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INTERNET PARSHA SHEET ON Tetzave/Zachor - Purim - 5786

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Rav Moshe Feinstein zt"l's 40th Yahrzeit is **Taanis Esther** this Monday; Rav Moshe died the evening of the 13th of Adar II, 5746 and the Levaya on Taanis Esther in MTJ and in all the surrounding streets was attended by more than 20,000 Jews; well over 100,000 attended his Levaya and Kvura Shushan Purim in Yerushalem; Rav Moshe is buried in Har Hamenuchos

Rav Moshe Feinstein

Torah, Work, and Keeping Torah "Fixed"

Chatgpt summary of

Shark Tank Podcast February 23, 2026 coinciding with the **40th yahrzeit of Rabbi Moshe Feinstein zt"l** — offers exploration of Rav Moshe's worldview on how a Jew should live a Torah-centered life in the real world. Hosted by **Yaakov Wolff** with guest **Rabbi Moshe Kurtz**, and highlights lasting life principles from Rav Moshe's teachings: how to balance Torah and worldly responsibilities, how to make career and life choices with Torah values, and — most importantly — what it means to keep *Torascha keva* (your Torah fixed and central) amidst competing demands.

On the fortieth yahrzeit of Rav Moshe Feinstein זצ"ל, it is fitting not only to recall his towering halachic genius, but to reflect upon the broader worldview that animated his life and leadership. Rav Moshe was more than the preeminent posek of his generation, more than the author of *Igros Moshe*, more than the Rosh Yeshiva of Mesivta Tifereth Jerusalem. He embodied a Torah that addressed the lived realities of Jews navigating work, family, community, and spiritual aspiration in the modern world.

Much has been written about Rav Moshe's responsa — thousands of teshuvot that charted the course of American Orthodox life in the twentieth century. Yet beyond the specific rulings lies a unifying theme: Rav Moshe offered a model for how a Jew can live a Torah-centered life fully engaged in the real world. His teachings speak directly to enduring questions: How should one structure a life in which *parnassah* and prayer compete for time? When does full-time learning make sense, and when must one turn to worldly responsibilities? How does one ensure that Torah remains central even when life grows complex and demanding? At the heart of Rav Moshe's legacy is a simple yet profound directive from Pirkei Avos: *aseh Torascha keva* — make your Torah fixed.

Torah in the Real World

The challenge of integrating Torah and worldly responsibility is not new, but in America it took on unique dimensions. Rav Moshe lived in an era when Torah observance had to take root in a culture defined by professional ambition, economic mobility, and social openness. He himself was a scholar

of unparalleled erudition, yet he was deeply engaged in communal leadership, public advocacy, and the daily realities of American Jewish life. For Rav Moshe, Torah was not meant to be confined to the *beis medrash*. It was not an island detached from commerce, medicine, law, or civic life. Nor was it meant to be diluted by those realities. Rather, Torah was to serve as the guiding framework through which every decision was filtered and every path evaluated. This is perhaps why Rav Moshe's guidance continues to resonate. He did not offer abstract ideals divorced from circumstance. His Torah addressed people where they were — young men considering *kollel*, parents worrying about *parnassah*, professionals navigating demanding careers, communities grappling with modern pressures. His message was not escapist, nor was it accommodationist. It was principled and practical.

Kollel Is Not a Binary

One of the enduring misconceptions in contemporary discourse is that Torah commitment is an all-or-nothing proposition: either one learns full-time or one has compromised. Rav Moshe's worldview was more nuanced. Full-time Torah study is an extraordinary calling. But the central question is not merely how many hours one sits in the *beis medrash*; it is whether Torah is truly "fixed" — whether it occupies the core of one's identity and priorities. A person whose schedule includes work can nonetheless live a life in which Torah shapes thought, aspiration, and daily conduct. Rav Moshe understood that life unfolds across stages. Circumstances shift. Responsibilities grow. The measure of a life is not solely the quantity of uninterrupted years in *kollel*, but whether Torah remains the compass by which decisions are made. The issue is not binary; it is orientational.

Education and Parnassah Through a Torah Lens

In a society that equates higher education with success and stability, Rav Moshe approached such assumptions with care. He did not dismiss secular education outright, nor did he embrace it uncritically. Instead, he insisted that choices regarding schooling and career must be grounded in Torah values. College is not automatically synonymous with *parnassah*, and *parnassah* itself is not the ultimate metric of a life well lived. Every educational path carries spiritual implications — environments, influences, priorities. A Jew must evaluate these not only in terms of income or prestige, but in terms of long-term spiritual direction. This perspective does not reject engagement with the world. It demands that engagement be deliberate and guided. Decisions about education and livelihood must be measured against a larger question: Will this path strengthen or weaken my ability to live a Torah-oriented life?

Aseh Torascha Keva: Orientation, Not Just Hours

Perhaps the most powerful lesson of Rav Moshe's life is his understanding of *aseh Torascha keva*. To make Torah "fixed" is not merely to assign it a regular time slot in the day. It is to make Torah the fixed point around which the rest of life revolves. Torah is a compass, not a clock. A person may spend hours in professional work and yet be profoundly Torah-centered if those hours are framed by Torah priorities. Conversely, one may sit in study without internalizing Torah as the organizing principle of life. To live with Torah as *keva* means that decisions — financial, professional, familial — are not made in isolation from spiritual purpose. It means that success is defined by fidelity to Torah values, not merely by external achievement. Rav Moshe's own life demonstrated this orientation. His schedule was crowded with communal burdens and halachic inquiries from around the world, yet Torah remained the fixed axis of his existence.

Career as a Spiritual Decision

Modern professions often demand more than time; they demand identity. Fields such as medicine, law, finance, and academia require intense commitment, continuous education, and emotional investment. Rav Moshe did not render blanket judgments about these careers. Instead, he invited individuals to evaluate them through a Torah lens. Does this path allow for sustained Torah growth?

Will it strengthen family life or strain it?

Will it elevate one's character or erode it? These are not peripheral questions. They are central. Career is not merely an economic choice; it is a spiritual

trajectory. To approach it without Torah guidance is to surrender orientation to circumstance. Rav Moshe's model encourages engagement with eyes open and values intact. One can pursue demanding professions, but only if Torah remains the master priority and not the casualty of ambition.

Compassionate Psak

Rav Moshe's greatness was not only intellectual brilliance. It was also profound human sensitivity. His responsa reveal not merely a command of sources but an acute awareness of the people who stood behind each question. Halachah, in his hands, was not cold abstraction. It was Torah applied to living souls. He listened carefully, understood context, and sought solutions that upheld fidelity to halachah while recognizing human complexity. This care-driven approach is one of his most enduring legacies. It teaches that Torah leadership requires both precision and compassion. A posek must be rooted in sources, but also attuned to struggle, vulnerability, and circumstance. Such halachah is not rigid; it is alive. It does not bend truth, but it recognizes the human being before it.

Living Torah Beyond the Beis Medrash

Rav Moshe's life affirms that Torah does not retreat from the world; it transforms it. Work, family life, communal activism — all can become vehicles for avodas Hashem when framed by Torah purpose. One cannot isolate oneself in a self-contained spiritual enclave and imagine that the broader community's condition is irrelevant. Rav Moshe consistently emphasized communal responsibility. Spiritual isolation is neither realistic nor desirable. A Jew's well-being is intertwined with the well-being of his community. Thus, activism on behalf of education, kashrus, moral standards, and communal stability is not optional. It is part of living Torah in the real world. Yet such activism must be guided by Torah authority, not driven by ego or impulse.

Flexibility Without Compromise

A remarkable feature of Rav Moshe's approach is that it allows for flexibility without compromise. Life circumstances vary. Not every individual's path will look the same. But flexibility in form does not mean surrender in substance. Torah remains central. Priorities remain clear. Orientation remains fixed. This balance — principled yet practical — enabled Rav Moshe to guide an entire generation navigating unprecedented change. He neither retreated from modern challenges nor capitulated to them. He responded with clarity, humility, and unwavering fidelity to Torah.

Why This Matters Today

Forty years after his passing, the questions Rav Moshe addressed remain urgent. Jews continue to grapple with balancing work and learning, ambition and devotion, engagement and separation. The pressures of contemporary life may be even more intense than in his time. Rav Moshe's message offers a path forward. Torah must be central, not peripheral. Career and education must be evaluated through Torah values. Communal responsibility cannot be ignored. And halachah must be applied with both rigor and compassion. To commemorate his yahrtzeit is not merely to honor a giant of Torah scholarship. It is to recommit to the model he lived — a life in which Torah is not an accessory but the foundation; not an isolated pursuit but the animating force of every decision. Rav Moshe Feinstein taught that one need not choose between Torah and life. Rather, one must choose to make Torah the life within life — the fixed axis around which everything else turns. May his memory continue to guide us in making our Torah truly *keva*, and in living it with integrity, wisdom, and heart.

Notes-to-Tetzaveh-Zachor-5777-529311.pdf

From: **Rabbi Jonathan Schwartz** jschwartz@yutorah..

Points to Ponder – Tetzaveh/Zachor 5777

Pure Olive Oil (27:20). Rashi notes that the oil for the Menorah had to be pure—without sediment—while that used for Menachos was more flexible. Why the difference? **Rav Moshe Feinstein** zt"l suggested that when illuminating individuals, leadership must be pure. People cannot suspect ulterior or impure motives. Their intentions must be zach (pure) from the outset.

And They Shall Take the Gold and Techeiles (28:5). Rashi explains that the Chochmei Lev themselves took the materials to make the garments. Why must they take the donations directly? **Rav Moshe** Feinstein zt"l explained that this teaches a valuable lesson: when beginning a mitzvah, one should complete it fully. While division of labor increases efficiency in physical matters, in spiritual matters the complete action is ideal. Additionally, Rav Moshe noted that donations should be directed to Gedolim who can properly guide which projects merit support.

And the Mizbeiach Shall Be Kodesh Kodashim (29:37). Why is the Mizbeiach HaNechoshes called Kodesh Kodashim, while the Mizbeiach HaZahav is called only Kodesh? **Rav Moshe** Feinstein zt"l offered two possibilities: (1) When one's actions are Kodesh near the Aron (in the Beis HaMedrash), they must be Kodesh Kodashim when farther away. (2) One in the Beis HaMedrash is already regarded as Kodesh Kodashim, and others assume his actions reflect that sanctity. Therefore, a Talmid Chacham must ensure his conduct is exemplary.

Each Day When He Cleans the Candles He Shall Offer the Ketores

(30:7). **Rav Moshe** Feinstein zt"l explained that although the Ketores was offered privately, its fragrance spread widely—the Gemara (Yoma 39b) teaches that women in Yerushalayim did not need perfume due to its scent. Similarly, someone who spreads Torah through personal example must recognize that private actions radiate influence far beyond the home.

Remember What Amalek Did (Devarim 25:17). Chazal teach that Zechira is verbal while not forgetting is in the heart. Yet memory functions in the brain—why emphasize the heart? **Rav Moshe** Feinstein zt"l explained that we are meant not only to remember Amalek's evil intellectually, but to feel it deeply—to recognize how low a person can descend and ensure we never reach such darkness.

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Parshas Tetzaveh

Shoshanas Yakov Insights

The Shoshanas Yakov poem which we recite following the reading of the Megilla contains the words "L'hodeea she'kol kovecha lo yeivoshu v'lo yeekolmu lanetzach kol hachosim Bach." This statement really sums up what Purim is all about. Purim teaches us that all those "who put their hope and faith in You (kovecha) will never be embarrassed or humiliated forever, all those who take refuge (chosim) in You."

This is one of the main lessons of the reading of the Megilla. Those who put their trust and reliance in the Ribono shel Olam will never come out wanting. This means to say that the story of the Megilla is a story of bitachon (trust) that salvation comes from Hashem. Klal Yisrael put their trust in the Ribono shel Olam and they were rewarded with the nes of Purim, the salvation of Klal Yisrael.

At first glance, it is not so apparent where we see Klal Yisrael placing this trust in the Ribono shel Olam. The simple reading is that when Klal Yisrael responded to the decree of Haman by fasting, crying, and wearing sackcloth, that represented teshuva, and by extension, bitachon on the part of Klal Yisrael.

In other words, they did not respond to Haman's decree by hiring lobbyists or engaging in "back door efforts." Rather, they accepted the decree, they did teshuva, they fasted, and they went into mourning. That showed their bitachon in the Ribono shel Olam.

Perhaps on a deeper level, it is even more pronounced than that. When the gezeira was decreed and Klal Yisrael was on the verge of being annihilated, they could have taken solace in the fact that "we see the yad Hashem over here." Of all the girls available from the entire empire of Achashverosh, it was Esther who was chosen as queen. This occurred despite the fact that, according to Chazal, she was not a "beauty." Nonetheless, despite the fact that Esther had no royal Persian lineage, she was the one who was chosen. Mordechai could have said, "Ach! We see the hand of Hashem at work here.

She was chosen from among all the women. She is on our side. She is going to affect the salvation. That is how it is going to happen.” That, perhaps, is how they could have calmed themselves down.

And yet, we see an amazing thing. We see that when Mordechai sent a message to Esther and told her that he wanted her to go to the king and plead on behalf of the Jews, Esther was hesitant. She did not want to go. Esther knew that anyone who entered the chamber of the king without having been summoned was liable to be put to death.

At that point, what should Mordechai have said to Esther? He should have said, “Esther, if you don’t do this, Klal Yisrael is going to be lost. You are our last best hope. I don’t care about your fear. YOU NEED TO DO THIS!” In other words, Mordechai should have pushed the PANIC BUTTON. He should have ranted and raved, “You need to go to do this! You can’t think about yourself at a time like this!”

And yet Mordechai reacted calmly: “You don’t want to do this? So be it. No problem. Salvation will come to the Jews from another place and your father’s house will be lost.” In other words, “We don’t need you. We have faith in the Ribono shel Olam, who will figure out a way to save us.” It is your opportunity. It is your zechus. This could be your moment in history. If you want to do it, great, and if you don’t want to do it that is also fine. This is your decision. I am not going to worry because I know that ultimately “L’Hashem hayeshua!” (Salvation comes from the L-rd).

That equanimity that Mordechai demonstrated – that he didn’t panic and he didn’t freak out – is the lesson of “She’kol kovecha lo yeivoshu v’lo yeekolmu lanetzach, kol hachosim Bach – not only bitachon in the outcome, but also recognition that the method, too, is determined by Hashem.”

This is a practical lesson for all of us. Sometimes we are given a business opportunity and we can see how this is the thing that is going to really put us on the map, set for life! If this business opportunity comes through, then I am set! If it doesn’t, then I am back to square one. This is an incorrect approach. If the Ribono shel Olam wants to make someone into a millionaire, He will give him the money in one way or another. You think it needs to come through this particular deal? Not necessarily. If we believe – with more than just ‘lip service’ – that a person’s financial allotment for the year is determined the previous Rosh Hashanna, then if the Ribono shel Olam wants you to receive the money, you will receive the money. It won’t necessarily come the way you think it will come.

The same is true with all such situations in life. Sometimes a person needs a particular medical procedure or a particular surgery. Of course, like all of us, he wants to get “the top man in the field” to perform the procedure. If, for whatever reason, he can’t get “the top guy,” he moans, “Woe is me! What is going to be?” Truth be told, we think it is the surgeon who is going to perform the operation that is going to save our life. It is not the surgeon. It is the Ribono shel Olam. The Ribono shel Olam can make it happen whether you get the top guy or whether you get some surgeon who can’t speak the English language without an accent. He didn’t go to Harvard Medical School, he didn’t practice in the Cleveland Clinic, and he may not have been your first choice to operate on you, but that does not justify despair. It is the Ribono shel Olam who runs this world.

This is the lesson of the Megilla: “She’kol kovecha lo yeivoshu v’lo yeekolmu lanetzach kol hachosim Bach!”

This statement also provides insight into the interpretation of a pasuk we say every day in davening: Baruch hagever asher yivtach b’Hashem, v’haya Hashem mivtacho. This pasuk seems somewhat redundant. The first phrase stands by itself: Blessed is the man who trusts Hashem. What is added by the last few words “And Hashem is his trust?” It appears to be saying the same thing.

The Malbim explains: The meaning of Baruch hagever asher yivtach b’Hashem is believing that salvation will come from the Ribono shel Olam (bitachon in the result). The words v’haya Hashem mivtacho add that the means of how salvation will come will also be determined by the Ribono shel Olam (bitachon in the process, not only the result). Since, even the means of how salvation will come will be determined by Hashem, the

particular type of hishtadlus (personal effort) I invest in my salvation does not concern me as much.

We can add a further thought along these lines by analyzing the expression “kol hachosim Bach” (those who take refuge in You). In Lashon Hakodesh, lachasos and havtacha describe related but distinct concepts. Lachasos means to take refuge or seek shelter. By contrast, a havtachah implies an assurance or a guarantee upon which a person relies. When we say in Hallel, “Tov lachasos b’Hashem mi’betoach b’nedivim,” the Vilna Gaon explains that taking refuge in Hashem does not depend on receiving a formal guarantee. It is reliance upon Him even without an explicit assurance.

If there is a terrible windstorm or terrible hailstorm outside, and I run into a building that has a roof, I have “chisayon” in that roof. I am taking refuge in that building. The building does not say anything to me guaranteeing protection from the hail. But, I know the roof is there, it is a solid roof and I take refuge in it, relying upon it without any type of guarantee.

A guarantee is when you go to someone and you ask him for a loan for a business opportunity and he says “I guarantee to you that I will give it to you.” That is a type of havtacha.

The pasuk in Hallel is saying that it is better to put your reliance in the Ribono shel Olam (tov lachasos b’Hashem) without any type of guarantee. It is better to put your faith and trust in Him than to have a guarantee from a nediv (rich man). The guarantee from the nediv is not for certain. Things change. Life changes. This illustrates the difference between taking refuge without a guarantee and relying on an explicit guarantee.

Now this sentence of Shoshanas Yakov makes even more sense. L’hodeea – the purpose of Purim demonstrated that kol kovecha – all that put their faith and hope in You – lo yeivoshu v’lo yeekolmu lanetzach kol hachosim Bach – referring to those people who have this chisayon in the Ribono shel Olam. They look at Him as a Rock that they can take cover in, even without an explicit personal guarantee of how the outcome will unfold. They don’t need that. They put their total reliance in Him.

This is what the Megilla is trying to tell us. The nes of Purim teaches us how we need to approach crises in life. The approach is v’haya Hashem mivtacho – He is the means by which our salvation will occur. It may not happen in exactly the way we expect, but He will provide the means of salvation according to His plan. That is the way it is with parnassa. That is the way it is with refuah. That is the way it is with shidduchim.

That is why Mordechai’s name is associated with the word baruch (blessed) – Baruch Mordechai. Mordechai Hayehudi put his faith in the Ribono shel Olam, fulfilling the pasuk: Baruch hagever asher yivtach b’Hashem, v’haya Hashem mivtacho. He is a living demonstration of a person who put total faith in the Ribono shel Olam – not only bitachon in salvation, but also chisayon – taking refuge in Hashem – that the way it will unfold is according to His Divine plan.

Transcribed by David Twersky; Jerusalem DavidATwersky@gmail.com
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from: **Ira Zlotowitz** <Iraz@klalgovoah.org>

date: Feb 26, 2026, 7:02 PM

subject: **Tidbits for Parashas Tetzaveh** 5786 in memory of Rabbi Meir Zlotowiz zt"l

Daf Yomi - Shabbos: Bavli: Menachos 48 ..

Taanis Esther is this Monday, March 2nd. Purim begins Monday evening, March 2nd.

This Shabbos, the Shabbos before Purim, we fulfill the positive Torah commandment of Zechiras Maaseh Amalek, to remember Amalek’s attack,

through the special kerias haTorah of Parashas Zachor (Devarim 25:17-19). The baal korei must have in mind to be motzi the participants in this mitzvah through his leining, who in turn have in mind to be yotzeh the same. One should understand the meaning of the words of these pasukim (see Parashah section below). Many congregations say yotzros for Parashas Zachor during/after shacharis. Two sifrei Torah are taken out. The haftarah for Parashas Zachor is read. Av Harachamim is omitted.

One who inadvertently missed the leining may be yotzei with the kerias hatorah of Purim morning (“Vayavo Amalek”; in this case one should advise the baal korei to be motzi him in that mitzvah). The obligation of women in this mitzvah is a matter of dispute. The minhag in many communities is for women to try to attend Shul for the keriah. Many communities hold a special keriah for women who could not attend Shul, although some poskim advise against this practice. If a woman does not hear the leining, many poskim advise that she can simply read the pesukim from a chumash.

Summaries

TETZAVEH: First-squeezed olive oil should be used for the Menorah • Appointment of the Kohanim and description of their sacred clothing • Four additional garments worn only by the Kohen Gadol include: 1) the Ephod (an apron); 2) the Choshen (a breastplate with precious stones inscribed with the names of the Shevatim; it also holds the Urim V'Tumim, a parchment on which a most holy Name of Hashem was written); 3) the Me'il (a techeiles-dyed robe, its bottom hem adorned with gold bells and cloth ‘pomegranates’); 4) the Tzitz (a forehead-plate) • Consecration and anointing of Aharon and his four sons • The Korban Tamid • Description of the Mizbeiach HaKetores and the Avodas HaKetores • The Ketores (incense) shall be offered twice daily, plus a third time on Yom Kippur.

Parashas Zachor (Devarim 25:17-19): “Remember what Amalek did to you, on the way when you were departing Mitzrayim. He ambushed you on the way, and he killed some among you, all the weaklings (sinners - who are spiritually weak) trailing behind, when you were faint and tired; and he did not fear G-d. It shall be when Hashem your G-d gives you rest from all your surrounding enemies, in the land that Hashem your G-d gives you as an inheritance, you shall wipe out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven - you should not forget!”

Haftarah: Having recalled Amalek’s brazen attack and our obligation to eradicate the nation, we recount the episode of Shaul HaMelech who was commanded to execute the Amaleiki nation along with their possessions. With misplaced mercy, Shaul Hamelech temporarily spared their king Agag (Shmuel Alef 15:1-34). We recall these events before Purim, as this delay led to Agag’s descendant, Haman, coming into existence and plotting to wipe out the Jewish nation. Shaul’s failure was redeemed by his descendants Mordechai Hatzadik and Queen Esther, who defeated Haman and foiled his wicked plan.

Dvar Torah

“וְאַתָּה תְּצַו אֶת־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְיִקְחוּ אֵלֵיהֶם שֶׁמֶן זַיִת נָדָה” And you will command the Bnei Yisrael that they shall take for you clear olive oil” (Shemos 27:20)

The Baal Haturim explains that “Tzav” in this pasuk means to be mezeze, to encourage and persuade in this mitzvah of Menorah. By the Korban Tamid as well, the word Tzav indicates the same, as these two daily mitzvos entailed a seemingly inefficient expense. For the Menorah only the first drop of each olive was used, and the korbanos tamid did not provide leftover meat or the like for the Kohanim’s consumption. Therefore, the performance of these mitzvos required Moshe’s encouragement. Now, one may wonder that surely the actual building of the Mishkan amounted to a far greater expense than these amounts of oil, and yet the Torah did not find the need to add any encouragement to donating construction materials. If so, why is there a concern for laxity in this area in the area of the Menorah or the Tamid?

Rav Elya Baruch Finkel z”l explains that something which occurs daily and comes at a cost is prone to lose its excitement and ‘glamor’ quite quickly. It is common that when institutions begin a ‘once-in-a-lifetime’ building campaign or similar campaign, people are likely to give easily and generously. Yet, when the same institution requires funds for the day-to-day

expenses, people have a harder time contributing. We must recognize that the entire purpose of the edifice is only to facilitate the continued learning and growth within it. The Midrash in Vayikra in fact explains that our pasuk is referring not only to the Mishkan, but also to the Mikdash Me’at in all future generations - meaning, our Shuls and Batei Medrash. One should overcome feelings of staleness and recognize the opportunity he has in facilitating and fueling Harbatzas Torah and communal causes on a constant and regular basis.

MATANOS L’EVYONIM:

“It is preferable to spend more money on gifts to the poor than on one’s seudah and mishloach manos, as there is no greater joy than making the poor and less fortunate happy” (Rambam, Hilchos Purim 2:17). On Purim day, each man and woman must give to two needy people the monetary equivalent of a small meal. An ‘individual in need’ is classified as someone who is struggling to cover his day-to-day expenses. Maaser funds may not be used for the obligatory amount. One should ensure that his wife and bar/bas mitzvah children fulfill this mitzvah (one can simply ask the gabbai tzedakah to acquire the money on behalf of his wife or child and provide it to a needy recipient on their behalf). It is proper to train one’s chinuch-age children in this mitzvah, although the extent of a minor’s obligation is a matter of dispute. Throughout the day, one should give freely to any needy individual who solicits without examining the legitimacy of their cause, just as Hashem performed the Purim miracle without examining our merits and deeds.

Based on - Seeing Ourselves in the Story of Megillas Esther

Rabbi Shay Schachter

<https://www.yutorah.org/lectures/1167342/>

[used AI to summarize audio]

The highlight of Purim is not merely that we read the Megillah, but that we read it with understanding. We are meant to walk away with takeaways, inspiration, and connection. Too often, however, when we open Chumash or Tanach we slip into spectator mode. We watch Adam and Chavah, Noach, Avraham, Yosef in the pit, David and Goliath, Esther before Achashverosh—and we file it away as a gallery of great people who lived in another world. But Tanach was not written to be admired from a distance. It was written as a living guide, a manual for every Jew who comes after.

That is why the right way to learn Tanach is to ask: where am I in this story? Which character’s experience resembles what I am living through right now? “Lech Lecha” is not just a story about Mesopotamia. Avraham is told to step into uncertainty—“לך לך מארצך וממולדתך”—to leave comforts behind and go without being handed certainty. That experience repeats whenever a Jew is asked to take a moral stand that may isolate him, to live with integrity when others choose differently, to embrace a Torah path even when the surrounding culture pushes against it.

So too Yosef. Betrayed by his brothers, thrown into a pit, sold into slavery, falsely accused, imprisoned, forgotten—Yosef had every right to be angry and confused. Yet he names a child Menashe: “כי נשני אלקים את כל עמלי”—because Hashem has brought me to where I am. It is not resignation; it is perspective. It is the refusal to let bitterness become identity. And it is hard to read Yosef without thinking of those who live in their own pits—rejection, illness, infertility, setbacks, loneliness—and hear in Yosef’s story the reassurance: you are not alone, and the pieces may still fit even when you cannot yet see how.

And then David and Goliath. Most of us will never face a nine-foot warrior, but we all know imposing fears: anxiety, self-doubt, social pressure, public opinion. The story becomes a mirror: what is my Goliath? And what is my sling? Because the lesson is not only that obstacles stand in our way, but that tools have already been placed in our hands.

All of this prepares us to read Megillas Esther properly. Hashem’s name is not written. Events unfold through what looks like ordinary politics: banquets, timing, rivalries, alliances, ambition, social forces, antisemitism. The story spans years. Read in one sitting it feels immediate; lived in real time it was long, slow, and uncertain. And the more one thinks about that,

the more the Megillah starts to feel current. We look at our world and do not see “G-d” printed on the headlines—yet the Megillah insists that hidden providence is still providence. The Name may not be written, but the Hand is present.

In the center of the story comes the line that should make a person shudder: “מי יודע אם לעת כזאת הגעת למלכות.” It is not only instruction to Esther. It is a whisper to every Jew: maybe this is why you are here. Maybe you are in that job, that community, that conversation, that position of influence, because you were placed there for a moment that demands moral clarity. Life is not random placement; it is purposeful positioning. “Mi yodea?” is the question that keeps a Jew awake.

From the very beginning, Esther’s defining trait is restraint: “אין אסתר מגדת אין מולדתה ואת עמיה.” In a world that equates leadership with being vocal and visible, where everyone is encouraged to post, disclose, and narrate every experience, Esther’s dignity looks almost foreign. But the Megillah teaches that privacy is not weakness; it is royalty. Not everything in life is meant to be public. Some things are sacred and meant to be protected. A dignified person is not the one who shares the most; it is the one who knows what to hold back.

That restraint is also a model of leadership. Esther does not force herself into the story. She waits until her presence can change the arc of history.

Sometimes leadership means not reacting to everything we see or hear, listening carefully until context becomes clear, and having the humility to admit that we do not fully understand. Counsel and mentorship are part of that humility. Even in the highest seat of power, Esther remains guided by Mordechai. The Torah itself models this when it describes creation as “נעשה אדם”—“Let us make man.” Chazal explain לַיְהוָה תִּרְרָה דֶּרֶךְ אֶרֶץ: the Almighty does not “need” counsel, yet He models it for us. The greater the authority, the more a person needs perspective from outside himself.

Toward the end of the Megillah, after וְנִפְקֵד הוּא, the Jewish people are given permission to defeat their enemies, and then the Megillah repeats a detail that seems almost incidental: “וּבְיָמָהּ לֹא שָׁלְחוּ אֶת יָדָם”—they did not take the spoils. Why does this matter?

Because Jewish victory is not only whether we survive. Jewish victory is also how we behave after we survive. The real test is not who you become under threat; it is who you become when you have power—when it would be legally justified, socially understandable, even emotionally tempting to “take.” In that moment, the Jewish people demonstrate that power does not have to corrupt. *Just because it is accessible, just because it is justifiable, doesn’t mean it is for me.* That restraint proves that victory did not distort identity.

This is the test of prosperity as well. Under duress, Jews can unite magnificently. But comfort and control bring a subtler challenge: do we retain moral clarity when we feel secure? Moshe Rabbeinu, the ultimate leader, is described as “ענו נאד.” With extraordinary authority, he refuses to abuse his position and can say, in effect, that he took nothing that was not his. The Mishnah defines strength not as domination but self-mastery: “אִידוֹ גִּיבּוֹר? הַכּוֹבֵשׁ אֶת יָצְרוֹ.” A gibor is not intoxicated by victory. A gibor is in control.

This is what kedushah looks like in practice. Kiddushin, at its simplest, is restraint—“אסורה לכל העולם.” To be kadosh is to know where to stop. A dignified life is not defined by the ability to do whatever one wants; it is defined by the ability to say no even when one can say yes—especially in a free society, especially when accountability feels distant, especially when advantage is available.

Even the Mishkan teaches this lesson. Shlomo HaMelech wonders how Hashem can “fit” into a finite space when the cosmos cannot contain Him. The answer given by later teachers is *tzimtzum*—a kind of self-limitation, allowing presence to dwell within boundaries. If the Ribbono Shel Olam models a kind of “contraction,” then a person can learn the same: to be talented, articulate, influential, successful—and still know how to limit himself. *Just because I can, doesn’t mean I should.*

That is why the Megillah repeats: “וּבְיָמָהּ לֹא שָׁלְחוּ אֶת יָדָם.” The Jewish people

did not allow victory to reshape them. Purim invites us not only to relive a plot twist, but to enter the story—to hear “Mi yodea” as a call to mission, to learn that dignity includes privacy, that leadership includes restraint, that authority requires mentorship, and that true heroism is not only surviving—but staying ourselves after we survive.

<https://blogs.timesofisrael.com/tetzaveh-and-zachor-war-and-the-urim-and-thummim/>

Tetzaveh and Zachor – War and the Urim and Thummim Ben Lazarus

As I write this on February 26, 2026, many of us in Israel are carrying the same unspoken weight: will a larger war engulf us in the coming days. We can look to this week’s Parsha for some inspiration. The uncertainty is palpable. U.S. carriers and jets shift positions, deadlines regarding Iran approach and recede, hospitals prepare quietly, and diplomats receive evacuation options. No one truly knows what tomorrow holds. Like many of you, I find myself scanning X and news sites for signals in the noise, while others step away entirely, aware that the so-called experts understand little more than we do.

We want reassurance that we will be safe. Those defending us seek clarity on the road ahead. Our greatest kings, prophets, and leaders once had a G-d-given instrument intended for moments exactly like this, a tool to seek guidance from Heaven in times of existential uncertainty, especially in matters of war. It was called the Urim and Thummim.

What was this enigmatic device. How did it function. And in its absence today, does it still offer wisdom for our current fog of doubt. I believe that it does, and that it offers a measure of quiet comfort as well. The Ibn Ezra opens this week’s parasha with a tantalizing and poetic line: לְדַעַת אֱמֶת אִם לִבְבְּךָ יֵאָדָה רָאָה כֵּל גִּיּוּדָה לִנְכַבֵּד בְּנוֹה וְאוֹרִים וְתוֹמִים וְסוּדָם אֲחֻזָּה בְּסֹדֶר וְאֵתָה תִּצְוֶה “If your heart desires to know the truth, look at the body and consider the most glorious thing within it. I will secretly reveal the mystery of the Urim and Thummim in the portion ‘And Thou Shalt Command.’”

Rabbi Yehuda Leib Krinsky explains that the “most glorious thing” is the human soul. The Ibn Ezra binds the secret of this oracle, the instrument for national decision making, to the soul itself. He teaches that the essence of this device reflects the core spiritual command embedded in the very name of this week’s parasha. Far from a mechanical or magical object, the Urim and Thummim demanded an inner readiness and purity of spirit.

The Torah gives only a brief description. “*Inside the breastpiece of decision you shall place the Urim and Thummim, so that they are over Aaron’s heart when he comes before G-d*” (*Exodus 28:30*).

The Ramban paints a vivid picture. Unlike every other vessel in the Mishkan, the Urim and Thummim were not crafted or donated. They were placed directly into the breastplate and consisted of holy Names of G-d hidden within its folds. When the Kohen Gadol inquired, for example “Who shall go up first against the Canaanites,” he focused on the Urim, which means “lights.” Letters on the stones of the tribes would illuminate. But glowing fragments alone were insufficient. They could point toward the phrase “Yehudah Yaaleh,” Judah shall go up, yet the letters might also permit incorrect combinations.

This is where the Thummim, meaning perfection or integrity, entered. Through their power the heart of the priest was refined and granted divine clarity. He could assemble the illuminated letters into coherent and true words. The Urim offered the data. The Thummim granted the insight to interpret it. We see King David rely on this repeatedly during moments of danger with the Philistines.

This mysterious prophetic instrument is difficult to comprehend, and perhaps it is meant to remain so. It offered certain individuals, on a specific spiritual level, access to a prophetic realm that lies far beyond our experience. Most of the Torah focuses on practical living and collective memory, not on the mechanics of the spiritual world. To borrow from business language, its inner workings are beyond our pay grade.

Bringing this to our present moment and to the approach of Purim and

Parashat Zachor, the Urim and Thummim were primarily tools for war. The Netziv notes that the core purpose of the Choshen, the breastpiece, was national and military. He links the word Choshen to chash, to hurry, because war demands swift judgment and clear decisions. There was no room for endless debate. The king and the people turned to the Urim and Thummim especially for matters of national survival. The Talmud limits its use to the king, the Sanhedrin, or essential communal needs such as the anointed priest for war. It was the ancient equivalent of a war room, joining human planning with the guidance of Heaven when Jewish lives were at stake. This Shabbat we also read Parashat Zachor. “Remember what Amalek did to you.” We are reminded that there have always been enemies who seek our destruction without cause. Today we face such an enemy in the Iranian regime and its proxies.

The lesson of the Urim and Thummim aligns precisely with Zachor. Joshua fought Amalek below while Moshe prayed above. Victory required both physical effort and spiritual elevation. We are not meant to rely only on miracles. The story of Purim reinforces this as well. Its triumph came through human decisions, strategy, and courage, G-d’s hand hidden within natural events and our forebear’s bravery. The Torah leaves the mechanics of the Urim undefined, and no blueprint has survived. We live in an age of hester panim, the hidden face of G-d. The link between this week’s parasha and Purim deepens this idea. Moshe’s name is absent from [Tetzaveh](#) and G-d’s Name is absent from Megillat Esther. In both, the hiddenness itself becomes the message. In Purim’s quiet miracles our ancestors prevailed not through visible signs from Heaven but through intelligence, loyalty, bravery, and faith.

We no longer have glowing stones or open revelations. What we have is ourselves and the responsibility to act in a concealed world. Yet we are not without guidance. The Urim reminds us that spiritual strength must be joined with the ability to see beyond the surface. Israel’s enduring resilience has always emerged from this combination: the soul that G-d breathed into us together with the Yiddishe Kop, our ingenuity, our intelligence services, and our relentless determination. It is Torah joined with the IDF, spiritual awareness woven together with physical action. Place G-d’s Name first, just as the Urim and Thummim rested over Aaron’s heart, and that becomes our center of balance. From this foundation, even as we face anxiety about the unknown, we can confront the frightening data of our world not with panic but with steadiness and direction. Follow the heart and soul aligned with G-d’s instruction and we will endure. This is the essence of Purim. It teaches that victory is possible even in darkness, through courage, wise maneuvering, and trust in the unseen. Even when His Name is hidden, He walks beside us. May we find the strength to stand firm. May we be victorious. May clarity pierce the concealment, speedily and in our days.

The Urim and Thummim teach that neither action nor faith alone is sufficient. It is their union, body and soul, that will see us through whatever comes next.

Shabbat Shalom and Purim Sameach.

<https://etzion.org.il/en/tanakh/torah/sefer-shemot/parashat-tetzaveh/tetzaveh-priestly-kutonet-undercoat-and-me%E2%80%99il-robe>
Tetzaveh | The Priestly Kutonet (Undercoat) and Me’il (Robe)

Harav Yaakov Medan

07.03.2017

Translated by Kaeren Fish

Tekhelet and White

The special garments worn by a Kohen in the mikhnasayim (pants), ketonet (tunic), avnet (belt) and migba’at (turban). The Kohen Gadol wears his headdress as a mitznefet (mitre), instead of the migba’at, and in addition he wears four garments that are unique to his station: the choshen (breastplate), efod (apron), me’il (robe), and tzitz (golden crown). On Yom Kippur, the Kohen Gadol wears only the first four garments. The Mishkan refers to these as the “garments of white,” while the special garments that the Kohen Gadol

wears at other times are referred to as the “garments of gold.” An examination of the description of these garments as presented in the Torah suggests that the “garments of white” might more accurately be called the “garments of linen,” as they are referred to in the order of the service for Yom Kippur (Vayikra 16:4).

The “garments of linen” are worn, as noted, by all Kohanim, and are essentially “working clothes.” The Kohen Gadol, in performing the special Yom Kippur service before God, likewise wears only the garments of linen. The garments of gold, which he wears for the daily elements of service that are performed also on Yom Kippur, as well as for service throughout the rest of the year, are royal garb. The Kohen Gadol is, as it were, the “king” of the priestly tribe. On Yom Kippur, he cannot stand before God as a king wearing his golden garments, since “a prosecutor cannot speak for the defense.”[1] The Kohen Gadol therefore stands before God in the simple garments of a regular Kohen.

However, if we adopt the mishna’s term for the Kohen Gadol’s clothes for the special service on Yom Kippur – “garments of white” – then we might refer to his other garments (the “garments of gold”) as “garments of tekhelet (blue),” since the blue dye is a dominant feature of each of them.

The me’il is entirely blue. Concerning the tzitz, we find:

And you shall put it on a blue thread, that it may be upon the mitznefet. (Shemot 28:37)

The choshen and the efod also feature blue, along with gold, purple, and scarlet, but the blue seems to be the most prominent:

And they shall bind the choshen by its rings to the rings of the efod with a thread of blue, that it may be above the finely wrought girdle of the efod, and that the choshen not come loose from the efod. (Shemot 28:28)

Thus, the dominant colors of the priestly garments are white and tekhelet, like the tzitzit.

In Parashat Mishpatim, we discussed the combination of these two colors in the Revelation at Sinai:

And they saw the God of Israel, and there was under His feet a kind of paved work of sapir stone, and as it were the very heaven for clearness. (Shemot 24:10)

The clear sapir and the sky-blue tekhelet together formed a heavenly and inspirational sight.

In our consciousness, the color tekhelet – dominating the four special garments of the Kohen Gadol – represents the high heavens, with its pure clarity expressing, for us, the One God. The lower heavens – the clouds – are usually represented by the color white, which is the color of the garments of regular Kohanim. From there, God’s blessing of rain descends to us as a reward for fulfilling the commandments.[2] The “lower heavens” also have different shapes and changing hues, expressing the variegated manifestations of the One God.

Garments of the Garden of Eden In our shiur on Parashat Bereishit, we discussed the parallel between the Garden of Eden and the Temple. In terms of this parallel, Adam – who was placed in the Garden “to cultivate it and to guard it” – was a Kohen Gadol of sorts, serving in this Temple and bearing responsibility for its preservation. Thus, in light of the fact that God makes “coats of skins (kotnot or)” for Adam and his wife and clothes them, we might point to some sort of connection between these coats and the ketonet worn by the Kohanim. Indeed, we find in the midrash:

Adam was the firstborn of the world, and since he brought a sacrifice – as it is written, “And it shall please the Lord better than an ox or a bullock that has horns and hoofs” (Tehillim 69:32) – he wore garments of a Kohen Gadol, as it is written, “And the Lord God made coats of skins for Adam and for his wife, and He clothed them.” These were garments of honor, and the firstborn would use them. (Bamidbar Rabba 4)

“And the Lord God made coats of skins... and He clothed them” – What were these coats of skins? They were the garments of the Kohen Gadol, with which the Holy One, blessed be He, clothed them, for the honor of the world. (Tanchuma, Toldot 12)

These midrashim appear to conform mainly with the teaching of R. Meir:

In the teachings of R. Meir they found: It is written, “coats of light” [or, written with an alef instead of an ayin] – these were the garments of Adam. (Bereishit Rabba 20)

From these midrashim, it seems that the verse, “And the Lord God made coats of skins for Adam and for his wife, and He clothed them” actually precedes the sin; its proper “chronological” place would be after the verse, “And they were both naked, Adam and his wife, but they felt no shame” (Bereishit 2:25).[3]

However, since the text deliberately juxtaposes the story that begins, “And the serpent was cunning (arom)...” with “And they were both naked (arumim),” the fact that God made the garments for Adam and his wife appears only after the sin.

On this basis, we might propose a different understanding of the verse: And the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked, and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths. (Bereishit 3:7)

Perhaps the priestly garments were removed from them in the wake of the sin, and therefore they were forced to make themselves loincloths. Perhaps it was after that that God made them “coats of skins,” in accordance with the plain meaning of the text, instead of the “coats of light” which they had lost, in accordance with the teaching of R. Meir. Thus, R. Meir explains the verse in accordance with the midrash – “coats of light,” referring to what God made for them prior to the sin – and also in accordance with the plain meaning of the text – the “coats of skins” that He gave them after the sin. Let us dwell for a moment on R. Meir’s teaching concerning the “coats of light.” It seems that these coats might be an expression of man having been created “in the image of God.” Man’s resemblance to God was reflected in his garments, for indeed we find:

O Lord my God, You are very great, You are clothed with glory and majesty. Who covers Himself with light as with a garment; Who stretches out the heavens like a curtain; Who lays the beams of His chambers in the waters; Who makes the clouds His chariot. (Tehillim 104:1-3)

God is “clothed,” as it were, in light, and therefore He clothes Adam, too, in light. Moreover, there seems to be a connection between God’s garment of light and His stretching of the heavens like a curtain:

From where were the heavens created? God took from the light of His garment and spread it like a garment... for His garment produced light, as it is written, “Who covers Himself with light as with a garment.” (Pirkei De-Rabbi Eliezer 3)

This description of God’s “garment” seems most closely suited to the me’il, which is all techelet. God stretched the light of this me’il to form the blue curtain of the sky.

God’s voice, going about in the Garden in the breeze of the day, may likewise recall the sound of the me’il, which is decorated with bells and pomegranate:

And they heard the voice of the Lord God walking in the garden in the breeze of the day. (Bereishit 3:8)

And upon its hem you shall make pomegranates of blue and of purple and of scarlet, round about its hem, and bells of gold between them, round about... And it shall be upon Aharon when he comes to minister, and its sound shall be heard when he goes in to the holy place before the Lord, and when he comes out, so that he will not die. (Shemot 28:33-35)

The white ketonet was used to clothe Adam, and this, too, was a “garment of white” and one of the garments of the Kohen Gadol, as taught in the midrash. It seems, then, that Adam was dressed as though in the garments of the Kohen Gadol on Yom Kippur.

Atonement for Bloodshed In a midrash concerning the respective function or significance of the various priestly garments, R. Anani teaches:

The ketonet atones for bloodshed, as it is written, “And they dipped the ketonet [Yosef’s coat] in blood.” (Arakhin 16a)

The ketonet referred to in this midrash and considered in comparison to the priestly ketonet is not that of Adam, but rather that of Yosef. It seems that R. Anani regards the striped coat (or long-sleeved coat) that Yaakov made for

Yosef as a priestly garment of sorts, for Yaakov raised him as a nazir: “They shall be upon the head of Yosef and on the crown of the head of him that was a nazir among his brothers” (Bereishit 49:26). This echoes the prohibitions pertaining to a nazir whose close relative dies – “for the crown of his God is upon his head” (Bamidbar 6:7) – as well as the similar commandment concerning a Kohen Gadol. Yosef receives the double portion of the birthright, which is also the priesthood, and his ketonet is also a priestly garment of sorts.

The brothers relented of their original plan to kill Yosef; ultimately, they took his ketonet, which was a garment befitting a free man, such that they were able to sell him as a slave when he was hauled out of the pit wearing only (short) pants, in the manner of slaves in the ancient world. In our discussion of Parashat Vayeshev, we focused on the sin of the sale of Yosef as a slave, but we must not forget the points in favor of the brothers. The ketonet “atoned,” as it were, for their original intention to spill his blood; it was taken instead of his life. We may assume that the ketonet that a Kohen wore while performing the regular sacrificial service in the Temple would sometimes be splattered with the blood of sacrifices, just as Yosef’s ketonet was dipped in the blood of the wild goat.

These blood stains are not insignificant:

And you shall take of the blood that is upon the altar and of the anointing oil, and sprinkle it upon Aharon, and upon his garments, and upon his sons, and the garments of his sons with him, and he shall be sanctified, and his garments, and his sons, and his sons’ garments with him. (Shemot 29:21)

The verse describes the process of sanctification of the Kohanim and their garments. As part of this process, blood is sprinkled, among other places, directly onto the priestly garments.

This issue demands deeper consideration. The gemara (ibid.) draws a comparison between atonement achieved by means of the ketonet and atonement achieved by the eglarufah, the sacrificial calf whose neck is broken in the event that someone is found murdered outside of a city. For the purposes of our discussion, it is clear that the very fact that a comparison is made to the eglarufah indicates that in the case of the ketonet, too, the atonement is not for the murderer, but rather for the congregation as a whole, and for the sin of the ground, which concealed the blood that had been spilled.

More on the Me’il According to the plain text, the me’il is a service garment that expresses the idea that the Kohen Gadol goes about in the Temple as the servant of the Master of the house – God Himself:

And it shall be upon Aharon when he comes to minister, and its sound shall be heard when he goes in to the holy place before the Lord, and when he comes out, that he will not die. (Shemot 28:35)

The bells on the me’il – like bells on the garments of servants of human masters[4] – are meant to keep the master informed of the servant’s whereabouts, and to ensure that the servant, entering some unfrequented place to perform his service, will not catch the master by surprise, since he will be heard approaching. On the other hand, the me’il, which is all blue, is also meant to evoke the glory of God, Who is “clothed,” as it were, in the blue of the heavens, as discussed above. The blue of the sky covers God’s glory as the me’il covers the body of the Kohen:

It has been taught: R. Meir used to say: Why is tekhelet set apart from all other varieties of dye? Because blue resembles the sea, and the sea resembles the heaven,[5] and the heaven resembles the Throne of Glory, as it is written, “And they saw the God of Israel, and there was beneath His feet as it were a paved work of sapir stone, and as it were the very heaven for clearness” (Shemot 24:10), and it is written, “The likeness of a Throne, as the appearance of a sapir stone” (Yechezkel 1:6). (Sota 17a and elsewhere)

This dimension of significance of the Kohen Gadol’s garments also arises from the similarity between the me’il and the covering of the Ark of the Testimony, which represents the glory of the Divine Presence. The covering is put in place “when the camp journeys,” when the Mishkan is dismantled: And Aharon shall come, and his sons, when the camp sets forward, and they shall take down the veil of the screen, and cover the Ark of Testimony with

it, and they shall put on it the covering of skins, and shall spread over it a cloth wholly of blue, and shall put in its poles. (Bamidbar 4:5-6)[6] Atonement for Lashon Ha-Ra The midrash of R. Anani cited above has the following to say about the me'il:

The me'il atones for lashon ha-ra. The Holy One, blessed be He, said: Let something that makes a sound come and atone for a sound that is made. (Arakchin 16a)

This midrash seems to contradict a different midrash, which teaches that it is the incense that atones for lashon ha-ra:

The school of R. Yishma'el taught: For what does incense atone? For lashon ha-ra. The Holy One, blessed be He, said: Let that which is performed in concealment [for the incense is offered when no one else is present] come and atone for an act committed in concealment. (Zevachim 88b)

The first midrash emphasizes the sound – the loudness – of lashon ha-ra, while the second emphasizes its concealment or hiddenness, but both are correct. The incense and the me'il atone for different types of lashon ha-ra: there is lashon ha-ra that is spoken in public, and lashon ha-ra spoken in concealment.

We can understand the source of the idea that incense atones for lashon ha-ra. The gemara (ibid.) derives the general idea of atonement achieved by the incense from the incense that Aharon used to atone for the rebels in the episode of Korach. From here we learn that the essence of the sin of Korach and his company was the lashon ha-ra that they spoke against Moshe and Aharon, which caused the whole controversy in the camp, leading to the deaths of some fifteen thousand people.[7] But what does the me'il have to do with atonement for lashon ha-ra (aside from the idea of the voice, or sound, as explained in the midrash)?

In several different places, Chazal teach that the essence of the unit on tzara'at concerns lashon ha-ra:

R. Yitzchak said: "This shall be the teaching concerning the metzora (leper)" – [this may be read as,] "This shall be the teaching concerning one who is motzi shem ra (slanders someone else)." (Yerushalmi Sota 2:1 and elsewhere)

The Kohen makes atonement for the metzora, while the me'il – the prestigious priestly garment – is the main vehicle for atonement for the sin of lashon ha-ra when the sinner repents and mends his ways.

Notes [1] This is the view of R. Chisda (Rosh Hashana 26a). What he means, as suggested by the gemara and the commentators, is that gold recalls the sin of the golden calf. This explanation fits with our suggestion that gold is a "prosecutor" because it leads to arrogance, and this must be avoided during the special and holy service performed on Yom Kippur.

In the Second Temple, the practice reflected the opposite idea: the linen garments of the Kohen Gadol on Yom Kippur were extremely luxurious (see Mishna Yoma 3:7, and in the gemara 35a-b). [2] See Devarim 11:10-17 and elsewhere. [3] Rashi (Bereishit 3:20) suggests a similar interpretation. [4] See Shabbat 58a concerning the pair of bells on the garment of a servant. [5] In the Yerushalmi (Berakhot 1:2) and other sources from Eretz Yisrael, we find in the midrash, "The sea resembles grasses, and grasses resemble the heaven." [6] Admittedly, the other items of furniture of the Mishkan are likewise covered with cloths of blue, but a garment that is wholly blue is mentioned only in connection with Aharon and the me'il. Furthermore, the blue cloths that cover the other vessels are themselves covered with other layers (of scarlet or purple, or tachash skins). Only in the case of the ark is the wholly blue cloth exposed to the outside – like the me'il of the Kohen Gadol. [7] The explanation given here appears to contradict the idea discussed previously of incense as atoning for lashon ha-ra that is concealed, since the lashon ha-ra of Korach and his company against Moshe and Aharon was spoken openly and publicly, while the metzora (leper), whose atonement is achieved by virtue of the me'il, would appear to have spoken in concealment. This contradiction requires some resolution.

From: **Rabbi YY Jacobson** <rabbiyy@theyeshiva.net>
Thu, Feb 26, 2026 at 8:27 PM

Stop Arguing, Just Take a Look at Me!

Why Did Esther Not Refute Haman's Vile Accusations against the Jews?

By: Rabbi YY Jacobson

"I wouldn't belong to a club that would have me as a member." -- Groucho Marx "The modern Jewish maxim is Incognito, ergo sum, I am invisible, therefore I am." -- Sidney Morganbesser.

The Case for Genocide In the biblical Book of Esther, which we read and study on Purim, there is a moment that is so timely and relevant, it could have been written today, for Purim 2026.

Haman, the Prime Minister in the large and powerful Persian Empire, makes a short but powerful presentation to the Persian king, Achashverosh (Ahasuerus), successfully persuading him to embrace his plan of Jewish genocide. "There is a certain people," Haman says to Achashverosh(1), "scattered abroad and dispersed among the peoples in all the provinces of your realm. Their laws are different from all the other nations, and they do not observe the King's laws. Therefore, it is not befitting the King to tolerate them. If it pleases the king, let it be recorded that they be destroyed, and I will pay ten thousand silver talents ... for deposit in the King's treasuries." Haman's argument is straightforward: Jews are different. They are alien, outsiders, an obstruction to normal society, and a threat to your kingdom. They don't fit into the rest of the human family. They have their own faith and their laws, which in their mind are superior to the king's laws. They are a nuisance, a danger, a growth in an otherwise harmonious and integrated society. They ought to be disposed of.

The Talmud (2) records an oral tradition describing Haman's presentation in more detail. "They don't eat from our food," Haman lamented to the King; "they do not marry our women, and they do not marry their women to us. They waste the whole year, avoiding the King's work, with the excuse: Today is Shabbat, or today is Passover."

Haman also discusses gross Jewish habits: "They eat, they drink and they mock the throne. Even if a fly falls in a glass of wine of one of them, he casts away the fly and drinks the wine. But if my master, the King, touches a glass of wine of one of them, that person throws it to the ground and does not drink it (3)." The Jews, Haman argues, see themselves as superior to us; they will forever stand out. They are an enemy. Who needs them? Ilhan Omar did not invent the lie. She was repeating it.

Repeating Haman's Words Some six centuries after Haman, these same words would be repeated by Philostratus, a third-century teacher in Athens and Rome, who summarizes the pagan world's perception of the Jews. "The Jews," Philostratus wrote, "have long been in revolt not only against the Romans, but against humanity; and a race that has made its own life apart and irreconcilable, that cannot share with the rest of mankind in the pleasures of the table, nor join in their libations or prayers or sacrifices, are separated from ourselves by a greater gulf than divides us from Sura or Bactra of the more distant Indies (4)."

The same argument, in one form or another, would be repeated thousands of times throughout history. The greatest Roman historian, Tacitus, living in the first century CE, had this to say about the Jews: "The Jews regard as profane all that we hold sacred; on the other hand, they permit all that which we abhor... toward every other people they feel only hate and enmity, they sit apart at meals and they sleep apart, and although as a race they are prone to lust, they abstain from intercourse with foreign women."

One example he mentions to describe the moral conflicts between the Romans and the Jews is worthy of note. "The Jews," Tacitus writes, "regard it as a crime to kill any newborn infant." The Romans, as the Greeks before them, killed mentally and physically handicapped infants. Keeping such children alive was unaesthetic and a burden for society who would have to support these disabled humans (5).

First Lady Intervenes Back to the Haman story of Purim. The viceroy's arguments persuade the King. A decree is issued from the Persian throne. Every Jewish man, woman, and child living under Persian dominance would be exterminated on a particular date. Then, in a stunning and gripping turn of events, the First Lady, the Jewish queen Esther, invites her husband and

Haman to a drinking wine feast. As we recall, Esther, from all the thousands of young women who were brought from across the Empire as potential candidates for the role of queen, succeeded in gaining the affection and grace of the King. "The King loved Esther more than all the women, and she won more of his favor and grace than all other women; he set the royal crown upon her head (6)." Years later, during this wine feast, the King pledges to Esther that he will fulfill every request of hers. She utilizes the opportunity to make the fateful pitch. "If I have won Your Majesty's favor and if it pleases the King," Esther tells the King (7), "let my life be granted to me as my request and my people as my petition. For we — I and my people — have been sold to be destroyed, slain and exterminated. Had we been sold as slaves and servant-girls, I would have kept quiet. The compensation our adversary [Haman] offers cannot be compared with the loss the king would suffer [by exterminating us, rather than selling us as slaves]." Clearly, Esther is attempting to approach the issue from two sides, a personal one, and an economic one.

First, she exposes her Jewish identity. The queen is a member of the people condemned to death. Esther knows, however, that this alone may not do the trick, so she continues to discuss dollars and cents (Haman too, as recorded above, used a two-point approach in persuading the King: logic and money). By selling the Jews as slaves, Esther argued, Achashverosh would be profiting far more than by exterminating them. The money Haman offered him is miniscule vs. the potential profit from their sale into slavery. The King, who never realized that Esther was Jewish, is outraged at Haman. He has his minister executed. In subsequent conversations with Esther, Achashverosh grants the Jews the right to self-defense against anybody who would dare to harm them. The entire climate in the Persian Empire toward the Jews is radically transformed. Esther's first cousin, the Jewish sage Mordechai, replaces Haman as Prime Minister.

Why Not Answer The Accusations? Yet, one question remains. Haman did not argue the case for Jewish extermination on the basis of senseless, venomous passion. He presented what was to the King a sound and persuasive case. The Jews, Haman argued, were an alien growth, a bizarre people, a separatist nation that did not accept the King's authority; they do now follow his orders, and consider their law superior to the King's. A leader could not tolerate such a superior nation with dual loyalties in his empire. This is a strong accusation. The King accepts it and, as a result, issues a decree demanding his subjects to dispose of all the Jews — men, women, and children. Yet nowhere in her entire dialogue with the King does Esther refute this argument.

Why did Achashverosh consent to the abolishment of his original plan if he believed Haman's accusations to be valid? You might say that Esther's charm and grace were the exclusive factors in the King's change of heart. Yet, as we have shown above, Esther does not rely on this alone. That is why she presents a logical argument for slavery vs. genocide. She refutes Haman's economic offer by demonstrating that the king would lose money. Esther thought through her argument to her husband. How, then, could she ignore Haman's powerful argument advocating a "Judenrein" society? It is clear from the entire story that Achashverosh was a successful and powerful leader who made sure to protect his position at all costs, even if that meant eliminating his own gorgeous queen (reminiscent of what happened to Stalin's wife). If the king truly felt that the Jews were a threat to his Empire, did Esther think that just because of her looks he would cancel his edict meant to safeguard his kingship? Esther should have refuted the accusation Haman made against her people!

When False Notions Face Reality

Some questions are canceled out via answers; some arguments are refuted by counter-arguments. But there are those beliefs that require neither debate nor dialogue to disprove them. When reality is exposed, the questions and distortions fade away into oblivion.

Haman's argument fell into this category. Esther responded to Haman's argument for Jewish genocide not by dialogue, but by her very presence. The moment she identified herself as a member of the Jewish people and as a

product of its faith, Haman's "thesis" vanished into thin air. Achashverosh knew Esther intimately. She was his wife for five years. As the Megillah tells us, he was enthralled by her. He adored her, cherished her nobility and refinement, and would do almost anything for her (he explicitly told this to her more than once). He chose her from thousands upon thousands of young women, all of them not Jewish. Yet the king never realized that she was a daughter of the Jewish people and a product of its upbringing. When the King suddenly discovered that she was a proud member of the Jewish people, an adherent of the Jewish faith, Haman's argument was moot. Esther's living presence demonstrated its absurdity.

"I am that horrific scary Jew Haman was walking about," Esther was saying. "Look at me, and you will know what a Jew is. I am a product of these people, an embodiment of their values and lifestyle." The King did not have to hear another word. He got it. The Jew was a blessing for society, a beacon of moral purity, justice, compassion, authenticity, and love. The last thing he needs to worry about is the Jewish people and their faith. If anything, they will prove to become the greatest blessing for his Empire.

Looking at Esther, the King grasped that this alien nation who lived by another code ought to be respected. They may be different, but it is an otherness that elevates other nations rather than threatens them. (Leo Tolstoy wrote: "The Jew is that sacred being who has brought down from heaven the everlasting fire, and has illuminated with it the entire world (8).") The Jew may be different, but it is this "otherness" that has the power to inspire all of the nations of the world to live and love deeper, to encounter their path to G-d, truth, justice, and kindness.

Should We Hide? The lesson for our times is clear. Sometimes, Jews think that by hiding the "otherness" of Judaism and the Jewish people, they will gain the approval of the world. Yet the facts prove otherwise: Assimilation, the eclipsing of the otherness of the Jewish people, has never assuaged anti-Semitism. Look at what happened on October 7th and its aftermath. The most left-wing assimilated and secular Jews were hunted down with the same hate as the most religious Jews. The Jews of Shushan (the capital of the Persian Empire at the time of the Purim story) were assimilated (9). Yet, this did not deter the Persian viceroy and king from believing that despite all of the Jews' compromises and attempts not to be "too Jewish," they were still strange and different. This pattern has repeated itself in every milieu. Never in history has assimilation solved the problem of Jew hatred. Jews in Germany were the most assimilated and integrated in mainstream society, yet it was in that very country where the worst Jew hatred in history sprouted. Jewish students at Harvard and Columbia have been integrated beautifully for decades, yet they have become the punching bag of so many haters, all in the name of freedom and human rights. The solution for the Jewish people is not to deny their otherness. That will never work. Rather, just like Esther, we ought to be proud of the lifestyle and moral ethic of the Torah. When we learn how to embrace our otherness with love and grace, rather than with shame and guilt, it will become a source of admiration and inspiration for all of humanity. As Rabbi Jonathan Sacks would always say, the world respects Jews who respect Judaism. The are embarrassed by Jews who are ashamed of their G-d, faith, and history.

How Do We Survive? And there is one more grand lesson from this story: You can't argue with the facts. Jews often wonder what is our path forward? What is the tool for our continuity and success? How do we survive and thrive with such adversity and hatred? The answer is: Just take a look at the Jew. He has been around for 3300 years and remains fully intact, vibrant, and vivacious. Ancient Egypt, Assyria, Babylonia, Persia, Greece, and Rome are gone. Which Jews survived and endured? Historically, all Jews who swayed from the Torah and Mitzvos and tried to emulate the other nations have been lost. They are not around any longer. Only the Jews who clung to Judaism have remained, millenia later. This is what Esther teaches us. We can argue as much as we want about the science and the sociology. But just take a look at me: I am the Jews you heard the rumors about. Now draw your own conclusion. Look at the Jewish people and draw your own conclusion. Take an honest look at the Jew who survived for 3300 years, and you got the

answer. The arguments are moot. (This essay is based on a talk delivered by the Lubavitcher Rebbe, at a Purim farbrengen, Purim, 5729, March 4, 1969. (11)). 1) Esther 3:8.2) Megilah 13b.3) Wine poured in idolatrous service is, according to Torah law, forbidden to the Jew. The rabbis decreed that wine touched or poured by an idolator, even if not in service to his deity, be prohibited for a Jew to drink (See Shulchan Aruch, Yoreh Deah 123:1).4) Quoted in Why The Jews? (By Dennis Prager and Joseph Telushkin, NY, 1983) p. 83.5) Ibid. pp. 86-88.6) Esther 3:17.7) Ibid. 7:3-4. The translation of the last clause of the verse follows Rashi's interpretation.8) Quoted in Radican Then, Radical Now (Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, London 2000) p. 3 with reference noted there.9) See Talmud Meggillah 12a; Shir Hashirim Rabah 7:8. Introduction to Manos Halevi. Sicah, Purim 1941.10) Nietzsche, Beyond Good and Evil (Harmondsworth, 1978) p. 178.11) Published in Sichos Kodesh 5729 vol. 1 pp. 401-414. Toras Menachem 5729.

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subject: Tetzaveh and Purim

Purim and Jewish History

By Rabbi Josh Kahn

As the Purim story reaches a crescendo and Haman prepares to annihilate Klal Yisrael, Zeresh, Haman's wife, comments to Haman, "Im MiZera HaYehudim Mordechai Asher HaChilota Linpol L'Fanav Lo TuChal Lo Ki Nafol Tipol L'Fanav, "If Mordechai, before whom you have begun to fall, is from Jewish lineage, you will not prevail against him, but you will surely fall before him." (Esther 6:13). Until this point, the story has generally unfolded in Haman's favor. What makes Zeresh feel this sudden sense of pessimism? Furthermore, why does Zeresh express this pessimism by connecting Mordechai to the "Zera HaYehudim"? After all, there are many other ways to describe his lineage or our nation?

Zeresh intuitively understood Jewish history. Rav Yisrael Meir Druck points out that in describing Mordechai as coming from the "Jewish seed" she was sharing something profound. When a seed is thrown into the ground and trampled on, it does not get destroyed. Instead, it takes root in the ground, derives nutrients from its lowly place and then grows back bigger and stronger. Similarly, Zeresh notes, the Jewish people have been thrown to the ground and persecuted. In each case, they have not been destroyed, but rather rebuild. Zeresh felt she was starting to notice this shift take place at that moment. Until this point, Haman had great success in persecuting the Jewish people and preparing to annihilate them. Yet, as Haman paraded Mordechai through the streets, she expresses this vision of Zera HaYehudim. This message remains timely in each generation and certainly is palpable today. In the face of anti-Semitism, we are reminded of the message of Zera HaYehudim and how we respond with growth

from: Ohr Somayach <ohr@ohr.edu> [Rabbi Shmuel Kraines]

Taamei Hamitzvos - The Garments of the Kohen Gadol

Mitzvos #99, #100, and #101 in Sefer HaChinuch

The Kohanim are commanded to wear eight majestic garments of the type worn by royalty at the time of the Giving of the Torah (Ramban). The garments accord honor to the service and also remind the Kohanim of its great importance. Glancing upward, a Kohen would see his turban; he would constantly feel his thick sash with his arms. This would help keep his mind focused on serving Hashem, in the same way tefillin help a person focus on Hashem (Sefer HaChinuch). Some garments, such as the tunic, were made of pure white linen, suggesting purity (Rav Hirsch). Lightly dressed and walking without shoes on cold marble stones, the Kohanim would serve Hashem with humility, sanctity, and alacrity. Each garment atoned for a different sin: The tunic atoned for bloodshed, the sash atoned for sinful thoughts, the pants atoned for immoral acts, the turban atoned for haughtiness, the ephod-apron atoned for idolatry, the breastplate atoned for perversion of justice, the me'il- cloak atoned for lashon hara, and the headplate atoned for brazenness (Zevachim 88b). In this article, we will focus on the latter four garments, which were worn only by the Kohen Gadol.

APRON (EPHOD)

The Ephod was suspended by shoulder straps, upon which were affixed a pair of black gems called shoham stones, and inscribed on each gem were six names of the twelve sons of Yaakov. When Yaakov was on his deathbed, his sons affirmed their belief in Hashem's unity by proclaiming the first verse of Shema, and Yaakov blessed Hashem with the words: Baruch shem k'vod malchuso l'olam va'ed. In commemoration of this event, there are twenty-five letters on each shoham stone, representing the twenty-five letters in the first verse of Shema and the twenty-five letters in the accompanying phrase "Baruch shem k'vod..." (Malbim). As the Sages teach that the Ephod atones for idol worship because idolaters commonly wore such an apron. Wearing an apron to serve Hashem atones for wearing an apron to serve idols. Based on what we have explained above, we may add that the Ephod atones for idolatry also because the shoham stones represent the unity of Hashem and our subjugation to Him.

There was a third shoham stone on the breastplate itself that represented Yosef. Accordingly, the two shoham stones on the apron straps represent Yosef's two sons, Menasheh and Ephraim, who were raised amongst Egyptians but did not learn from their sinful ways (Pesikta D'Rabbi Kahana). The shoham stones allude to Egypt either because they can be excavated from the Nile River that runs through Egypt (Radal, citing Bereishis 2:12) or because the Egyptians were black-skinned (Rabbi Meir Shapiro), or because the Egyptians were "black" with sin and impurity.

We may explain the significance of this allusion based on Rabbi Avigdor Miller's observation that the Jewish people never invented an idol but rather copied the practices of neighboring nations. Thus, whenever Hashem sees the shoham stones, He is reminded of the Jewish people's origin in idolatrous Egypt, where they were exposed to the idolatry of the Egyptians. He recalls that this sin does not represent the true essence of the Jewish people, and He atones for them. Moreover, Hashem recalls those in every generation who, like Menasheh and Ephraim, retain their holiness despite anti-religious social surroundings.

BREASTPLATE (CHOSHEN)

The Kohen Gadol would wear an ornamental breastplate studded with twelve different precious stones, upon which are inscribed the names of the twelve tribes, the names of the Patriarchs, and the words "Shivtei Yeshurun - tribes of Yeshurun, i.e., the Jewish People. The breastplate is set upon a folded piece of fabric that contains Hashem's seventy-two-letter Name.

The Torah commands us to attach the breastplate to the Ephod and never to separate them. We may suggest that the idea behind this mitzvah is that the glory of the twelve tribes symbolized by the breastplate must never be seen as a value in its own right. Our glory is nothing more than an extension of Hashem's glory, by virtue of our being His servants. The breastplate must therefore always remain attached to the Ephod, which symbolizes our service to Hashem, as explained above.

CLOAK (ME'IL)

The cloak atones for lashon hara (evil speech/malicious gossip). There are seventy-two types of skin impurities, tzaraas, that a person might contract as a punishment for speaking lashon hara. Correspondingly, seventy-two articles hang from the hem of the cloak: thirty-six bells, in between which are thirty-six balls of fabric resembling pomegranates. Pomegranates allude to the Torah, because a pomegranate is filled with numerous seeds in the same way the Torah is filled with 613 Mitzvos; the noise produced by the bells clanging against the pomegranates suggests that a person should use his mouth to speak meritorious words and not malicious ones.

We may suggest that the clanging of a bell against the two adjacent pomegranates reminds us of this idea because the numerical value of rimon (קרימון/pomegranate) is 306, so two pomegranates have the value of 612, which is 613 including the bell (based on Lechem Rav to Perek Shirah, Rimon).

The cloak is made of wool dyed pure blue, the color of the sky, which signifies that one's speech should be as pure as the heavens. It is forbidden to tear the "lip" (neckline) of the cloak, signifying that one should not "tear" the holiness of the lips with improper speech (Malbim).

HEADPLATE (TZITZ)

Upon the headplate is inscribed the phrase Kodesh La'Shem - sacred to Hashem. Wearing the headplate atones for brazenness because brazenness is associated with the brow, as in the term azus metzach (a brazen brow). The Kohen Gadol must constantly keep in mind the fact that he displays Hashem's Name on his brow (Yoma 8a); this instills within him a deep reverence for his service. The Sages (ibid.) infer from this that one who is wearing tefillin, which has not one but many Divine Names written within it, should certainly bear in mind that he carries Hashem's Name upon him.

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Tetzaveh & Purim 5786: **Garments of Eternity**

By **Michal Horowitz** on February 26, 2026

In Parshas Tetzaveh we learn of the induction of Aharon as kohen gadol and his sons as kohanim. The pasuk tells us: And you shall bring near to yourself your brother Aharon, and his sons with him, from among the children of Israel to be kohanim to Me: Aharon, Nadav, and Avihu, Eleazar, and Itamar, the sons of Aharon (Shemos 28:1).

The Torah then outlines, in precise and beautiful detail, the bigdei kehunah to be worn when they serve in the Mishkan (and later, in the BHM"K). The Kohen Gadol dons eight special vestments, and the regular kohanim (kohen hedyot) don four. The Torah tells us: וַעֲשִׂיתָ בְּגָדֵי־קֹדֶשׁ לְאַהֲרֹן אֶתְיָד לְכַבֹּד וּלְתַפְאֵרֶת, and you shall make garments of holiness for Aharon your brother, for honor and for glory, וְאֵתָהּ תְּדַבֵּר אֶל־כָּל־חַכְמֵי־לֵב אֲשֶׁר מִלְּאֲתֵיךָ יוֹם חֲכָמָה וְעָשׂוֹ אֶת־בְּגָדֵי אֶהְרֹן, and you shall speak to all the wise hearted, whom I have filled with the spirit of wisdom, and they shall make Aharon's garments to sanctify him, to be a kohen to Me (28:2-3).

Interestingly, the parsha of Tetzaveh coincides with the yomtov of Purim (in a regular, non-leap year), and will be read the Shabbos before Purim. This calendar confluence is not an accident, and there are connections between the parsha and Purim.

In the beginning of the Megillah, when Achashvairosh hosts his lavish party, the pasukim tell us: בַּשָּׁנָה שְׁלוֹשׁ לְמַלְכוּתוֹ עָשָׂה מִשְׁתֵּה לְכָל־שָׂרָיו וְעַבְדָּיו חֵיל | פָּרַס וּמְדֵי בַּשָּׁנָה שְׁלוֹשׁ לְמַלְכוּתוֹ שָׂרֵי הַמְּדִינֹת לְפָנָיו - In the third year of his reign, he made a feast for all his officers and his servants, the army of Persia and Medes, the nobles, and the princes of the provinces before him, בְּהָרְאֹתוֹ אֶת־עֹשֶׂר כְּבוֹד מַלְכוּתוֹ, - When he showed the riches of his glorious kingdom, and the splendor of his glorious majesty, many days, one hundred and eighty days (Esther 1:3-4).

Noting that in regard to the bigdei kehunah, the pasuk says: וַעֲשִׂיתָ בְּגָדֵי־קֹדֶשׁ לְכַבֹּד וּלְתַפְאֵרֶת, the garments of the kohen are for honor and glory, and in the Megillah, the clothing that Achashvairosh wore to his feast were to display וְתַפְאֵרֶת גְּדוּלְתוֹ, the splendor of his glorious majesty, the Sages teach (Megillah 12a):

”בְּהָרְאֹתוֹ אֶת עֹשֶׂר כְּבוֹד מַלְכוּתוֹ.” אָמַר רַבִּי יוֹסִי בַר חֲנִינְיָא: מִלְּמַד שֶׁלֵּבַשׁ בְּגָדֵי כְהוּנָה. כְּתִיב: הָקָא: ”וְתַפְאֵרֶת גְּדוּלְתוֹ”, וְכִתִּיב הֵתָם: ”לְכַבֹּד וּלְתַפְאֵרֶת”

“When he showed the riches of his glorious kingdom,” Rabbi Yosei bar Chanina said: This teaches that Achashvairosh wore the priestly vestments. For it says here (in the Megillah): “the splendor of his glorious majesty,” and it is written there (with regard to the priestly garments): “for honor and for glory.”

Rashi (to the Gemara) teaches: בגדי כהונה - שהיו בידו שם בגדי כהן גדול שהביאן מירושלים. Rashi explains these were the actual garments of the Kohen Gadol that were physically in his possession. They had been taken from Yerushalayim after the destruction of the first BHM"K and were now in the hands of the Persian monarchy. Achashvairosh wore those very garments at his feast!

These were the glorious and authentic priestly vestments that had once been worn by the kohen as he performed the avodah. They had been brought from Jerusalem as spoils of conquest and were now part of the royal treasury.

The message of Chazal is strikingly sad, on the one hand, and uplifting and hopeful on the other.

The bigdei kehunah were created וּלְתַפְאֵרֶת, לכבוד ולתפארת, garments designated for

Divine service and sanctity. In the BHM"K and its avodah, they elevated the Kohen Gadol and the entire nation. In Shushan, in the hands of the Persian kings, R"l, they were reduced to costumes of revelry at a political celebration.

This underscores the audacity of Achashvairosh's actions. He was not merely dressing in royal finery; he was using - and abusing - the holiest garments of the Jewish people and displaying them as evidence that Jerusalem had fallen and its sanctity was now under his control.

And yet... right here, at the beginning of the Megillah, as we read of the celebration of the wicked king, and his supposed victory over Am Yisrael, the Divine hand is moving the world stage to bring redemption to His nation. For at this very feast, the seeds for redemption are planted. Vashti refused to come, she was conveniently disposed of, Esther was chosen as queen, Haman's plot was foiled, the nation was saved and our enemies destroyed.

How powerful a lesson for all of us: what Achashvairosh treated as spoils of a defeated nation were, in truth, eternal symbols of a covenant, a nation, and a Torah, that could never - and will never - be erased. Far from being a symbol of a defeated nation, the garments were a Divine reminder and symbol that Am Yisrael will always remain undefeated, la'netzach.

How fitting that once Haman's plot is foiled and the Jews are saved, the pasuk tells us that it is Mordechai the Jew who goes out in the streets dressed in garments of royalty, reminiscent of the bigdei kehunah, the holy avodah, and the BHM"K that one day would stand again. וּמָרְדֵּכָי יָצָא מִלְּפָנֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ בְּלִבְיֹשׁ - And Mordecai went out from the before the king with royal garments, blue and white and a large golden crown and a wrap of linen and purple, and the city of Shushan rejoiced and was glad (Esther 8:15).

וְיָהוֹיָדִים הָיְתָה אוֹרָה וְשִׂמְחָה וְשִׁשׁוֹן וְיָמֵר, to the Jews there was light and joy, gladness and honor (Esther 8:16). As they merited redemption, may we too merit salvation, in our days and in our time.

Michal, בברכת שבת שלום ופורים שמח

<https://aish.com/purims-counterintuitive-strategy-three-ancient-lessons-for-confronting-antisemitism-today/>

Purim's Counterintuitive Strategy for Confronting Modern Antisemitism

by **Rabbi Raphael Shore**

February 24, 2026

The Purim story is Judaism's masterclass on antisemitism — and we're ignoring every lesson in it. Purim is Judaism's oldest playbook on antisemitism, why it happens and how to respond to it. And in many ways, Jews today are doing the exact opposite. Here are three critical lessons Purim teaches about confronting antisemitism and how so many are often getting them backwards.

1. Don't Be Fooled by the “Reasons” When Haman rose to power in the court of King Ahasuerus, he demanded that everyone bow to him. Mordechai refused. The Midrash records something astonishing: many Jews were furious at Mordechai. Why provoke him? Bow like everyone else! Don't stand out! Don't create trouble! You are going to cause antisemitism! And then Haman issued a decree of genocide against every Jewish man, woman, and child. The critics were vindicated, yet when the decree came, the Jews didn't blame Mordechai. Why not? Why did they change their minds?

Genocide does not happen because one Jew refuses to bow. The hatred was there already. Mordechai did not create it; he exposed it. They understood something profound. Genocide does not happen because one Jew refuses to bow. The hatred was there already. Mordechai did not create it; he exposed it. For 2,000 years Jews were told: You killed our god. You are a strange race. You are rootless cosmopolitans. You control the banks. You are communists. You are capitalists. Today it is: You are colonialists. You build settlements. You are white oppressors. You are too powerful. You are too nationalist. Different accusations, same hatred. People keep believing the surface explanations, thinking: If only we behaved differently. If only we adjusted. If only we improved our Israeli PR. If only we stopped building

settlements. Hamas did not attack on October 7 because of a border dispute. It was an unapologetic call to destroy Israel, a radical Islamist expression of ideological hatred that makes no secret of its goal to eliminate the Jewish state. The leadership of the Islamic Republic of Iran has repeatedly framed its genocidal hostility toward Israel as central to its identity. Iran's doctrine rejects Israel's existence irrespective of its policies or borders. Just as the Jews in Shushan eventually recognized that hatred was not caused by Mordechai's refusal to bow, October 7 and its global reverberations revealed that much of the hostility directed at Jews and Israel today is not about specific actions or politics. The global antisemitic aftermath made that clear. Within hours, even before Israel responded militarily, Jews around the world were targeted. Synagogues were vandalized, students were harassed. "Globalize the intifada" echoed in Western capitals. That reaction exposed something many were reluctant to admit: this was not about settlements, checkpoints, or a particular government. Purim teaches that the excuses are not the cause. The hatred preceded the trigger. As I explore in my book *Who's Afraid of the Big Bad Jew?*, antisemitism mutates across history but the "reasons" are always interchangeable. The justifications shift because they are not the root. The Rambam writes in *Laws of Fasting* that when suffering strikes the Jewish people, to dismiss it as coincidence or caused only by superficial sociological explanations is cruelty. History is not random. There is a deeper spiritual dynamic at play. Purim tells us: don't mistake the symptom for the cause. Failing to see that truth leaves us vulnerable, and misled.

2. The Response Is Not PR — It's Commitment to Judaism When the decree is issued, what do the Jews do?

They don't hire lobbyists. They don't launch a public relations campaign. They don't boast of Jewish contributions to science and medicine. They don't commission studies on antisemitism. They fast, repent, and gather in prayer. Esther calls for three days of fasting. Mordechai mobilizes the nation for spiritual return. This is counterintuitive to the modern Jewish instinct. Today our default response is: Strengthen the ADL to do more research on antisemitism. Improve our Israeli messaging. Explain how much Israel has contributed to technology, and Jews have enriched the world. Increase Holocaust education. Rabbi Gedalia Schorr, in *Ohr Gedalyahu*, describes history as "a wheel within a wheel" — an outer political layer and an inner spiritual layer. If you focus only on the outer wheel (the politics, the media, the narrative), you miss the true engine. The events in the Scroll of Esther appear to be pure chance — palace politics, royal banquets, intrigue, a series of remarkable coincidences. God's Name is absent from the entire book precisely because He is hidden within the unfolding of events themselves. And that's the point. The core lesson of Purim is not merely that God saves. It is that God operates invisibly. Purim teaches us how to see. It trains the Jewish eye to look beneath the surface layer of history — beneath politics, power shifts, headlines, and "coincidences" — and to recognize that what appears random is often directed, and what appears chaotic may be purposeful. We inhabit a civilization that explains everything through the outer layer — sociology, economics, geopolitics, science, psychology. The dominant worldview sees only visible causes and immediate triggers. Judaism insists there is always an inner layer. Purim challenges us to resist the superficial reading of events, to look past the costumes and coincidences and ask the harder question: not only what happened, but what does it mean? God's Name doesn't appear in the Book of Esther but His fingerprints are everywhere. The timing of Achashverosh's sleepless night, the precise moment Esther found favor in the king's eyes, Haman's lot falling on the month it did — none of it was random. Once that lens is applied, the entire story transforms. What looked like a series of fortunate accidents reveals itself as a carefully orchestrated divine drama. The hidden hand was there all along. That recognition changes everything about how one responds. If antisemitism were purely a political or sociological phenomenon, the appropriate response would be purely political and sociological — better lobbying, stronger alliances, sharper messaging. And while none of those things are unimportant, Purim insists they are incomplete. Because if there is

meaning behind the madness, then the response must go deeper than the surface. The Jewish response to antisemitism, then, begins not with PR, but with introspection. Not with marketing, but with meaning. What is being asked of us in this moment? What does it mean to be Jewish — not defensively, not apologetically, but fully and proudly? Mordecai models this perfectly. When Haman rises to power and the pressure mounts, Mordecai does not assimilate. He does not shrink. He sits at the king's gate and refuses to bow. His Jewish identity is not a liability to be managed — it is a commitment to be lived, openly and without shame. And it is precisely that refusal to disappear that sets the entire redemption in motion. This does not negate diplomacy or security. Both matter enormously. But Purim insists on a clarity that is easy to lose in moments of fear: the destiny of the Jewish people is not ultimately shaped by the whims of hostile empires or the calculations of political strategists. It is shaped by the willingness of Jews to see both the physical and spiritual dimensions of reality — and to live proud, distinctively Jewish lives in response to what they see. The antidote to Haman is not a better press release. It is Mordecai — unbowed, unashamed, and unambiguously Jewish.

3. Recognize Evil and Defend Yourself Without Apology The Scroll of Esther records that the Jews killed 75,810 of their enemies. Read that again. There is no handwringing in the text. No apologetics. No moral confusion. These were people who intended genocide. The Jews defended themselves. Today people struggle with this lesson. They rationalize our enemies and project our values onto them, assuming everyone ultimately wants peace. Mordechai didn't assume Haman merely needed economic opportunity. The Jews of Shushan did not say, "Surely they don't mean it." Purim forces a difficult but necessary recognition: some people choose evil. Not everyone shares Judaism's moral framework. Not everyone values life the way Jews do. October 7 forced people to confront this again. One of the most sobering themes emerging from the testimonies of hostages released from Gaza was not only the brutality of Hamas terrorists but the atmosphere of broad agreement and complicity. They described being hidden in civilian homes, guarded in family apartments, surrounded by people who knew exactly who they were. Most testified that they felt hatred was not isolated to masked gunmen, but woven into the environment around them. Israeli soldiers reported something equally sobering: weapons stored in living rooms, rifles in children's bedrooms, rockets launched from schools, terror infrastructure embedded in mosques and hospitals. The line between "militant" and "civilian space" was blurred. When an ideology of annihilation saturates a society, in schools, media, religious sermons, and homes, the hatred cannot be dismissed as fringe. The Jews of Shushan did not tell themselves that genocidal rhetoric was symbolic. They did not pretend the threat was limited to one man. They recognized that when a decree of extermination is signed, it reflects a broader willingness to act on it. Purim demands that we look at reality without flinching. And it shows us two simultaneous truths: Trust in God. Defend yourself decisively. Faith and strength are not contradictions. They are partners. The Jews of Shushan fasted, and then they fought. They prayed, and then they acted militarily and with courage. They recognized that redemption comes from Heaven but responsibility rests with us. The Scroll of Esther repeats three times that the Jews did not take the spoils. They were not driven by vengeance or conquest. They acted to survive. A people committed to life must be prepared to confront those committed to a cult of death and destruction. In a world still struggling to distinguish between victim and aggressor, between self-defense and hatred, that moral clarity may be one of the most urgent Jewish contributions of all. The Great Inversion Purim is the holiday of *v'nahafoch hu* — everything was turned upside down. The decree of annihilation became a day of survival and celebration. The hunted became the protected. The gallows built for Mordechai became Haman's. Jewish history has seen so many such reversals before and after. The Holocaust was not a "victory." Six million Jews were murdered. Entire worlds were lost. Nothing about that horror can be minimized. But Jewish history did not end as Hitler intended. Within three years of Auschwitz's liberation, the State of Israel was reborn.

The people marked for extinction returned to sovereignty. Nazi propagandist Julius Streicher understood the irony. As he stood on the gallows at Nuremberg in 1946, he shouted, “Purimfest 1946.” The regime that sought to erase the Jews was once again erased. That is v'nahafoch hu. The eternal Jewish people endure. Today we need another inversion. People think: If we are quieter, they'll ignore us. If we assimilate more, they'll like us. If we explain ourselves better, they'll understand. If we shrink Jewish distinctiveness, hatred will shrink too. History says otherwise. Assimilation has never solved antisemitism. In fact, dilution of Jewish identity often intensifies it. Purim teaches: The excuses are not the cause. Don't get fooled. The response begins with spiritual clarity. Evil must be recognized and confronted. The way to defeat those who hate the Jewish mission is to live it more fully.

Parsha Potpourri

Parshas Tetzaveh / Purim – Vol. 21, Issue 20

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את הכבש האחד תעשה בבקר ואת הכבש השני תעשה בין הערבים (29:39) Toward the end of Parshas Tetzaveh, the Torah discusses the korban tamid that was brought twice daily, once in the morning and once in the afternoon. The section of the korban tamid is repeated in Parshas Pinchas (Bamidbar 28:1-8), where the Torah uses almost identical wording, with one minor difference. Parshas Tetzaveh, which refers to the first time the korban tamid was offered, says (Shemos 29:39) את הכבש האחד (the one sheep), while Parshas Pinchas, which discusses the ongoing mitzvah to bring the korban tamid, says (Bamidbar 28:4) את הכבש אחד, without a ה.

The Brisker Rav explains that throughout the history of the Beis HaMikdash, the morning korban tamid and the afternoon korban tamid were independent. If for any reason one of them could not be offered, the other one was still brought. There was one exception to this rule: The first time the korban tamid was offered to dedicate the Altar, they had to be brought as a pair. Even though the two sacrifices are not usually contingent upon one another, the first time the korban tamid was brought, it had to be done right. If they did not bring the korban tamid that morning, they could not bring one in the afternoon. For this reason, in Parshas Tetzaveh, which deals with the initial dedication of the Altar, the Torah refers to the morning korban tamid as האחד – the one sheep without which the other cannot be offered. In his sefer Shemen HaTov, Rav Dov Weinberger derives from here that whenever we start a new project, we should strive to begin in the best possible way. The Sfas Emes uses this concept to answer a question asked by the P'nei Yehoshua (Shabbos 21b). On Chanuka, we celebrate the fact that the Chashmonaim discovered a flask of pure oil that miraculously burned for eight days. The Gemara rules (Pesachim 77a) that if most Jews are tamei (impure), the Divine service in the Beis HaMikdash can be done in a state of impurity. If so, why did they need to find pure oil that burned for eight days when they were allowed to use tamei oil?

The Sfas Emes notes that the Menorah was plundered by the Greeks, and after the Chashmonaim's military victory, a new Menorah was constructed (Avodah Zara 43a). Because it was being inaugurated and used for the first time, it had to be lit in the ideal manner. Even though impure oil would normally have been permitted under the circumstances, on the day of the dedication of the new Menorah and the rededication of the entire Temple, only pure oil was acceptable.

איש יהודי היה בשושן הבירה ושמו מרדכי בן יאיר בן שמעי בן קיש איש ימיני (אסתר 2:5) Mordechai is one of the primary protagonists in Megillas Esther, yet the text seems somewhat vague and contradictory in identifying his tribal background. When we are introduced to him, we are first told that he was an איש יהודי who came from the tribe of Yehuda, but the pasuk (verse) ends by saying that he was an איש ימיני from the tribe of Binyomin. The Gemara explains (Megillah 12b) that both are correct, as his father was from the tribe of Binyomin while his mother was descended from Yehuda. However, this is still perplexing. A person's mother determines his status as a Jew, but his tribal affiliation is solely determined by his father. Why then does the pasuk

mention Mordechai's maternal background? The Sfas Emes explains that the Megillah is teaching us that Mordechai possessed essential characteristics of both tribes. Yehuda represents dibbur (speech), as his name connotes hoda'ah (giving thanks), and he publicly confessed after Tamar returned his collateral to him (Bereishis 38:26). Binyomin was the opposite, associated with the concept of shtikah (remaining silent). He was the son of Rochel, who remained quiet about her father Lavan's plan to replace her under the chuppah with her sister Leah. Binyomin's stone in the Choshen was the Yashpeh, which is a contraction for יש פה (he has a mouth), referring to the fact that he knew about the sale of Yosef but did not disclose it. Mordechai embodied both attributes. When he heard about Haman's decree, he cried out loudly and bitterly to inspire the Jews to daven and do teshuvah (Esther 4:1). At the same time, he insisted that Esther remain silent and not disclose her nationality (Ibid., 2:10). Still, why is Yehuda, from whom Mordechai was descended through his mother, mentioned before his paternal lineage through Binyomin, which was his primary tribal affiliation? The Rokeach explains that on his father's side, Mordechai was descended from Shimi ben Geira, who cursed Dovid HaMelech. This yichus (ancestry) was considered a disgrace, so it is only listed at the end of the pasuk. Mordechai was also descended from Shaul HaMelech. Part of Mordechai's mission was to rectify Shaul's sin of not killing the Amalekite king Agag immediately, which allowed him to conceive a child from whom Haman was descended. In fact, the Nesivos writes that Mordechai's lineage is not traced all the way back to Shaul because it was Shaul's error that enabled Haman to come into existence and terrorize Klal Yisroel.

הפיל פור הוא הגורל לפני המן מיום ליום ומחדש לחדש שנים עשר הוא חדש אדר (3:7) Since the Jewish calendar begins in Nissan (Shemos 12:2), Rav Gedaliah Schorr points out that Adar is the final month of the year. On a spiritual level, Nissan represents renewal. It is the beginning of a new year and the first month of spring, when the earth begins to awaken from its winter slumber. It is full of potential, and for this reason, it was chosen as the month for the redemption from Egypt. The more distant a month is from the source of light and energy, the darker and more hidden it can seem. Haman was therefore ecstatic when his lots fell out on Adar, the last and darkest month of the year, and the month when Moshe Rabbeinu was taken from us, which he viewed as the most auspicious time to annihilate the Jews. Rav Schorr explains that, beneath the apparent concealment, a pool of light is hidden. In fact, this light must be even stronger than at other times to penetrate the darkness and not be completely eclipsed. In the midst of the darkness at the end of the year, the month of Adar contains a powerful source of radiance. When the Jewish people were inspired to repent wholeheartedly, they were able to access and reveal this brilliant light, transforming the darkness into growth and inspiration. This potential energy is present every Adar, available and waiting for us to tap into it to reveal the ultimate light – יהודים יהיה אורה, – there was light for the Jews, so may there be for us!

בלילה ההוא נדדה שנת המלך (6:1)

The Gemara in Megillah (19a) quotes the opinion of Rav Shimon bar Yochai, who maintains that when we publicly read the Megillah on Purim, we should begin from the pasuk that records Achashverosh's inability to sleep on one fateful night, as this represents the turning point of the Megillah, when Mordechai and Esther's fortunes begin to overtake Haman's. The Megillah records that Achashverosh's sleepless night occurred בלילה ההוא – on that night – which implies that it happened on some well-known night. Rashi writes (Ibid., 16a) that this night was 16 Nissan, the second night of Pesach. Why did the turning point of the Megillah specifically take place at this time? Pesach is a time of redemption for the Jewish people. The night of 15 Nissan is well-known as a time when numerous miracles happened throughout Jewish history, as recorded in the piyut זכה פסח ואמר that we say at the end of the Seder. If so, why didn't the critical miracle of Purim also happen on 15 Nissan instead of on the following night? Rav Dovid Feinstein explains that 16 Nissan is not Yom Tov in Eretz Yisroel. Only outside the land of Israel, where Jews in exile observe two days of Yom Tov, is this day also considered Yom Tov. In essence, the second day

of Yom Tov perfectly symbolizes the concept of Hashem appearing to hide His face from us by reminding us that we are in exile. Because one of the central themes of the Megillah is hester panim (Hashem's concealed face), the most appropriate time for the pivotal miracle to occur is on the "hidden" night of Pesach: 16 Nissan, which is only a Yom Tov for a person who is in exile and unable to experience Hashem's revealed Hashgacha (Divine Providence).

(7:5) מי הוא זה ואי זה הוא אשר מלאו לבו לעשות כן

At the second banquet that Esther arranged, Achashverosh asked for her request. Esther replied by telling him that she and her nation had been sold to be destroyed, slain, and exterminated. She added that if they had only been sold as slaves, she would have accepted the decree and remained quiet, but since they were faced with annihilation, she had no choice but to beseech him to rescind the decree. Achashverosh incredulously responded by asking who would dare to threaten the Queen and her people with mass extermination. This is quite difficult to understand. Why did Achashverosh act so surprised and question who would do such a thing when he had personally given Haman permission to destroy the Jews only three days earlier? Secondly, why did Esther say that she would have remained quiet if they had instead been sold as slaves, when nobody until this point had mentioned a word about becoming slaves? The Apter Rav explains that when Haman initially approached Achashverosh with his plan, he was afraid to reveal his true intentions, so instead he told Achashverosh that he wanted to purchase the Jews לעבוד – with an ע, which means to work with them – and he said that he was prepared to pay 10,000 talents of silver to buy them. They wrote and signed a contract to this effect to complete the transaction. Haman then went and secretly changed the ע to an א, so the contract said that he bought the Jews לאבד – with an א, which means to destroy them. When Achashverosh's scribes saw the contract, they accepted it at face value and sent out edicts proclaiming that the king had decreed להשמד ולהרוג ולאבד – that the Jewish people should be destroyed, slain, and exterminated. This explains what Esther told Achashverosh. If you had proceeded with your original plan to sell us as slaves, I would have remained quiet, but now that Haman changed the ע to an א and my nation is threatened with destruction, I must speak up. When Achashverosh heard this, he legitimately questioned in wonderment who would dare do such a thing, as he had certainly never agreed to this plan.

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Rabbi Ahron Lopiansky

Beauty and Honor: Divine or Empty?

This week's parsha describes the garments worn by the kohanim. There is a general description of these garments as being there for "l'kavod u'l'tiferes - honor and glory" (Shemos 28:2). We naturally assume that important buildings and officials would look especially grand and dignified. But one wonders why Hashem's service would demand the grandness that we associate with human enterprises. As a matter of fact, when we speak of those terms, of 'glory and honor', we tend to see them in somewhat of a negative light. At best, it's a necessary contrivance.

Another fascinating point to note about the various adornments on the vessels in the Mishkan is that they all have to be of the item itself. Thus, the menorah had many intricate designs on it, but it all had to be hammered out from one piece (Shemos 25:31); they could not be made separately and then welded on. Similarly, the designs on the curtains had to be woven in, not sewn on. Obviously, this is a more refined form of craftsmanship. But one would expect that when we are dealing with items that are of Divine nature there is a lot more to it than merely eye-catching design and craftsmanship. We also find that the Torah will occasionally single out someone for their beauty. Thus, Rachel, Yoseph, and David are all singled out for their appearance, being of great beauty. Obviously, this is not simply a factual description but is telling us something of significance.

Let us think a moment of Hashem's purpose in creating the world. Hashem wanted a spiritual world that would penetrate even physical darkness, and within that darkness express itself and project its image and message. Thus, even a person who is of physical substance learns to understand that physicality is empty and that only the spiritual is worthy.

When an object expresses itself to others, we call that 'beauty', or tiferes. Thus, when I adorn a most important venue in a way that reflects the dignity and significance of its content, then I have actually furthered its goal. The point of beauty, kavod, and tiferes is that the content of the object project itself and impress itself on the people interacting with it.

But does not the passuk say that "charm and beauty are empty" (Mishlei 31:30)? The answer is, indeed, that is the point of it. When one takes a vessel that's empty and contains nothing of value but adorns the outside in a way that it seems to project value and importance, one is perpetrating a lie. But when dealing with something of great value and real content, by projecting its value one is actually delineating and highlighting the truth.

This helps us understand the constant emphasis on having the decorations on the divine vessels coming from within rather than being pasted on. If its beauty is something that came from the outside and is added to it, it inevitably is not really expressing the inner truth. But when the truth breaks through from the inside, and its beauty projects outwards, then the beauty is truly reflecting the content. Thus, Shlomo Hamelech says, "the wisdom of a person radiates from his face" (Koheles 8:1). Wisdom is inside one's mind, but if it is powerful enough it will radiate outwards.

Apropos of Purim this week, we see the exact opposite with Achashverosh. Chazal say that he took the garments of the kohanim and wanted to show them off (Megillah 12a). He made a huge party to show all of his glory and greatness. He embodies something that is all beauty and glory, and no substance whatsoever. His kingdom rises and falls on beauty, and nothing but that.

This gives us real understanding concerning the creations of beauty and glory. They are meant to be the final piece that connects us to Hashem. An orator with a profound message who is able to articulate it in a way that is beautiful and pleasing is really accomplishing something most worthy. He is taking the truth and connecting it to people in a way that they will absorb it. A person who lacks articulation and eloquence may have the truth, but the truth falls short of influencing, and being absorbed by, the listener.

But the person who is all articulation and beauty with no substance or content is a travesty. People grasp his words, but the words have nothing to tell them. Like a child who sucks a pacifier, eagerly thinking that they're drinking milk, but their stomach continues to hurt them because there is no nourishment forthcoming.

The Beis Hamikdash is Hashem's words, projected through the articulation of beauty and majesty, and that is why it has such a profound effect upon us.