

Home In My Opinion DOUBLE ADAR

Rabbi Wein's Weekly Blog

The month of Adar is designated in Jewish life as the month of joy and celebration – and with this being a Leap Year, we have a double dose of those special feelings. In every nineteen-year lunar-solar calendar cycle, there are seven years in which an extra lunar month is inserted into the Jewish calendar. This extra leap month is always the month of Adar. And with the wondrous holiday of Purim occurring in the middle of Adar 2, we are certainly in for joyous times.

Purim is not a holiday in the sense that Pesach is for example, but it sure is a holiday by any other reckoning. A people constantly threatened with persecution and annihilation needs to be reminded regularly – at least annually – of its ultimate survival and of the defeat of its oppressors and enemies. The advent of the month of Adar always signifies a time of reassurance and confidence in Judaism, the Jewish people and the Divine hand of Providence, so to speak, which hovers over us.

It is a month of renewed vitality, faith and purpose. And in Jewish life, joy is always associated with the concepts of observance of ritual and the strengthening of Jewish values and beliefs. Even though the holiday of Purim itself is restricted to only two days in the month, its spirit and joy permeate all the days of Adar.

The rabbis stated that from the day that Adar begins we are already bidden to intensify our feelings of joy, faith and optimism. A happy event suffuses the atmosphere both before and after the day on which it occurs. The whole month of Adar is viewed as a unit, as an entirety of good tidings and happy events. The month takes on the vibrant coloration of the joyous days that fall within its allotted time.

Adar also marks the final month of winter. It therefore becomes the harbinger of the beautiful weather of spring and summer that is the climate of the Land of Israel. Though Europe and America have experienced a truly bitter winter, we here in Israel have escaped with our moderate and mild winter weather interspersed with the blessing of periodic days of life-giving rain. (and even a little bit of snow.) In this, Adar fulfills its role of looking forward optimistically to better climes and times. Adar is, so to speak, the proverbial light at the end of the tunnel of winter and its inclement weather and sometimes dreary days. People are clearly affected by the climate where they live. The pervading darkness of the upper reaches of the northern hemisphere contributes to higher rates of suicide, depression, alcoholism and other negative behavior.

People do better in sunlight and warmth than in ice, snow and penetrating cold. The dramatic and continuing population shift in the United States for example to the warmer West and South is testimony to this fact. The coming of the month of Adar, above and apart from its aspects of Purim, is, by itself, a sign of hope and optimism. The sun will now shine more brightly and more often. As you can already fathom none of this brilliant journalism of mine really applies to those living south of the Equator. But since Israel is the center of the world and Israel is my home, everything written here should be considered valid.

We can all use an extra dose of Adar every so often. The realistically difficult world that Jews constantly live in needs to be occasionally lightened by an additional dose of joy and optimism. People gladly bear the idea of two Adars while they would be less likely to accept a doubling of any of the other eleven months of the Jewish calendar year. The Talmud advances practical and logical reasons to explain why Adar was chosen to be the potential double month. All of these reasons are naturally valid and acceptable on their own – a late rainy season, crops not ready, etc. The rabbis prevented King Chizkiyah from doubling up Nissan instead of Adar. There is an underlying value that the month of Adar possesses that no other month in the Jewish calendar can lay claim to. This idea of the joy of survival, of the ultimate downfall of the wicked, of the better tomorrow in physical, spiritual and national terms, belongs exclusively to Adar. There is no substitute for it in the rest of the year's calendar.

Home Weekly Parsha TETZAVEH

Rabbi Wein's Weekly Blog

The concept of an eternal light in the place of worship is an ancient one derived from the opening section of this week's reading of the Torah. The eternal light represents the unquenchable spirit and resilience of the eternal soul that the Lord has implanted within human beings. Human life can be taken away but the spirit of life, which is so unique to human beings, seems never to disappear.

In this week's reading of the Torah, we learn that the eternal light must be attended to and nurtured. It requires preparation of the fuel and the kindling of that eternal light by human beings, in this case the descendants of Aaron, the priests of Israel. There was an eternal flame that existed on the altar in the Tabernacle and in the holy Temple. That flame existed and was kept alive permanently by a miracle of God. It existed during the entire time of the first Temple but was one of the miracles that no longer reappeared in the times of the second Temple and thereafter. But the eternal light that was to be lit and maintained on the great candelabra in the building of the Temple was not to be miraculously so endowed. This light required constant human attention and participation.

From this we may derive that there are two forms of eternity in human affairs and history. One is of purely divine origin, miraculous and wondrous, which operates completely independent from human efforts, ordinary laws and rules of nature. The other path of eternity, represented by the likes of the candelabra, is wholly dependent on human participation, care and attention.

Human beings often confuse these two types of eternal light. When it comes to certain matters, mainly spiritual or familial in nature, we rely heavily on miracles that will sustain us and allow us to escape from our difficulties. Regarding our personal lives, our profession, and our politics, we feel that these areas of human life are totally within our ability and purview to control and shape. However, the Torah teaches us that both forms of eternallight, the miraculous and the one that requires human effort and attention, are with us always.

That is why in the Tabernacle, and later in the first Temple itself the eternal light was represented at one and the same time and in the same place. Miracles do happen, and the guiding hand of the Eternal One is evident throughout the history of the Jews. But, the old adage that God helps those who help themselves is also valid and true. The eternal flame is to be lit by human beings who prepare the fuel and kindle a light through human effort and care. It is this combination of the forces of eternity that unite and guarantee that the light of Israel will never be extinguished.

Shabbat shalom
Rabbi Berel Wein

A Portable Home (Terumah 5779)

Rabbi Jonathan Sacks

The parsha of Terumah describes the construction of the Tabernacle, the first collective house of worship in the history of Israel. The first but not the last; it was eventually succeeded by the Temple in Jerusalem. I want to focus on one moment in Jewish history which represents Jewish spirituality at its lowest ebb and highest flight: the moment the Temple was destroyed.

It is hard to understand the depth of the crisis into which the destruction of the First Temple plunged the Jewish people. Their very existence was predicated on a relationship with God symbolised by the worship that took place daily in Jerusalem. With the Babylonian conquest in 586 BCE, Jews lost not only their land and sovereignty. In losing the Temple, it was as if they had lost hope itself. For their hope lay in God, and how could they turn to God if the very place where they served Him

was in ruins? One document has left a vivid record of the mood of Jews at that time, one of the most famous of the psalms:

By the waters of Babylon we sat and wept as we remembered Zion...How can we sing the songs of the Lord in a strange land? (Psalm 137)

It was then that an answer began to take shape. The Temple no longer stood, but its memory remained, and this memory was strong enough to bring Jews together in collective worship. In exile, in Babylon, Jews began to gather to expound Torah, articulate a collective hope of return, and recall the Temple and its service.

The prophet Ezekiel was one of those who shaped a vision of return and restoration, and it is to him we owe the first oblique reference to a radically new institution that eventually became known as the Beit Kneset, the synagogue: "This is what the sovereign Lord says: although I sent them far away among the nations and scattered them among the countries, yet I have become to them a small Sanctuary [Mikdash me'at] in the countries where they have gone" (Ezekiel 11:16). The central Sanctuary had been destroyed, but a small echo, a miniature, remained.

The synagogue is one of the most remarkable examples of an *itaruta de'letata*, "an awakening from below." It came into being not through words spoken by God to Israel, but by words spoken by Israel to God. There is no synagogue in Tanach, no command to build local houses of prayer. On the contrary, insofar as the Torah speaks of a "house of God" it refers to a central Sanctuary, a collective focus for the worship of the people as a whole.

We tend to forget how profound the concept of a synagogue was. Professor M. Stern has written that "in establishing the synagogue, Judaism created one of the greatest revolutions in the history of religion and society, for the synagogue was an entirely new environment for divine service, of a type unknown anywhere before." It became, according to Salo Baron, the institution through which the exilic community "completely shifted the emphasis from the place of worship, the Sanctuary, to the gathering of worshippers, the congregation, assembled at any time and any place in God's wide world." The synagogue became Jerusalem in exile, the home of the Jewish heart. It is the ultimate expression of monotheism – that wherever we gather to turn our hearts towards heaven, there the Divine Presence can be found, for God is everywhere.

Where did it come from, this world-changing idea? It did not come from the Temple, but rather from the much earlier institution described in this week's parsha: the Tabernacle. Its essence was that it was portable, made up of beams and hangings that could be dismantled and carried by the Levites as the Israelites journeyed through the wilderness. The Tabernacle, a temporary structure, turned out to have permanent influence, whereas the Temple, intended to be permanent, proved to be temporary – until, as we pray daily, it is rebuilt.

More significant than the physical structure of the Tabernacle was its metaphysical structure. The very idea that one can build a home for God seems absurd. It was all too easy to understand the concept of sacred space in a polytheistic worldview. The gods were half-human. They had places where they could be encountered. Monotheism tore this idea up at its roots, nowhere more eloquently than in Psalm 139:

Where can I go from Your Spirit?

Where can I flee from Your presence?

If I go up to the heavens, You are there;

If I make my bed in the depths, You are there.

Hence the question asked by Israel's wisest King, Solomon: "But will God really dwell on earth? The heavens, even the highest heaven, cannot contain You. How much less this temple I have built!" (I Kings 8:27).

The same question is posed in the name of God by one of Israel's greatest prophets, Isaiah:

Heaven is My throne,

and the earth is My footstool.

Where is the house you will build for Me?

Where will My resting place be? (Isaiah 66:1)

The very concept of making a home in finite space for an infinite presence seems a contradiction in terms. The answer, still astonishing in

its profundity, is contained at the beginning of this week's parsha: "They shall make a Sanctuary for Me, and I will dwell in them [betokham]" (Exodus 25:8). The Jewish mystics pointed out the linguistic strangeness of this sentence. It should have said, "I will dwell in it," not "I will dwell in them." The answer is that the Divine Presence lives not in a building but in its builders; not in a physical place but in the human heart. The Sanctuary was not a place in which the objective existence of God was somehow more concentrated than elsewhere. Rather, it was a place whose holiness had the effect of opening hearts to the One worshipped there. God exists everywhere, but not everywhere do we feel the presence of God in the same way. The essence of "the holy" is that it is a place where we set aside all human devices and desires and enter a domain wholly set aside for God.

If the concept of the Mishkan, the Tabernacle, is that God lives in the human heart whenever it opens itself unreservedly to heaven, then its physical location is irrelevant. Thus the way was open, seven centuries later, to the synagogue: the supreme statement of the idea that if God is everywhere, He can be reached anywhere. I find it moving that the frail structure described in this week's parsha became the inspiration of an institution that, more than any other, kept the Jewish people alive through almost two thousand years of dispersion – the longest of all journeys through the wilderness.

Shabbat Shalom

Shabbat Shalom: Parshat Tetzaveh (Exodus 27:20 – 30:10)

By Rabbi Shlomo Riskin

Efrat, Israel – "And you shall command the children of Israel... And you shall bring forth your brother Aaron and his sons together with him... And you shall speak to all of the wise-hearted." (Exodus 27:20–28:3)

Often what you really have is that which you give away, what you most profoundly say is what you leave unsaid when you wisely decide not to respond, and the most commanding presence is felt most keenly when that presence is not around. An example of the third phenomenon is to be found in the Torah reading of Tetzaveh, the only portion since the opening of the book of Exodus wherein Moses' name does not appear even once! Why not?

The midrashic answer suggests that Moses initiated his own absence. When the Israelites sinned by worshiping the golden calf less than six weeks after the divine revelation at Sinai, God's anger reaches the breaking point (as it were) and he makes Moses the following offer: "And now leave Me alone as my anger shall burn and I will destroy them, and I shall make of you a great nation." (Exodus 32:10)

God suggests that He wipe Israel, no longer worthy of His benevolence, from the pages of history by starting a new nation, a new branch, from the loins of Moses himself.

Others in his shoes might have taken up God's offer, but Moses refuses to increase his own glory at the expense of the nation. The climax of his brilliant argument is an emotional ultimatum: God must forgive the people. "...If not [says Moses], blot me, I pray you, out of Your Book which You have written." (Exodus 32:32)

God responds to Moses' pleas. But Moses' expression of identification with the people, Moses' selfless willingness for himself to be obliterated as long as his nation prevails, is eternalized by the fact that in one portion of the Torah, Tetzaveh, the master prophet's name is "missing in action."

But on an even deeper level, is there a further significance to the fact that the "blotting out" of Moses' name occurs specifically in Tetzaveh? Even a quick glance reveals that our portion is almost entirely devoted to the priesthood. Chapters 28 and 29 deal extensively with all the garments that the priests are commanded to wear, particularly the High Priest, as well as the sacrifices that shall be brought to "sanctify the priests." In fact, Tetzaveh is often called parshat ha-kohanim, the portion of the priests.

Without a temple, the priest's public role is severely limited. One area, though, where his presence is still felt (particularly here in Israel and

among Sephardim even in the Diaspora) is the daily priestly blessing during the repetition of the morning Amida: at the conclusion of the blessing for peace, the priests, attended to by Levites, stand before the congregation and invoke the biblical blessing: "May God bless you and keep you..." (Num. 6:24). Before intoning these words, they recite the following blessing: "Blessed are You Lord, our God, king of the universe, who has sanctified us with the holiness of Aaron, and has commanded us to bless His people with love."

And when the Priests (Cohanim) give their blessing, the Synagogue turns into a Sanctuary!

The final words in the blessing – "with love" – raise certain questions, since kohanim, or descendants of the High Priest Aaron, are fairly typical people. Some are as sweet as cherry ices in July, and some are as cold as Alaskan ice cubes, but most change in accordance with their mood upon awakening – how can we measure the love-quotient felt by Mr. Cohen when he ascends the bimah for the blessing? How can we legislate the emotion of love which the priests are apparently expected to feel?

The first answer lies in the very nature of the priesthood, in how the Bible legislated the priestly class's means of livelihood. It's often said that if you ask a typical entrepreneur, "How's business?" if he says, "Great," it means that he is doing well and his competitor is facing bankruptcy; if he says, "good," that means it's a good market for everyone, he's doing well and so is his competitor; and if he says, "Terrible," then that means he's facing bankruptcy but his competition is earning a lot of money. Gore Vidal was once quoted by Hilma Wolitzer in the New York Times for his poignantly honest observation: "Whenever a friend succeeds a little, something in me dies."

Enter the kohen. If there is one person who disagrees with Mr. Vidal, it would have to be a member of the priestly class who served in the Temple, received no portion of land to till or business to develop, and who made his living by tithes given him by the Israelites: 1/40, 1/50, 1/60 of their produce depending upon the generosity of the individual donor. And since the tithe was a percentage of the crop, the better the farmer makes out, the happier the kohen ends up. To modify the Vidal quote, a kohen would declare: "Whenever a farmer succeeds a little [and certainly a lot], something in me lives." Hence by the very nature of the economic structure set up by the Bible, the kohen-priest could truly give the blessing of prosperity and well-being to the congregation of Israel "with love." And since the one leader of Israel, Moses, had so much love for Israel that he was willing to be blotted out of Torah if his beloved people were destroyed, it is the portion of Tetzaveh, the portion of the Priest-Kohanim, whose love for Israel remind us of Moses, although Moses is absent. Even if Moses is absent, his deep love is felt! Indeed, the essence of Moses' greatness, His sacrificial love of his people, emerges most clearly from the portion of his absence and anonymity. Shabbat Shalom!

Rav Shlomo Aviner Shlit" a

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

Sitting in Father's Place After His Death

Q: Is it permissible for a son to sit in his father's chair in Shul after his father's death?

A: Yes. Honoring one's father after death does not include the prohibition of sitting in his place, which only applies during his lifetime (Rabbi Chaim Palagi in Shut Chaim Be-Yad #125:48. Shut Yerech Yaakov, Yoreh Deah #14).

Repenting with Joy

Q: Since one must serve Hashem with joy, how does one repent with joy?

A: With the joy that one is performing Hashem's will. Rambam at the end of Hilchot Sukkah Ve-Lulav.

Low IQ

Q: I have a low IQ. Can I still be a Torah scholar?

A: Certainly. Hashem wants you to be one. Rambam, Hilchot Talmud Torah 3:1. There are different levels among Torah scholars.

Professional Army

Q: Should Tzahal be a professional army, small and smart?

A: No. Our army is a people's army.

Cohain Visiting Concentration Camps

Q: Is it permissible for a Cohain to visit the Concentration Camps?

A: Aside from the prohibition of leaving Eretz Yisrael, which applies to everyone, and other prohibitions involved, there is a fear of becoming impure at the Concentration Camps through contact with the dead on account of remnants of bones there.

Combat Service

Q: If a man has the ability to be a combat soldier in Tzahal, but decides to be drafted into a non-combat unit, does he still fulfill the Mitzvah of waging war to protect the Nation, conquer Eretz Yisrael, etc.?

A: Yes. All military service is a Mitzvah. Service in a combat unit is the highest form of the Mitzvah.

Davening Alone

Q: In my high school, the Rosh Yeshiva decided that if someone wakes up late and doesn't make it to Minyan, he has to Daven on his own, and cannot leave to find a Minyan elsewhere. Do we have to obey him?

A: Someone who comes to learn at a Yeshiva does so on condition that he obeys the rules of the Rosh Yeshiva. If it is not a good fit for him, he should transfer to another Yeshiva, since a person learns Torah in a place that his heart desires (Avodah Zarah 19a).

The Name "Yitzchak"

Q: Our son's name is Yitzchak. We now heard that someone with this name can have troubles. Should we change it?

A: Certainly not. It is a wonderful name. Yitzchak Avinu!

Settlers and Danger

Q: Is it possible that the State does not fully protect the communities in Yehudah and Shomron?

A: Not true. The army invests huge amounts of its force to protect them, and the danger is minimal. For example, security incidents there are certainly much fewer than traffic accidents.

Hilchos Shabbos

8170. "Soaking Vegetables for Eating"

Generally, it is permitted to prepare water and soak vegetables that are detached and no longer growing, to preserve them or prevent them from wilting if this is needed to keep them palatable.

8171. Adding vinegar, salt water, or salad dressing is also permitted because these liquids do not enhance their growth.

Shulchan Aruch w/Mishnah Berurah 321:11, 336:11 MB51, Chayei Odom 11:2, SA 336:4-6 MB35, Shmiras Shabbos Kehilchasa 26:4, Sefer 39 Melocho

Is this the Right Purim?

By Rabbi Yirmiyohu Kaganoff

Question #1: Four Purims!

Could someone observe Purim four times in one year?

Question #2: Which Bar Mitzvah Day?

"My son, whose thirteenth birthday was on the fourteenth of Adar Rishon, wants to know why his bar mitzvah day was not Purim."

Question #3: Mistaken Parshah

If a community mistakenly read one of the four parshi'os in Adar Rishon, must they read it again in Adar Sheini?

Introduction:

The Mishnah (Megillah 29a) teaches: “Rosh Chodesh Adar that falls on Shabbos, we read (for its maftir) Parshas Shekalim. If it falls during the week, we read this maftir the Shabbos before. We skip the next Shabbos (meaning that we do not read a special maftir). The second Shabbos after Shekalim, we read Parshas Zachor; the third, Parshas Parah Adumah; the fourth, Hachodesh Hazeh Lachem; and the fifth, we return to the regular order.” This Mishnah teaches about the four special readings, called the Arba Parshi’os, that we read for maftir during or near the month of Adar.

In a leap year, when there are two months of Adar, we observe the special laws of the month of Adar, including Purim, Taanis Esther and the Arba Parshi’os, in the second Adar. What many do not realize is that there is actually a dispute among the tanna’im, the Torah scholars of the era of the Mishnah, concerning in which Adar one should observe the special mitzvos of Adar.

The Gemara (Megillah 6b) records three opinions how we should observe these events. An anonymous opinion (known as the Tanna Kamma) contends that the four parshi’os may be observed either in Adar Rishon or in Adar Sheini, but Purim can be observed only in Adar Sheini. Rabbi Eliezer, the son of Rabbi Yosi, contends that all observances, including Purim, may be observed in Adar Rishon. In his opinion, these mitzvos should preferably be observed in the first Adar, but if one failed to do so, one can still fulfill the mitzvah by performing them in the second Adar. Rabbi Shimon ben Gamliel contends that all the mitzvos can be observed only in Adar Sheini.

Sanhedrin’s calendar

This dispute becomes even more interesting after we understand some additional historical background. One of the 613 mitzvos of the Torah is the establishment of a Jewish calendar that includes occasional leap years that are thirteen months long. The requirement of adding this extra month is so that Pesach always falls in the spring and Sukkos in the autumn (in the northern hemisphere). The preferred way to establish this calendar is through determination of the Sanhedrin in Eretz Yisroel. For thousands of years, a special court of seven judges was created each year to decide if there is a need to add an extra month. The judges were chosen by the nasi, the head of the Sanhedrin. We hope and pray that this system will be re-implemented soon, when Moshiach arrives.

In the era when the Sanhedrin and its special committee determined whether to create a leap year, many considerations were included in the decision. Among the factors evaluated were not only astronomical and weather information, but also what year it was in the shemittah cycle, what was the condition of the roads, whether people had left Bavel early enough to arrive in Yerushalayim for Pesach, whether enough lambs would be available for korban Pesach and what was the condition of the ovens used to roast the korban Pesach.

The special court began meeting any time after Rosh Hashanah, and the deliberations regarding whether to add an extra month could continue until the last day of Adar of the year involved. This means that they could decide to make it into a leap year even after Purim had already been observed!

Chodesh Mussaf

By the way, a practice of ours results from the timetable in which the Sanhedrin was allowed to declare a leap year – after Rosh Hashanah and before Rosh Chodesh Nissan. During Musaf on Rosh Chodesh, we close the middle brocha with a prayer for twelve blessings to occur in the coming month, and, in a leap year, we add a thirteenth blessing to this prayer. Thus, the number of blessings mentioned in this brocha corresponds with the number of months that the specific year contains. However, most customs add the thirteenth blessing only from the months of Marcheshvan until and including the months of Adar (both of them), but do not recite this thirteenth blessing during the rest of the year. Why don’t we recite this additional blessing between Nissan and Elul?

Based on our knowledge of when the Sanhedrin could declare a leap year, we can explain why the additional blessing is omitted between Nissan and Elul. At the time that the calendar was created by the Sanhedrin, the decision whether to add a month to the year was never

made before Rosh Hashanah, and, therefore, between Nissan and Elul one never knew if the coming year was a leap year or not. Therefore, at that time, adding an additional blessing in that part of the year would be inappropriate, not only when the Sanhedrin is making that determination, but even today, when, as we will soon explain, the cycle of leap years is predetermined.

Sanhedrin and the calendar printers

When the calendar was decided by the Sanhedrin, printers would be unable to print a calendar in advance and, on Purim, housewives might be uncertain whether they have four weeks in which to prepare for Pesach, or eight, since the Sanhedrin may not yet have decided whether to add an extra Adar. As we noted above, this decision could be reached as late as the last day of Adar, some fifteen days after Purim.

The contemporary calendar

Unfortunately, we no longer have a Sanhedrin to establish our calendar. Instead, we use the calendar established by Hillel Hanasi, during the time of the Gemara. (One should be careful not to confuse Hillel Hanasi, who was the great-grandson of Rabbi Yehudah Hanasi, with their very illustrious and more famous ancestor, Hillel, who is often called Hillel Hazakein.) Hillel Hanasi was the last head of a Sanhedrin in Eretz Yisroel before the Roman persecution made it impossible for the Sanhedrin to continue functioning. Hillel Hanasi created the calendar we currently use, which has, among its features, a regular pattern of seven leap years and twelve common years in a nineteen-year cycle. Hillel established a system whereby the 3rd, 6th, 8th, 11th, 14th, 17th and 19th years are leap years in which we add the additional Adar.

In which Adar is Purim?

We mentioned above the three-way dispute concerning when we observe Purim and the four parshi’os in a leap year. According to Rabbi Eliezer berabbi Yosi, the unique mitzvos of Adar, that is, the observances of the four parshi’os, Taanis Esther and Purim, should all be observed in the first Adar. However, should one fail to observe them then, one may observe them in the second Adar. According to the Tanna Kamma, the four parshi’os may be observed in either Adar Rishon or Adar Sheini, but Purim can be observed only in Adar Sheini. Rabbi Shimon ben Gamliel contends that all the mitzvos can be observed only in Adar Sheini.

Basis of the dispute

What are the reasons behind the dispute?

The Gemara explains that Rabbi Eliezer berabbi Yosi holds that all the mitzvos should be kept in Adar Rishon, because of the principle called ein ma’avirin al hamitzvos, the opportunity to observe a mitzvah should not be allowed to pass. Since, in Rabbi Eliezer berabbi Yosi’s opinion, one may observe these mitzvos in either Adar, one should fulfill them at the first opportunity and not wait until the second Adar.

Ein ma’avirin al hamitzvos

The law of ein ma’avirin al hamitzvos is referred to in several places, and, according to Rashi and the Mechilta (to Shemos 12:17), this requirement is derived from the Torah. When the Torah states, Ushemartem es hamatzos, and you shall guard the matzos, (Shemos 12:17), meaning to make sure that one’s matzos do not become chometz, the word matzos is understood hermeneutically to refer to all mitzvos. This renders the command of the Torah to mean that you should “watch” for the mitzvos, that is, wait eagerly to perform them. As explained by the Mechilta, this means that when one has an opportunity to fulfill a mitzvah one should not tarry, but should fulfill it as soon as one can.

Is ein ma’avirin al hamitzvos a Torah requirement?

Since Rashi and the Mechilta cite a verse as the source for the law of ein ma’avarin al hamitzvos, should we assume that this is a Torah requirement? This is indeed the position of Tosafos (Yoma 33a s.v. ein) and some other authorities (Nishmas Odom 13:2; see also Shu”t Divrei Malkiel, Orach Chayim #16). However, there are authorities who contend that ein ma’avirin al hamitzvos is required only midrabbanan, and the verse quoted is what is called in halachic terminology an asmachta, a Scriptural foundation or hint for a rabbinic law (Shu”t Radbaz #529).

Other examples of ein ma’avirin al hamitzvos

Here are some other examples of the principle of ein ma'avirin al hamitzvos.

When donning tefillin, one should be careful not to touch the shel rosh before he touches the shel yad. According to Tosafos (Yoma 33b, s. v. avurei), if he touches his shel rosh first, he will be forced to wait to put it on until after his shel yad, because the Torah implies that one should not don the shel rosh until he is already wearing the shel yad. This will constitute a violation of ein ma'avirin al hamitzvos, because he sets aside the shel rosh and does not put it on immediately.

Similarly, because of the law of ein ma'avirin al hamitzvos, one who touched his tefillin before his talis must put the tefillin on first.

Here is an unusual application of the principle of ein ma'avirin al hamitzvos. Someone who is imprisoned, and cannot fulfill many mitzvos, such as kerias haTorah, tefillah betzibur, shofar blowing, and hearing Megillah while he is incarcerated, is provided the opportunity for one furlough. When should he use his furlough? One early authority was uncertain whether he should request to get out for Yom Kippur, because of the sanctity of the day, or whether he should use it for Purim, since the mitzvah of pirsumei nisa accomplished by hearing Megillah is something that cannot be accomplished at any other time.

The Radbaz (Shu"t Haradbaz #1087) takes issue with these considerations, contending that whatever mitzvah he can observe first should be the one for which he takes his furlough, because of the principle of ein ma'avirin al hamitzvos. While his incarceration makes him unable to perform many mitzvos, once he has been granted a furlough, he now has an opportunity to perform a mitzvah, and not taking advantage of that constitutes going its observance!

Rabbi Shimon ben Gamliel

Having explained the reason why Rabbi Eliezer berabbi Yosi contends that one should read Megillah and the four parshi'os in Adar Rishon, the question is why does Rabbi Shimon ben Gamliel rule that one must wait until Adar Sheini to observe these mitzvos?

The Gemara presents two approaches to explain Rabbi Shimon ben Gamliel's opinion. Rabbi Tevi maintains that since the celebration of Purim is to thank Hashem for redeeming us, we should observe these mitzvos in the Adar that is closer to the month of Nissan, when we celebrate another redemption, that of the Exodus from Egypt.

Rabbi Elazar explains Rabbi Shimon ben Gamliel's opinion in a different way, deriving from a verse in Megillas Esther that, when there are two months of Adar, we should celebrate Purim and the other events in the second Adar.

Four Purims?

At this point, we can address one of the questions I raised at the very beginning of this article: Could someone observe Purim four times in one year?

I mentioned above that, in the era that the Sanhedrin establishes whether the year is a leap year or not, it could happen that a leap year is declared after Purim, but before the month of Adar has ended. This means that, in what appeared to be a common year, the beis din decided to declare, towards the end of the month of Adar, that they would add an extra month. In this scenario, Purim was already observed, yet now the Sanhedrin declared that there would be a second Adar. Does everyone need to observe Purim a second time?

As I explained above, according to Rabbi Eliezer berabbi Yosi, the addition of the second Adar does not affect the observances of the four parshi'os, Taanis Esther and Purim, since they are all kept in the first Adar. Regardless as to when the Sanhedrin decided to add an extra Adar, these mitzvos are performed in the first Adar.

According to the Tanna Kamma, the four parshi'os may be observed either in Adar Rishon or in Adar Sheini, but Purim can be observed only in Adar Sheini. This would mean that when the beis din decided prior to Adar to create a leap year, the mitzvos should all be observed in Adar Sheini. If the beis din did not decide until some time in Adar, whichever of the four parshi'os had been read already did not need to be repeated. However, if they decided to add an extra month after Purim had been observed, everyone is required to observe Purim for a second time in the second Adar.

Rabbi Shimon ben Gamliel contends that all the mitzvos can be observed only in Adar Sheini. In his opinion, if beis din decided to add an extra month at the end of Adar, then the four parshi'os and all of the observances of Purim must be repeated.

How do we rule?

The Gemara concludes that the halachah follows Rabbi Shimon ben Gamliel. For this reason, even though most tanna'im contend that a community that read the four parshi'os in Adar Rishon is not required to repeat them in Adar Sheini, the halachah is that they are required to do so. This ruling is followed by the Rif, the Rosh, the Rambam, the Tur, the Shulchan Aruch and all later halachic authorities.

Two or four?

We now know how one might end up observing Purim in both months of Adar; but how does one end up keeping Purim four times in one year? The answer to this question, also, requires a small introduction. As we know from the Megillah, the "open cities," meaning places other than a city or town that were walled at the time that Yeshoshua conquered Eretz Yisroel, observe the laws of Purim on the fourteenth of Adar, whereas the walled cities observe Purim on the fifteenth. Now, there are places in which it is uncertain whether Purim should be observed on the fourteenth of Adar, like the "open cities," or the fifteenth, like the walled cities. For example, the Gemara (Megillah 5b) recounts that in Teverya, they read the Megillah on both the fourteenth and the fifteenth. Teverya was walled on three sides, and the Sea of Kineret (also known as the Sea of Galilee) served as its "wall" on the fourth side. It was uncertain whether this conformation qualifies it as a walled city or a non-walled one.

Now think: What would happen in Teverya in a year when the beis din decided at the end of Adar to create a leap year? They would end up, according to the Tanna Kamma and Rabbi Shimon ben Gamliel, observing Purim four times.

Which bar mitzvah day?

At this point, let us answer our remaining questions: My son, whose thirteenth birthday was on the fourteenth of Adar Rishon, wants to know why his bar mitzvah day was not Purim.

The answer is that he would be correct if we ruled according to Rabbi Eliezer berabbi Yosi. However, since the Gemara concludes that the halachah follows the disputing opinion of Rabbi Shimon ben Gamliel, we celebrate Purim in the second Adar. As I mentioned above, the Gemara cites two opinions why Rabbi Shimon ben Gamliel rules that we observe Purim in Adar Sheini. According to one opinion, this is because the redemption that we celebrate on Purim should be observed as close to the celebration of the redemption of Pesach as possible. According to the other opinion mentioned by the Gemara, there is a special hermeneutic derivation that teaches us this halachah.

Mistaken parshah

If a community mistakenly read one of the four parshi'os in Adar Rishon, must they read it again in Adar Sheini?

Although according to both the Tanna Kamma and Rabbi Eliezer berabbi Yosi, they would not be required to do so, the halachah follows Rabbi Shimon ben Gamliel, who requires them to read it again.

In conclusion

We see how important it is not to delay performing a mitzvah. Certainly, our attitude towards the performance of all mitzvos should be one of enthusiasm – we are overjoyed at the opportunity to fulfill Hashem's commandments.

Pninin on the Torah

עשיית בגדי קדש לאהרון אחיך לכבוד ולתפארתו

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

The Bigdei Kehunah, Priestly vestments, were different from any other type of garment, because of their service l'kavod u'lsiferes, for honor and splendor. Furthermore, they are similar to the garments worn by the Heavenly Angels. Otzar Efraim quotes Gevuras Shimshon (cited by Horav Shlomo Levinstein, Shlita), who asserts that this is implied by

Yechezkel HaNavi's vision of Malach Michael, V'hinei ha'ish l'vush ha'badim; "And behold! The man clothed with linen" (Yechezkel 9:11). The Midrash explains that this alludes to the Bigdei Aharon HaKohen, the Priestly vestments of Aharon HaKohen, who was granted the honor of being clothed in the same fashion as the Ministering Angels.

On the other hand, the very concept of clothing is the result of the sin of Adam HaRishon. Prior to eating of the Eitz HaDaas, Tree of Knowledge, the Torah writes, Va'yiheyu shneihem arumim... v'lo yisboshahu; "They were both naked... and they were not ashamed" (Bereishis 2:25). Following the sin, the Torah records that Hashem fashioned kosnos ohr, garments made of skin, to clothe Adam and Chavah. In other words, clothing, in contrast to the Priestly vestments, is a sad reminder of Adam's sin and the consequent need for clothing.

Rav Shlomo Levenstein offers a telling analogy. The king's close friend rebelled and was sentenced to death. At the last minute, with the thick noose around his neck, the king remembered their close relationship and commuted the sentence. He did have one stipulation, however, that henceforth the condemned man, his children and every one of his descendants be relegated to wearing a noose around their necks. This would remind them of their good fortune in being alive.

The condemned man was only too excited to trade the real noose for this replacement. He wore a thick noose, similar to the one that had encircled his neck. He gladly wore the noose until his final moment on earth. His son also wore a noose – perhaps a bit thinner – but he wore it nonetheless. As the generations continued, the noose was an integral part of their daily garments. With each ensuing generation, however, they became more and more creative in the size, thickness, material and color of the noose. The noose ended up being a necklace of thin string, its colors changing with the color trend of society. At one point, they attached trinkets and eventually jewels to the string/noose.

Rav Levinstein decries our present attitude towards clothing and modern styles of dress. We seem to have forgotten that clothing is the consequence of the sin of Adam HaRishon. Instead of wearing clothing as "clothing," because it is something that we must wear to cover ourselves, it has, instead, become a marketable item which presents us with some styles that border on tznius criteria and some that clearly do not. Indeed, the Bigdei Kehunah the Kohen wore had a lofty purpose. The only aspect of loftiness that applies to modern-day clothing is the price.

ועשית בגדי קדש לאהרן אחיך לכבוד ולתפארת

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

Tiferes, beauty/splendor, is a term that is most often defined subjectively. Beauty is in the eye of the beholder. Thus, beauty/splendor is a term that may have various meanings, dependent upon the individual's sensitivity to – and perception of – what connotes beauty. The fact that the Torah equates the Bigdei Kehunah with kavod, glory/dignity, implies that the beauty of the Priestly vestments was not necessarily a fashion show, artistic beauty, but rather, dignified splendor, a beauty that inspires, a beauty that catalyzes thoughtfulness. When the Kohen Gadol wore his Priestly vestments, he inspired the people who viewed him as a king dressed in the clothing of a monarch. The Kohen Gadol, having achieved the pinnacle of spirituality, was truly a spiritual monarch, an individual who represented the finest that Torah has to offer. His attire matched his essence – dignified splendor.

How different is the Torah's perspective on beauty! The Greek culture extolled beauty, but it was a base form of beauty that promoted desire. Its culture focused on the body – not the spirit. Understandably, its appreciation of beauty coincided with its view on that which was significant and meaningful to them.

Our understanding of beauty is quite different. The words of the Neviim, Prophets, are replete with references to the importance of Jewish children, especially their role in the survival of Klal Yisrael. They are our future; they are our legacy; they are our beauty/splendor. The special love that Hashem has for Yiddishe Kinder, Jewish children, is underscored a number of times throughout Tanach. One especially

poignant and telling example is to be found in a pasuk in Eichah (1:5,6), "Her young children have gone into captivity before the enemy. Gone from the daughter of Tzion is all her splendor." Chazal (Midrash Eichah) define splendor as the Shechinah, Divine Presence. Rabbi Yehudah says, "Come and see how beloved are the children before Hashem. When the Sanhedrin HaGadol, Great Sanhedrin, was exiled, Hashem's Shechinah did not accompany it. When the Kohanim were sent into exile, Hashem's Shechinah did not accompany them. It remained in Tzion. When the children, however, were exiled, then the Shechinah left with them. Thus, the departure of Tzion's splendor coincided with the departure of the Shechinah.

The Midrash suggests another definition for the word splendor. The children themselves comprise Klal Yisrael's splendor. The shainkeit, beauty of Klal Yisrael, is its children, its legacy, its future. Jewish children are the living splendor of our people. On a trip to Eretz Yisrael during the 1950's, Horav Zelik Epstein, zl, Rosh Yeshivah of Shaar HaTorah, took his young son (Horav) Kalmen (present Rosh Yeshivah) to visit the Brisker Rav, zl. At the end of the visit, the Brisker Rav turned to Rav Zelik and said, "Take your son to Yeshivas Eitz Chaim and allow him to see the cheder children learning Torah and their rebbeim teaching them. That is the sheinkheit, the splendor of Eretz Yisrael."

True beauty is neither merely skin deep, nor is it in the eyes of the beholder. True beauty is intrinsic, dignified, inspiring and, like children – who represent our survival and future – enduring. They are our enduring legacy, our future. They represent true beauty.

ושמת את שתי האבנים על כתפת האפד אבני זכרון לבני ישראל ונשא אהרן את שמותם לפני ד' על שתי כתפיו לזכרון

You shall place the two stones on the shoulder straps of the Eiphod, remembrance stones for Bnei Yisrael; and Aharon shall carry their names before Hashem on both his shoulders as a remembrance. (28:12)

Twice remembrance. The remembrance is for Hashem – not Aharon HaKohen. Chazal say (Midrash Rabbah 38:8) that the names of the Shevatim, tribes, which are engraved upon the stones of the Eiphod, cannot be the subject of the remembrance. (They probably are not being remembered.) Remembrance is a term that applies to a subject that either is not here or is not presently visible. Since the names of the tribes are visible, the term remembrance is not applicable to them (in this context); rather, by seeing the names of the tribes, Hashem acknowledges their tzidkus, righteousness. What is their righteousness?

Horav Reuven Karlinstein, zl, cites a passage from the Talmud 56a, "Yaakov Avinu called together his sons, because he wished to reveal to them the Keitz ha'Yamin, the end of the withdrawal of Hashem's Right Hand from battle against the enemies of the Jewish People. [This means that when the enemy destroyed the Bais Hamikdash and sent our nation into exile, Hashem's Right Hand (so to speak) was drawn behind His back, in a state of withdrawal. In the Messianic era, He will return His right hand – which means, metaphorically, that He will destroy our enemies and return us from exile.] The Divine Presence departed from him, causing the Patriarch to be concerned. His first thought was that perhaps, like his ancestors, he could have a blemish in his family. (Avraham Avinu begot Yishmael, and Yitzchak Avinu fathered Eisav.) Sensing his concern, his sons immediately declared, "Shema Yisrael, Hashem Elokeinu, Hashem Echad. Just as there is only One deity in your heart, so, too, is there only One in our hearts. Yaakov responded, Baruch Shem Kavod Malchuso L'olam Va'ed, Ein Od Milvado, "There is no one besides Him."

Yichud Hashem, the unity of Hashem, means believing with total conviction that, besides Hashem, no other power exists. The tribes all declared unanimously that their belief in Hashem as Echad, the One and only, was undeviating from the belief of their forebears. Yaakov had nothing to worry about. The emunah in Hashem that he imparted to his sons had achieved its purpose. This was their tzidkus, achieving a belief in the unity of Hashem on the same level as Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaakov.

Eid Od Milvado applies to every aspect, decision, and situation in our life. It applies, not only: during war, when the situation appears to be overwhelming; or when the doctor's prognosis is far from encouraging; or when the principal, shadchan, broker, looks at us with downcast eyes. On the contrary, we always maintain our conviction in only Hashem, because, after all is said and done, only Hashem can solve our problems. Eid Od Milvado: We do not ascribe to Him any form of "assistant." Yet, it goes even further. Emunah is a metzius, an entity, a self-contained existence.

The following incident (quoted by Rav Karlinstein), which took place a number of years ago, gives us an idea of the madreigah, plateau, of emunah inherent in one who understands the depth of conviction lived by our Torah giants. To them, emunah meant much more than faith. It was a metzius.

An observant Jew was a member of the Chevra Kaddisha, Jewish Burial Society. His "day" job was his occupation as a barber. While he owned a barber shop on Bnei Brak's main street, he would do "house calls" for certain venerable Torah giants. One of those was Horav Yitzchak Aizik Sher, zl, son-in-law of the Alter, zl, of Slabodka, and successor as its Rosh Yeshivah. Since the barber had the merit to cut the hair of such a sage, he would often ask him halachic questions concerning the laws pertaining to Chevra Kaddisha. The Rosh Yeshivah was impressed with this man's attitude to Torah study and his meticulous adherence to Halachah. They became very close, with the Rosh Yeshivah holding his barber in great esteem. One day, Rav Aizik said to the barber, "When the time comes for me to be called to my eternal rest, I want you to prepare my body for burial." This was the unique relationship the Rosh Yeshivah had with this man.

One day, the barber, who was an intelligent man who had studied in the yeshivos that graced the Hungarian spiritual landscape, asked if he could attend the Rosh Yeshivah's shmuessen, ethical discourses. Rav Aizik replied in the affirmative. He then asked if his friends, themselves also Hungarian immigrants who had all studied in yeshivah, could also attend the shmuessen. The Rosh Yeshivah agreed in principle, but he added one stipulation, "I would like them to come here, so that I can first meet them."

These men came the next day to the Rosh Yeshivah's house. "Welcome!" the Rosh Yeshivah began. "Forgive me for asking such a question of such a group of outstanding, observant Jews, but, since I do not know you, I must ask, "Do you have emunah in Hashem?"

The men were incredulous. Is this the type of question one asks of an observant Jew? "What is the question?" they asked. "Certainly! We have emunah." Then Rav Aizik turned to a member of the group and asked, "Where do you work?" "In Tel Aviv." Bnei Brak was just a small town at the time. It was a far cry from the bustling metropolis that it is today. Rav Aizik asked each one of the men where he worked, and the response was the same: "Tel Aviv." "How do you get to work each day?" he asked. "By bus" was their immediate response. "Is the bus driver a Torah observant Jew?" Rav Aizik asked. "No. He is not," they replied. "Do you mean that he drives on Shabbos?" Once again, they replied that he was a full-fledged non-observant Jew.

We must take into consideration that a mechallel Shabbos, Shabbos desecrator, in those days was quite different than it is today. Today's mechallel Shabbos, for the most part, is a tinok she'nishbah, child that was taken captive. (This means that he neither had an opportunity to study, nor did his parents provide him with a Torah observant environment and education. Thus, his lack of observance cannot be held against him.) Then, the mechallel Shabbos was a Jew who knew better, but for various reasons (such as spiritual freedom, economics, social acceptance), turned his back on the religion of his forebears and rejected his Jewish heritage.

Hearing this, the Rosh Yeshivah looked at them and asked, "Forgive me for asking, but are you not afraid to travel by bus with a driver who is dead? He is dead! How can you risk your lives in such a manner?"

The men looked at one another, thinking that the Rosh Yeshivah had lost it and suddenly become unhinged. What was he

saying? How could he make such a statement – claiming that their driver was dead?

Rav Aizik continued, "You claim that you believe in Hashem; yet, you ignore the fact that Chazal say that one who is a rasha, wicked (because he knowingly, willfully, desecrates the Torah), is considered to be dead. When Chazal make a statement, it is a reality. If they say a rasha is dead – he is dead! You travel every day with a dead driver. I am not instructing you how to live, but be aware that when Chazal make a statement, it is Kodesh Kodoshim, Holy of Holies. Emunah is a metzius. [To believe in Hashem is a reality. Not to accept this entity, is not to believe in Hashem.] This is why the Kohen Gadol wore the stones with the names of the Shevatim on his shoulders as a remembrance of their righteousness. Their belief in the unity of Hashem was real.

והאבנים תהיין על שמות בני ישראל שתים עשרה על שמת

The stones shall be according to the names of Bnei Yisrael, twelve according to their names. (28:21)

The Choshen Mishpat was the Breastplate that the Kohen Gadol wore on his chest. It was a special addition to his "wardrobe", in that the front of it contained twelve precious stones, each engraved with the name of a different Shevet, Tribe. It is most noteworthy that the stones were engraved with the names of the "children," rather than that of the "forefathers," the Avos, Patriarchs. Indeed, the Kedushas Levi wonders why the names of the shevatim are engraved, as opposed to the names of the Avos, in whose merit we always pray and seek salvation and atonement.

Actually, the Choshen Mishpat did contain the names of the Avos. The Choshen Mishpat provided a vital service, in that it was a medium through which Hashem would communicate with Klal Yisrael through the Kohen Gadol, who was the only one who could decipher the message. When an urgent question facing the nation was presented to the Choshen Mishpat, the answer would come via the illumination of the necessary letters which would spell out the answer. The answer was understood by the Kohen Gadol, who knew how to "read" the letters. In order for this mode of communication to work, it was necessary that the Choshen contained all the letters of the alphabet. None of the names of the shevatim contains certain letters: kuf, tzaddik, ches, tes. To resolve this problem, the names of Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaakov, our Avos, were also engraved on the Choshen, as well as the words Shivtei Yeshurun. Thus, all of the letters of the Hebrew alphabet were included. Each stone contained six letters; all were equal in number. Nonetheless, while the names of the Avos were also engraved, it was only to supplement the names of the shevatim, in whose merit the Choshen functioned. We return to our original query: Why choose the merit of the children instead of the fathers?

The Kedushas Levi says that Aharon HaKohen, Klal Yisrael's first designated Kohen Gadol, had the distinction of being the first to wear the Choshen over his chest. This is attributed to a pasuk (Devarim 18:5), which teaches, "For him has Hashem chosen from among all your tribes, to stand and minister in the Name of Hashem, him and his sons, all of the days." The Kohanim were selected from among Klal Yisrael for the express purpose of ministering before Hashem. As Kohen Gadol and thus Patriarch of his large family of Kohanim, Aharon was selected as Kohen Gadol. (There are other reasons, but, for our purposes, we will focus on this reason.)

As a result of the selection of Aharon to be the progenitor of the family of Kohanim, the other tribes might feel that Hashem has greater love for the Kohanim than He does for the rest of the Jewish nation. To countervail this erroneous assumption, the name of each of the shevatim was engraved on the Choshen. All were included – each was equal – no preference of one over the other. No one has preferential treatments no one has an exclusive on Hashem's love. We are all the same before Him. The Kohanim were merely the intermediaries, the go-betweens, between Hashem and Klal Yisrael. The Kohanim's positions and support came from the people whose trust they must constantly earn. This is symbolized by the engraved names of the shevatim on the Choshen.

In Messages from Rav Pam, Rabbi Sholom Smith quotes the Rosh Yeshivah, zl, deriving from this concept that regardless of a Jew's station in life, background, family pedigree, financial portfolio – every Jew is beloved by Hashem. We are all equal. No Jew should feel inadequate, worthless, before His Creator. Nor should he think that Hashem does not take an active interest in his existence and achievements.

How sad it is that so many people judge themselves through the eyes of others. If I am not prominent enough to be honored by an organization, or if my name is unworthy of a spread in the paper; if I lack the funds to garner my worthiness, or if my family name does not ring a bell in anyone's mind – this is not a reason for me to devalue myself. One's value is not determined by the false and shameful criteria established by contemporary society and its enablers. Perhaps the following analogy will serve as a means for buttressing the self-esteem of those who are victims of society's disingenuousness.

A well-known speaker commenced his seminar by holding up a twenty - dollar bill. To the audience of two hundred, he asked, "Who would like this twenty - dollar bill?" Hands began to rise throughout the room. "I am going to give this twenty dollar bill to one of you, but first, let me do this."

He proceeded to crumple up the bill and then asked, "Who still wants it?" Still the hands were up in the air. "Well," he mused, "what if I do this?" He dropped the bill to the floor, stepped on it in such a manner that he seemed to grind it into the floor. He picked it up – all crumpled and filthy and asked, "Now, who still wants the bill?" The hands that had originally been raised continued to remain in their prone position. The condition of the bill did not affect their willingness to make an easy "twenty."

"My friends, you have all learned a valuable lesson. No matter what I did to the bill, you still wanted it, because its value did not diminish. It was still worth twenty dollars. Many times in the course of our lives we are dropped, crumpled and ground into the dirt by the decisions we make and by the various adverse circumstances that come our way. There are times when we feel worthless, but we must remember that regardless, of what has happened or what will happen, we never lose our value in Hashem's eyes.

To Hashem, crumpled or finely creased, dirty or clean, we still remain priceless to Him. The value of our lives is not determined by who we are or what we do, but by Whose we are! We belong to Hashem. This is the source of our value.

וְיָרְשׁוּלַיִם עִירְךָ בְּרַחֲמִים תָּשׁוּב – V'Yerushalayim Ircha b'rachamim tashuv. And to Yerushalayim, Your city, may You return with compassion.

We pray for the return of Hashem's Presence to Yerushalayim. Although no place in the universe is devoid of His Presence, it is felt more tangibly in the Holy City, the center of the world, the eye of the universe. In a meaningful exposition of the theme of this brachah, Horav Yitzchak Kirzner, zl, explains that Hashem's Presence is not to be found in a particular fixed place. Paradoxically, He is to be found most easily where people feel a sense of anguish over His absence. [Perhaps this is why we "feel" Hashem's Presence so strongly at a sacred site, such as the Kosel. It is here that we feel the longing; we sense His absence.] Furthermore, those who have a sense of anguish over His Presences in exile/in concealment from us, are most prone and open to a total relationship with Him. Wherever Jews are dispersed throughout the Diaspora and are anguished over the lack of Hashem's Presence – it is specifically there and to them that He is near. I think this is the underlying motif of V'asu Li Mikdash v'shachanti b'socham; "And they shall make for Me a Sanctuary so that I will dwell among them" (Shemos 25:8). "Within them." When we yearn for Hashem, when we demonstrate our anguish over His not being with us – He is within us. He comes where He is invited and missed.

Rav Kook Torah

Tetzaveh: The High Priest's Golden Crown

Perhaps most striking of the special garments worn by the Kohen Gadol (High Priest) was the tzitz. This was a gold plate tied around the forehead, engraved with the words "Holy to God." What was the significance of this priestly crown?

Rav Kook explained that the tzitz, fashioned out of pure gold, reflected the loftiest spiritual riches. The crown's placement on the forehead - the location of our inner drive (ratzon) for good and holiness - symbolized the kohen's aspirations for the highest good contained within his inner soul.

The Talmud teaches that the tzitz encircled the kohen's forehead "from one ear to the other" (Shabbat 63b). What is the significance of the ears in relation to the tzitz?

Two Types of Listening

The ear is an organ which we use to hear and listen. One aspect of listening, represented by one ear, is directed above - receptive to the inner voice of elevated thought. The tzitz extended from this ear to the forehead, indicating that its function was to conduct these lofty thoughts to the kohen's inner will. In short, it symbolized the kohen's aspirations to actualize his loftiest goals, implementing them in life, character traits, and deeds.

The second aspect of listening, our awareness of the physical world below, is represented by the second ear. This connection allows the physical world to acquire a new inner content, while providing practical knowledge which could not be attained in the spiritual realm. Here the spiritual is enriched through insight into the material world, its actions and emotions.

The tzitz encompassed both types of listening - receptiveness to lofty ideals from above, and practical understanding from the physical world below. It provided a channel connecting these two realms, uniting the world with all of its disparate parts.

In this way, the Kohen Gadol became whole and integrated, aware of how the physical can extend and enrich the spiritual realm. He could serve as a unifying force for the people, who share this yearning for complete unity.

This ability to bridge the physical and spiritual worlds corresponds to the essence of the mission of the kohanim. They are a conduit, connecting the Jewish people to God and God to the Jewish people. The Talmud describes them as sheluchei dedan - our representatives, as they bring Israel's offerings to God. And they are also sheluchei deRachamana - God's emissaries, bringing God's blessings and Torah to Israel.

The placement of the tzitz, encompassing both ears, indicated that the Kohen Gadol should not suffer from a disconnect between his spiritual and physical sides. As a conduit between humanity and God, he needed to be attuned to the spiritual, while still in touch with the material world. (Sapphire from the Land of Israel. Adapted from Ein Eyah vol. IV, Shabbat 6:72, p. 113)

See also: Tetzaveh: The High Priest's Clothes and the Convert

Drasha By Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky Parshas Tetzaveh Bell Bottoms

This week the Kohen Gadol (High Priest) is commanded in sartorial law. The Torah instructs the creation of eight intricate garments that must be worn at all times by Ahron. Each vestment functions on a specific spiritual level. One, however, seems to also have a mundane raison d'être.

The Torah instructs the Kohen Gadol to wear a Me'il, a four cornered blue-wool garment worn like a sandwich-sign. The hem of this majestic robe was adorned with an alternating array of 72 functioning gold bells and small pomegranates. Unlike most of the vestments, where the Torah just commands what to sew, the Torah explains the purpose of the Me'il. Exodus 28:34 "Its sound (i.e., the bells) shall be heard upon entering the Sanctuary before Hashem." The Torah continues to tell us that if the

Kohen Gadol dares enter the sanctuary without that bell adorned garment, he is subject to a decree of untimely death.

It is nearly impossible to fathom divine reasoning for each vestment. The written Torah does not give an explicit explanation as to why the Kohen must wear the belts, tunics, and turbans. Yet when it tells us about the bells at the bottom of the Me'il it justifies their existence with a very mundane reason. "Its sound shall be heard upon entering the Sanctuary before Hashem." Our sages explain that the Torah is teaching a moral lesson: one should announce himself before entering any room.

I am amazed. Does Hashem, who knows every mortal's move, have a "knock before entering" sign on the doorway of His sanctuary? Why, of all places, is this the place to teach etiquette? Couldn't the Torah have found more mundane whereabouts to direct the people about proper behavior upon entering a room?

The young widow who entered Reb Shlomo Zalman's* study was obviously distraught. In addition to the loneliness and pain she experienced, a sense of urgency was about her. She had recurring pangs of guilt. She wanted to do something spiritual to memorialize her dear husband. Perhaps she should establish a free loan fund or contribute books to the Yeshiva library. Or perhaps there was an act of spiritual self-improvement that she should perform.

Reb Shlomo Zalman waited till she finished and then instructed her to listen to his advice very carefully. "I understand your need to do something spiritual as a tikkun (uplift) for your husband's soul. This is my advice to you. Go out and buy some toys for your children, take them to the park and enjoy life with them. Forget the quest for the great spiritual tikkun and help your children rejoice in life. That will bring the greatest tikkun for your husband."

The Kohen's bells teach us all a great lesson. Upon entering the Holy of Holies, the Kohen's thoughts may become so focused on attaining the high level of spirituality that he may forget simple courtesy. He may forget to knock before entering. The Torah tells us that the search for spirituality can never supersede simple etiquette. We often have dreams and lofty spiritual goals. How many toes do we step upon to achieve them? How many doors do we burst through to prescribe our morals to inattentive ears?

This week the Torah tells us that even the High Priest — the holiest of mortals — as he converges on the Kodosh HaKodoshim — the holiest of places — in the quest to perform the most spiritual of Judaic rites — must remember one simple thing. It is the same thing that the poor farmer must remember before trudging into his home: basic courtesy. Don't forget to knock. And the foremost place to teach us that lesson is the Holy of Holies. Good Shabbos!

* Rabbi Shlomo Zalman Auerbach (1910-1995) was one of the foremost Torah Scholars of our generation. Dean of Yeshiva Kol Torah, his Halachic rulings guided thousands world over. This story is adapted from *And From Jerusalem* his Word c 1995 Hanoch Teller, N.Y.C. Pub Co.

This issue is dedicated in loving memory Nochum Moshe ben Yosef by Sam & Ingrid Davies and Family

Tetzave 5779 by Ben-Tzion Spitz

Commentary based on the Berdichever (Rabbi Levi Yitzchak of Berditchev) - The Upside of Evil (Tetzave)

Evil is unspectacular and always human, and shares our bed and eats at our own table. -W. H. Auden

In describing the construction plans of the Holy Tabernacle, the Torah adds a short line about the fuel needed to light the Menorah, the golden candelabrum, which was one of the special fixtures of the Tabernacle. It states as follows:

"And thou shalt command the children of Israel, that they bring unto thee pure olive oil beaten for the light, to cause a lamp to burn continually." - Exodus 27:22

The Berdichever focuses on the choice of words of "beating" the olive to get light. He compares the olive in this case to one's evil inclination. The evil inclination is constantly enticing us to follow our base desires, to

indulge in what is forbidden and to separate us from spiritual and divine service.

The solution is to "beat" that desire and then elevate that very same desire, to channel it into divine service. To use that passion, that interest, that energy, in holy ventures. We need to consider that if we have some physical yearning, how much stronger should our yearning be for the infinite, for God? If we have some physical fear, how much stronger should our fear and awe of the divine be?

When we've managed to convert that evil inclination, those base desires into spiritual energy, into holy actions, then that evil has become a base, a powerful springboard for good.

This is one of the reasons God has created some distance, some obfuscation between us and Him. For if we constantly, diligently served Him without fail, with pure clarity and devotion, then God would not have the same level of satisfaction from our efforts, from our struggle to overcome our evil inclination, by our conquest of our animalistic instincts and converting ourselves into more spiritual beings. A state of constant bliss is not really bliss. Us mortals need the ups and downs. We need the encounter with our evil inclination to appreciate good, to fight for good, to conquer evil on a regular basis, predominantly in ourselves.

When circumstances have us at a spiritual distance from God and we then "beat" the evil inclination, break the masks that hide us from God and cleave to divine service, God is overjoyed, and it causes a divine light to spread forth.

May we always overcome our negative natural impulses and turn our inner demons into radiant light.

Shabbat Shalom,

Ben-Tzion

Dedication

To Rabbi Asher Brander and the Link Kollel of LA for a wonderful welcome.

Insights into Halacha

Snowballs on Shabbos? by Rabbi Yehuda Spitz

With the 'Arctic Vortex' or 'Polar Blast' recently causing record breaking freezing temperatures all across the Eastern United States (when Niagara Falls freezes over and Polar Bears prefer to be indoors, you know it's C-O-L-D), and over on this side of the pond, the memory of Yerushalayim's 2014 Asarah B'Teves / Erev Shabbos[1]"Blizzard"[2] [seemingly the worst since 5547 (1787),[3] or at least 5717 (1957)][4] still lingering,[5] there is one specific Halachic sheilah that readily comes to mind.[6]

The very same question that this author was asked several times over that snowed-in Yerushalayim Shabbos and ended up addressing in a Shabbos shiur: Is making snowballs permitted on Shabbos? And if not, why not?

Truthfully, the question is far more complex than one might think, with quite interestingly, no clear-cut consensus as to the proper rationales and reasons, even among those poskim who deem it prohibited.

Hotza'ah

Yet, one very important fact is clear. If the Eruv is down, or in a locale that does not have an Eruv, outdoor snowball fights (unless in an enclosed Reshus HaYachid) would certainly be forbidden, as throwing snowballs would transgress the prohibition of Hotza'ah, Carrying.[7] The question would not even start unless referring to a place with a reliable Eruv.

However, to define which actions or set of actions define snowball making, and whether or not it is prohibited is not so simple. Let us explore these issues further.

Muktzeh

First of all, is snow actually Muktzeh? Is one allowed to move it?

The common halachic consensus is that rain is not Muktzeh, even if it fell on Shabbos, as proven by Tosafos(Beitzah 2a s.v. ka and Eruvin 46a s.v. kol), based on the Gemara in Eruvin (45b - 46a), as the moisture existed beforehand in the form of clouds. This is the halacha pesuka.[8] Would the same categorization apply to snow?

Many Acharonim, including the Chavos Yair, Even HaOzer, Maamar Mordechai, and the Butchatcher Rav,[9] as well as many contemporary authorities including the Minchas Shabbos, Rav Tzvi Pesach Frank, Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach, Rav Yosef Shalom Elyashiv, the Debreciner Rav, the Shaarim Metzuyanim B'Halacha, Rav Ovadia Yosef, Rav Chaim Kanievsky, the Rivevos Efraim, the Nishmas Shabbos, and Rav Pesach Eliyahu Falk,[10] do define snow similarly to rain, maintaining that the same rationale permitting utilizing rain on Shabbos applies to snow as well, and it is therefore not Muktzah.

However, Rav Moshe Feinstein,[11] held that snow is indeed considered Muktzeh, as nowadays people generally do not have a real use for it, and is akin to gravel, that its main use is simply to walk on it. Additionally, he held that snow would be prohibited due to another concern as well. In Rav Feinstein's assessment, snow would be considered Nolad (came into existence on Shabbos) if it fell on Shabbos,[12] since, as opposed to rain, true as it might be, nevertheless people do not associate snow with being carried in the clouds.

An interesting upshot of this shitta is that although he held snow is Muktzeh, Rav Moshe did not ascribe any other prohibition to making snowballs. Accordingly, Rav Moshe would hold that if one gathered snow on ErevShabbos and set it aside for a snowball fight on Shabbos (within a proper Erev, of course) then one may make and throw those snowballs on Shabbos.[13]

Boneh

On the other hand, many other authorities, although maintaining that snow itself is not Muktzeh, nevertheless held that making snowballs on Shabbos is problematic for other reasons, chief among them Boneh Building. The Rambam,[14] cited as halacha by the Mishnah Berurah, discussing cheese making, rules that anytime one takes separate parts of an item and joins them together to make a new item, is 'similar to Boneh' and therefore prohibited on Shabbos.

The Chavos Yair, and more contemporarily, Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach, and Rav Chaim Kanievsky,[15] as well as others, apply this rule to the formation of snowballs, prohibiting them. Although by making snowballs one is not actually creating something new, he is still giving form to something that was previously not extant, which gives the appearance of and is akin to the halachic definition of building.

Yet, other poskim, including Rav Moshe Feinstein, the Debreciner Rav, and the Nishmas Shabbos[16] disagree, maintaining that the prohibition of Boneh can only apply when one builds something which has at least a minimal semblance of permanence. On the other hand, snowballs, they argue, which have a transient and ephemeral existence lasting a grand total of several seconds from time of throwing, should not be including in the 'building' category. Nonetheless, they concede that when it comes to building snowmen, which generally are meant to stick around until they melt several days later, this would be proscribed due to Boneh.

Risuk

Another potential prohibition involved with making snowballs on Shabbos is Risuk, mashing or crushing, related to the prohibition of Sechita, squeezing (as in squeezing out juice from a fruit). The Shulchan Aruch[17] regarding washing one's hands on Shabbos with icy or snowy water, rules that one should be careful not to rub his hands together with the ice as it may crush the ice, causing it to melt and him to unwittingly transgress the prohibition of Risuk.

Several authorities, including the Chavos Yair, and the Debreciner Rav[18] apply this ruling to making snowballs. In the formation of a snowball by applying direct pressure to it, one cannot avoid crushing the snow, causing a bit of it to melt. Ergo, they explain, snowball making would still be prohibited on Shabbos due to this reason.

However, Rav Moshe Feinstein and the Nishmas Shabbos[19] disagree. They aver that any miniscule amount of water that is possibly melted while forming a snowball outdoors in the freezing cold is definitely not noticeable, and in no way would this constitute crushing or squeezing out a liquid.

More Melachos?

Other potential prohibitions in the formation of snowballs mentioned by several authorities and rejected by others include: Ma'mar, gathering

(i.e. gathering the snow to make the snowballs),[20] Uvda D'Chol, weekday activities,[21] and Soser, destroying (i.e. when the thrown snowball hits its target and consequently falls apart).[22]

In the final analysis, although there are poskim who give a dispensation to allow young children to make and throw snowballs on Shabbos,[23] nevertheless, the majority of authorities rule that it is assur, period.

In fact, and unknown to most, this contemporary sheilah is not as current as many suspect, as already in the 1690s (!) the Chavos Yair exhorted that if one sees children throwing snowballs at each other on Shabbos, one should attempt to stop them.[24]

In the final analysis, although they do not see eye to eye in their rationales, and there is no clear cut consensus as to the singular reason why it should be prohibited, all the same, the hachra'as haposkim, is indeed that making snowballs, and certainly making snowmen, is assur on Shabbos.[25] Just another reason to play inside on Shabbos when a 'White Winter Wonderland' beckons from the great outdoors or a 'Polar Vortex' comes a-knocking.

This article was written L'iluy Nishmas R' Chaim Baruch Yehuda ben Dovid Tzvi, L'Refuah Sheleimah for R' Shlomo Yoel ben Chaya Leah, and Shoshana Leah bas Dreiza Liba, Rina Geulah bas Dreiza Liba, Rochel Miriam bas Dreiza Liba, Shayna bas Feiga, Mechoel ben Shelly, Mordechai ben Sarah, and l'zechus Shira Yaffa bas Rochel Miriam v'chol yotzei chalatzeha for a yeshua sheleimah teikif u'miyad!

Talmud Tips

Chullin 65-71 by Rabbi Moshe Newman

The Kosher "Sea-Monster"

Rabbi Yossi ben Dormaskis says, "A liviyatan is a kosher type of fish."

While you may not be familiar with a kosher fish called liviyatan from the supermarket nowadays, you are likely to be familiar with this name from learning Rashi in the beginning of the Chumash (1:21). Regarding the fifth day of Creation, when the fish, fowl and crawling life was created, the verse states, "And G-d created the great tananim." Rashi first explains tananim to be large fish in the sea. (Today, the word tanin refers to a crocodile or alligator.)

However, Rashi also cites a Midrash that teaches that these tananim were two large creatures that were originally created as a pair — a male and female. But, the Midrash states, G-d saw that the world would not sustain their reproduction, and He proceeded to kill the female and salt her for the righteous in the World-to-Come. (This idea that they were created as two and then reduced to one is deduced from the lack of the letter yod in the word's suffix that denotes a plural noun.)

Rabbi Yossi ben Domaskis, in a beraita on our daf, states that he learns that it is a kosher type of fish from verses in Sefer Iyov which describe the awesomeness of the liviyatan. In chapter 41, verse 7 alludes to its scales, and verse 22 to its fins, as explained in the gemara and in Rashi's commentary there.

The Maharsha questions the need for Rabbi Yossi ben Dormaskis to teach us that the liviyatan is a type of kosher fish since we have already been taught that it was preserved as a reward for the righteous to eat in the World-to-Come. This clearly indicates that it is kosher!

The Maharsha answers that without Rabbi Yossi's teaching, based on the verse in Iyov, we might have thought that a liviyatan is not a fish at all. Rather, perhaps it is a different type of kosher creature that lives in the water, such as a gigantic goose, which is not a fish. Therefore, the Sage needed to teach that it is in fact a type of fish.

A different answer to the Maharsha's question is offered by the Maharitz Chiyut here. He notes another Midrash (Vayikra Rabbah, Shemini) that teaches that the fins of the liviyatan will be used in the future to perform the mitzvah of shechita on a gigantic type of ox. The Midrash states that although this type of shechita with an unsmooth utensil is not considered kosher according to halacha, G-d proclaims that "a new law of the Torah will go forth from Me." The Yafeh To'ar commentary notes that this is difficult to understand since we are taught that mitzvahs will not be voided or changed in the future, and the laws of shechita will not be voided or changed. He explains the intent of the Midrash to be that the

shechita done with the fins of the liviyatan in the future will be permitted as a hor'aat sha'ah, an act permitted by G-d only at that specific time. Only at that time, when G-d will make a celebration for the righteous in the future, will the normal laws of shechita not be in effect. And likewise, asserts the Maharitz Chiyut, we might have thought that although the liviyatan is not a kosher type of fish, it would be permitted for the righteous to eat at that special Chiyut, we might have thought that although the liviyatan is not a kosher type of fish, it would be permitted for the righteous to eat at that special occasion. Rabbi Yossi ben Dormaskis teaches that this is not so. The liviyatan, he teaches, is a kosher fish, and is permitted to eat even without any hor'aat sha'ah dispensation.

To summarize, the key word in the Rabbi Yossi ben Dormaski's statement is "fish" according to the Maharsha, whereas the word to emphasize according to the Maharitz Chiyut is "kosher".

· Chullin 67b

Like a Kosher Bird on a Wire

Rabbi Elazar the son of Rabbi Tzaddok says, "A string is pulled taut, and the bird stands on it. If the bird stands with divided toes, two on one side and two on the other, we can be certain that this (type of) bird is not kosher; if it puts three toes on one side and one on the other, it is kosher."

This "string test" is taught in a beraita listing various bodily signs of empirical evidence which indicate if a bird is of a kosher species or not. A bird that is called a do'res, is certainly not kosher. (While do'res means "trample" in Modern Hebrew, it is meant to describe a predatory nature when referring to a non-kosher bird according to halacha.) Other ways to see if a bird is do'res or not are taught in the gemara and by the Rishonim. For example: eating a living creature, catching and eating its food in the air, or lifting its food up to its mouth instead of pecking at it on the ground.

It is interesting to note that, unlike the signs of land animals, the signs of non-kosher birds are not mentioned in the Torah. Only their names. And since there are more categories of kosher birds than non-kosher ones, the Torah taught us in a "short manner" — an important principle in teaching — the fewer ones that are not-kosher rather than the larger list of kosher ones. (It is recommended to see Shulchan Aruch Yoreh Deah 82 for the intricate details of the signs and the halachot regarding kosher birds.)

· Chullin 65a

Torah Weekly Parshat Tetzaveh

by Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair - www.seasonsofthemoon.com

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 courtyard of the Mishkan. This offering should be accompanied by a meal-offering and libations of wine and oil. G-d commands that another altar be built, for incense, from acacia wood and covered with gold. Aharon and his descendants should burn incense on this altar every day.

Insights

Being a Professional Human Being

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

I was in a music store the other day. In the back of the store I heard someone playing the piano. Of course it wasn't a real piano. Those are a rare breed nowadays, rarely spotted outside the likes of Carnegie Hall. This was an amazingly life-like electric counterfeit. It sounded amazing. The music coming from this piano was really beautiful and I turned to see who it was that was coaxing such divine sounds from this electric beast. My eyes alighted on a guy in his thirties, somewhat overweight, with a blue shadow of a two-day beard around his jowls, and dark rings under his eyes. The contrast between him and his music was to me — to say the least — quite arresting. As I was walking to the back of the store I said to him, "You play really beautifully." Without looking up he said, "Ani yodea," which means "I know". I thought of Peter Shaffer's play "Amadeus" about Mozart. The main idea in "Amadeus" is that you don't have to be a beautiful human being to make beautiful music. Shaffer's depiction of Mozart is an uncouth slob with the manners and the sensitivity of an elephant.

"You shall make vestments of sanctity for Aharon your brother for glory and splendor."

"Glory" was due to Aharon and his descendants by the mere fact of their lineage, even though their abilities were given by G-d. "Splendor" comes to a person only through his own effort and accomplishment.

Rav Shlomo Wolbe said that the definition of a Jew is "a professional human being". If a Jew doesn't work on his character as hard as an aspiring concert pianist practices to get to Carnegie Hall, he will never become an Artist of the Soul.

Source: based on the Malbim

לע"נ

שרה משה בת ר' יעקב אליעזר ע"ה