

Toras



Ace

The parsha newsletter that knows when to hold them, and knows when to fold them...

RABBI DOV KRAMER

Taking a Closer Look

"And the decree was given in Shushan the capitol; and the king and Haman sat down to drink, and the City of Shushan was baffled" (Esther 3:15). Why was the city baffled? We can understand why the Jews living in the city would be upset, or depressed, but why were they baffled? Additionally, the "City of Shushan" included both Jews and non-Jews (as evidenced by the 800 enemies eventually killed there- besides the countless that might not have been enemies). Why would the decree to annihilate the Jewish people leave the entire city confused? And why Shushan more than any other city (where there were Jews)?

There are numerous other perplexing parts to the Purim story, and by looking into those issues, perhaps we can understand what was going on in Shushan.

For one thing, what did Achashvairosh see in Haman that caused him to be elevated to the status of Viceroy? Also, if Haman's decree was sent to the entire kingdom, and made public (3:14), it would seem that everyone knew about it; why does it the Megillah specify that "Mordecai knew all that had happened" (4:1)- implying that others did not know? Finally, why does the Megillah close with a political note: "And King Achashvairosh placed a tax on the land (10:1)?" What relevance does this have to the miraculous story of Purim?"

The Talmud (Megillah 11a) tells us that Achashvairosh did not inherit the throne. There is a dispute as to whether this was said as praise (as there was no one else more worthy of being king, whereas had he succeeded his father he might have done so despite being incompetent) or as derision (as he bought his way into the position). Either way, though, he didn't become king by force. Those in (political) power had to acquiesce to his becoming their king, and it is hard to imagine that they would allow him to have complete control and power of them. Therefore, Vashti thought she could get away with disobeying his order to appear before him, and

Achashvairosh couldn't just decide to do what he wanted to either punish her or set an example with her. Instead, he had to consult his "advisors," "for such was the manner of the king" (1:13), i.e. he had no choice but to get their approval before taking any action.

However, this just added to Achashvairosh's feeling of powerlessness. Not only did his queen disobey him, but he couldn't do anything about it without getting authorization. Haman realized this, and, as the Malbim puts it (1:19), "advised that from now on there should be established a new system [of governing], that all things relating to the kingdom should no longer come from the ruling officers as had been until now, where the king didn't have permission to make a ruling or to establish (or fix) anything on his own without the officers and national advisors. From now on it shouldn't be that way. Rather, anything that must be set forth regarding the kingdom should come from him (the king) alone. And not only that, but it should be written in the laws of Persia and Media that every ruling that is made by the king should be written into the laws of Persia and Media to remain as the permanent law upon which future similar cases will be based." This is how the Malbim understands Haman's suggestion that "things pertinent to the kingdom should come from him" (1:19), in contrast to how things worked up until then (as described in 1:13). Once the other officers agreed to this (1:21), "the authority of the officers was gone, and the leadership of [setting] law remained with the king alone."

This may have been part of the reason why Achashvairosh elevated Haman (see Vilna Gaon 3:1), as thanks to his suggestion, he was able to assume full control of the kingdom.

Soon after Haman's rise to power, he convinces Achashvairosh to let him destroy the Jewish people. But the verse that describes the publicized decree is worded very strangely: "The wording of what was written [was] that the law should be set in every country, revealed to all the nations, to be prepared for this day (i.e. the 13th of Adar)" (3:14). No mention is made of what the decree itself was, only that all should be prepared. Prepared for what? The Malbim explains that the decree was sealed, not to

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A freilachen Purim!

be opened until the 13th. All anyone knew was that there would be a war, but no one knew against whom. This was done so that the Jews wouldn't be able to find a way to counter the decree, and so they wouldn't know to run away. (See Vilna Gaon for a similar approach.)

Rashi (4:1) tells us that Mordecai found out about this in a dream. (Although Rashi is referring to the reason for the decree, not what the decree itself was.) The Malbim also says that G-d specifically informed Mordecai of what was going on. This explains why the verse must tell us that Mordecai knew, as (except for Achashvairosh and Haman) no one else did. Once Mordecai knew, though, he spread the word throughout the Jewish communities, so that they could try to repent (see 4:3).

Getting back to the decree, though, think about the contrast: Originally, the advisors made the decisions. They were involved in all of the kingdom's business. The capitol city must have attracted all those that wanted to be part of the action. The highest officers would discuss the inner workings- the secret goings on in the palace- with those eager to hear every tidbit. Now, a decree went out that they had no part in making, and didn't even know what it was. They had to wait till the 13th of Adar to find out what was in the sealed envelope just like every other peasant in the kingdom. This hit them very hard. They were in shock. Dumfounded. Bewildered.

Perplexed. The city that was used to being "the insiders" was just as much on the "outside" as everybody else. What a reality check. "And the City of Shushan was baffled."

I recently met someone that had been working on Howard Dean's campaign. Dean had just given up trying to become the Democratic candidate for the Presidency, so this worker was back home. I asked him how it was, expecting a response about how disappointing it was after being favored to win the candidacy to have to close up shop. Instead, I was told how great it was, as all the media attention was on the campaign; it was where things were happening. It made me wonder how many people living in Washington D.C. are there to be in the center of the action rather than to try to have a positive influence on how our government operates. Perhaps this was true in the capitol city of Shushan as well, and they were therefore taken aback when they realized how things had changed thanks to Haman's advice and decree. Consequently, they were very happy to hear that Haman was killed and the scheme he devised behind their backs foiled.

Because the change in power structure caused such a backlash, we might have thought that Achashvairosh's grip on his kingdom had weakened. Instead, it solidified- as evidenced by his ability to place a tax on the land. The instability caused by Haman was replaced with the stability of the new Viceroy, Mordecai. Achashvairosh was able to have his son inherit his throne- a son who would allow the Jews to restart the rebuilding of the Bais Hamikdash (Temple). © 2004 Rabbi D. Kramer

"Those who cast the votes decide nothing. Those who count the votes decide everything." - Josef Stalin

RABBI NOSSON CHAYIM LEFF

Sfas Emes

The Sfas Emes on Purim is extraordinarily rich. He has bequeathed us page after page of new, mind-stretching ideas. So be aware that what I offer here is like a drop of water from the ocean or a grain of sand from the beach. The implication is: much joy awaits you if you take the plunge, buy yourself a set of the Sfas Emes, and learn some of the text yourself (or with a chavrusa) each week.

Let us work with the third paragraph of the Sfas Emes's ma'amar for Purim in his first year as Rebbe, 5631. The text there begins: "U'mitzvas mishlo'ach manos..." ("The mitzvah of sending presents to one another...") The Sfas Emes immediately appends his comment: "Nir'eh lavo le'ahavas Yisroel" ("Apparently, the objective of this mitzva is to get us to a state of Ahavas Yisroel" [love of our co-religionists]).

Note what the Sfas Emes has just done. His comment on mishlo'ach manos has, in effect, inverted the conventional view of how this mitzva operates. The standard approach sees mishlo'ach manos as an expression of our deeply founded, pre-existent love of our fellow Jews. By contrast, the Sfas Emes has just told us—without making a big splash about it—that in reality, first comes the gift giving; and only later, the love. The Sfas Emes is apparently working here with an idea similar to Sefer HaChinuch's maxim:

"Ahdam nif'al lefi pe'ulosov." ("A person becomes what he does.") In the present context, this idea tells us that the purpose of mishlo'ach manos is to get us to a state in which we love our fellow Jews.

The implication is clear. The Sfas Emes takes it for granted that many of us may start from a state in which we do not love our fellow Jews. But he does not stop there. The Sfas Emes goes on to tell us that although we may begin from that state, we should not remain there. And he views mishlo'ach manos as an instrument to get us from our initial negative or indifferent state to one of true ahavas Yisroel.

The ma'amar moves on now to a new perspective on ahavas Yisroel. The Megilla's first mention of Mordechai refers to him (Esther, 2:5) as "Ish Yehudi..." i.e., "a Jewish person." However, in non-pshat mode, Medrash Rabba reads these words as "Ish yechidi" i.e., "a single person." What does this mean? Is the Medrash telling us that Mordechai was an "isolated person"? A social misfit? Chas veshalom! Read on.

The commentaries on that Medrash explain that Mordechai was called 'yechidi' because he proclaimed HaShem's unity (yichud). How did he do this? By refusing to bow before Haman's idol. But in what amounts to a Medrash on the Medrash, the Sfas Emes reads "Ish yechidi" very differently. The Sfas Emes reads "Ish yechidi" as telling us that Mordechai unified—i.e. brought together—the Jewish people.

Why was it important to bring Klal Yisroel (the Jewish people) together? Because in a state of unity, we were able to fulfill the mitzva (Vayikra, 19: 18) of "Ve'ahavta lereie'cha kamocha." (R. Aryeh Kaplan: "Love your neighbor as much as you love yourself.") Chazal tell us that this mitzva is a "klal gadol baTorah" ("a major principle of Yiddishkeit") By any standard, enabling people to rise above their innate egoism is a major achievement. Hence, the question arises: How did Mordechai do it?

The Sfas Emes answers by citing what may sound like a far-fetched chassidische commentary on the posuk "Ve'ahavta lereie'cha kamocha." That commentary explains: "Rei'acha—zeh Hakadosh Baruch Hu." That is, when the Torah tells us: "Love your neighbor as you love yourself," the Torah is really telling us: love HaShem—who is our true rei'ah ('friend'; 'neighbor') -- as we love ourselves.

You may be wondering: who is the "far-fetched chassidische" commentator quoted above? The answer may come as a surprise: Rashi. He offers this explanation in Gemora Shabbos (31a). In support of this explanation, Rashi cites a posuk (Mishlei, 27:10) which refers to HaShem as our "rei'a". To maintain credibility, I quote the posuk: "Rei'acha verei'ah avicha ahl ta'azov". (Artscroll: "Do not forsake your friend and the friend of your father.")

The Sfas Emes proceeds to explain HOW ahavas HaShem can lead to ahavas Yisroel. If we all cling tightly to the inner core of our existence—to HaShem—we are all connected to each other. Then, in fact, all of Bnei Yisroel are one. And, recognizing that joint inner connection, we can treat each other—in reality, ourselves—with love. Thus, in principle, we can reach Ahavas Yisroel by starting with Ahavas HaShem.

Continuing in this vein, the Sfas Emes refers us to the posuk (Esther, 8:11) which says: "nikhalu ve'amod ahl nafsham". That is, Bnei Yisroel "came together and defended themselves." The Sfas Emes points out that in the Hebrew text, the word translated here as "themselves" is given in the singular. Thus, translated literally, the pasuk says: "they defended their 'nefesh'". As you see, the word 'nefesh' is in the singular. But from the context, we know that the text is speaking about a multitude. Why does the text not use the plural?

To answer, the Sfas Emes refers us to Rashi on Bereishis, 46:26. That posuk speaks of the Bnei Yisroel who went to Mitzrayim. There, too, the Torah is speaking of many people but, nevertheless, employs the singular word "nefesh." Rashi there notes the contrast with the family of Esav Harasha, of whom the Torah (Bereishis, 36, 6) speaks in the plural, "nafshos beiso." Rashi explains that Bnei Yisroel is referred to in the singular because they all served the one HaShem. Thus, in that case, too, many people holding tightly to the same HaShem became, in effect, one. Hence, the posuk can—and does in fact—refer to them in the singular.

(Why do the Torah—and Rashi—have to tell us that all Bnei Yisroel served the same HaShem? Perhaps because an uninformed observer could easily misperceive the situation. That is, seeing the individual tribes—each with its own headgear and garb; with its own way of pronouncing Hebrew words; its own poskim; and its minhagim (customs) -- a person would have the impression that, in fact, they were serving different deities. For this reason, we have to be told that, notwithstanding superficial impressions, we are in fact one people.)

Finally, the Sfas Emes cites his grandfather, the Chiddushei HaRim, who noted an important fact. Our coming together—initially for self-defense and ultimately, with mishlo'ach manos—generated ahavas Yisroel and achdus (unity). This achdus, in turn, had a further beneficial effect. Unity enabled us to receive the Torah again, in Esther's time, as we had received

it at Har Sinai—"ke'ish echad belev echad." (As one person with one heart.") Receiving the Torah in that manner was no small thing. Awareness of that 'side effect' of Purim should increase our joy. In fact, Purim is the happiest day in the year.

This ma'amar has much to teach us: e.g., What is mish'loach manos all about? Who is the the "rei'ah" of mish'loach manos ish "le'rei'eihu"? Who is the "rei'ah" of Veahavta le'rei'acha kamocho? © 2004 Rabbi N.C. Leff and torah.org

"By all means marry; if you get a good wife, you'll be happy. If you get a bad one, you'll become a philosopher." - Socrates

RABBI BEREL WEIN

Wein Online

If it is true that clothes make the man, it is apparently doubly true that clothes make the kohen, especially the kohen gadol - the High Priest of Israel. The description of the garments to be worn by the kohanim and the kohen gadol during their hours of service in the Temple is specific, detailed and inspirational. Each of the garments has a specific purpose aside from the obvious one of clothing the kohen. The garments described were meant to be a source of honor and glory, not only to those who wore them but for the Temple and for the service of the God of Israel as well. Because of this purpose, the great commentators to the Torah searched for the symbolic, even mystical, meanings and lessons represented by the priestly garments. For, apparently, to understand the message of the garments of the priests would allow for a greater understanding and appreciation of the entire concept of service to God as defined by the Torah.

The Torah describes not only the garments of the priests and of the kohen gadol but also outlines the order of dress for the installation of the kohen gadol into his lofty public position. The Torah points out that, of necessity, the lower part of the body must first be covered. In the process of dressing, the final piece of clothing that the kohen gadol donned was the tzitz - the golden plate which bore the name of God in relief upon it and which the kohen gadol tied to his forehead. The lesson here is simple and obvious and certainly not limited to the kohen gadol or to the Temple service. The lesson is that one should not proclaim one's own godliness, to flaunt the name of God, so to speak, brazenly on one's forehead, unless one is certain that the lower part of one's body - one's everyday, mundane, human behavior is covered with the proper ethics and modesty that the Torah ordains. There are many who rush to place the tzitz on their forehead but there are few who realize that in order to be entitled to do so all of the other pieces of clothing of one's life need be covered properly and in good moral order.

The Talmud teaches us that the tzitz had the power to bring about enormous forgiveness for the public sins of Israel. It could restore purity and holiness to the Temple and its public worship and sacrificial service. By proclaiming openly Israel's loyalty and dedication to the service of the Lord, the tzitz clearly delineated the priorities in the both the public and private sectors of Jewish life. Worn properly by the right person - the true kohen gadol, who is the heir of Aharon not only genetically but morally and spiritually as well - the tzitz became a statement of the Jewish dedication to the service of God and man and the pursuit of holiness in human life. But again, a tzitz worn by a person who is otherwise improperly clothed is of little value. All of Jewish history proves the accuracy of this conclusion.

Finally, the idea of proper dress, dress that brings honor and glory to those who wear clothing and to the society that views that clothing, is central to Jewish life and values. Clothes that are provocative, that are vulgar and insulting to others, that are physically immodest and meant to attract anti-social response, are all frowned upon by Jewish tradition. There need not be specific uniforms in the Jewish street (though I must admit that Jews apparently love to wear specific uniforms to identify themselves and their attachment to a particular group) but modest, clean, attractive dress should be the rule for our society. In that sense, perhaps we can all agree that clothes do make the Jew. © 2004 Rabbi Berel Wein- Jewish historian, author and international lecturer offers a complete selection of CDs, audio tapes, video tapes, DVDs, and books on Jewish history at www.rabbiwein.com. For more information on these and other products visit www.rabbiwein.com/jewishhistory.

"Be careful about reading health books. You may die of a misprint." - Mark Twain

RABBI SHLOMO RISKIN

Shabbat Shalom

“(Separate) your brother Aaron and his sons from among the Israelites... Make sacred vestments that are both dignified and beautiful for your brother Aaron...” (Exodus 28:1,2).

The Kohen-Priest officiates over the Sanctuary. If the Sanctuary-Temple is the forerunner of the contemporary Synagogue, then the Kohen-Priest is the forerunner of the contemporary Rabbi. A Rabbi can function as a Secretary of his board of directors, as a prophet, as a Kohen-priest, or, at best, as a combination of the latter two. Let us attempt to analyze the nature of the priestly vocation, of the prophetic vocation, and the differences between them.

Let us begin with the very first of the sacred objects fashioned for the Sanctuary, the Ark (Hebrew, Aron) the repository for the holy tablets of stone upon which were engraved the Ten Commandments. It is obvious as to why the Bible begins its detailed description of the Sanctuary's furnishings

with the ark; after all, the ark served as repository of the most sacred material in the universe, the words and writings expressing the Divine message to Israel at Sinai. Even to this very day there are organized missions, books and movies obsessed with the search for the ancient ark—as in the motion picture, "Raiders of the lost ark." So then, why is the ark only gold plated rather than pure gold—as is the ark-cover (Kapporet), the cherubs and the menorah? Everyone knows that gold-plated is less valuable than pure gold—and the Kapporet is merely a protection for the Ark and is therefore less significant than the ark itself!

Clearly every object of the Sanctuary is invested with profound symbolic meaning, as we have attempted to demonstrate in the past regarding the menorah (the Garden of Eden's tree of life) and the cherubs (the winged children of Israel whose commitment to Torah provides for and protects our Eternity). What then is the symbolism of a Sacred Ark formed from gold plated acacia wood?

I would suggest that wood, derived as it does from a tree, represents life, growth and development. Trees also have the capacity to reproduce themselves, thereby symbolizing fruits and future. Gold, on the other hand, expresses eternal value, a precious metal deeply buried within the earth which neither ages nor tarnishes, neither decays nor destructs. The Divine Teaching, our Holy Torah, must likewise comprise both of these crucial elements: precious eternity as well as creative advancement, timelessness as well as timeliness, the capacity to speak to the ages as well as to the age. The Holy Ark of the Torah tablets of stone must be formed by vegetative tree-wood encased by non-decayable gold.

This dialectic combination of tree-wood and gold is expressed in an equally striking manner by the two main leaders of the Israelites during the Biblical period, the prophet and the priest, the navi and the Kohen, Moses and Aaron. These two functionaries differed from each other in two very clearly defined ways: firstly, the Kohen-priest derived his exalted office and stature from his father who derived it from his father stretching all the way back to Aaron, elder brother of Moses; it was a matter of yihus, or ancestry. The navi-prophet, on the other hand, could have been born into any family at all, his position dictated exclusively by his personal charisma and spiritual passion. Secondly, the priest-Kohen wears special garb, -- four unique garments for the regular Priest-Kohen and eight unique garments for the Kohen Gadol High Priest—without which his divine service was to be disqualified; the navi-prophet has no unique garb, his message and persona being the only significant aspect of his ministry.

These differences speak volumes about the specific function performed by each of these prototypical leaders. Religion in general and Judaism in particular provide two very crucial and complementary components for which humanity yearns: an intuition of the eternal, a sense

of participation in eternity, which is so important in our fast-changing world of flux and mortality, as well as a sense of direction and purpose in a cosmos which too often seems to be governed by happenstance, in a life which can off-times appear to be "a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing."

The priest-Kohen minister of the Sanctuary and keeper of the Traditions is responsible for the continuity, the structure, the permanence expressed by time-honored ceremonials performed generation after generation in our prayer services, celebrations and life-cycle events; hence the priest-Kohen receives the teachings from his father and bequeaths them to his son, expressing the external and eternal chain of Jewish being which existed before each of us was born and will continue after each of us will die. This external structure of continuity is symbolized by the unique external garb of the Kohen-priest, which was—and one day will again become—transmitted from generation to generation.

But continuity requires commitment, structure yearns for significance, permanence cries out for passion. It isn't sufficient to repeat rituals merely because they were performed by our forbears. We dare not allow our religious rite to degenerate into empty, habitual performance. The structured psalms must sensitize our souls, the detailed laws must infuse us with freely-given love, the emphasis on structure must allow for spiritual spontaneity, the fealty to past cannot blind us to the challenges of the future. It was the charismatic navi-prophet who extracted purpose and pathos from permanence and precedent, who made G-d's passion and fire infuse the laws and traditions with meaning for the moment. The Kohen-priest is the eternal gold of the Sacred Ark, and the navi-prophet is the ever-growing tree—wood of the Sacred Ark. "May the old be renewed, and may the new be sanctified." © 2004 *Ohr Torah Institutions & Rabbi S. Riskin*

A couple of rednecks are out in the woods hunting when one of them suddenly grabs his chest and falls to the ground. He doesn't seem to be breathing; his eyes are rolled back in his head. The other guy whips out his cell phone and calls 911.

He gasps to the operator, "I think Bubba is dead! What should I do?" The operator, in a calm soothing voice says, "Just take it easy and follow my instructions. First, let's make sure he's dead." There is a silence, and then a shot is heard. The guy's voice comes back on the line, "Okay, now what?"

MACHON ZOMET

Shabbat B'Shabbato

The similarity between the "Tzitz" that the High Priest wears on his forehead and "Tzitzit" on the corners of the garments worn by Bnei Yisrael is much deeper than just the sounds of their names. In both cases, a blue thread of wool, techelet, is used. With respect to the headband, "Place it on a thread of techelet" [Shemot 28:37]. For Tzitzit, "Put on the tzitzit, on each

corner, a thread of techelet" [Bamidbar 15:38]. The sages have explained what is so special about techelet. "Techelet is similar to the sea, and the sea is similar to the sky, and the sky is similar to the Throne of Glory" [Sotta 17a]. But what is the deeper significance of the similarity between the Tzitz and Tzitzit?

The role of the headband has been explained: "Let Aharon carry the sin of the holy sacrifices that Bnei Yisrael will sanctify, including all their holy gifts. And let it be on his forehead constantly to find favor for them with G-d" [Shemot 28:38]. The early commentators did not agree what is meant by the phrase "the sin of the holy materials." According to Rashi, this refers to "blood and fats sacrificed while with ritual impurity." That is, it atones for sins committed while a sacrifice is brought. The Rashbam, on the other hand, feels it refers to the sins for which the sacrifices were brought. "The straightforward meaning is that this does not refer to impurity of the holy sacrifices. Rather... for all the sacrifices brought by Bnei Yisrael, whether an Olah, a Chatat, or an Asham, for the purpose of atonement, the Tzitz will help serve as a memory before the Almighty to accept them favorably and offer atonement for Bnei Yisrael."

In any case, the verse emphasizes that it is Aharon who accomplishes the atonement by "carrying the sin of the holy sacrifices." Evidently the Tzitz, on which the words "Holy to G-d" are written, together with G-d's seal of techelet, adds to Aharon's sanctity and gives him properties similar to the Altar, ensuring that the sacrifices are accepted favorably by the Almighty.

There is a similarity between the Tzitz worn by the High Priest and the hair of a Nazir, one who has taken an oath not to drink any wine. A Nazir's hair increases his holiness and is linked to new obligations. "During all the days of his dedication to G-d he shall not approach a dead person... For there is a crown of his G-d on his head, all the days of his abstention he is holy to G-d" [Bamidbar 6:6-8]. Similarly, the High Priest becomes holier because of the headband, which is also called a "holy crown" [Shemot 29:6]. This extra holiness gives Aharon the ability to help absolve the sins of Bnei Yisrael.

Other men of Bnei Yisrael cannot attain such a high level of holiness. However, they can achieve a holy state with the aid of Tzitzit. The role of the Tzitzit is described in the verse, "You shall see it and you will remember all the mitzvot of G-d, and you will do them. And you will not turn to follow your hearts and your eyes... And you shall be holy for your G-d." [Bamidbar 15:39-40]. This is not a sanctity that gives the possibility of atonement after a sin has taken place, rather it is a holiness that is a consequence of following G-d's path, in order to avoid sin. In this case, the thread of techelet acts as a constant reminder to man about the Almighty

and His mitzvot. This reminder will help man be dedicated to fulfilling his obligations.

Thus, the Tzitz and Tzitzit are related to two different types of holiness in Bnei Yisrael. The Tzitz shows the unique sanctity of the High Priest, while the Tzitzit are the means by which every man from Yisrael can achieve holiness.

Have you heard about the new pirate movie? It's rated AAAAAA!



<http://lrs.ed.uiuc.edu/wp/crime/pirate.gif>

RABBI AVI WEISS

Shabbat Forshpeis

In both the Purim and Joseph stories, seemingly meaningless sub plots eventually turn into major focal points.

In the Purim story, Mordechai exposes the plot to kill King Ahashveirosh. The plotters are hanged and Mordechai's good deed is recorded in the Book of Chronicles. (Esther 2:21-23)

This narrative appears unimportant until much later when Ahashveirosh, unable to sleep, has the Book of Chronicles read to him. When hearing of Mordechai's actions, he arranges for Mordechai to be led through the streets of Persia with great honor. This leads to Mordechai's ascent to power. (Esther Ch. 6)

A similar episode unfolds in the Joseph story. The butler and baker have dreams that Joseph interprets. Joseph correctly predicts that the baker will be hanged and that the butler will return to his place in the palace. (Genesis Ch. 40)

Once again, a seemingly insignificant story, until years later, when Pharaoh cannot sleep and seeks to have his dreams interpreted. Here the butler steps in, telling Pharaoh of Joseph's great interpretive skills. (Genesis 41:9-13)

Rabbi David Silber points out that both the butler and Ahashveirosh remember a past good deed only when it serves to benefit them. The Megillah actually explicitly states that the king was told of Mordechai's heroism immediately after it took place (Esther 2:22), yet he chose to ignore it up until the point of that famous sleepless night. Only when in personal turmoil does he remember Mordechai.

This is also the case in the story of Joseph. Although Joseph had requested that the butler remember him, he does not. Only when Pharaoh

is in personal chaos and the butler senses that he could get some credit in recommending Joseph, does he come forward.

Note the parallels in language. Joseph asks the butler to remember his dreams (ki im zechartani-Genesis 40:14). The butler fails to do so (ve-lo zachar-Genesis 40:23). Later, before Pharaoh, the butler states: "My sin I remember (mazkir) today." (Genesis 41:9) In other words, the butler realized that he failed to recall Joseph's greatness earlier. Similarly in the Megillah narrative, Mordechai's heroism was read by the King in the book of records of the chronicles (zichronot, divrei hayamim - Esther 6:1). Not surprisingly Purim falls on the day in the week following Shabbat Zachor.

Some people remember out of altruism, others from selfishness. The butler and Ahashveirosh are examples of the latter type-they remember only when it suits their fancy. Our challenge is to remember the actions of others and keep them in our consciousness at all times, even at the times when we have little to gain. We must remember not because it suits us, but we must do so because it's simply the right thing to do. © 2001 Hebrew Institute of Riverdale & CJC-AMCHA

"I don't want to achieve immortality through my work... I want to achieve it through not dying." - Woody Allen

YESHIVAT HAR ETZION

Virtual Beit Medrash

STUDENT SUMMARIES OF SICHOT OF THE ROSHEI YESHIVA
HARAV YEHUDA AMITAL SHLIT"A

Adapted by Dov Karoll

This shiur is dedicated in memory of Yosef Peretz, the legendary gardener of Yeshivat Har Etzion for over twenty years. Yehi zikhro barukh.

"And you [Moshe] shall command the children of Israel that they shall take to you pure pressed olive oil for light, to light the continual lamp. In the Tent of Meeting outside the Partition near the Testimonial-tablets shall Aharon and his sons arrange it [to burn] from evening to morning before God, an eternal decree for all generations, from the children of Israel.

"And you shall bring near to you Aharon your brother and his sons, from among the children of Israel, to make them priests to me, Aharon, [along with] Nadav, Avihu, Elazar and Itamar, the sons of Aharon. And you shall make vestments of sanctity for your brother Aharon, for glory and splendor. And you shall speak to all the wise-hearted people whom I have invested with a spirit of wisdom, and they shall make the vestments of Aharon, to sanctify him to be a priest to Me." (Shemot 27:20-28:3)

In the opening verses of the parasha, the Torah repeats the word "Ve-atta," meaning "And you," three times: "And you shall command," "And you shall bring near" as well as "And you shall speak" (27:20, 28:1, 28:3).

While Moshe's name is not mentioned here, the Torah is clearly emphasizing his role in the process. This point is further emphasized by two other second-person commands in this passage: the taking of the oil for the lighting of the menorah ("And they shall take to you," 27:20), and the selection of Aharon ("Bring near to you," 28:1).¹ This stands in contrast to the beginning of last week's parasha, "And let them take a portion for Me," as well as, "And they shall make a Sanctuary for Me" (25:2, 8).

The Midrash (Shemot Rabba 37:4), opening an interpretation of the verse "And you shall bring near," cites a verse from Tehillim, "Were it not for Your Torah, my delight, I would have perished in my affliction" (119:92). The Midrash explains that when God commanded Moshe "And you shall bring near your brother Aharon," Moshe was saddened, but God comforted him saying, "The Torah I possessed I gave to you; had it not been for the Torah, I would have destroyed the world." The Midrash continues: This can be compared to a wise man who wanted to take another wife after his first wife was unable to bear children for ten years. He asked her to help him in choosing a new wife, explaining that he desired her permission. This is what God said to Moshe: I could have appointed your brother as High Priest without informing you thereof, but I wanted you to be his superior. The comfort for Moshe in this arrangement lies in the fact that he was the one receiving the Torah, so he still remains in a position of some superiority.

Why would Moshe be so upset with the fact that he was not gaining the position of Kohen Gadol (High Priest)? Moshe recognized the dangers of splitting the worlds of Torah and Mikdash (Temple). The Mikdash is the focal point for the service of God, with a universal message of bringing the world as a whole closer to God through His ordained worship. Torah, on the other hand, is "an inheritance to the congregation of Ya'akov" (Devarim 33:4), passed down through Moshe. Moshe was concerned that if the two positions were split between different people, these two aspects of Divine service would diverge, with people drawing the conclusion that they are irreconcilable. Accordingly, God came to Moshe to ask his permission for taking Aharon as the Kohen Gadol.

¹ The Ba'al Ha-turim on our parasha (Shemot 27:20) points out that this is the only parasha from the beginning of Sefer Shemot until the end of the book of Bemidbar in which Moshe's name does not appear. He explains that this is a result of Moshe's statement in next week's parasha, "Blot me out of Your book" (32:32). The elimination of Moshe's name from this parasha is a partial fulfillment of that request, despite the fact that its conditions were not met. I would like to point that, notwithstanding the omission of Moshe's name itself, it seems that there is great emphasis on Moshe at the beginning of the parasha. The repetition of "And you" and the emphasis on "to you" makes it clear that he is very central.

I believe this is also significant on another level. The fashioning of the priestly vestments is another activity that will not be performed by Moshe himself. The Torah emphasizes this point, as the verse states, "And you shall speak to all the wise-hearted people whom I have invested with a spirit of wisdom, and they shall make the vestments of Aharon, to sanctify him to be a priest to Me" (28:3). While in the verse immediately preceding this one, God tells Moshe, "And you shall make vestments of sanctity for your brother Aharon," He immediately clarifies that Moshe will not be the one doing the designing. Why is that?

When the Torah introduces the fashioning of the vestments, it immediately explains their purpose: "for glory and splendor" (28:2). The Kohen needs glorious vestments to perform the service in the Mishkan (Tabernacle). One could ask, why is this necessary? Is this not an over-emphasis of outward appearance, of superficial exterior?

It seems that it is for this reason that Moshe himself could neither wear nor design the priestly vestments. For Moshe, given his lofty spirituality, garments were of no significance. He did not need the priestly vestments to achieve the level of "glory and splendor." However, God recognized that other people are not on the same level as Moshe, and they would need the external expression of the "glory and splendor" in order to properly appreciate what the Divine service symbolizes. Accordingly, God selected Aharon to be the one to wear the priestly vestments, and He appointed people "wise of heart," providing them with "a spirit of wisdom" to design these vestments to properly express this notion.

In fact, the Gemara (Avoda Zara 34a) states that during the Seven Days of Consecration described in this week's parasha (chapter 29), Moshe was the one who performed the Divine service. The Gemara explains that when Moshe performed the service, he did not don the priestly vestments. Rather, he performed the service wearing a plain white cloak. Given Moshe's lofty level, he was able to perform the Mishkan service without the regulations that bind all Kohanim, for he was able to relate to God in an unparalleled direct way.

Once the task of the Divine service would be transferred to the Kohanim, these vestments would play a central role in the service itself. The Gemara states (Zevachim 17b), based on verse at the end of this week's parasha, that "When wearing their appointed garments, they are invested with their priesthood; when not wearing their garments, they are not invested with their priesthood."

Furthermore, the Gemara (Zevachim 88b) derives from the proximity between the sections on sacrifices and the priestly vestments that the vestments themselves have a role in atonement comparable to the sacrifices. The Gemara explains, citing verses to back up each association, that the cloak atones for bloodshed, the breeches atones for lewdness, the

turban atones for arrogance, the sash atones for impure thoughts of the heart, the breastplate atones for neglect of civil laws, the eiphod atones for idolatry, the robe atones for slander, and the headplate atones for chutzpa. Accordingly, we can see that once the service moves away from Moshe to the Kohanim, the vestments themselves play a crucial role in the Temple service. This was the mistake of Nadav and Avihu (see Vayikra 10:1-2). They saw Moshe performing the Temple service for seven days without the priestly vestments, and they noted that he was able to transcend the very protocol that they were taught during those days. They thought they could do the same, that they too did not need the vestments, the requisite structures and limitations built in to the Temple service, to come close to God. For this chutzpa, they were punished. They were not on the same level as Moshe, and as such, they needed to follow the proper procedures and guidelines in order to approach God.

There is significance to clothing in Judaism, as an external expression of deep worship of God, as an expression of the glory that God bestows upon man. "Rabbi Yochanan used to call his clothing 'my honorers'" (Bava Kamma 91b). Similarly, in our parasha, the purpose of the vestments is "to sanctify him to be a priest to Me" (28:3), to enable the Kohanim to attain the status of Kehunna (priesthood).

Returning to the message of the midrash: the integration between Divine service and Torah, which concerned Moshe so much, is essential. We need to develop both our internal world of devotion to God and our "clothing," the external expression of that internal devotion. We also need to beware the reverse problem. One ought not be merely a hanger for his clothes. We need to be very careful that our clothing is not a replacement for internal development, but rather that it gives expression to the appropriate honor and internal attitude.

To apply the model of integrating between Mikdash and Torah, we can turn to the prayer we say every day at the conclusion of the Shemoneh Esrei, "Yehi ratzon mi- lefanekha... she-yibbaneh Beit ha-mikdash bi'mheira ve- yameinu, ve-tein chelkeinu be-Toratekha," "May it be Your will... that the Temple be rebuilt speedily in our days, and our share shall be granted in the Torah" (based on Mishna Avot 5:20). [This sicha was delivered on leil Shabbat, Parashat Tetzaveh, 5763 (2003).]

"You can only be young once. But you can always be immature." - Dave Barry

