

Weekly Internet Parsha Sheet Tetzave Zachor 5767

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AIR POLLUTION :: Rabi Berel Wein

The environmentalists of the world, as well as many us poor unwashed souls, are rightfully concerned regarding pollution, particularly regarding the air we breathe, the water we drink and the food that we consume. These are all legitimate concerns. The Torah itself bids us to take care of the world that God has entrusted to us, not to abuse its resources nor endanger its living creatures.

Physical pollution of the environment is dangerous to everyone's health and well-being. And again we are bidden by the Torah not to place ourselves unnecessarily into potentially dangerous situations. But the main gist of this article is not so much about the physical pollution of our environment as it is about the spiritual and psychological pollution.

Judaism places great emphasis on the criteria by which we choose our friends and about the general tenor of the behavior and speech in the environment that surrounds us. Maimonides goes so far as to say that if one lives in an environment that is not conducive to morality and probity and where the values of the Torah are mocked or ignored, then that person should move out of that society even if it means wandering in the desert alone! For just as our bodies are influenced by the air that we breathe so too are our souls shaped by the social and moral environment of the society that we live in. It has often been said that we today live in an open environment. Openness has many advantages but oftentimes it also brings with it many disturbing, and sometimes, even lethal consequences.

Though the Talmud describes the Jewish people as being *am peizai* - hasty, impetuous, utopian and always given to experimentation with new radical ideas and programs - Judaism itself is essentially low-keyed, modest, reticent and conservative in its outlook and demands. Thus Judaism searches for a society of compassion, tolerance and pleasantness. It forbids slanderous statements spoken gratuitously and unnecessarily even if those statements somehow may be true.

The Torah is aware that our world is one of sleaze and scandal. The Torah is never naïve about human nature and therefore never demands the impossible from us. But, nevertheless, the Torah sees no advantage in advertising that shoddiness to such an extent that all of society is exposed to its unhealthy radiation.

We live in a world where we, the plain ordinary citizens who would be happy to mind our own business, know too much. We are too informed about diseases which induce hypochondria in all of us, about aberrant behavior that plants the seeds of that behavior in those who would otherwise not even know that such things exist; and about violence and hurt that engenders, almost inevitably, other forms of violence and hurt.

One of the great blessings of the Sabbath day is that it shuts off, at least temporarily, the flow of information that drowns us during the six workdays of the week. It serves as an antidote to the otherwise persistent air pollution of our social and moral society.

Judaism does not subscribe to the "ignorance is bliss" school of thought regarding anything. However, like in all other areas of life, Judaism does set limits on speech, behavior, invasion of privacy and the general tone of debate and atmosphere in a community. It sees no reason to encourage salacious rumors and descriptions of events and people when those rumors and/or descriptions will bring no positive benefit to the society whatsoever. Its ways are *darkei noam* - ways of pleasantness - and this is an overriding value transcendent to almost all other values in Jewish life. When knowledge of certain facts or events contradicts or opposes that value of *darkei noam*, Judaism frowns upon the dissemination of such knowledge. It will inevitably pollute our spiritual and moral air and society.

Over the ages the Jewish people, as a whole, has been victimized by false information and accusations disseminated in the non-Jewish world. We also suffer from the fact that we are always in the limelight of the world's interest, curiosity and oftentimes malevolence. We are too well known and

that brings us to the attention of many people who are jealous, hateful and just plain evil.

Anti-Semitism is an extremely poisonous form of air pollution that infests our political, moral and social environment. It invests a fall out of fumes that lasts for generations and permeates all who come into contact with it. In our attack against the physical pollution of our environment we should always be aware that the Torah also bids us to address the pollution of the spiritual and moral environment in which we live.

Shabat shalom.

Weekly Parsha :: PARSHAS TETZAVEH :: Rabi Berel Wein

The emphasis in this week's parsha on the clothing of the kohanim - the priests of Israel of the family of Aharon - raises the issue of "Jewish clothing" as practiced throughout the ages. The vestments of the kohanim were divinely ordained and their exact description undoubtedly contains within it realms of spirituality and service to God and man. These garments were meant to reflect "honor and glory" on those who wore them - and to the entire household of Israel. In fact, in Second Temple times, when there was no longer any remaining anointment oil that could be used to inaugurate the kohanim into the service in the Temple, the Talmud teaches us that donning the vestments of the priesthood was deemed to be sufficient to officially install them into their holy positions.

Thus, to a great extent, clothing made the person. As such, I feel that it is quite understandable that Jews always placed a great stress upon what clothing they wore and how they dressed. Naturally, the type and style of "Jewish clothing" varied in different ages and locations. The Jews of Persia and Iraq did not wear Polish fur trimmed hats nor did Polish Jews wear head scarves or turbans. The Jews of Amsterdam in the seventeenth and eighteenth century wore triangular cocked hats and the Lithuanian rabbis of the nineteenth century wore gentlemanly tall silk top hats. But the common denominator to all of this is that, from the time of Moshe onwards, Jews attempted to dress distinctively, albeit always within the confines and influences of the surrounding general population.

"Jewish clothing" was always meant to be modest, neat and clean. It was to be an "honor and glory" to the wearer and the Jewish society. The Talmud speaks very strongly against Torah scholars who are somehow slovenly in the appearance of their clothing. Poverty was never allowed to be an excuse for stains or dirt on one's garments. In the Temple, the used clothing of the kohanim was still considered to have an element of holiness to them even if they could no longer be worn. Wicks for the candelabra were fashioned from them.

Clothing was never looked at as being a purely inanimate object. After all, the first clothing for humans was fashioned for Adam and Chava by God Himself, so to speak. Ill treatment of clothing was deemed to be a punishable offense. King David, in his old age was not warned by his clothing any longer. The Rabbis attributed this to the fact that he mistreated the clothing of King Saul earlier in his life.

I think all of the above helps explain the importance that clothing, the type of individual "uniforms" that Jews in the world and here in Israel, play in our communal and personal life. Each of us and the groups that we belong to attempt to wear clothing that will be an "honor and glory" to us individually and to the group collectively. We should therefore not only treat clothing with respect but we should respect as well the wearers of those different types of clothing that conform to our traditions of modesty and Jewish pride.

Shabat shalom.

TORAH WEEKLY—Parshat Tetzaveh
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by Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair

OVERVIEW

G-d tells Moshe to command the Jewish People to supply pure olive oil for the menorah in the Mishkan (Tent of Meeting). He also tells Moshe to organize the making of the bigdei kehuna (priestly garments): A breastplate, an ephod, a robe, a checkered tunic, a turban, a sash, a forehead-plate, and linen trousers. Upon their completion, Moshe is to perform a ceremony for seven days to consecrate Aharon and his sons. This includes offering sacrifices, dressing Aharon and his sons in their respective garments, and anointing Aharon with oil. G-d commands that every morning and afternoon a sheep be offered on the altar in the Mishkan. This offering should be accompanied by a meal-offering and libations of wine and oil. G-d commands that an altar for incense be built from acacia wood and covered with gold. Aharon and his descendants should burn incense on this altar every day.

INSIGHTS

Flash Memory

“you shall wipe out the memory of Amalek from under the heaven - you shall not forget!” (Devarim 25:19)

Nothing is more hidden than a forgotten memory.

Memory is an evanescent storehouse. How often do we struggle to locate a name, a face or a phone number in the dusty databanks of our gray matter, while at other times, a specter will arise before our eyes unbidden, unexpected - and often unwelcome - in brilliant clarity!

Memory is a slippery customer at best.

This week is a special Shabbat. Its name is Shabbat Zachor. The Shabbat of Remembering. On this Shabbat we perform the Torah mitzvah to remember Amalek's attack on the Jewish People after our exodus from Egypt. We are bidden not to forget to erase “the memory of Amalek from under the heaven.”

Ostensibly, the idea of Shabbat Zachor is self-contradictory. If the mitzvah is to obliterate the memory of Amalek from the world, why do we dredge it up every year at this time? Isn't that helping to perpetuate his remembrance rather than eradicate it?

There's another day of “memory” in the Jewish calendar - Rosh Hashana. The Torah calls Rosh Hashana Yom Hazikaron, the Day of Memory. Rosh Hashana is a day of judgment because on that day G-d “remembers.” He compares how the world looks as compared to His original conception of how it should look. That comparison is, in essence, judgment. It's as though G-d thinks “Is this the world that I had in mind when I created it?” That judgment call extends to each and every part of G-d's creation. To each one of us. Have I done with my time on this planet what G-d had in mind when He created me?

Remembrance is, in essence, judgment.

The gematria of Amalek is 240, which is also the gematria of “safek” - doubt. The doubt that Amalek engenders in this world is existential doubt. His is the voice of denial that lurks in the heart. The voice that says, “Can you be sure there's a G-d without a doubt?”

Amalek's attack took place immediately after the event that removed all doubt about G-d's existence: the ten plagues and the miraculous Exodus of the Jewish People from Egypt.

Amalek, and the doubt he tries to sow in our hearts, cannot be annihilated by mere forgetfulness. Amalek's power cannot be assuaged by allowing it to fester in the darker recesses of our collective memory, for there it becomes more powerful. Like all decay, it thrives in dark crevices.

Our remembrance of Amalek is his obliteration, for we are able once again to remember who he is and what he stands for, and that G-d's dominion over this world will never be complete until Amalek's is truly forgotten, and never to be remembered.

“RavFrاند” List - Parshas Tezaveh

The Lesson of “Shmoneh Esrei” - 18 Repetitions of “As G-d Commanded”

There is a refrain that recurs throughout the construction of the Mishkan: All of the components of the Tabernacle were made “as G-d Commanded Moshe.” This expression appears no less than 18 times in the four Torah

sections dealing with the construction of the Mishkan! The Torah certainly goes out of its way to make a point of this by interspersing this statement so often in the narration, rather than merely mentioning it one time at the end of Parshas Pekudei. Why?

Rav Baruch Mordechai Ezrachi offers an explanation (in his Sefer Birkas Mordechai): There is a lot to be said for people who do a Mitzvah exactly as they are told—no more and no less. The nature of people is that they do not like to do exactly as they are told. People like to feel a degree of independence. They like to feel that they can at least bring some degree of personal creativity to whatever job they are doing. The natural inclination is to think “True, the Almighty told us to do it ‘this way’, but wouldn't it be nicer if we did it just a little bit better.”

Of course, no one would consider doing less than the Ribono shel Olam Commanded. Heaven forbid! On the contrary, the tendency would be to do more. There is an inclination to say: “I want to show my own individuality. Maybe we can do it a little different.” Doing a mitzvah in a “no more, no less” fashion testifies that the person is not doing it for his own sake, but simply as a servant following the orders of his Master.

This is akin to the Talmudic idea that “greater is one who is commanded and does than one who is not commanded and does.” [Bava Kama 38a] There is greater challenge—and hence greater reward—for a man to recite Krias Shema daily in its proper time than for a woman to do so. This is somewhat counter-intuitive. We might have thought that a “volunteer” gets extra credit and is to be rewarded more than a person who is merely fulfilling an obligation. However, it is a higher spiritual level when a person does something not because he wants to, not because he enjoys doing so, not because he feels it is a form of self-expression, but because “I told you so!” That is a higher spiritual level.

People do not like to be “told you so!” That goes against a person's ego. That is why people like to be self-employed. “I don't want to take orders. I want to be my own boss.” To be an employee and have to do it always the way the boss says is difficult. In Judaism, we are all employees. There is One Boss. He says something and that is the way it is. This is why the Torah repeats 18 times: “As G-d commanded Moshe.”

It is written in Parshas Be'Ha'Aloscha (in connection with the mitzvah of lighting the Menorah in the Mishkan), “And Aharon did so.” [Bamidbar 8:3] Rashi there makes the simple comment: “This teaches the praise of Aharon -- that he did not deviate.” Anyone who ever picked up a pen to write a commentary on Chumash deals with this Rashi. What does it mean “This teaches that he did not deviate”?

The premise of the question is “Of course you do what G-d Commands you. What's the big deal?” But in fact it IS a big deal. It is in fact a great complement when the Torah testifies that Aharon did exactly like he was told regarding the lighting of the Menorah, day in day out, and year in year out. He never tried to stamp the lighting with his personality. He never tried to improve the process. He always did exactly as he was told, no more and no less.

Battling The Amalek Within All Of Us

There is a mitzvah to verbally remember, at least once a year, what Amalek did to us. In truth, this does not specifically have to be fulfilled exactly on Parshas Tezaveh. Nor does it specifically have to be fulfilled on the Shabbos before Purim. However, the Rabbis instituted that this reading take place the Shabbos before Purim in order to juxtapose the reading of the Commandment to eradicate Amalek with the story of Purim.

There is a relationship between the story of Purim and Amalek. Haman the Agagi was a descendant of Amalek, who had previously tried to wipe the Jews out. Amalek has been our nemesis throughout the generations.

The mitzvah of destroying Amalek occupies a very important place in the Torah. The Torah discusses Amalek at the end of Parshas B'Shalach: “Amalek came and battled Israel... For there is a hand on the throne of G-d;

Hashem maintains a war against Amalek from generation to generation” [Shmos 17:8-16]. The Torah discusses Amalek again in Parshas Ki Teitzeh:

“Remember what Amalek did to you ... you shall wipe out the remembrance of Amalek from under the Heaven—you shall not forget!”

[Devorim 25:17-19] There is something about Amalek that the Almighty cannot tolerate.

The Torah gives us a Biblical commandment to wipe out every aspect of Amalek. Something about being an Amalekite contradicts the essence of being a servant of Hashem.

Obviously, Amalek has something against us. "Nations heard and they trembled; fear gripped the residents of Pelashes." [Shmos 15:14]. Everyone was in awe of the Jews—but Amalek started up with us. They started up when we were in the Wilderness. They started up in the time of King Saul. They started up again in the time of Haman. The conventional wisdom is that Hitler was also a descendant of Amalek. What is this epic battle between Klal Yisrael and Amalek all about?

Rav Hutner explains in his book on Purim that the battle is much more fundamental than merely the struggle of one nation against another. There is something about Amalek that is the antithesis of what it is to be a Jew. There is a sharp inclination within that nation, Rav Hutner writes, not to tolerate anything that is important (chashuv). There is an inclination to destroy, to denigrate, to mock and make fun of that which most people think is important, even awe-inspiring. They seek out the breach in any structure of importance, with the goal of demolishing the entire structure by attacking this crack in the wall. This concept, he writes, is called "laytzanus" (mockery).

When we say a person is a "laytz" (someone possessing the attribute of "laytzanus"), this is often incorrectly translated as "a joker", "a funny fellow", or "a person with a sense of humor." This is incorrect. A person with a good sense of humor is not a "laytz". Humor has nothing to do with "laytzanus." "Laytzanus" is more correctly associated with cynicism. A "laytz" is a cynic - someone who mocks and denigrates. He wants to show that there is nothing and no one in this world worthy of respect.

Klal Yisrael is on the opposite end of the spectrum, in the arena of "this and the corresponding opposite to this has the L-rd created" [Kohel 7:14]. Klal Yisrael's mission is to praise that which is praiseworthy, to give homage to that which is worthy, to revere and to honor that which is so deserving, and to build up and to respect that which is important in this world. In his inimitable fashion, Rav Hutner states: "This battle is about the ability to profane (koach haChilul) versus the ability to praise, show respect and revere (koach haHilul)."

All of us—to a greater or lesser extent—have a tendency to mock (be 'mevatel') and be cynics. It is so emancipating! If there is nothing important in the world then it releases me to do whatever I want. Think about it! If there is no institution or person in this world that is worthy of my respect then I am a free agent. What restrains me? I can do whatever I want, whenever I want, in whatever place I want. This is laytzanus in its worst form. This is the battle between Amalek and Klal Yisrael.

This is exactly what Amalek did. When the entire planet, the entire civilized world stood in awe of Klal Yisrael after the splitting of the Red Sea—there was somebody who said "Agh! No big deal!"

When Chazal interpret "asher karcha b'derech" (literally "who cooled you off in your journey") they give an example—that Amalek was like a person who jumped into a scalding hot bathtub, who cooled it off for everyone else who came after. Amalek is all about taking that which frightens everyone and saying: "It's no big deal!"

The battle is about scoring versus praising; about bitul versus respect. This is a timely message to us in the United States at this point in history. If one looks at the popular press, one of the most prevalent discussions among social commentators today is that Americans are a bunch of cynics. Someone did a Lexus-Nexus search for me. Between January 1997 and February 1998 the word cynic appeared either in the title or in the first paragraph of over 5000 articles. People are cynics. They like to be "mevatel" because they want to be free. They don't want to have the pressure of being in awe of someone whose standards they cannot personally live up to.

Amalek has the attribute of cynicism strongly implanted in his genes. Amalek is the descendant of Eisav. Eisav was the first cynic. Eisav traded the status of Bechora [first-born] for a bowl of soup! If it would have stopped at that, Eisav could be faulted for doing a stupid thing, but that was only half the problem. His real sin was that "he mocked the bechorah".

"Agh! What is the Bechora worth? What is service of Hashem worth?" He mocked it! The attitude, the turn of the nose, the scorning - that is Eisav, that is Amalek, and that is Haman.

The Baal HaTurim points out that there are only two times in all of Tanach that "vaYivez" [and he mocked] is written. "vaYivez Eisav the Bechorah" [Shmos 24:34] and "vaYivez Haman to merely send his hand against Mordechai alone" [Esther 3:6]. The Medrash calls Haman a "mocker the son of a mocker" (bozeh ben bozeh). He was a denigrator the son of a denigrator, a "letz" the son of a "letz", a cynic the son of a cynic.

This is Eisav. This is Amalek. This is Haman. This is what we need to battle. When the Torah commands us to eradicate any vestige of Amalek, we are challenged to battle not only the external, physical, Amalek. We must also battle the attribute of cynicism that is so present among all of us. This too is part of eradicating the memory of Amalek.

We have to show respect for those things in the world that are deserving of respect, and to thereby magnify the honor of Heaven. This is the task of the Jews who are the progenitors and propagators of the power of Hilul (praise) versus the destructive power of Chilul (desecration).

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Penim on the Torah by Rabbi A. Leib Scheinbaum PARSHAS TETZAVEH

And they shall take for you pure, pressed oil. (27:20)

When Hashem instructed the people to contribute towards the Mishkan, the Torah uses similar wording: V'yikchu li Terumah, "They shall take for Me a portion." In truth, the word v'yikchu, "they shall take," teaches us the Torah perspective towards mitzvos in general. One is not giving to Hashem. He is, instead, being availed of the opportunity to "take for himself."

Chazal tell us that as soon as Klal Yisrael declared, Naase V'Nishma, "We will do and we will listen," Hashem immediately responded, "They shall take for Me a portion." We should address a number of questions. First, what is the relationship between Naase v'Nishma and taking a Terumah for Hashem? Second, what is the meaning of V'yikchu, "they shall take?" Should the Torah not have said, "they shall give" or "they shall bring"?

The Bais HaLevi explains that a person's true fortune is what he gives to tzedakah, charity. An individual can amass a large sum of money, but he cannot take it with him. He only takes with him that which he has given away. It is similar to a fly that is trapped in a box with a cube of sugar. He may feel ecstatic about his good fortune, but what is he going to do with the sugar cube? He cannot get out of the box. The money we have stored away in the bank is not accessible, since we cannot take it with us when we leave our earthly abode. Therefore, the Torah uses the word "take" to teach us that by giving to the Mishkan or the Menorah, we are actually taking for ourselves.

Horav Yaakov Beifus, Shlita, comments that this is the idea behind the performance of all mitzvos. One might view the time, energy, and money that he expends for a mitzvah as his act of giving; when he thinks about it, however, he is not giving - he is taking. This time, money, or energy is a value that he brings before the Almighty as his achievement, as his accomplishment. Is it any different from a person who invests his wealth into his own business? Is he considered "giving," or is he taking? After all, it is his business in which he is investing.

The yetzer hora, evil inclination, however, does not give up. It is constantly painting for us a picture that a life of dedication to Torah is one of constant giving, continuous demands on our time, a life in which we have nothing for ourselves. We must constantly live for others. What we do not realize is that living for others is actually living for ourselves. Furthermore, this is the definition of living. We are investing in our own business.

You shall make the Robe of the Eiphod entirely of turquoise wool. (28:31)

The Priestly Vestments were not simply royal garb. They were infused with holiness and purity; they had the power to atone for many serious transgressions. Everything about them alluded to lofty, esoteric secrets.

They consisted of a physical fabric that was imbued with a profound degree of mystical powers. Rabbeinu Bachya writes that the Kohen Gadol would wear on his head the Tzitz, which was a holy crown that contained the Name of Hashem. He wore the Meil, a long robe, that had seventy-two bells, corresponding and referring to the numerical equivalent of Yud, Kay, Vav, Kay, in its complete spelling. In other words, the Kohen Gadol was bedecked in the Holy Names from head to foot!

Chazal teach us that each of the eight vestments atoned for a specific sin. The Meil atoned for the sin of lashon hora, slanderous speech. The relationship between the Meil and its ability to atone for sins of the mouth is actualized through the paamonim, bells, which give off sound: "Let something that transmits sound atone for an act of sound." While this idea explains why the Meil was Divinely selected to be mechaper, atone, for the sin of speaking slanderously, it does not explain how a sin which is so grave that the Almighty instructs the angel appointed over Gehinnom, Purgatory, "I will be over him (the one who speaks lashon hora) from above, and you will be over him from below," can be atoned for by the Kohen Gadol's robe?

Horav Shneuer Kotler, zl, gives the following profound thought. In the Talmud Berachos 61a, Chazal compare the yetzer hora, evil-inclination, to a fly. A fly gravitates towards filth and anything that is decaying. The yetzer hora does likewise. A fly finds its home in a wound, or in an area of pus and disease. The yetzer hora also seeks out weakness and frailty, making its home there. This does not mean that the fly does not notice a healthy, clean place. He sees it, but he is just not interested in health and cleanliness. He is attracted to dirt and impurity.

The slanderer has much in common with the fly and the yetzer hora. He also gravitates to, and seeks failing. He sees only shortcomings, not the whole person. The fly sees the wound, ignoring the person. The baal lashon hora also ignores the person. He focuses on the wound, on the shortcoming. If his perspective were broader, he would see the failing in the context of an entire human being. Perhaps the frailty might now be ameliorated or even justified, surely not something upon which to expound and denigrate a person. Yes, a wound can and will heal with proper intervention. Likewise, a shortcoming can be addressed, and the person will return and repent. Just as a fly does not see the whole picture, neither does the slanderer. They see what they expect to see.

It is for this reason that the Kohen Gadol wears a long Meil. Bedecked from head to foot in techeilas, turquoise wool, he presents himself as an imposing figure. Chazal teach us that the color techeilas brings the heavens to mind. Heaven signifies an area that is vast, enveloping and covering the world. The robe teaches us the concept of an all-inclusive, all-embracing perspective. It teaches us to have a penetrating insight and a comprehensive, sweeping outlook. This way we perceive the whole picture, the entire person, not just his failing. Thus, the Meil atoned for the sin of lashon hora by addressing the origin of the sin and taking appropriate measures to correct it. The distorted perspective engenders such malignant behavior.

Its opening shall have a border all around. (28:32)

The neck of the Meil was required to be very sturdy, so that it would not tear. Therefore, the material at its neck was to be folded inward to provide a double layer of material at the neckline. Indeed, the halachah is clear that one who tears the Bigdei Kehunah is punished with malkos, lashes. We wonder at the need for so many warnings concerning the vestments. Certainly, the Jewish People are not suspected of willingly tearing the vestments. Therefore, why the various admonishments? The Sefer HaChinuch explains that the purpose of these prohibitions is to imbue the wearer with a sense of fear and trepidation when he puts them on, so that he will accord these vestments the appropriate respect that they deserve.

Let us now think about the underlying message of this statement. The Kohen must exert care when he puts on the Bigdei Kehunah, because of the function that they play in the Priestly service. Now, what about the actual service? That certainly must be carried out with the greatest sense of fear and reverence, so that it does not "tear." We derive the lofty level of the avodah, service, from the care manifest in putting on the garments that the Kohen wears when he performs the service. Let us go forward in time to the present when, regrettably, there is no Bais HaMikdash and the

substitute for the avodah is our tefillos. How much care do we manifest concerning our tefillos? How do we dress when entering a shul to daven? What is our decorum in shul? What is our davening like? The Torah goes to great lengths to protect the vestments worn by the Kohanim when they serve. This indicates in no small manner the awesome significance of the service. Today, we are all compared to Kohanim in that our tefillos take the place of the service. Need we say more?

For the sons of Aharon you shall make Tunics. (28:40)

In the Talmud Arachin 16a, Chazal note the juxtaposition of the Bigdei Kehunah, Priestly Vestments, on the Korbanos. This teaches us that just as Korbanos serve as a medium for atonement, so, too, do the various vestments also serve as an atonement for certain sinful behavior. We wonder at this connection between vestments and sacrifices. A sacrifice is exactly that - a sacrifice, and thus, it effects atonement. What is the connection between wearing a specific set of vestments and atoning for unacceptable behavior?

Horav Tuvia Lisitzin, zl, explains that the secret lies in the fact that the Bigdei Kehunah, with their profound beauty, inspired kavod Shomayim, reverence for Heaven. When a person saw the Kohen bedecked in his regal vestments, he felt elevated. It inspired him to think of Heaven in lofty terms. Kavod Shomayim does that. The Midrash notes that when Eglon, the king of Moav, was told by Ehud, "Hashem has spoken to me concerning you," he stood up out of respect for Hashem's Name. Because of this reverential gesture, he merited to father Rus, the progenitor of Moshiach Tzidkeinu. Likewise, when Nevuchadnezzar skipped four steps in honor of Hashem, he merited to reign over a kingdom unparalleled in size and power. All of this occurred because they had kavod Shomayim.

When the Kohen walked among the people wearing his Priestly Vestments, it engendered among the common Jew a sense of pride, a sense of belonging, a sense of making it all worthwhile. This is kavod Shomayim. Anything that creates or enhances kavod Shomayim has unlimited possibilities connected with it.

The problem that many of us have is defining kavod Shomayim. Some might suggest that it is how much one spends or how ostentatious one is in his mitzvah performance. Get as much attention as possible, so that people will notice. That is kavod Shomayim. This is not true. Kavod is true honor, not any different than the honor one gives to his parents or rebbeim. Would honor be defined as the one who makes an elaborate public display of his reverence, but behind closed doors is a different person with a different personality, so that a different set of rules emerges? It has to be real, and, in order for honor to be real it must be sincere and true. Note the following episode.

Horav Mordechai, zl, m'Neschiz was far from being a man of means. Yet, mitzvos meant the world to him. The mitzvah of having a pri eitz hadar, beautiful Esrog, played a prominent role in his service to Hashem. Alas, purchasing an Esrog on his meager financial portfolio was but a dream. Thus, he put away a few pennies every single day for an entire year, in order to purchase a beautiful Esrog. Several days prior to the Festival, he joyously made his way to the Esrog kiosk to purchase his coveted Esrog, for which he had saved an entire year.

On the way, he chanced upon a man sitting at the side of the road weeping. Rav Mordechai immediately sat down next to the man and inquired as to the reason for his grief. The man replied, "I make a living by going from place to place, peddling or hauling goods with my horse and wagon. Today, my horse died. I have no way of earning a living. I cannot purchase another horse, and I have a large family to feed."

When Rav Mordechai heard this tale of woe, he realized what a great mitzvah was involved in helping this man. He asked him how much money he needed to purchase another horse. Surprisingly, the sum equaled exactly the amount of money he had brought with him to buy an Esrog. Without a second thought, and, with all the enthusiasm he had reserved for his precious Esrog, he handed the man the bag of money he had saved, saying, "Here, buy yourself a horse." The man was stunned. He could hardly believe his ears, but after heaping blessing upon blessing upon Rav Mordechai, he ran off excitedly to the horse dealer.

Rav Mordechai looked at the man and mused as he took off, "Well, tomorrow all Jews will rejoice over an Esrog. As for myself, I will rejoice over a horse!"

What a powerful story. What an incredible attitude to manifest towards mitzvah observance. Rav Mordechai had put away pennies every day for almost an entire year, so that he could have a beautiful Esrog, an Esrog that would certainly increase kavod Shomayim. Yet, when necessary, he was able to part with the Esrog, so that a Jew would have parnassah, a livelihood. Why? Because that was the real definition of kavod Shomayim. To be there for a Jew in need means that you are prepared to give up your "plans," both mundane and spiritual. Helping another Jew is how we give true honor to Hashem.

And I shall be their G-d. (29:45)

We say it all the time. Indeed, we claim that we believe that Hashem's Presence is among us and that He guides and controls everything around us. In the final analysis, is our belief real, or is it merely lip service? Let us think about the following incident and consider whether we are any different.

One of the close chassidim of Horav Moshe, zl, m'Kubrin, was inundated with troubles. If it was not one thing, it was another. He just could not seem to extricate himself from his misery. Finally, he decided to travel to his Rebbe for a blessing. He arrived at his Rebbe's home just as Rav Moshe was about to have dinner.

The Rebbe noticed his chasid standing by the side, but did not interrupt to give him shalom. The Rebbe made a loud blessing of Shehakol Niheyeh bidvaro, "Everything is in accordance with His word." The man responded and watched the Rebbe begin to eat. Since the chasid just stood immovable, Rav Moshe called him over and said, "I thought you were like your father, but I guess I was mistaken." When the Rebbe saw the incredulous look on the chasid's face, he explained the following:

"Your father came to me once with a load of troubles and misery. He also walked in as I was reciting the blessing of Shehakol Niheyeh bidvaro. After I completed the blessing, I asked your father if he had anything to say. He responded that he did not, and he turned around and left.

"Do you know why he did not reply to my question? Because as soon as he heard the brachah and its meaning registered in his mind, he no longer had any questions. If a person truly believes that everything comes from Hashem, then he has nothing to worry about! All of his prior questions now have one answer: Hashem."

Rav Mordechai bid the chasid a good day, and the man returned home, secure that Hashem would see to his salvation.

Va'ani Tefillah

Al tigu b'meshichai u'binviai al taraiu.

Do not touch My "anointed ones," and to My prophets do no harm.

Usually, the word Moshiach is translated as anointed, a reference to a king or to a Kohen Gadol, who was anointed as part of his induction into service. As Horav Shimon Schwab, zl, explains, however, the actual meaning of the word is "distinguished." Anointing someone who had recently been elevated to a position of distinction, such as a king or Kohen Gadol, was a symbolic gesture that bespoke his new position. Moshiach is used a number of times in the sense of lending distinction, such as by the Matnos Kehunah, gifts given to the Kohen (Bamidbar 18:8). Thus, the phrase, Al tigu bimshichai, means, "Do not touch those whom I have distinguished." This is a reference to the Avos, Patriarchs, who were also Neviim, Prophets, and to their children who were also protected under Hashem's Divine shelter.

In the Talmud Shabbos 119b, Chazal give an additional meaning to this phrase. They say it refers to tinokos shel bais rabbon, "children who study Torah." This is the purest form of Talmud Torah, study of Torah, for children, who have never sinned, study Torah with a pristine, pure, unadulterated approach. Even those who might have erred and committed acts that are inappropriate for a Jew, these acts are not considered aveiros, sins, since children under age are not held responsible for their actions. Indeed, as Chazal continue, "The world exists only because of the merit of the breath of children who are studying Torah." These little children are the meshichai of Hashem, His distinguished ones. The next time we pass a

Torah school, it should engender within us a new perception of its inestimable value.

...

"The Alter on the Parsha"

Shmuessen of Rav Nosson Tzvi Finkel, the Alter of Slabodka – adapted from Sefer Ohr Hatzafun by R' Baruch Harris – Kollel Ner Dovid

Fear of G-d is considered among the loftiest and most elusive of concepts. However, the more we comprehend our own greatness and how close we are to Hashem, the easier it will be to reach higher levels of Yiras Elokim. The posukim (דברים כ"ה:ז-ט) state, "זכור את אשר לך עמלק...תמהה את זכר" - "Remember what Amalek did to you... you shall wipe out the remembrance of Amalek... you shall not forget." Ramban is of the opinion that this is a commandment to remember Amalek every day. The posuk indicates that the purpose of this obligation is to annihilate Amalek. However, this is only applicable in the days of Moshiach. Nowadays, we are neither empowered to war them nor do we know who they are. What then is the intention of reminding ourselves to destroy Amalek?

Chazal (ילקוט רמז רס"ד) tell us that another objective of remembering Amalek is to remind ourselves of the sin that caused the attack, namely, the Bnei Yisrael questioning "הי"ש בקרבנו אם אין" - "Is Hashem in our midst or not?" (שמות י"ז:ד)

The posuk (דברים כ"ה:י"ג) also says, "ואתה עיף ויגע ולא ירא אלקים" - "And you were tired and weary, and did not fear G-d". Sifri learns the clause "and did not fear G-d" to be pertaining to Amalek.

Mechilta, however, learns it to be referring to the sin of Bnei Yisrael. This is almost unfathomable. The Jews at that time were at an extraordinary level of faith. After encountering cataclysmic events, signs and wonders, both in Egypt and by the splitting of the sea, the Torah testifies that they believed in Hashem. Additionally, Hashem sings the praises of His nation that followed him into an unknown, unsown land. Are these the people who "did not fear G-d"?

This unprecedented level of faith and trust is in stark contrast to Amalek - a nation that breached all boundaries of audacity, traversing great distances to attack us, while the rest of the world was still resounding from the awesome displays of Hashem's power and majesty. They are a nation truly deserving of Sifri's designation, "did not fear G-d".

Two opinions cannot have such disparate views. How then, is it possible for Sifri and Mechilta to cast Amalek and Klal Yisroel as comparably deficient in fear of G-d?

The standards of fear of G-d are not uniform; they are measured by individual yardsticks of spirituality. The entire concept of creation obligates realization of fear of Hashem. One's very life sustenance is only made possible by a life support system plugged in to a higher power. As one more deeply appreciates this reality, he deepens his feel of Hashem's presence. The closer one is with his Creator, the more he is responsible to feel Hashem constantly with him, watching over him. To lose focus of this connection is a lack of fear of Hashem.

It was precisely the unparalleled attachment that the Bnei Yisrael shared with Hashem, which required their complete attentiveness to their unique bond. Their slight nuance of neglect was deemed a lack of fear of G-d, tantamount to that of Amalek.

We cherish our own close relationship with Hashem as the chosen nation made holy by being given the world's blueprint, the Torah which guides each of us. If we can dwell on this internal, eternal greatness, it will stimulate our feelings of connection to Hashem and put us at the doorstep of true fear of Hashem.

The Character of Ta'anis Esther

Rabbi Yonasan Sacks

The TorahWeb Foundation

The opening Mishnah in Maseches Megillah relates the various days upon which the Megillah may be read: "The Megillah is read on the 11th, 12th, 13th, 14th, and 15th (of Adar), no earlier and no later."

Noting that the Megillah itself explicitly specifies only the 14th and 15th of Adar as appropriate times for fulfillment of the mitzvah, the Gemarah (2a) immediately seeks a scriptural source sanctioning the reading on the 11th, 12th, and 13th of Adar. The Gemarah identifies such a source: in describing the establishment of the days of Purim, the Megillah uses the plural construction of the term “bi’zmaneihem” (Esther 9), denoting a plurality of days - “z’manim harbei tiknu la’hem.” This term thus implies that the Megillah may be read on days other than the 14th and 15th of Adar. The Gemarah notes, though, that the term “bi’zmaneihem” would seem to denote only two additional days. How, then, do we derive that the three preceding days may serve for the mitzvah as well?

In light of this challenge, the Gemarah reconsiders its analysis. Indeed, “bi’zmaneihem” teaches us that the 11th and 12th of Adar are fit for Megillah reading. What, then, allows for Megillah reading on the 13th? The Gemarah answers that the fitness of the 13th is self evident and needs no source, because “Yud Gimel Z’man Kehillah LaKol Hi.” That is, the 13th day’s status as a “Z’man Kehillah LaKol,” a time of assembly for everyone, justifies reading the Megillah. Rashi (2a, s.v. “Z’man Kehillah LaKol Hi”) explains that the 13th marks the day in history on which “everyone assembled to exact revenge from their enemies.” This day thus warrants Megillah reading because the “central part of the (Purim) miracle took place” on that that day.

The Rosh (1:1), however, presents a very different possibility in the name of Rabbeinu Tam. Rather than commemorating the when the Jews of old gathered to fight, the 13th of Adar marks the day upon which “everyone gathers for the fast of Esther” - a time of assembly, not for the Jews of antiquity, but rather for Jews of the present age. This explanation presents an obvious question: why does the 13th of Adar’s status as Ta’anis Esther necessarily justify the reading of the Megillah? The Gemarah’s inference certainly suggests a conceptual link between the reading of the Megillah and the observance of Ta’anis Esther, but what is the nature of this connection?

To answer this question, Rav Chaim Ahron Turtzin suggests that one must understand the character of Ta’anis Esther. While fast days generally assume a tragic quality in commemorating despondent times of destruction, ample evidence suggests that, perhaps, Ta’anis Esther is quite different in this regard. For example, the Ran (Ta’anis 7a in the Rif) cites the Ra’avad who questions the permissibility of our practice of fasting on the 13th of Adar, given that Megillas Ta’anis expressly forbids the enactment of such a fast, due to Yom Nikanor [1]. The Ra’avad adds that even though the celebrations delineated in Megillas Ta’anis are not actively observed after the destruction of the Temple, it is still forbidden to establish a public fast day on any of the listed days. The Ra’avad justifies our practice by suggesting that only fasts of suffering are forbidden on days of Megillas Ta’anis. Ta’anis Esther, however, is not a fast of suffering, and therefore does not violate the prohibition of Megillas Ta’anis. Similarly, the She’iltos (Parshas Vayakhel, 67) explains that although fast days that fall on Shabbos are generally deferred until after Shabbos (“akdumei pur’anusa lo mikadminan”), Ta’anis Esther is actually observed early (on the preceding Thursday) because it is not a tragic fast. These sources suggest that Ta’anis Esther stands unique from other fast days in being a fast day which is not colored by sadness. Why is this so?

Perhaps one can understand the unique nature of Ta’anis Esther in light of a brief comment of the Rambam at the very beginning of his Yad HaChazaka. As the Rambam concludes his “Minyan HaMitzvos HaKatzuv” in which he lists the 613 commandments, he notes that beyond the 613 biblically mandated mitzvos, Chazal innovated a multitude of rabbinic enactments. The Rambam defends the legitimacy of these enactments, namely, that they do not constitute a violation of the prohibition of “Bal Tosif,” because Chazal clearly publicized that their enactments are not written in the Torah itself (see Hilchos Mamrim 2:9). In the course of this discussion, the Rambam cites an example of a legitimate rabbinic enactment: reading the Megillah on Purim. The Rambam explains that Chazal enacted the mitzvah of reading the Megillah in its time in order to proclaim the praise of Hashem and the salvation which He orchestrated, and to attest to the fact that HaKadosh Baruch Hu responds to the prayers of Klal Yisrael. In the face of adversity, we call

out to HaKadosh Baruch Hu, and the salvation of Hashem comes k’heref ayin, like the blink of an eye. The Megillah is a testament to the special relationship that connects Bnei Yisrael to HaKadosh Baruch Hu. The significance of the Megillah is that HaKadosh Baruch Hu responded to our cries.

The Rambam thus suggests that the purpose of reading the Megillah is to accentuate the transition from fear and despondency to hope and joy; to emphasize that K’nesses Yisrael can find itself on the brink of disaster, and instantly find salvation. On Purim, we do not merely celebrate the miracles themselves, but rather, the metamorphosis from disaster to tranquility. The contrast is what is critical.

What emerges from the Rambam’s interpretation is that the fast of Ta’anis Esther constitutes an intrinsic part of the pirsumei nisa, the publicizing and glorification of the mitzvah, itself. Ta’anis Esther sets the stage, allowing us to appreciate the direness of the situation that preceded the miracle, so that we can fully appreciate the greatness of the salvation. If so, the suggestion of the Ra’avad and the Sh’iltos that Ta’anis Esther is not a tragic fast becomes clear. The fast is not tragic, because it merely serves to compound the eventual simcha and hoda’ah on Purim itself. Moreover, Rabbeinu Tam’s understanding of “Z’man Kehilla La’Kol” becomes lucid as well. Our mandate to read the Megillah on the 13th is obvious, even without a scriptural source, since Ta’anis Esther does not stand as a day of sorrow independent of Purim. Rather, Ta’anis Esther is part and parcel of the pirsumei nisa which the Megillah strives to achieve. When the Jews of old gathered to fight their enemies, they gathered for “puranus.” When we gather, however, we gather for pirsumei nisa.

[1] Megillas Ta’anis enumerates certain celebrated days that were observed during the time of the Beis HaMikdash. These days were seen almost like minor Yamim Tovim, and prohibited fasting. Yom Nikanor specifically commemorates the victory of the Chashmonaim over a Greek chieftain.

Haftorah Zachor - Parshas Tetzaveh

Shmuel I 15:2

Rabbi Dovid Siegel

This week’s haftorah that we read before Purim deals with Hashem’s command to Shaul Hamelech (King Saul) to annihilate Amalek. The time had come for the Jewish people to eradicate every trace of their earliest archenemy who paved the way for all subsequent battles. A pure descendent of the wicked Eisav, Amalek displayed no fear or reverence for Hashem and arrogantly waged war against Hashem’s chosen people with overt blasphemy. Although the Jewish people successfully defeated Amalek his open blasphemy had not been addressed. Shaul Hamelech (King Saul) faithfully fulfilled most of his order and annihilated the entire Amalek save one soul, King Agag. Shaul destroyed almost all their animals but acquiesced in the Jewish people’s plea to spare select sheep for sacrifices. Hashem immediately summoned the prophet Samuel to reprimand Shaul for his shortcomings. Shmuel told Shaul that his serious oversight cost him the throne and that his successor was already in place.

Shmuel proceeded to summon King Agag and gruesomely execute him. However, Shmuel’s act came after Agag remained alive one last day. The Sages teach us that the Amalekite king took full advantage of Shaul’s error. In a most unpredictable way Agag managed to spend his last hours of life procuring his nation. His attempt was successful and, against all odds, the entire nation of Amalek was reborn. (see Mesichta Megila 13a) This total reversal seems to reflect Hashem’s interest in preserving Amalek. Although one day earlier Hashem decreed Amalek’s total destruction the Jewish people apparently forfeited this privilege. Their recent error called for Amalek - the epitome of anti-Semitism - to continue to exist.

In order to properly understand this let us discover Hashem’s purpose for this wicked nation and what benefit it serves. For this, we refer to the Jewish people’s initial encounter with Amalek and the strategy used against him. The Torah states, “And when Moshe raised his hand the Jewish people overpowered (Amalek) and when he lowered his hand Amalek overpowered (the Jews).” (Shmos 17:11) These words peculiarly suggest that the Jewish nation’s success against Amalek depended on

Moshe Rabbeinu's raised hand?! The Sages ask this question and answer that Moshe Rabbeinu's hand served as a vehicle and gauge for the Jewish people's devotion to Hashem. (Mesichta Rosh Hashana Perek 3)

The Sages explain that the defeat of Amalek required extreme devotion and tefilla prayer. Hashem demanded His people to totally subject themselves to Him before responding to their dangerous predicament. Moshe's hands did not fight the war but they did propel the Jewish people into devoting every fiber of their heart and soul to Hashem. As long as their hearts were totally focused on Hashem's salvation He responded accordingly. But, the moment they deviated from total devotion Hashem no longer assisted them. Moshe Rabbeinu's hand was a perfect catalyst for this devotion. His totally raised hand reflected their total subjection to Hashem and the slightest lowering of it indicated their lack of focus on Him and predicted inevitable defeat.

This initial encounter reveals the need for Amalek and why Hashem permits him to attack Hashem's people. The Sages trace this back to the Jewish people's initial shortcoming in the desert. The Sages support this by citing the verse immediately preceding Amalek's arrival. Therein the Torah states, ".....For your testing Hashem and questioning, 'Does Hashem dwell in our midst or not?'" (Shmos 17:7) The Sages explain that the Jewish people became acclimated to their miraculous existence in the desert. Hashem so perfectly attended to their needs that they began questioning if Hashem's presence remained amongst them. Thus far, their relationship consisted of crying out to Hashem and Hashem coming to their rescue. Their recent stretch did not involve hardship and overt danger. Hashem so efficiently provided their needs - food, drink and shelter - that they felt totally secure in their incredibly perilous predicament. Consequently they did not feel Hashem's presence and began questioning if He truly remained amongst them. (see Rashi Shmos 17:8)

This absurdity reflected their lack of subjection to Hashem and unwillingness to recognize His constant involvement in their lives. In truth, the clouds of glory were themselves a manifestation of Hashem's glorious presence. Yet, instead of praising Hashem for every moment of existence the Jewish people took all their favors for granted and began searching for Him. This absolutely unwarranted behavior called for immediate response and Amalek was summoned to send the shock. He was notorious for his unwillingness to recognize Hashem and subject himself to a supreme power. Amalek reflected, in extreme proportions, the Jewish people's subtle - but similar - imperfection. They immediately responded and reversed their line of thinking. During the attack they remained transfixed on Hashem's salvation thereby rectifying their lack of devotion. Hashem responded to their abrupt turnabout and delivered them from the hands of their enemy.

With this newly gained insight we return to Shaul Hamelech's subtle - yet serious - deviation. The Sages reveal that Shaul Hamelech found it difficult to accept Hashem's command to annihilate an entire nation. He compassionately questioned, "If Amalekite men are sinful why must the children perish and their cattle die?" (Mesichta Yoma 22b) Although these concerns came from the heart they reflected Shaul Hamelech's faint unwillingness to subject himself to Hashem's supreme intellect. His error together with the Jewish people's weakness reinstated their earlier shortcoming and gave rise to Amalek. Regretfully, the Jewish people and their king did not seize the opportunity to overcome their deep-seated problem. They forfeited through this their one time chance and Amalek was granted the right to exist. It was then determined that anti-Semitism would remain and be on call to remind the Jewish people to totally subject themselves to Him.

This pattern reappeared in the days of Purim. The Jewish people became acclimated to their lifestyle in the diaspora and reduced their focus on Hashem. At their first opportunity to display Persian loyalty the Jews of Shushan eagerly attended a royal feast despite Mordechai's stern warning. Severe immorality reigned at the feast, as would be expected at occasions of that nature. In addition, the sacred vessels of the Bais Hamikdash were exposed and defiled but the Jewish people were indifferent to all. The Sages reveal that, under cover, this royal feast actually was meant to celebrate Hashem's rejection of His people. The Persian king Achashveirosh believed that he accurately calculated the Jewish people's

promised day of return. Once this did not happen he was convinced it never would. In honor of his newly gained control over the Jewish nation he gleefully celebrated and arrogantly served in the sacred Bais Hamikdash vessels. (see Mesichta Megila 11b)

They should have protested and fainted at the sight of the vessels but they were so insensitive to Hashem that they did not even respond! Such indifference called for immediate action and once again Amalek was called to give the shock. Haman, a pure descendent of Amalek suddenly rose to power and reminded the Jewish people to focus on Hashem. He influenced the king to involve the entire world in a one day merciless frenzy of total Jewish annihilation. Through Mordechai and Esther's guidance the Jewish people responded with three consecutive days of prayer and fasting. This total subjection to Hashem reestablished the Jewish people's long lost relationship with Him. Hashem miraculously responded and Haman and tens of thousands of Amalekites were decimated without a single Jewish casualty. The Jewish people responded to Hashem's display of love and rededicated themselves to His Torah in an unprecedented manner. (see Mesichta Shabbos 88a)

Let us pray to Hashem that we learn our Purim lesson well and merit to reestablish our relationship with Hashem. Once we totally subject ourselves to Hashem He will undoubtedly respond and end our seemingly endless troubles. May the day soon arrive when Eisav's descendent Amalek will be totally destroyed thus clearing the path for Hashem's absolute rule over all of humanity. Amen.

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Parshas Tezaveh 12 Adar 5767

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Halacha Discussion by Rabbi Doniel Neustadt

Washing Before a Meal:

Questions and Answers- Part 2

Washing when traveling

Question: What should one do if he is traveling and has no water with which to wash his hands?

Answer: He can use a soft drink such as soda, or beer.¹

If a soft drink or beer is not available, he must travel 72 minutes ahead [or back up for 18 minutes] to look for water² [or soda]. If still no water can be found, one may wear gloves or wrap both of his hands in a plastic bag, etc.³ When using this method, the hands must remain covered during the entire meal, even when one is eating foods other than bread.⁴

If one cannot find anything to cover his hands with, he may wash his hands with any fruit juice, but not with oil⁵ or wine. No blessing is recited when washing with juice.⁶

If none of the above options are available, some poskim allow eating bread with a fork while being very careful not to touch the bread with one's hands.⁷ This method should be relied upon only if one is very hungry, as there are several poskim who do not agree with this leniency.⁸

Question: Can the obligation of netilas yadayim be discharged by dipping the hands in water?

Answer: Dipping the hands in water is valid only if the hands are dipped in a wellspring, hot or cold. There must be enough water in the spring to cover both hands at one time.⁹

a running river or a natural lake. If the water is discolored because of smoke, pollution or debris, it is invalid. If it is discolored because of sand or other natural particles, it is valid.¹⁰

a sea. Even if the water is too salty for a dog to drink from, it is still valid.¹¹ The water, however, may not be discolored, as stated above.

a man-made lake or swimming pool¹² with a volume of 40 se'ah of water [approximately 180-19013 U.S. gallons]. The water must be piped into the lake through pipes which are built on or under the ground. If the lake or pool is filled in some other way, it is invalid.¹⁴

a kosher mikveh.

The hands could be dipped one at a time or both together.¹⁵ They need to be dipped in one time only. Drying the hands is not required, unless the

residual wetness will make the food unappetizing.¹⁶ The regular blessing of al netilas yadayim is then recited.¹⁷

Issues of chatzitzah

Question: Visitors to amusement parks, etc., are often stamped on the back of their hand so that they can freely exit and re-enter the park. May one wash his hands for a meal while the stamp is visible, or does the stamp constitute a chatzitzah (a halachic obstruction) that invalidates the netilas yadayim?

Answer: Yes, one may wash his hands. There are two reasons why this is permitted:

Shulchan Aruch¹⁸ rules that dried ink is considered a chatzitzah. He is referring, however, only to dried ink which can actually be felt when touched, such as ink from an inkwell. If there is only an inky smudge but the ink has no substance and cannot be felt, it is not considered a chatzitzah.¹⁹

An additional argument for leniency in this case could be based on the view of some poskim who rule that one is required to wash his hands only until the knuckles. Although under normal circumstances one should be stringent and wash his hands until the wrist as is the established custom, in this situation [when the stamp is needed for re-entry and there is no other choice] we may rely on the basic view that washing the hands until the knuckles is sufficient.²⁰ Accordingly, even if the stamp on the back of the hand would constitute a chatzitzah, the washing itself is still valid.²¹

Question: Is a woman's nail polish considered a chatzitzah?

Answer: Generally, no. Since women paint their fingernails for the sake of beauty, the polish is considered as if it is part of their body and is not considered a chatzitzah.²² If, however, the nail polish has become chipped and the woman would be embarrassed to be seen in public with chipped nail polish, it is possible that the nail polish would no longer be considered as part of her body.²³ She should, therefore, remove the chipped polish before washing her hands.

Question: Are men or women required to remove their rings before washing their hands for a meal?

Answer: Generally, yes. A ring is considered a chatzitzah since the water cannot easily reach all parts of the finger while a ring is worn. Even though a loose-fitting ring does allow the water to reach the entire finger, the poskim maintain that it is difficult to assess what exactly is considered loose and what is considered tight. L'chatchilah, therefore, all rings should be removed before washing.²⁴ B'diavad, though, one who forgot to remove his ring and has already washed, need not wash his hands again, as long as the ring fits loosely²⁵ around the finger.²⁶ [When in doubt if the ring is loose or not, the washing should be repeated but the blessing should not.]

The rule that an object such as a ring is considered a chatzitzah applies only to men or women who sometimes, even on rare occasions, remove their ring from their finger. The occasional removal signifies that the person is sometimes particular about having the ring on his finger, rendering it a chatzitzah. It follows, therefore, that men or women who never take their rings off, even when kneading dough, swimming or performing manual labor, may wash their hands for a meal while wearing a ring.²⁷

Question: Is a Band-Aid protecting an open cut [from bleeding, infection or pain] considered a chatzitzah?

Answer: No. Indeed, the area which the Band-Aid is protecting does not need to be washed at all. Care should be taken, however, that at least 3 fl. oz. of water is poured over the rest of the hand.²⁸

It frequently happens, however, that the wound which was originally protected by the Band-Aid has healed and the Band-Aid no longer serves as protection. In such a case, the Band-Aid must be removed before the washing. If it was not, the washing may be invalid.²⁹

(Footnotes)

1 Based on Rama O.C. 160:12.

2 Beur Halachah 163:1.

3 O.C. 163:1. The hands should be covered until the wrist. If that is impractical, they must be covered at least until the knuckles; Sha'ar ha-Tziyun 7.

4 Avnei Yashfei 2:11 based on Rama 170:1.

5 Shulchan Aruch Harav 160:15.

6 Mishnah Berurah 160:64 and Sha'ar ha-Tziyun 69. Some hold that the option of using fruit juice has priority over the option of covering the hands.

7 Mishnah Berurah 163:7.

8 While Mishnah Berurah allows one to rely on this option when no alternative exists, many poskim disagree. Chayei Adam, Kitzur Shulchan Aruch and Aruch ha-Shulchan do not mention this leniency at all.

9 O.C. 159:14.

10 Mishnah Berurah 160:3.

11 Mishnah Berurah 160:38, 40. Salty water, however, may not be used when washing hands with a vessel.

12 The filter must be turned off.

13 See Siddur Minchas Yerushalayim and Taharas Mayim, pg. 22.

14 O.C. 159:16 and Beur Halachah.

15 Mishnah Berurah 159:80.

16 Ibid. 158:46.

17 Ibid. 159:97 and Chazon Ish O.C. 23:13.

18 O.C. 161:2.

19 Mishnah Berurah 161:14. See also Machatzis ha-Shekel 8. There is a view that holds [concerning immersion] that a mere appearance of any type or substance may also be considered a chatzitzah (see Sidrei Taharah Y.D. 198:17). See the following paragraph as to why the stamp will not be a chatzitzah even according to that view.

20 Based on Mishnah Berurah 161:21 and Beur Halachah.

21 See Sha'ar ha-Tziyun 161:2.

22 Mishnah Berurah 161:12.

23 Halichos Bas Yisrael 3:2 and other contemporary poskim. See possible source in Igros Moshe Y.D. 3:62 [concerning artificial eyelashes].

24 Rama O.C. 161:3.

25 This can be tested by pouring water over the hand and then checking to see if it became wet under the ring area; Harav Y.S. Elyashiv (quoted in Avnei Yashfei 3:14).

26 Mishnah Berurah 161:18. This is valid, however, only if he poured at least a revi'is of water over his hand.

27 Mishnah Berurah 161:19; Aruch ha-Shulchan 161:6. [A woman who removes her ring only when immersing in a mikveh may still wash for a meal while wearing a ring.]

28 O.C. 162:10.

29 Mishnah Berurah 161:4. If the Band-Aid is on the back of the hand past the knuckles, the washing is valid b'diavad.

R. Joshua Flug (YUTorah.org)

Rosh Kollel of the Boca Raton Community Kollel Celebrating Purim: May One Bend the Rules?

Purim certainly takes its place as one of the more festive holidays of the year. Unlike the other Yom Tov days, the festivities of Purim include certain activities which would normally be frowned upon any other day of the year. This article will discuss some halachic perspectives on those activities.

Drinking on Purim

The Gemara, Megillah 7b, cites the opinion of Rava that one is required to drink wine on Purim until he does not know the difference between the blessings of Mordechai and the curses of Haman. The commentators ask a number of questions regarding Rava's statement. First, the Gemara, immediately after presenting Rava's statement, records an incident where Rabbah became intoxicated on Purim and slaughtered R. Zeira. Rava was a student of Rabbah. Ran, Megillah, 3b s.v. Gemara, quotes Rabbeinu Efraim who asks: how is it possible that Rava would require one to drink wine on Purim if there is even a slight possibility of placing someone's life in danger? Second, getting drunk is an act which is inconsistent with a Torah way of life. Orchos Chaim, Hilchos Megillah UPurim no. 38, asks: how can the rabbis obligate one to commit such an abhorrent act?

Based on these questions, both Rabbeinu Efraim and Orchos Chaim conclude that one should not actually become intoxicated on Purim. Orchos Chaim states that one should drink a little more than he is accustomed to drinking. Many Rishonim seem to subscribe to this opinion and offer various novel interpretations to Rava's statement. [See for example, Rabbeinu Yerucham, Netiv no. 10 and Avudraham, Hilchos Purim.]

R. Moshe Iserles (Rama), Darkei Moshe, Orach Chaim 695:1, cites the opinion of Mahari Brin who suggests that Rambam is also of the opinion

that the rabbis did not intend for anyone to become intoxicated on Purim. Rambam, Hilchot Megillah 2:15, states that one should drink wine until he becomes drunk and falls asleep. According to Mahari Brin, Rambam's intention in mentioning falling asleep is to limit the drinking of wine only to the point that one would become sleepy from the consumption of the wine.

Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim 695:1, records the statement of Rava. Rama, ad loc., adds that one should not become intoxicated. Rather one should drink more than he is accustomed to drinking and this will cause him to fall asleep. Rama notes that a precondition to any type of drinking is that one should have the noblest intentions. R. Avraham Danzig, Chayei Adam 155:7, rules that if drinking wine will cause one to be negligent in observance of any mitzvah (for example, netilat yadayim, birkat hamazon or tefillah) or to act with frivolity, it is preferable not to enter into that situation. Chayei Adam's statement is codified by Mishna Berurah, Bi'ur Halacha 695:1, s.v. Ad.

Wearing Costumes of Questionable Permissibility

There is a tradition of wearing costumes on Purim. These costumes can sometimes present halachic problems. Some costumes contain sha'atnez (a prohibited mixture of wool and linen). Others involve the prohibition against a male wearing female garments and vice versa.

R. Yehuda Mintz in his responsa, no. 15, addresses the issue of a male wearing female garments. He notes that according to Tosafot, Avodah Zarah 29a, s.v. HaMistaper, the prohibition against a male wearing female garments only applies if it is for the purpose of beautifying oneself. If the garments are worn for some ulterior motive, there is no prohibition. Therefore, R. Mintz suggests that if a male would like to dress like a female on Purim, it is permissible since his motivation is not to beautify himself, rather to be a part of the festivities.

R. Mintz's ruling is codified by Rama, Orach Chaim 696:8. However, R. Yoel Sirkes, Bach, Yoreh De'ah 182, disagrees. According to Bach, there are two scenarios where it is permissible for a male to wear female garments. First, the prohibition against a male wearing female garments only applies if his intention is to look (at least partially) like a woman. If his intention is anything other than to look like a woman, he may wear female garments. Second, if the article of clothing is one which is not worn for beauty, but rather for protection from the elements, that article may be worn by someone of the opposite gender. Bach claims that dressing like someone of the opposite gender on Purim is not included in either of these leniencies. First, the whole purpose of this act is to look like someone of the opposite gender. Although the original motivation is celebrate Purim, if the means of doing so are through dressing like someone of the opposite gender, it is prohibited. Second, the garments required to dress like someone of the opposite gender are not garments which are worn exclusively to protect one from the elements. Mishna Berurah 696:30, cites the opinion of Bach.

R. Iserles, Darkei Moshe, Orach Chaim 696:5, applies R. Mintz's logic to wearing a costume that contains sha'atnez. The Mishna, K'laim 9:2, states that it is permissible to wear garments containing sha'atnez if one's intention is to avoid taxation on the garment (from someone who is not authorized by the government to collect those taxes). The Gemara, Baba Kamma 113a, states that the reason why there is no violation of the prohibition of sha'atnez is that the prohibition of sha'atnez only applies if one wears the garment for the purpose of wearing it. If one has some ulterior motive in wearing the garment, there is no prohibition. R. Iserles suggests that if one wears a garment containing sha'atnez for the purpose of celebrating Purim and not for the purpose of wearing the garment per se, there is no prohibition. R. Iserles, in his comments on Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim 696:8, rules that one may rely on this logic if the costume contains a form of sha'atnez which is only rabbinically prohibited.

Interpersonal Mitzvot

Mordechai, Sukkah no. 743, cites Rabbeinu Shimshon who rules that if there are participants in a wedding who damage the property of other participants as a result of the festivities, they are not required to pay. Sefer HaAgudah, Sukkah no. 41, adds that if a child injures another child while

playing in the courtyard of the synagogue, he is not required to pay. Sefer HaAgudah implies that the exemption from liability is based on the idea that when one enters into such a situation, he knows that there may be monetary or physical consequences and he nevertheless chooses to participate. These statements are codified by Rama, Choshen Mishpat 378:9, with the provision that a beit din may institute certain guidelines in order to curb this type of behavior. Rama, Orach Chaim 695:2, adds that if property gets damaged as a result of celebrating Purim, the causer of damage is not liable for the damage.

Rama, Darkei Moshe, Orach Chaim 696:5, cites the opinion of Mahari Brin who notes the practice of some communities that it is acceptable to pilfer small parcels from one another. Mahari Brin notes that he has heard that this practice is cited as justification for wearing costumes of questionable permissibility. He notes that one should reject this justification because the basis for the practice to pilfer on Purim is that in these communities everyone is a willing participant in these "thefts." One cannot extrapolate from this that it is permissible to violate Halacha. While it was already noted that Rama does provide some leniencies regarding wearing costumes of questionable permissibility, Rama (Darkei Moshe) concludes this section with the term (based on a combination of two verses in Tehillim 2:11 and 100:2) "Ivdu et Hashem b'simcha v'gilu bir'ada," one should worship the Almighty with happiness but the rejoice should be tempered with the fear of the Almighty.

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by Rabbi Mendel Weinbach

RESPECT FOR THE CONGREGATION

A woman, rule our Sages, may not be given an aliya to the Torah on Shabbat out of respect for the congregation. This concept appears once again in our gemara as an explanation for why one whose torn clothes reveal his arms and shoulders cannot be the reader of the Torah for the congregation, lead the services for them or bless them if he is a kohen.

What is meant by "respect for the congregation?"

The common understanding is that an individual must show respect to a community. Since a woman is not obligated in the mitzvah of Torah study, as is a man, it is a sign of disrespect for the man's obligation to have someone who is exempt from that obligation read the Torah publicly for him. Someone who is not properly attired would also be guilty of disrespect for the congregation if he led it in Torah or prayer or even publicly blessed its members.

Tiferet Yisrael, however, offers a different perspective of what our Sages meant with respect for the congregation. Not the honor of the congregation was the concern of our Sages, he maintains, for this would invite the possibility of the congregation waiving the honor due it. Since we find no allowance made by halacha for such a gesture by the congregation, we must conclude that "respect for the congregation" should better be understood as the respect "by the congregation" which must be shown towards Heaven. A congregation has a greater responsibility in its service to Heaven than an individual, and must therefore show its respect for Heaven in a more proper manner.

This approach to "respect for the congregation" fits the cases mentioned in our gemara and another gemara (Gittin 60a) which prohibits reading for the congregation from a scroll containing just one of the five Chumashim (Books of Moses) rather than the entire Torah. There is some difficulty, however, applying this interpretation to other gemara statements (Yoma 70a and Sotah 39b) where the term is used in relation to not causing the congregation to idly wait while certain functions are performed (such as rolling the Sefer Torah to the place where it will be read). This would seem to be an indication that indeed "respect for the congregation" is the issue. It may be, however, that an entire congregation idly waiting and not utilizing their presence in the synagogue to pray or study also constitutes a lack of "respect by the congregation" for their responsibilities towards Heaven in such a holy setting. (Megillah 23a/24b)

BLESSINGS AND RETURNS

“What happened to your belt?” asked the Sage Rav of his disciple Rabbi Huna when he noticed that he was wearing some makeshift belt of vegetation rather than his regular one.

“I gave away my belt as collateral in order to secure money to buy wine for Shabbat kiddush.”

Rav was so impressed by his disciple’s sacrifice of a personal garment for a mitzvah that he blessed him that he should, as a reward, “be covered with clothes.”

Some time afterwards Rabbi Huna was hosting a wedding for his son Rabba. Rabbi Huna, who was a very short man, lay down upon a bed to rest while his family gathered for the celebration. His daughters and daughters-in-law did not notice his presence and they placed their coats on the bed, completely covering him with clothes in fulfillment of Rav’s blessing.

When Rav heard that his blessing had thus been fulfilled he complained to Rabbi Huna:

“When I blessed you why did you not respond with a blessing of “the same to my master” (Rashi - it may have been a moment of Divine favor and the blessing would have been fulfilled for me as well).

Two problems arise in regard to understanding this story. Why was it necessary to mention the uncomplimentary fact of Rabbi Huna’s diminutive size? Even more puzzling is Rav’s disappointment in not receiving a counter-blessing after seeing the fulfillment of his blessing.

What benefit would Rav have derived from being temporarily covered by clothes as was his disciple?

The simple approach to the first question is that it was necessary to mention Rabbi Huna’s size in order to explain why his family members did not notice his presence on the bed where they placed their coats. In regard to the second issue, an interesting explanation is offered in the footnotes of Bach (Rabbi Yoel Sirkis):

Rav was upset because the fulfillment of his blessing indicated that it was moment of Divine favor and had he received a counter-blessing it may well have, in his case because of his greater merit, been fulfilled in the way it was intended by Rav - by being blessed with the wealth which enables one to cover himself with clothes.

A most innovative approach to answering these questions is suggested by Rabbi Yaakov Emden. Rav was the tallest sage of his generation while Rabbi Huna was among the shortest. Rabbi Huna therefore hesitated to return the blessing which Rav gave, as the clothes which fit his short figure would look absurd on the tall figure of his master.

An important lesson is to be learned from this story. When you receive a blessing from anyone, be sure to return it. (Megillah 27b)

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