemara, the Meiri (Pesachim 117a) rules that an individual or community may establish a practice of reciting Hallel every subsequent year as a commemorative way to celebrate their salvation, provided that they do not recite a brocha prior to reciting the Hallel. To quote the Meiri: "Any individual who was redeemed from a potential calamity may institute that he recite Hallel that day every year, albeit without reciting a brocha beforehand. The same is true for every community. In fact, a practice of the prophets was to recite Hallel whenever one was redeemed from trouble." Thus, a community or an individual may establish the annual recital of Hallel on a specific date to commemorate an event of salvation.

After they move

Are individuals who have relocated from a community required to continue observing the local Purim? I found this question discussed about five hundred years ago by Rav Moshe ben Yitzchak Alashkar, known as the Maharam Alashkar, a gadol of his generation, who received halachic inquiries from the greatest gedolim of his era, including the Mahari Beirav, Rav Eliyahu Mizrahi, and the Maharalnach. It is interesting to note the difficulties and wanderings of the Maharam Alashkar himself. Born about 5226 (1466) in Spain, he was expelled in 1492 with all the other Jews, and in his escape from Spain was captured by pirates who threatened to execute him. Eventually, he escaped from the pirates and found refuge in Tunis, but the Jews of this community were then expelled. The Maharam Alashkar wandered onward to Greece, then later Cairo, and eventually succeeded in settling in Yerushalayim, where he passed on in 5302 (1542). In addition to probably being the posek hador in the Mediterranean basin, he was also the source of many teshuvos of the geonim that would otherwise have been lost, and he translated responsa of the Rambam from Arabic into Hebrew.

The following question that the Maharam Alashkar discusses is germane to our discussion: A local takkanah (based on other evidence, I believe it was Sepanto, Italy) had established the 11th of Teiveis as a local festival, for the Jews of that town and their descendants wherever they would reside, in commemoration of some deliverance that had transpired on that date. The question was: The community is now destroyed. Must they continue to observe this takkanah?

The Maharam Alashkar first quotes the Talmudic sources that a community has the ability to establish regulations that are binding on its members. He writes that although regulations and customs of a community are, in general, not obligatory upon someone once he relocates, when the community accepted upon its members and their descendants to follow a certain practice regardless of whether they reside in the original location, they must continue observing the practice even after they relocate (Shu"t Maharam Alashkar #49). His conclusion is quoted by many prominent halachic authorities as definitive (Magen Avraham, 686:5, Elyah Rabbah, 686:5, Mishnah Berurah, 686:8; also see the Chayei Odom and the Chasam Sofer that I will quote later in this article).

Celebrating on the Tenth of Av

Our next discussion is the extent to which we go to celebrate a personal Purim.

Sena'ah was the name of one of the large Jewish family clans that returned from Bavel together with Ezra (Ezra 2:35; Nechemiah 7:38). According to the Mishnah (Taanis 26a), they were descended from the tribe of Binyamin (see Tosafos, Eruvin 41a s.v. Mivnei) and they brought wood to the Beis Hamikdash on the tenth of Av, which was then observed as a day of celebration. The Gemara (Eruvin 41a; Taanis 12a) records that the Tanna

Rabbi Elazar ben Tzadok, continued to observe this date even after the churban (Tosafos, Taanis 12a s.v. Hasam), although the cause for the celebration no longer existed. This is even more surprising since Rabbi Elazar ben Tzadok himself was a kohen (see Bechoros 36a), and therefore not descended on his father's side from Sena'ah and the tribe of Binyamin. As Tosafos (Eruvin 41a s.v. Mivnei) notes, his observance of this date as a family festival was either because his membership in this family clan was from his mother's side or because his wife was a descendant of the tribe of Binyamin and a member of this family.

Tisha B'Av on the tenth

As we know, when Tisha B'Av falls on Shabbos, the fast day is observed on Sunday, which is the tenth of Av. Since we now know that the Sena'ah family observed the tenth of Av as a festival even after the churban, what did they do when Tisha B'Av fell on Shabbos, causing the national day of mourning to coincide with their personal festival? The Gemara quotes Rabbi Elazar ben Tzadok as saying that they began the fast together with the rest of klal Yisrael, but did not complete its observance to the end of the day since it was a family festival. This means that they ate on the day that the rest of klal Yisrael was still observing all the laws of Tisha B'Av! We see the extent to which the observance of the family festival was kept. Based on this Gemara, the Maharam Alashkar ruled that a local festival must continue to be observed.

[There is a curious halachah that results from this Gemara. Several rishonim record the following practice from the baal Tosafos, Rabbeinu Yaakov ben Rabbeinu Yitzchak Halevi, who is also called Yaavetz. (He should not be confused with much later gedolim, such as Rav Yaakov Emden, who are also called Yaavetz.) Yaavetz once celebrated a bris on the tenth of Av which was a Sunday and therefore a postponed Tisha B'Av. Several rishonim record that after davening mincha, Yaavetz bathed and broke the fast because it was his own personal Yom Tov (Mordechai, Taanis #630; Hagahos Maimoniyos, Taanis 5:8; Tur Orach Chayim, Chapter 559). This practice is recorded as normative halachah – that the baalei simcha, meaning the mohel, the sandek and the parents of a bris that falls on a postponed Tisha B'Av do not complete the fast because it is their own personal Yom Tov.]

Controversial custom

However, the Maharam Alashkar's position on this question was not universally accepted. The Pri Chodosh (Orach Chayim 496:14) expressly disputes what the Maharam Alashkar writes, concluding that even a local resident does not need to observe the custom of local festivals and celebrations. The Pri Chodosh contends that the practice is not binding even while the original inhabitants continue to reside in the same city in which the miracle happened, and it is certainly not incumbent upon their descendants or anyone who relocated from the city.

Explaining the Pri Chodosh's objection to the Maharam Alashkar's ruling requires an introduction regarding an ancient manuscript called Megillas Taanis, which the Gemara (Shabbos 13b) teaches us was written by the Tanna Chananyah ben Chizkiyah, who lived at the end of the second Beis Hamikdash period (Rambam, Introduction to Peirush Hamishnah, towards the end). Megillas Taanis is a list of dates on which miraculous events occurred. To commemorate these celebrations, Chazal prohibited fasting and conducting eulogies on these dates. After the destruction of the Beis Hamikdash, a dispute (Rosh Hashanah 18b-19b) developed as to whether these dates remained minor festivals prohibiting hespedim and fasts, or whether, in light of the churban, these festive days are no longer significant, a position that the Gemara calls: batlah Megillas Taanis, "Megillas Taanis is no longer in effect." The Gemara (Rosh Hashanah 19b) concludes that, with the exception of Chanukah and Purim, batlah Megillas Taanis. It is also important to note the Gemara's comment that if batlah Megillas Taanis, certainly no new days can be added as holidays (Rosh Hashanah (18b, 19a). The Pri Chodosh contends that the creation of any of these local festivals runs counter to the Gemara's conclusion that batlah Megillas Taanis. He,

therefore, concludes that the community declaring specific practices on these days has no halachic legitimacy and that one is not required to observe them. We will continue this topic next week...

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What's the Truth about . . . Mishloach Manot?

by Ari Z. Zivotofsky |

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Mishloach Manot Misconception: The two foods sent on Purim for mishloach manot must be from two different categories of blessings.

Fact: This widespread misconception has no halachic basis.

Background: Mishloach manot is one of the four mitzvot established by Mordechai and Esther to be performed on Purim day. Alluded to in Megillah Esther, these mitzvot are: reading the megillah, eating a festive meal (seudah), giving money to the poor (matanot l'evyonim) and giving gifts of food to friends (mishloach manot).

The mitzvah of mishloach manot is based on Megillah Esther (9:19 and 22), which states that Purim was established as a day “of gladness and feasting, [a yom tov] and of sending portions one individual to his friend [and gifts to the poor].” Like all of the mitzvot of Purim, it applies equally to men and women (Rema, OC 695:4), but there are various opinions as to how this principle is applied in practice. The Magen Avraham (695:14) and Mishnah Berurah (695:25) express surprise that many women are not scrupulous about personally performing this mitzvah and suggest that a married woman possibly fulfills the obligation through her husband. Nonetheless, they say that it is proper to be stringent, implying that a married woman should, in fact, send her own mishloach manot. Regarding matanot l'evyonim, the Aruch Hashulchan (694:2) invokes the principle that a husband and wife are considered as one; however, when it comes to mishloach manot (695:18), he explicitly states that a woman does not fulfill her obligation via her husband and must send her own. He adds that the women in his region do so. Rabbi Shlomo Zalman Auerbach (Halichot Shlomo, p. 338, n. chaf zayin) states that a man should specifically send mishloach manot on his wife's behalf or make it clear that it is from both of them. The Kitzur Shulchan Aruch (142:4) rejects this idea and advises women to send their own.

Why Send Mishloach Manot?

Later authorities offer two basic reasons for this mitzvah. The Terumat Hadeshen (Rav Israel Isserlin [1390-1460], 111) viewed it as a practical way to ensure that everyone will have sufficient food for the festive Purim meal.¹ Rav Shlomo Alkabetz, who lived in the sixteenth century and is best known as the author of Lecha Dodi, provides another reason. In his work Manot HaLevi, which he sent to his father-in-law as “mishloach manot,” he explains that the mitzvah is intended to engender friendship and brotherhood among Jews.² This is to counter Haman's critical statement describing the Jewish people as “one nation dispersed and divided [among the nations]” (Esther 3:8).

The posekim of the last several hundred years discuss many differences in the performance of the mitzvah, depending on the reasoning behind it. For example, according to Rav Alkabetz, sending non-food items is acceptable³ because such a package also engenders friendship, while the Terumat Hadeshen rejects any item that cannot be used at the seudah. If one sends mishloach manot anonymously, according to the Terumat Hadeshen, the sender fulfills his obligation; however, according to Rav Alkabetz, because the mishloach manot does nothing toward engendering good will, the sender does not fulfill his obligation (see Ketav Sofer 141).

Based on the reasoning of the Terumat Hadeshen that the purpose of mishloach manot is to provide food for the seudah, the Magen Avraham (695:11), Chayei Adam (135:31), Kitzur Shulchan Aruch (142:2) and Aruch Hashulchan (695:15) rule that the food should not be raw. However, others

opine that sending unprepared food is permissible and the Mishnah Berurah (695:20) cites both opinions as acceptable. He suggests (see Sha'ar Hatziyun 695:28) that the Taz permits uncooked food. Rav Ovadia Yosef (Yechave Da'at 6:45) rules that raw meat is acceptable.

What to Send?

The basic obligation is to send any combination of two portions of food to one individual (Megillah 7a; SA, OC 695:4). This is derived from the fact that the pasuk (Rashi, Megillah 7a, s.v. “shteit manot”) says “manot,” portions (plural) but “ish l'reiyahu,” an individual to his friend (singular). A drink would be considered a type of food, and thus two items, one food and one drink or even two drinks, may be sent (MB 695:20; AH 695:14).

The gemara (Megillah 7a-b) relates several incidents regarding mishloach manot from which the commentators derive some of the halachot governing this mitzvah. “[On Purim] Rabbi Yehuda Nesiah sent to Rabbi Oshaya the thigh of a third-born calf and a bottle of wine. Rabbi Oshaya told him that he had thereby fulfilled both the mitzvot of mishloach manot and matanot l'evyonim.⁴ Rabbah sent with Abaye to Mari bar Mar a basket filled with dates and a cup filled with the flour of roasted wheat . . . [Mari bar Mar] sent back [to Rabbah] a basket filled with ginger and a cup filled with long peppers . . .”⁵

The basic requirement is to send two portions, but what exactly constitutes “two portions”?⁶ The Shulchan Aruch states “two portions of meat.” Based on this, some understand that even one large piece of meat that can be divided into two reasonable portions would suffice, and indeed Eshel Avraham (Buchacher, last comment in OC) entertains this possibility.⁷ The Mishnah Berurah and many other posekim do not discuss the need for different types of food.⁸ Others understand (and this is the accepted halachah) that while two “types” of food are needed, the same item can be used as long as there are two distinct tastes. For example, Rav Auerbach (Halichot Shlomo 19:12) says that one can use two pieces of chicken—a top and a bottom—because they do not taste the same. Rav Nachman Kahana (Spinka Rebbe, late nineteenth century) suggests (Orchot Chaim 695:12) that in the Talmudic story, Rabbi Yehuda Nesiah fulfilled his obligation by sending meat because each limb of the animal tastes different. He quotes Rav Moshe Falk (nineteenth century) who discusses whether two types of wine, such as red and white, are considered two different types of food. Rav Falk (Tikkun Moshe, Purim 93a) also wonders whether roasted and cooked food would be regarded as two different types. He concludes that, based on the wording of the Shulchan Aruch, it would appear that they are indeed different. Rav Yosef Teomim (author of Pri Megadim), in analyzing the Talmudic story (Rosh Yosef, Megillah 7a), implies that two different fruits are considered two types of food.⁹ Rav Yitzchak Yosef (Hilchot Mishloach Manot 6) rules that one can send two similar pieces of raw chicken (or meat) because they can be cooked in different ways. The accepted halachah seems to be that two cuts of meat (i.e., from different parts of an animal), even from the very same animal, or two different fruits or types of wine, are regarded as two types of food and therefore can be used to fulfill the obligation of mishloach manot.

There is no source anywhere indicating that the two foods must have different berachot; in fact, from the above examples, it is clearly not the case. It is possible that this notion became popular as many were confused about what constitutes two types of food. To avoid confusion, they began sending food from two different categories of blessings.

Chazal also comment on the quality of the food. The Mishnah Berurah (in Biur Halachah 695, s.v. “chayav”) states that the food should be worthy of the status of the recipient. Thus, it would seem to be halachically problematic for an upper-middle-class individual to send a very inexpensive item to his peer. Rav Moshe Sternbuch (Teshuvot v'Hanhagot 2:354) states that both items should be of significant value. The gemara (Megillah 7a) mentions sending a substantial piece of beef and a large quantity of wine. Rav Sternbuch expresses surprise that people are not scrupulous about

sending the finest foods for mishloach manot. He states that it is preferable to give two items of significant value to one recipient rather than many items of lesser value to numerous people. The Aruch Hashulchan (695:15) says that those who send “little pieces” do not fulfill their obligation. While some authorities maintain that each portion need be no larger than the size of a k’zayit, most require that there be a substantial quantity of the food, enough to serve an important guest. In Yemen (see Halichot Teiman, p. 42), the custom was to send a cloth of about 3 x 3 feet filled with a meat dish and a bottle of wine or arak, in addition to a special treat consisting of nuts, seeds, candies and other items. In contrast, many people today send “junk food.” This might not be an entirely new practice as both the Knesset Hagedolah (seventeenth century, Shiurei Knesset Hagedolah on Tur, 695:10) and the nineteenth-century Turkish Rabbi Chaim Palagi (Moed Kol Chai 31:82) say that the custom in their day was to send sweet items.¹⁰ Sending candy is justified by Piskei Teshuvot (695, n. 88), who explains that it will help fathers get their children to eat the seudah, and thereby help them fulfill their obligation to educate their children in the mitzvot of Purim. Yosef Ometz (1099) suggests that after sending two items of significant value to one person, one can then send items of lesser worth to many others to foster good will and camaraderie.

Another common assumption about mishloach manot is that it is preferable to use a messenger (shaliach). The Mishnah Berurah (695:18) relates that the Binyan Zion (44) wondered whether one fulfills his obligation if he did not use a shaliach.¹¹ The Eshel Avraham (Buchacher) takes the opposite position and maintains that, as with all mitzvot, it is preferable to perform it personally. The halachah is that the mitzvah does not require a shaliach, but because the suggestion was put forth by an authority of such stature, Rav Auerbach (Halichot Shlomo, p. 337, n. 44) would give one mishloach manot via a shaliach.

The Shulchan Aruch (695:4), based on the Rambam (Hilchos Megillah 2:15), writes that one who sends mishloach manot to more friends is praiseworthy. Nevertheless, the Rambam goes on to say (Megillah 2:17) that it is better to spend one’s resources on giving a greater amount of matanos l’evyonim rather than on the seudah and mishloach manot. This is because there is no greater simchah than gladdening the hearts of the poor, orphans, widows and converts.

As seen, the obligation is to send two portions, i.e., two servings. This seems like a strange requirement; why send two servings to one person? Regarding the korban todah, the Torah mandates that a large amount of the korban must be eaten within a short period of time. The rabbis explain (see e.g., Ha’emek Davar to Vayikra 7:13) the rationale behind this puzzling commandment: the beneficiary of the miracle will then be forced to invite others to his meal and have the opportunity to share his story and express his gratitude to Hashem. Similarly, it may be that Chazal mandated the sending of two portions on Purim to force the recipient to share his food with others. Unlike the case of the todah, where the purpose is to proclaim God’s greatness, or that of the korban Pesach, where the purpose is to transmit our national history, on Purim the goal is to increase camaraderie and unity. Very possibly, Chazal instituted that two portions be sent in order to encourage communal feasts, which help promote good will, friendship and achdut among Am Yisrael. Rabbi Dr. Ari Zivotofsky is on the faculty of the Brain Science Program at Bar-Ilan University in Israel.

Notes

1. There are many authorities who link the mitzvot of seudah and mishloach manot. The Ran (Megillah 3b in Rif pages, end of s.v. “ela”) connects the day of giving mishloach manot to the seudah. The Magen Avraham (OC 688:10) cites an opinion that when the fifteenth of Adar is on Shabbat, those living in walled cities are required to have their Purim seudah on Shabbat; therefore, despite the inherent difficulties, mishloach manot must be distributed on Shabbat.

2. The Bach (OC 695) uses this reason for mishloach manot to give a creative, startling explanation to Rashi’s understanding of the story in Megillah 7b regarding the yearly practice of Abbaye bar Abin and Rabbi Chanina bar Abin.

3. Some reject non-food ideas for technical reasons. For example, the Gra (695 on seif 4) learns from Beitza 14b that “manot” means specifically food. Some suggest that one

can send money because it can then be used to purchase food. The Be’er Heiteiv (695:6) rules that non-food items are acceptable as long as there is still time on Purim day to sell the items and purchase food. See Yechave Da’at 6:45 for a discussion of this. It was suggested that a talmid chacham who sends chiddushei Torah has fulfilled his obligation because that fosters friendship. Rav Yitzchak Yosef (Yalkut Yosef Moadim, p. 323, n. 8) responded that this is mere pilpul and not halachah.

4. Rashi (Megillah 7b, first Rashi) states that with this gift Rabbi Yehuda Nesiah fulfilled his obligation because it contained two items. Of importance here is that Rabbeinu Chananel has a different version of this story that is similar to the version found in the Yerushalmi in which Rav Yudan Nesia was the sender and he sent a second gift of a calf and a barrel of wine. Many later authorities base their rulings on this version. See, for example, Rav Tzvi Pesach Frank, Mikraei Kodesh, siman 38.

5. Rabbi Joseph Ber Soloveitchik (Hararei Kedem, vol. 1, siman 206:3) learns from here that the recipient should reciprocate in kind.

6. The concept of two portions is also mentioned in the context of eruv tavshilin and the erev-Tishah B’Av seudah hamafseket.

7. See Tzitz Eliezer 14:65 and 15:31.

8. Note that some posekim distinguish between meat (where even one piece large enough to serve two people suffices) and other types of food where two kinds are required.

9. Nitei Gavriel (5760 ed.) 58, n. 8, seems to have understood the Rosh Yosef differently.

10. Nitei Gavriel (5760 ed.) 57, n. 8, understands this to mean not that they sent sweets, but rather that one should send sweet rather than sharp food. Note that Piskei Teshuvot and Nitei Gavriel cite this from Knesset Hagedolah while it is actually in the Shiurei Knesset Hagedolah.

11. The Kaf Hachaim (695:14) rejects the Binyan Zion’s derashah from the word “mishloach.” Chatam Sofer (Gittin 22b) says that ideally a messenger should be used.

Halacha Hotline of the Five Towns and Far Rockaway

Q) I am a fifteen-year old young adult in high school. Am I obligated to give my own matanos l’evyonim (monetary gifts to poor people) on Purim, or does my parents’ giving suffice for me as well?

A) Many young adults of bar- or bas-mitzvah age have accumulated their own funds through various means (such as presents, babysitting, camp tips, etc.), and they should use a portion of this money for matanos l’evyonim, as matanos l’evyonim is a personal obligation for each individual (Aruch HaShulchan, Orach Chaim 694:2).

Understanding the She’eilah (question/inquiry)

One of the primary mitzvos of the day of Purim is the mitzvah of matanos l’evyonim - giving gifts to poor people.[1] Its importance is apparent from the Rambam (Hilchos Megilah 2:17), who states that one should spend more money on matanos l’evyonim than on the Purim seudah (meal) and mishlo’ach manos.[2] The minimum monetary requirement is a dispute among the Poskim (halachic authorities), with opinions ranging from a perutah,[3] (Ritva, Megilah 7a; Mishnah Berurah 694:2), to enough money to buy a small meal (ibid.; Sha’arei Teshuvah O.C. 694:1). The minimum amount must be given to each of two distinct poor people.

Although the minimum amount would suffice to fulfill the mitzvah, it is meritorious, if one has the means, to give a more significant sum of money, such that the poor person derives some significant joy (Eliya Rabba 694:6; Y’vakshu Mipihu vol. 10 6:10; Sh”Ut Teshuvos V’hanhagos 3:231).[4] (The designation of “significant” is relative to the donor and the recipient.) Every adult (above bar- or bas-mitzvah age) is obligated in the mitzvah of matanos l’evyonim (Shulchan Aruch O.C. 694:1). Although women are generally exempt from time-bound mitzvos (Kiddushin 29a), they are obligated in matanos l’evyonim since they, too, were saved through the miracles that are recorded in Megilas Esther (M.B. 695:25).[5] Some Poskim (Bach O.C. 694:1; Taz O.C. 694:1; Eliya Rabba 694:1) contend that even poor people are obligated to give matanos l’evyonim,[6] even though, in general, those who receive tzedakah (charity) funds are not required to give tzedakah more than once a year (see Shulchan Aruch 249:2 and Rema 251:3). These Poskim base their ruling[7] on a comparison of the obligation

of matanos l'evyonim to the obligation of drinking dalet kosos (four cups of wine) on Pesach, in which even the poor are obligated, even if to do so they must collect money door-to-door (Pesachim 99b, Bach *ibid.*). This requirement is due to the obligation of *pirsumei nisa*, publicizing the miracles of the day, which is relevant on Purim as well. It follows, then, that these Poskim would rule that young adults who have no money of their own are still obligated to procure money (by asking their parents, or the like) so they can fulfill the mitzvah (Aruch HaShulchan 694:2).

Other Poskim argue that matanos l'evyonim is no different from the general obligation of *tzedakah* except in that it is given specifically on Purim. Therefore, unlike the dalet kosos on Pesach, poor people are not obligated in the mitzvah of matanos l'evyonim (Pri Chadash, O.C. 694:1; see Sh"Ut Chemdas Shlomo Y.D. #32). According to these Poskim, young adults who have no money of their own are not obligated in the mitzvah. Nowadays, however, most young adults have accumulated their own funds through various means (babysitting, presents, tips from summer programs), and they should use a portion of this money to fulfill their personal obligation of matanos l'evyonim.

If a young adult indeed has no money of his (or her) own, it is recommended that his parents give him money with which to fulfill the mitzvah of matanos l'evyonim, in accordance with the opinion of the Poskim cited earlier.

The discussion above is relevant also to the question of whether parents are obligated in the *chinuch* (training) of their young children (under *bar-* and *bas-mitzvah*) to give matanos l'evyonim. Some Poskim maintain that parents are not obligated to train their young children in the mitzvah of matanos l'evyonim, since young children generally have no money of their own, and they are thus not obligated whatsoever in this mitzvah (Eishel Avraham-B'tshach, O.C. 695:3).[8] Other Poskim maintain that the obligation of *chinuch* for young children is applicable to any mitzvah that the children will be obligated to perform when they become older. Accordingly, since young children will *IY"H* (G-d willing) become adults with resources with which to give matanos l'evyonim, these Poskim maintain that they must be trained when young also in the mitzvah of matanos l'evyonim (Mikadesh Yisrael, Purim p. 203; Kedushas Levi, end of Kedushah Sh'niah). According to these Poskim, parents would be obligated to give their young children money with which to fulfill the mitzvah of matanos l'evyonim.

It would seem that the prevalent custom is that parents do not train their young children in this particular mitzvah. Nevertheless, it is meritorious for a parent to do so.

[1] The term *evyonim* (generally translated as destitute people) refers to people who are poorer than *aniyim* (generally translated as poor people). According to most Poskim (halachic authorities), one need not give specifically to *evyonim* to fulfill the mitzvah of matanos l'evyonim; giving to *aniyim* qualifies as well (Aruch HaShulchan Orach Chaim 694:3; see also Dirshu Mishnah Berurah n.e. chapter 694:note 7).

[2] The sending of food gifts to friends colloquially referred to as "*Shalach Manos*."

[3] A *perutah* is the smallest currency in halacha. Most likely it is the equivalent of several cents. See, however, Dirshu Mishnah Berurah n.e. chapter 694:note 5

[4] For an elaboration, see Y'vakshu Mipihu 10:6:1 with note 3.

[5] According to the Aruch HaShulchan (O.C. 694:2), a married couple fulfills their obligation by giving jointly a total of two gifts; they need not give two gifts individually. See also M.B. 695:25.

[6] They may use monies they received on Purim (M.B. 694:1).

Alternatively, they may swap matanos l'evyonim with other poor people (Pri Megadim, *Mishb'tzos zahav* 694:1; M.B. 694:2).

[7] The Pri Megadim (*ibid.*) bases the ruling on the reasoning that obligates women - that they, too, were saved through the miracles that are recorded in Megilas Esther.

[8] It is questionable whether this reasoning holds true even according to those who hold that young adults who have no money are obligated in the mitzvah of matanos l'evyonim. See Y'vakshu Mipihu 10:3:1 with note 4. **DISCLAIMER:** Not all details and aspects of the question and answer can be fully expressed in this limited format. Accordingly, one should not rely on the information herein for their specific case as a small change in the circumstances can change the halachic outcome.

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