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INTERNET PARSHA SHEET
ON **PURIM & TZAV** - 5768

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Eretz Hemdah EMail Staff <info@eretzhemdah.org>
Mar 19, 2008 10:01 AM subject The Purim Meal on Friday

Dear Friends, Let's continue wishing each other "VeNahafoch Hu", also because of the difficult situation. In the process of getting ready for Purim, we recommend that you read the attached answer from "Shut Bemareh Habazak" volume 7, entitled "The Purim Meal on Friday."

The Purim Meal on Friday

When Purim (the 14th of Adar, or the 15th for those who celebrate Shushan Purim) occurs on Friday, many opinions hold that one should preferably have one's Seudat Purim (Purim festive meal) in the morning¹.

However, many opinions allow, and even encourage, beginning the meal later, and even continuing it through the advent of the Shabbat². This arrangement has the important advantage of easing the stress of this extremely busy day, thus likely contributing both to the joy of Purim as well as to the enjoyment of Shabbat (two gains which are quite significant halachically). In such a situation one should daven Mincha (pray the afternoon service) before beginning the meal³, and make sure not to overeat during the pre-Shabbat section of the meal, so as to allow room for eating what will be considered the Shabbat meal Friday evening⁴. Anywhere from Plag Mincha (an hour and fifteen minutes of sha'ot zemanot, which on Purim is usually close to a standard 75 minute period, before evening) until sunset, one should decide (and ideally verbalize) that one is accepting Shabbat⁵, and then not eat any more until the recitation of Kiddush⁶. (Whoever will light the Shabbat candles must do so before she/he accepts the Shabbat upon her/himself⁷). One may immediately recite the Friday night Kiddush over a cup of wine (or grape juice), but one should delete the Borei Pri HaGefen blessing (assuming one has already recited this blessing during the Purim meal)⁸. One should then bring out two Challot (bread loaves), and hand out pieces to the meal's participants⁹. The blessing of Hamotzee is also deleted (assuming it was recited for the Purim meal)¹⁰. When one recites Birkat HaMazon (Grace after Meals), one should include the Shabbat addition of "Retzai", but not the Purim addition of "Al HaNissim"¹¹. (It should be noted that in Yerushalayim, where Shushan Purim is observed, Al HaNissim is recited specifically on Shabbat, but not on Friday¹²).

One should be careful not to forget Ma'ariv (the evening prayers), either during or after the meal¹³. Efforts should be made to coordinate one's schedule so as not to sacrifice Tfilla BiTzibbur (praying the Friday evening services with a quorum of ten adult males).

¹ Sefer HaMinhagim of Rav Yitzhak Isaac Tirna (page 36), Darchai Moshe Orach Chaim 695,4, Rama on Shulchan Aruch 695,2, Matai Moshe (Purim 1011), Mishna Berura 249,13, Aruch HaShulchan 249,7, Shmirat Shabbat K'Hilchatah 42,27, Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach zt"l (in

Minhagei Eretz Yisrael, of Rav Gellis, p411). Also see Leket Yosher p156. [Some feel the meal should always take place in the morning, see Trumat HaDeshen, end of 110, brought in Darchei Moshe 695,4; Ma'aseh Rav 248, Mishna Berura 695,9 in the name of the Eliya Rabbah from the Shela.] For reasons for this preference see Rashba Gittin 38b, cited by Magen Avraham 249,4 and Mishna Berura 249,10, Rambam hilchot Shabbat 30,4 brought in Shulchan Aruch 249,2, Sefer HaMinhagim (ibid.), Be'ur Halach 249,2 dibbur hamatchil Mipnei.

² Meiri Ketubot 7b, Minhagei Eretz Yisrael 35,18 (page 209) in the name of Nahar Mitzrayim, Maharikash in Erech Lechem 695,1. Also see Orchot Chayim (Purim 37).

³ Rama 232,2, also see Mishna Berura,30.

⁴ Ateret Zekainim 249,2,2 and Aruch HaShulchan 249,7. Also see Be'ur Halacha 249,2 dibbur hamatchil Mutar and Mishna Berura 529,8.

⁵ Rama 261,2. [Also see the Rama 261,1, with Be'ur Halacha dibbur hamatchil Sha'ah Oh Shtayim, and 263,4 dibbur hamatchil Kodem, as well as Shmirat Shabbat Kehilchatah 43,66.]

⁶ Mechaber 271,4 and Mishna Berura 11.

⁷ See Ketzot HaShulchan vol. 3 in Badei HaShulchan 74,17.

⁸ Shulchan Aruch 271,4.

⁹ Aruch HaShulchan 271,13.

¹⁰ Bach 271,6, Taz 271,4, Mishna Berura 271,18 and Kaf HaChayim 271,29, unlike what seems to be the opinion of the Mechaber 271,4 and the Aruch HaShulchan 271,14 and 271,18.

¹¹ Chayei Adam 155,32 and Mishna Berura 695,15, unlike the Meiri Ketubot 7b, Nahar Mitzrayim (in Minhagei Eretz Yisrael ibid.) and Pri Megadim (695 M.Z. 3 and A.A. 9).

¹² Mishna Berura 688,17 based on Beit Yosef.

¹³ Taz 271,4, Magen Avraham 271,5 and Mishna Brura 271,11.



<http://613.org/rav/ravnotes2.html>

Rav Soloveitchik ZTL Notes (Volume 3)

[Thanks to David Isaac for typing these notes]

Lecture delivered by Rabbi Soloveitchik on Saturday night, March 10, 1979

"Purim"

The topic for tonight is the story of Esther. Whoever does not study the "Hagadah" -- the problems involved, does not know the complete story. I could explain the entire megillah but it would be too involved and so I have selected a few "maman" - sayings or teachings of Chazal. Chazal declares taht it is full of intrigue. Ahasverus was a usurper to the throne, that which ahd belonged to Belshazzar and he succeeded through money in obtaining the mighty throne. They derive it from the word "Hamolaych" - present tense - instead of "Moloch" (reigned - past tense). It means, "He imposed himself - elevated himself." "Hamolaych B' atzmoh" -- lifted himself up. They felt that the present tense is indicative of the form of government. It is parallel to today's history of Iran (the Ayatolah Halmeini (pronounced Cholmeni) is Haman). Chazal laid down the first premise - the events to let us know he was not a legitimate heir but an upstart. This fact was embarrassing to him -- not fit to be a king but gained it through violence or bribe. It is a negative portrayal of him. There are others who say that he was capable and conquered the throne.

An interesting fact is that he entertained the important officer of his empire for half a year (180 days) while the ordinary people of Shushan he entertained for a week. Which should have taken precedence?

He was a king over Persia but held sway over distant lands and entertained the distant gentry, those who had their own heads of government. He invited them and brought them because if he had trouble locally, he should be able to bring together those from other lands to support him! In this respect, some declare he is right. Others declare he should have invited the local citizens first so that they could support him in case of trouble.

Which is correct? Did he act wisely or not act wisely? He was a man of contradictions. He was at one time smart and at the same time a fool. The fact that an upstart could take over the scope of such a kingdom (known world at the time) proved him to be smart. In other actions he was foolish.

The third fact is also very strange. How many letters did he send? There were a total of three. The first letter was the advice of Memuchan (later Haman) that all men be masters in their domiciles. The second was the instigation of Haman against all Jews. The third was that Jews have a right to self-defense. Why was it important to tell us of the letters? In fact, Megilas Esther elaborates on these letters! Why was it necessary to tell us of Memuchan's famous speech (how Vashti wronged not only Ahasverus but all men, etc) and the sending of "Sforim" (letters) to all the provinces? And yet we know there is not a superfluous word in the megilah. We are told by commentators that were it not for the letters of Memuchan, the Jewish community would have been entirely destroyed. If not for the letters neither Moredecai nor Esther would have prevailed.

The fourth "maimor" or item -- When Vashti refused to appear, she not only refused but sent a letter to Ahasverus, "The servant of my father Belshazzar could drink with a thousand men and not be drunk." Here Ahasverus drinks a little and becomes drunk. He was insulted.

Basically, Ahasverus was smart and stupid - sometimes scheming and sometimes as a child. When the incident with Vashti occurred, he should have commanded, "execute her!" Instead, he didn't and rather acted as a constitutional monarch. He consulted with the great men. This was his habit, his custom to consult with the great of Persia. It was indeed meritorious. Then why didn't this fool consult about the Jews instead of taking of his signet ring and giving it to Haman? This was a greater involvement - a whole nation - than one individual, Vashti. Haman when later confronted by the enraged Ahasverus (at Esther's charge) "Mi Zeh Hu" (who is the one who has done this) could have said, "Majesty, it is your ring!" Thus, for a single individual he acted like a gentleman while for a whole nation he acted as a fool.

"Vayhee B'mai Achashverus" (it was in the days of Ahasverus). Chazal says that wherever it begins with "Vayhee" it means trouble. (V'Hoyo indicated happiness). Basically, Chazal says, "Whatever I am going to say was made possible only because Ahasverus was king." Would it have been another king, it would have been impossible. It was either drunkenness or egotism that these events took place. The irrational is due to Ahasverus. It is tragic-comical. It is all due to his being king.

Let us investigate the first problem of the entertainment. Did he act correctly? Whom should he have invited first? Those who held he was clever said he did well to entertain the distant because he could win a war over the closest at any time. Those who say he was foolish maintain he should have invited his own metropolis so that if others rebelled, they could have supported him. I believe it is different. In fact, he was both at the same time -- clever and foolish. He had to entertain generals and leaders because he was afraid of them. They could have liquidated the empire if they felt hurt or slighted. He could easily have been demoted by revolution. Often the crowd is not involved. The military control; the financiers control. Ahasverus knew this very well. They were involved in his ascension to greatness. He utilized the help of military and aristocracy. Rebellions are precipitated from above. The crowd didn't know that the Czar had been demoted. The modd was, of course, rebellious but it was the military which felt that Rasputin was vulgar. The certain clique has to be feared. Thus, Ahasverus had to invite the guests. Those of the high echelons are very sensitive. Had he reversed the order the latter would have a grudge and there is no predicting the outcome. Now, how not to antagonize the citizens of Shushan.

Revolutions in Rome we're instigated by the populace. There, the crowds made and removed Emperors. He paid tribute to the aristocracy but, on the other hand, it is dangerous to frustrate the mob. Yet, the mob is not as sensitive as the aristocrat. They are slow in formulating revenge. Thus, he attempted to prove that although he entertained the aristocrats, he remained

a folkman. "I don't like the aristocrat! I am your borthor! Emotionally I am part of you but I had to do it. Here I am at home amongst you. You know their sensitivity! You, my brothers, would not care; I love you! But the biggest surprise I reserve for you." How do you count seven days? When he celebrates with the crowd, here he will bring Vashti. There with the aristocrats he was afraid to do so for it was too vulgar and they would object. To them (aristocrats) he displayed "Chesser Malchus" (the ornate or riches of the kingdom) but not Vashti. After all, they would be hurt for she was the daughter of Balshazzar. Therefore, he got drunk on the last day of the citizens festivity. They will be drunk and will appreciate his feeling towards them. This is exactly how he resolved the problem. Thus, by bringing Vashti he shows them that he is with them. Actually, he didn't satisfy anyone for he made a mistake about Vashti. She couldn't take it. Not only did she refuse to come but spelled it out why. "He is a plebian and lacks knowledge about his own queen. This is the limit which Ahasverus didn't know -- not to make a woman do what she doesn't want to.

Our rabbis pointed out that Memuchan is Haman. Why is this emphasized? Because it throws light on the events. Ahasverus was confronted with a powerful opposition -- that he was an upstart and worked amongst Belshazzar's horses. Apparently, such a person is haunted by one fear -- assassination -- afraid to lose the "prince" is not so afraid as the upstart. This fear drives the upstart to madness. He develops a paranoid complex. He suspects even the people who are his closest. This is indicated in Kruschew's memoirs of Stalin where he was forced to taste Stalin's food for fear of poison. Memuchan knew Ahasverus very well and his paranoid fears. What he did was to interpret Vashti's actions not of human dignity but in terms of political rebellion. "It is not one person; it represents the masses. It is an organized movement against the throne. It is the first sign showing that rebellion has begun. It is the green light. It is a conspiracy." Ahasverus listened and did so carefully. It is easy to do so to a sick person (witness the workers of Howard Hughes). The Bigson-Sheresh episode enhanced and convinced him. Therefore, who is supposed to guard him? The one who informed him -- Haman. Therefore, if he is so sensitive, he is the logical one to be the security chief. He is the best one. Therefore, directly after the matter of Vashti and Bigson-Sheresh, Haman was elevated. The security chief invariably enjoys the greatest power as exemplified by the late Beria of Russia under Stalin. Here Haman says, "I'll sacrifice my life for the king." It must be interpreted in terms of modern politics. Such was Himmler in Germany.

Why was it necessary to send the letters to the provinces, "Man is superior to woman?" Chazal had a problem! It is obvious that those who would murder the Jews could take over their properties also. One thought bothered Chazal. It was sent out on the 13th day of the month of Nissan and the letters were addressed to those people they knew were "Sonay Yisroel" (enemies of the Jews). The obvious thoughts to the enemies would be, "Why wait till next year? Why not kill at once? Why such a long time? Answer! They were not sure of the king's competency. In essence, the absurdity of the first letter said, "No man shall anymore peel potatoes and diaper babies." Now, suddenly comes another foolish letter! Thus, the meaning of Chazal's words: "If not for the first letter, no Jew would have survived!" Otherwise, the slaughter would have begun at once. They could have taken the property at once, not in eleven months. But they doubted the sanity of the first letter and consequently the second one. It is interesting: before the whole drama was staged, Memuchan already saved the Jews inadvertently; it was his letter. If there is a question whether the emperor is sane or insane you stay away!

What was Esther's scheme? She didn't want to appear before Ahasverus concerning the royal edict because she knew very well that no amount of appealing would help (when you are dealing with a paranoia). The answer was to discredit Haman -- turn the suspicion towards him. Why did she invite Haman? She wanted to arouse suspicion of Ahasverus towards Haman and herself despite the fact that it was extremely dangerous to her. She was ready to accept sacrifice to cast suspicion on Haman. Of course, G-

d helped her. Hashgocha - Providence - was on her side. Between the first "mishta" (party) and the second, something occurred to simplify her task - so she could extricate herself from the plot.

Ahasverus could not sleep! Why does Megilah have to record this? Because G-d "suffers insomnia too." Ahasverus couldn't fall asleep. One thought bothered him. "Why did Esther enter my courtyard uncalled for? Didn't she know the penalty? There is something she knows which she must tell me personally. Did she come just to invite me? She had a message but didn't dare to tell me. She is cryptic; she didn't tell me all. Why did she come? She saved me from Bigson and Sheresh; now she must know something else, someone very important. It must be the security chief! He is not my friend but my enemy. Simultaneously, there was a noise! Who is it? Haman in the middle of the night. Why wasn't Mordecai rewarded? It was Haman's job. Apparently, he is a rebel coming to arrest me!" Ahasverus was a paranoid and confused. He was confused and figured that Haman was involved with Bigson and Sheresh. Therefore, when Esther pointed the finger at Haman it was not difficult to convince the king. We must understand the Megilah in political terms. It is interesting that when Esther spoke to the king about the Jews, "If Haman is concerned about a rebellious community, he should not recommend death but a concentration camp such as Pharaoh." "Get them later." Thus, Haman is not interested in the king at all.

People have misinterpreted the megilah intentionally or unintentionally. Some say it is a subhuman document that the Jews should slay all the "Goyim". This was impossible. There were too many "Goyim". Esther asked that the letters be cancelled. Had Ahasverus agreed the story would have ended then and there. The matter would have been closed and there would have been no conflict between Jew and Gentile. Instead, Ahasverus refused saying that even the king cannot do this. Instead, he advised, "You wirt whatever you desire concerning the Jews." In essence, Ahasverus gave the Jews to defend themselves. Before this permission the Jews had no right and would have been punished as a murderer. Thus, the letters -- that Jews can defend themselves against those who wish to harm them and if necessary to use weapons. Jews did not wantonly kill non-Jews; if a non-Jew attacked him, he defended himself. If the enemy laid siege to a city and a Jew was there, before the change he could do nothing, had no rights and no ammunition. Now, he had the right to fight. During the British mandate, a Jew had no right to weapons -- only the Arabs. During 1948, a Jew in America caught sending weapons could be arrested by the F.B.I. In that era, knowing that one wanted to kill, the Jew in Shushan used the element of surprise.

Purim as a holiday was not established immediately by Mordecai. There were three stages of development as far as the festival was concerned. Firstly, the festival was celebrated spontaneously. The next year, they felt the inner need to celebrate. The halacha was that if a family was miraculously saved they could celebrate the occasion each year. We find in chapter 9 - line 19 of megilah ("Al Kayn") -- That is why Jewish villagers who lived in unwallied towns celebrate the 14th day of the month of Adar etc -- It was a voluntary spontaneous holiday. Those who lived in open cities felt they should celebrate. Those of the cities didn't celebrate! Mordecai wanted that it should be fixed by law into a mandatory holiday, not merely spontaneous. What they did spontaneously should be a statute. Those who had lived in the far-flung places understood because for them the danger had been more acute. It should be a holiday for all on the 14th and 15th day of Adar. Thus, Mordecai effected three changes: a) institutionalization; b) the 15th day; c) exchange of gifts (on an equal basis amongst equal people).

There was, however, a difference between the demands of Mordecai and the demands of Esther. Mordecai was satisfied that the holiday be authorized by Sanhedrin! Esther, however, desired that it be introduced into the holy writ - the 24 books of Tanach. This is a higher level than Mordecai's desire. It is different than Chanukah. Purim occurred several hundred years before Chanukah; this was still during the time of prophets so it is not merely a holiday but introduced on a prophetic level. Her fear

and the reason for her demand was that another Beth Din might arise which would overrule this Sanhedrin. There was such a possibility. But if it becomes part of Tanach then not a single word can be amended. "It shall be part of Tanach -- not just a Beth Din holiday." This is what Esther accomplished. Thus, the three stages following the first Purim were: a) spontaneous celebration; b) rabbinical (Beth Din) sanction; c) prophetic (permanent - unchangeable). This is why it is called Megilas Esther - not Megilas Mordecai. He would have been satisfied; she, through an exchange of letters proved her point!

There was one change between the "spontaneous" and the "permanent". If those who observe the 15th day (Jews of Shushan and walled cities) didn't observe, there would be no "Matonas L'evyonim" (gifts to the poor). Every city had to use all means to protect itself. The Jews of the walled cities were not as exposed as the open places. Thus, the "exposed" Jews rejoiced while the walled city ones did not feel the miracle. Thus, the following year they didn't feel like celebrating. One group wanted to rejoice but the "walled Jews" lacked sympathy. This was the same psychology of the German Jews. "It can't happen here; it can only happen to the Polish Jews." They didn't share in the distress. They didn't give "Matonas" (gifts) -- they were aware of their common destiny." Why after the whole megilah is Haman mentioned again at the very end. Chapter 9 - line 24 - "Haman Tzorayr Kil Hahudim" (Haman, enemy of all Jews). Mordecai wrote a letter. "All shall observe because Haman is Tzorayr Kol Hahudim" the enemy of all Jews -- no matter where you live. That is why both the aristocratic and the ordinary must observe. The socially elevated must support the poor Jews also.

This is how the megilah became the legalized prophetic holiday -- part of the twenty-four scriptures.



from TorahWeb <torahweb@torahweb.org> date Mar 20, 2008 11:01 PM subject Rabbi Yaakov Neuburger - Purim's Lesson for a Time of Crisis
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TorahWeb.org
Rabbi Yaakov Neuburger

Purim's Lesson for a Time of Crisis

Still shell shocked by the outrageous massacre in Yerushalyim that ushered in the month of Adar, I believe that we are all groping to find within Purim that which will speak to us and our misery. It all happened as we were preparing to fulfill Chazal's mandate to celebrate, "mishenichnas Adar marbim besimcha".

Interestingly, this Talmudic dictum is not codified in Rambam and Shulchan Aruch and is only recorded in the great commentaries of the Shulchan Aruch. Some explain that this omission is simply because there are no defined observances to mark the happiness of Adar. Writing grammens and shpiels and preparing mishloach manos rhymes are not halachik events! This suggestion contrasts the vague joy of Adar with the clearly marked despondency of Av. In fulfillment of the sobriety of Av, which is codified, we are told to refrain from getting married and grooming ourselves, for example. Yet Chazal not only juxtapose the two ideas but actually connect them as they are recorded in Masechta Ta'anis, "[K'shem] similar to the way in which the month of Av enters bringing in increased sadness, the month of Adar brings with it increased joy". What a strange way to teach us that the entire month should be celebrated!

Perhaps Chazal are teaching us that both the appropriate observance of the fast of Tisha Ba'av and the proper performance of the Purim festivities require preparation, each in their distinct fashions. We understand well that would we come into the fast without any prior consideration, our painfully obvious distance from the Beis Hamikdash would make the mourning and even the recital of kinos perfunctory at best. We may not realize that the same is true about the joy of Purim. Without some thought in advance, we

would be marking a miracle no doubt, but one that is long behind us and separated from us by the destruction of the second Beis Hamikdash, crusades, inquisitions, holocaust and rebirth. The celebration of a far off miracle would be a forced and mechanical celebration. However if we utilize the early part of Adar to view the Purim miracle as part of a pattern of Divine guidance and concern which we can still recognize today, then our joy can indeed be authentic and impactful in the long run. If we listen to the megillah with a renewed commitment to seek out the hidden hand of Hashem as the story unfolds before us once again, we will rejoice with our refreshed sense of bitachon and gain some respite from the spiritual exhaustion which haunts us from time to time.

Yet perhaps of greater importance for us this year is the reaction of our people in times of crises which successfully changed the course of our history. Indeed the megillah stresses that in addition to being the record of the miraculous sequence of events, it is equally intended to record our fasting and praying (9:31). Thus Purim celebrates our ability and our resolve to respond to a frightening crisis, even as we rejoice with the guiding hand of Hashem extended to us. That we had the integrity to return to Hashem, distance ourselves from the comfort of our hosts and unite as one in prayer, no doubt moved Heaven to accept our prayers and fasting.

We who hear the megillah have to respond in kind, to the murders of eight precious yerushalmi children as they studied in their bais hamedrash.

A concluding thought. One of the opening Rashis of Vayikra, the sefer that we were preparing to start as it all happened, describes the Heavenly voice which taught Moshe Rabeinu in the ohel moed. Though a thunderous voice filled the ohel moed, it was for Moshe alone to hear. It stopped abruptly at the curtains of the ohel moed, and not a sound could be heard outside. It was the booming voice that we heard at Har Sinai, with its awesome clarity. Many have wondered why Hashem would create a booming voice for a few feet and miraculously cut it short. Though I do not know to answer that question, I do know that our generation has heard a booming voice from the heart of Yerushalyim. The murder of eight children in the blood splattered home of fervent torah study is an earth shattering call to all of us, surely as a cloud hangs over the future of Yerushalyim and has been for some time now. Those of us who see ourselves as members of the ohel moed should hear this call differently than all others. To be sure, the voice is hardly heard if at all, by those who are not inside the ohel moed of our time. This places the responsibility to lead a response on those who do hear.

Our simcha may be muted but our trust in our tefilos and our teshuva will give us much reason to celebrate and to be inspired for much time to come.

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from **Rabbi Yissocher Frand**

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Different Generations / Different Challenges

The first Rashi in this week's parsha quotes (in the name of the Toras Kohanim) a teaching to the effect that the word "Tzav" [command] indicates "ziruz" (encouraging in the strongest possible terms) for the immediate moment and for future generations. Rashi further quotes the Tanna Rav Shimon who teaches that in situations which involve a loss of money, the Torah must especially urge people to act.

However, the question can be asked, what kind of loss of money (chisaron kis) was involved from Aharon's perspective here? It was, after all, Aharon who was given this Command, and the Mitzvah in question did not cost

him a dime. People would come to the Beis HaMikdash and bring their Olah offerings to him. That did not cost him anything!

Rav Yaakov Kamenetsky presents an interesting idea. Aharon was a lover of peace and a pursuer of peace. He had a special relationship with the Nation of Israel that even surpassed that of his brother, Moshe Rabeinu. The leve l of mourning present when Aharon died involved "the entire house of Israel" [Bamidbar 20:29]. He had no peer in the nation in terms of his endearment to the people.

Rav Yaakov suggests that because of the great empathy Aharon had for the masses of the Jewish people, it was personally troublesome for him to see the Jews spend money for their olah offerings (which, after all, completely "went up in smoke"). This is particularly true because of the institution of the "olahs ketz haMizbeach." This was a special fund to guarantee that sacrifices would always be burning on the altar throughout the day (even when there were no obligatory or other voluntary personal offerings being brought). Aharon's relationship with the people was such that he felt bad for their expenses (chisaron kis).

Rav Shimon Schwab had a different approach. He connects the beginning and the end of Rashi on this pasuk [Vayikra 6:2]. After linking the word "tzav" with encouragement (zirus), Rashi commented that this command was "now and for future generations (m'yad u'l'doros). Only then does Rashi introduce the idea that it is most necessary to emphasize encouragement (ziruz) when expenditure (chisaron kis) is involved.

Rav Schwab points out that every generation has different problems and challenges. Each period is tested with their own particular set of trials and temptations. In the period of the First Beis HaMikdash [Temple], the problem was not that the people were skimpy. The problem was that they brought their sacrifices by rote.

Bringing a korban is supposed to represent a watershed event in a person's life. He is supposed to imagine his own blood being splattered on the altar and his own flesh burning thereon. It was supposed to be an awe-inspiring event. What happened, unfortunately, with the passage of time is that people came to the Beis HaMikdash, they bought their korban, gave it to the Kohen, and told him to offer it. It became just an other thing to do. Their spending money on the sacrifices degenerated into an empty gesture. As the prophet writes [Yeshaya 1:11] "Why do I need your numerous sacrifices? Says Hashem, I am sated with elevation offerings of rams and the fat of fatlings; the blood of bulls, sheep and goats, I do not desire." The offerings were offered in such a non-spiritual way that G-d complained He did not want such offerings.

They were expensive offerings, not at all stingy -- the fat of fatlings -- but the L-rd rejected them. Hashem much prefers that we bring less expensive sacrifices but put our hearts into them rather than bringing big fancy sacrifices as meaningless gestures. This was the mindset during the First Beis HaMikdash.

In the Second Beis HaMikdash, ironically, the reverse was the case. As we see from the Prophet Malachi, the problem was that the people brought inferior animals to the Beis HaMikdash. The attitude was, as we hear from so many people today, "the main idea is to be a Jew at heart". People claimed that it did not make any difference to Hashem if the animal cost more or cost less. "Who cares? As long as I have a Jewish heart! A Korban is a Korban."

The prophet finally needed to chastise them: "You present on My Altar loathsome food, and you say, 'How have we loathed You?' By your saying, 'The table of Hashem is repulsive.' When you present a blind animal for sacrifice is nothing wrong? And when you present a lame or sick animal is nothing wrong? Present it, if you please to your governor: Would he be pleased with you or show you favor? Said Hashem, Master of Legions." [Malachi 1:7-8]

This attitude as well was incorrect. Both factors are necessary. One needs the intent (kavanah) but one also needs objective action (l'maaseh) -- one also needs to meticulously follow the rules of what a korban is supposed to look like.

This is what Rashi means that the word "tzav" indicates encouragement immediately and for future generations. There would come a time in Jewish history when people would become lax about the quality of their sacrifices because it was something that affected their pocketbook. That is why the pasuk said "tzav" — strongly encourage them. It is going to cost them money, but such is the price of being a Jew.

Why Can The Todah Offering Only Be Eaten For One Day?

Later on in the parsha, we learn the details of the various sacrifices. One of the offerings is the Korban Todah (Thanksgiving offering): "This is the law of the sacrifice of the peace-offering that one will offer to Hashem: If he shall offer it for a thanksgiving-offering, with the sacrifice of the thanksgiving-offering shall he offer unleavened loaves, mixed with oil, unleavened wafers smeared with oil, and loaves of scalded fine flour mixed with oil... And the flesh of the sacrifice of his thanksgiving peace-offering must be eaten on the day of its offering..." [Vayikra 7:11-15].

When a person was sick, captured, or in mortal danger and was healed or rescued from this danger, he needed to bring a "Thanksgiving-offering." The Thanksgiving-offering contained 40 loaves — the "lachmei Todah". The Thanksgiving-offering is a form of Peace Offering (Korban Shlamim). However, it deviates from the normal protocol of a Peace Offering in a significant way. A standard Korban Shlamim may be eaten over a 2 day span (including the intervening night). The Thanksgiving-offering is an exception to this rule. It must be entirely consumed the day that it is offered.

This could be very difficult. If a person brought the sacrifice late in the day, he might have only a few hours or theoretically only a few minutes to consume the entire offering, and all the accompanying loaves! Why is this so?

The Netziv gives a beautiful answer. When a person is confronted with a large quantity of food that has to be consumed in a short amount of time, there is only one way to handle the situation — he must throw a party! He needs to invite his brother and his brother-in-law and his neighbor and his neighbor's neighbor together to help him eat all the food.

Thanksgiving, he explains, requires publicity. With a Todah offering, the more the merrier. Despite the fact that the over-riding rule in Judaism is "walking humbly with the Lord your G-d" [Micha 6:8] — doing Mitzvos privately and without fanfare — regarding thanksgiving, one should invite as many people as available to partake of the offering.

The Torah therefore built into the halacha of Korban Todah this concept that it must be shared with others. Using this idea, the Netziv gives a beautiful insight to a pasuk in Hallel: "To you I will offer a Todah sacrifice and I will call out in the Name of the Lord. My vow to Hashem I will pay up opposite the entire congregation. In the Courtyard of the House of G-d, in the midst of Jerusalem" [Tehillim 116:17-19]. The vow (the Korban Todah) I have to pay up, but it will be in the presence of everyone! It is offered privately in the courtyard of the House of G-d, but it is also eaten in the midst of Jerusalem so that everyone should know of my thanksgiving expression to the Almighty.

The Netziv points out elsewhere that there is another Shelamim offering that is only eaten for one night (rather than the normal 2 day and one night time period). That is the Korban Pesach (Paschal lamb). Here too we have emphasis on inviting people and registering them to join with us in our Paschal offering. The Korban Pesach is also a Thanksgiving offering of sorts. We publicly thank the Almighty for taking us out of Egypt. We do not allow "leftovers" such that people are eating lamb sandwiches for days after the 14th of Nissan. No. We want it all finished that night. This way people have no choice but to invite over many others to share the lamb together and to spread the word of G-d's kindnesses to us.

The Chidushei HaRim asks the same question as the Netziv: Why is the Korban Todah only eaten for one day? The Chidushei HaRim gives a different answer than the Netziv, but nonetheless a beautiful one.

The Chidushei HaRim explains that a Thanksgiving offering is only eaten for one day because the offering is brought as a result of a miracle done for

a person by the Almighty. Yesterday's miracle is yesterday's miracle. Today is a different day and it comes with its own miracles. "And upon your miracles that are with us EVERY day" (From the Modim paragraph in the daily Amidah). We do not want to celebrate yesterday's miracle today when today has new miracles of its own. Therefore, the Korban Todah representing today's miracle, must be finished today.

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"Megillat Ester and the Yosef Story"

by Rabbi Chaim Jachter

Introduction Many are aware of the numerous and prominent parallels between Megillat Ester and the Yosef story. We have discovered no less than thirty two parallels between these two stories, and make no claim to have exhausted all the possibilities. The Midrash (Ester Rabbah 7:8) notes many of the parallels, as do the Daat Mikra commentary (Ester pp. 12-14) and Yisrael Shadiel (Megadim 31:95-102). The students I taught at the Torah Academy of Bergen County in 5767 noted many additional parallels, especially the 5767 Y9 class (special thanks to Benny Berlin for recording the many insights we gleaned).

The Midrash – Four Parallels The Midrash notes the similarities between the Purim story and the Yosef saga. It observes that Yosef, like Ester and Mordechai (see though, Megillah 12b-13b), is a child/descendent of Rachel. The Megillah identifies Mordechai as "Ish Yemini," "From [Sheivet] Binyamin" (Ester 2:4) and lists one of Mordechai's ancestors as Kish, the father of King Shaul, who was from Binyamin. Ester was Mordechai's first cousin (Ester 2:7). The Midrash also notes that Achashveirosh, near the end of the Megillah, removed his ring from Haman and gave it to Mordechai, just as Paroh removed his ring and gave it to Yosef. Another parallel, both literary and thematic, is the similarity of Yosef resisting the advances of Eishet Potifar and Mordechai resisting the pressure from the king's servants to bow to Haman. Finally, Mordechai was paraded on a royal horse while wearing royal clothes, just as Yosef was given royal clothes and a royal chariot. "Avreich" was called out when Yosef went by (Bereishit 41:43), and an announcement – "This shall be done to the man that the king wishes to honor" (Ester 6:11) – was made when Mordechai was paraded around Shushan.

Daat Mikra and Yisrael Shadiel – Sixteen Parallels Daat Mikra notes thirteen other parallels between these two stories. Both stories occur outside

of Eretz Yisrael. In both situations, individual Jews rise to very high levels of power in a foreign government. The Jews who reach the upper echelons use their power to advocate for and aid their Jewish brethren while simultaneously faithfully and skillfully serving the interests of the monarch.

Both episodes involve good deeds being forgotten; namely, Mordechai's foiling of Bigtan and Teresh's plot to assassinate Achashveirosh and Yosef's interpretation of the dream of the Sar HaMashkim (butler). Sleep – Paroh's dreams and Achashveirosh's one night insomnia – serves as a vehicle to facilitate recognition of these positive but neglected deeds. In both stories, royal ministers – Haman and the Sar HaOfim- are hanged. Ester hides her Jewish identity from Achashveirosh, and Yosef conceals his true identity from his brothers. Both characters reveal their identities after tension-filled parties. Yisrael Shadiel notes that Ester offered Achashveirosh her brethren as slaves in an attempt to spare them from the death sentence, just as Yehuda offered himself to Yosef as a slave in trying to save Binyamin. Yisrael Shadiel also cites Rav Mordechai Breuer, who points out that Rachel, Yosef, and Ester are the only ones in Tanach to be described as beautiful in a doubled manner: "Yefat To'ar" and "Yefat Mareh" (Bereishit 29:17 and 39:6, Ester 2:7). Rav Galinsky of Yeshivat Shaalvim adds another parallel based on the Ketav VeHakabbalah's interpretation of the phrase "And they called before him (Yosef) 'Avreich.'" The Ketav VeHakabbalah explains "Avreich" as an Egyptian royal command to bow down to Yosef, which matches the Persian royal decree to bow to Haman.

Daat Mikra notes the striking literary parallels between the two events. Similar language is employed in describing both Yaakov's decision to risk Binyamin's life in an attempt to save the family ("Kaasher Shacholti Shachalti" – Bereishit 43:15) and Ester's decision to risk her life by appearing unannounced before Achashveirosh in attempt to save her people ("VeChaasher Avadti Avadti" – Ester 4:16). Comparable language is used to describe the embalming of Yaakov Avinu and the preparation of the candidates for their evening with Achashveirosh ("Ki Kein Yimleu" – Bereishit 50:3 and Ester 2:12). Amazingly parallel language is used to describe the appointment of administrators to gather grain in Egypt and those who would organize the gathering of beautiful women to serve as candidates for the queen of the Persian Empire ("VeYafkeid Pekidim" – Bereishit 41:33 and Ester 2:3). Finally, Ester couches her plea to Achashveirosh in the terms used by Yehuda in pleading for the release of Binyamin ("Ereh Bara Asher Yimtza Et" – Bereishit 44:34 and Ester 8:6).

TABC Students – Twelve Parallels My Talmidim offered a host of other parallels. They noted, of course, that both Mordechai and Yosef served as Mishneh LaMelech (viceroys) of countries that were during their respective eras the world's only superpower. They noted that both Yosef and Mordechai are described as having been exiled from Eretz Yisrael to a foreign land against their will. Yosef was taken to Paroh against his will, while Ester was taken against her will to Achashveirosh. In both cases, Hashem set up the solution to the problem before the problem began (Makdim Refuah LeMakah; see Megillah 13b) – Ester was appointed queen before Haman rose to power, and Yosef became the viceroy before the seven years of famine. Both Mordechai and Yosef suffered temporarily for their refusal to yield to temptation; Yosef for resisting Eishet Potifar and Mordechai for refusing to bow to Haman. In both cases, the suffering was a "Yeridah LeTzorech Aliyah," "a descent that facilitates an ascent," meaning that in both cases, the refusal to disobey Torah and the subsequent suffering eventually led to success and advancement. Chazal (Megillah 14a) note that even after we were saved from Haman's planned genocide, we remained "slaves to Achashveirosh." Similarly, we remained slaves to Paroh even after we were saved from the famine. Haman libeled the Jews, just as Eishet Potifar libeled Yosef. In both cases, a major turn occurs after a misinterpreted intimate situation – Yosef with Eishet Potifar and Ester with Haman (see Megillah 16a). Mordechai rose to power based on a recommendation from Ester, and Yosef achieved his position via the suggestion of the Sar HaMashkim. Chazal also seem to interpret the Megillah in light of these many parallels. They explain (Megillah 13b) that

Mordechai saved Achashveirosh from assassination due to his ability understand Bigtan and Teresh's plot despite it being spoken in a foreign tongue that no one else in the palace was able to understand. Chazal's assertion might be based on a parallel to Yosef's ability to interpret Paroh's dream when no one else was able to do so, which saved Paroh and his kingdom from the ravages of a seven year famine. Avi Levinson (TABC '08) notes that this parallel seems to be used by Chazal in the reverse direction as well. Chazal (Sotah 36b) teach that Yosef knew a language Paroh didn't (Hebrew), which paved the way for securing permission to bury Yaakov in Eretz Yisrael and for Yosef to be appointed viceroy in the first place. Chazal (Megillah 11b) state that Achashveirosh used stolen items from the Beit HaMikdash. This assertion might be based not only on the parallel event in chapter six of Sefer Daniel (there are also numerous parallels between Megillat Ester and Sefer Daniel), where Belshazzar used the stolen vessels from the Beit HaMikdash, but also on the fact that a stolen vessel plays a role in the Yosef story as well (Bereishit 44:2-15).

Conclusion – Significance of the Parallels Megillat Ester loudly and clearly calls our attention to the Yosef story. The question is why. One reason might be to stress the principle of Maaseh Avot Siman LaBanim, the events of the earlier Jewish generations point to what will occur to future generations. In other words, Megillat Ester is screaming out between its lines that the Yosef story has repeated itself. This message is enormously important to all generations of Jews, because the Megillah forewarns us that just as the Yosef story repeated itself, so too the Ester story will repeat itself in the future. The Megillah communicates to us that it is essential that we learn the lessons of the Purim story in order to insure the survival of our people in the Galut. Some of the survival lessons we need to glean from the Megillah are discussed in Rav Yosef Dov Soloveitchik's lecture presented in Reflections of the Rav 1 (pp. 178-186). These lessons include the fact that Jews in the Galut are vulnerable and must be vigilant and avoid naiveté. Recall that the Persian Empire was very positively disposed toward Am Yisrael during the reign of Achashveirosh's predecessors, Koreish and Daryavesh. The change to anti-Semitism was very quick and entirely unexpected, catching the Jews surprised and unprepared. Recall that the Megillah records that the city of Shushan was confused (Ester 3:15), perhaps for this reason. We may add another survival lesson gleaned from the Megillah is the need for Diaspora Jews to be politically engaged as Mordechai was, which led to overcoming Haman's decree. NORPAC is an excellent opportunity to act as a modern-day Mordechai and Ester (visit www.norpac.net). A second message that the Megillah is broadcasting by this plethora of allusions to the Yosef story might have to do with the absence of an explicit reference to Hashem in this work. In a previous essay (available at www.koltorah.org), we discussed why it was necessary for Megillat Ester to be written in a secular style that omits direct mention of the Creator. Nonetheless, it is possible that the Megillah does indirectly mention Hashem by the many references to the Yosef story. Rashi (commenting on Bereishit 39:3) writes about Yosef, "The name of Hashem was constantly in his mouth." Yisrael Shadiel notes that Yosef mentions Hashem in almost every conversation of his that is recorded in the Chumash and at least once with every character with whom he interacts (with the exception of the Egyptian nation). When naming his two sons, Yosef mentions Hashem. In total, Yosef refers to Hashem no less than twenty one times in the Chumash. The Megillah might be telling us that although it is necessary to omit Hashem's name from the text, nevertheless, just as Yosef unabashedly emphasized Hashem's worldly involvement, so too reading between the lines of the Megillah teaches that Hashem is behind the events recorded in this text. Yosef taught that Hashem is involved in terrestrial events even when His presence is not obvious. The Megillah teaches this lesson by its many "hyperlinks" to the Yosef story. We would all do well to take the lessons of Ester and Yosef to heart. We must have a conscious awareness that despite His apparent lack of involvement, Hashem is constantly in control of all events in the world. We

must also be sure to avoid becoming complacent in Galut, lest the story of Ester repeat itself.



http://www.aish.com/spirituality/growth/Spitzer_and_the_Power_of_Temptation.asp

by Rabbi Emanuel Feldman
Spitzer and the Power of Temptation

The news these days is not at all new. It centers on man's eternal struggle with temptation, and his occasional spectacular failings -- as exemplified by ex-Gov. Eliot Spitzer of New York.

The Talmudic sages in Sukkah 52a describe temptation as yetzer hara or the Evil Inclination. They suggest that to the righteous, who appreciate the seriousness of sin, temptation seems as mighty as a mountain, and therefore they struggle to overcome it. To the wicked, who discount the effects of sin, it seems as thin as a thread which can be easily overcome.

The point is that no one -- not even the righteous -- is free from temptation. This is what the Torah means in Genesis 7:21: "The inclination of man is evil from his youth." This is a warning shot, at the very beginning of history, across the bow of mankind: Watch yourself; be ever mindful of your negative tendencies to cheat, steal, hurt, to be corrupt, to engage in immoral behavior. The temptation to do wrong is built in to every human being. It is a powerful force, and no one is immune from it. And our task as human beings is to be aware of that tendency -- and to resist it.

Barati yetzer hara, G-d says in Talmud Kiddushin 30a: "I have created the Evil Inclination. But I have also created an antidote to it, and that is the Torah."

Living by the disciplines of the Torah, as well as studying it, can help overcome the Tempter. The Talmud tells us that the greater the person, the stronger is his evil inclination. And the greater is his glory when he succeeds in the struggle. The key is not to underestimate the power of the adversary.

We all sense that the fall of Spitzer is a morality tale of classical proportions. Here is a man who had everything going for him: a trajectory of political success, a straight-arrow Mr. Clean image of righteousness and rectitude, a paragon of virtue crusading against evil, a (sometimes) media darling offering a fresh breeze, a man who had broken up prostitution rings and rackets and who was the scourge of everything dishonest and immoral.

For all of his intimate knowledge of crime and its ways, however, he underestimated the power of temptation. For him it was a thin thread, not a mountain, and once he gave it entrée to his being, there was no way out. What it might do to his relationships, his family, his career, to himself, was all beside the point. Like a fly in a web of the spider, he was hopelessly enmeshed.

Why should a brilliant man behave in so singularly stupid and reckless a fashion? We need not enter the area of pop-psychology that is now springing up all around the Spitzer case. Jeremiah said it all in 17:9-10: "Obscure is the heart of man, and intricate; who can know it? Only I the Lord can probe the heart and know its depths."

We will never know what came over the governor to risk everything for some illicit adventures. But his deeds underscore the prescient comment of Hillel in Pirke Avot 2:5: "Do not trust yourself until the day of your death."

This holds true today as it did 2,000 years ago. That is, do not think that you can never succumb to the power of immorality. The Torah says it clearly in Genesis 4:7: "Sin crouches at the door." Once we come to believe that we are above such things, the crouching Tempter rises up and entraps us.

Gov. Spitzer did not invent or discover immorality. He is preceded by a centuries-old lineup of presidents, kings, prime ministers, and ordinary politicians. It is beyond our ken as to why powerful men in particular fall

victim to the weakness of the flesh. Hubris and pride and power are certainly major contributing factors.

By all accounts, humility is not one of the governor's strong traits. He has always been smarter than his peers, richer, and more accomplished. For him not to be completely humble is perhaps understandable. But it is in the nature of un-humble people to persuade themselves that, because they have achieved a certain status, nothing untoward can ever happen to them: they can do whatever they please and their deeds will not catch up with them. He, and untold powerful men before him, are living proof of the warnings of that wisest of all men, Solomon, in the book of Proverbs, that pride is the precursor of man's fall. Instead of surfing the Internet for illicit entertainment, Spitzer would have done better to surf the Book of Proverbs.

A great sage once said: "When I was young, I wanted to improve the entire world; as I grew older, I wanted to improve my country; later, I wanted to improve my village, and still later, my family. But now that I am very old, I would be most happy if I could only improve my own self."

To put it another way: If we want to improve the society around us, the place to begin is in the mirror. Of the several lessons we can glean from the Spitzer morality tale, one salient fact emerges from them all. Our material technology may be cutting edge, but our spiritual wherewithal has not moved one iota since ancient times. We are conquering outer space, but are nowhere near conquering inner space. Worse, we are hardly aware that we possess inner space.

This article originally appeared in the Jerusalem Post.



<http://www.chiefrabbi.org/>

Covenant & Conversation

Thoughts on the Weekly Parsha from

Sir Jonathan Sacks

Chief Rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregations of the British Commonwealth

[From 2 years ago - 5766]

<http://www.chiefrabbi.org/tt-index.html>

Tsav

Among the sacrifices detailed in this week's sedra is the korban todah, the thanksgiving offering: "If he offers it [the sacrifice] as a thanksgiving offering, then along with this thanksgiving offering he is to offer unleavened loaves mixed with oil, unleavened wafers spread with oil, and loaves of fine flour well-kneaded and mixed with oil." (Lev. 7: 12).

Though we have been without sacrifices for almost two thousand years, a trace of the thanksgiving offering survives to this day, in the form of the blessing known as Hagomel: "Who bestows good things on the unworthy", said in the synagogue, at the time of reading of the Torah, by one who has survived a hazardous situation.

What constitutes a hazardous situation? The sages (Berakhot 54b) found the answer in Psalm 107, a song on the theme of giving thanks, beginning with the best-known words of religious gratitude in Judaism: Hodu la-Shem ki tov, ki le-olam chasdo, "Give thanks to the Lord for His lovingkindness is forever".

The psalm itself describes four specific situations:

1. Crossing the sea: "Some went out on the sea in ships; they were merchants on the mighty waters . . . They mounted up to the heavens and went down to the depths; in their peril their courage melted away . . . Then they cried out to the Lord in their trouble, and he brought them out of their distress. He stilled the storm to a whisper; the waves of the sea were hushed."

2. Crossing a desert: "Some wandered in desert wastelands, finding no way to a city where they could settle. They were hungry and thirsty, and their lives ebbed away. Then they cried out to the Lord in their trouble, and he delivered them from their distress."

3. Recovery from serious illness: "They loathed all food and drew near the gates of death. Then they cried to the Lord in their trouble,

and he saved them from their distress. He sent forth his word and healed them; he rescued them from the grave."

4. Release from captivity: "Some sat in darkness and the deepest gloom, prisoners suffering in iron chains . . . Then they cried to the Lord in their trouble, and he saved them from their distress. He brought them out of darkness and the deepest gloom and broke away their chains."

To this day, these are the situations of hazard (many nowadays include air travel as well as a sea voyage) on which we say Hagomel when we come through them safely.

In his book *A Rumour of Angels*, the American sociologist Peter Berger describes what he calls "signals of transcendence" - phenomena within the human situation that point to something beyond. Among them he includes humour and hope. There is nothing in nature that explains our ability to reframe painful situations in such a way that we can laugh at them; nor is there anything that can explain the human capacity to find meaning even in the depths of suffering.

These are not, in the classic sense, proofs of the existence of G-d, but they are experiential evidence. They tell us that we are not random concatenations of selfish genes, blindly reproducing themselves. Our bodies may be products of nature ("dust you are, and to dust you will return"), but our minds, our thoughts, our emotions - all that is meant by the word "soul" - are not. There is something within us that reaches out to something beyond us: the soul of the universe, the Divine "You" to which we speak in prayer, and to which our ancestors, when the Temple stood, made their offerings.

Though Berger does not include it, one of the "signals of transcendence" is surely the instinctive human wish to give thanks. Often this is merely human. Someone has done us a favour, given us a gift, comforted us in the midst of grief, or rescued us from danger. We feel we owe them something. That "something" is *todah*, the Hebrew word that means both "acknowledgement" and "thanks".

But often we sense something more. It is not just the pilot we want to thank when we land safely after a hazardous flight; not just the surgeon when we survive an operation; not just the judge or politician when we are released from prison or captivity. It is as if some larger force was operative, as if the hand that moves the pieces on the human chessboard were thinking of us; as if heaven itself had reached down and come to our aid.

Insurance companies tend to describe natural catastrophes as "acts of G-d". Human emotion does the opposite. G-d is in the good news, the miraculous survival, the escape from catastrophe. That instinct - to offer thanks to a force, a presence, over and above natural circumstances and human intervention - is itself a signal of transcendence. That is what was once expressed in the thanksgiving offering, and still is, in the Hagomel prayer. But it is not just by saying Hagomel that we express our thanks.

Elaine and I were on our honeymoon. It was summer, the sun was shining, the beach glorious and the sea inviting. There was just one problem. I could not swim. But as I looked at the sea, I noticed that near to the shore it was very shallow indeed. There were people several hundred yards from the beach, yet the water only came up to their knees. What could be safer, I thought, than simply to walk out into the sea and stop long before I was out of my depth.

I did. I walked out several hundred yards and, yes, the sea only came up to my knees. I turned and started walking back. To my surprise and shock, I found myself suddenly engulfed by water. Evidently, I had walked into a deep dip in the sand. I was out of my depth. I struggled to swim. I failed. This was dangerous. There was no one nearby. The people swimming were a long way away. I went under, again and again. By the fifth time, I knew I was drowning. My life was about to end. What a way - I thought - to start a honeymoon.

Of course someone did save me, otherwise I would not be writing these lines. To this day I do not know who it was: by then I was more or less unconscious. All I know is that he must have seen me struggling. He swam

over, took hold of me, and brought me to safety. Since then, the words we say on waking every day have had a deep meaning for me: "I thank You, living and enduring G-d, for You have restored my life to me: great is Your faithfulness." Anyone who has survived great danger knows what it is to feel, not just to be abstractly aware, that life is a gift of G-d, renewed daily.

The first word of this prayer, *Modeh*, comes from the same Hebrew root as *Todah*, "thanksgiving". So too does the word *Yehudi*, "Jew". We acquired the name from Jacob's fourth son, Judah. He in turn received his name from Leah who, on his birth, said: "This time I will thank [some translate it, "I will praise"] G-d" (Gen. 29: 35). To be a Jew is to offer thanks. That is the meaning of our name and the constitutive gesture of our faith.

There were Jews who, after the Holocaust, sought to define Jewish identity in terms of suffering, victimhood, survival. One theologian spoke of a 614th commandment: You shall not give Hitler a posthumous victory. The historian Salo Baron called this the "lachrymose" reading of history: a story written in tears. I, for one, cannot agree. Yes, there is Jewish suffering. Yet had this been all, Jews would not have done what in fact most did: hand on their identity to their children as their most precious legacy. To be a Jew is to feel a sense of gratitude; to see life itself as a gift; to be able to live through suffering without being defined by it; to give hope the victory over fear. To be a Jew is to offer thanks.

from Heritage House <innernet@gmail.com> reply to
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"THE HOLY DRUNK"

by Rabbi Boruch Leff

* * *

"A person is obligated to become inebriated on Purim until he doesn't know the difference between 'cursed is Haman' and 'blessed is Mordechai'." (Talmud - Megillah 7b)

We all wonder: Why does G-d permit, nay encourage, us to get drunk on Purim? It seems to be such an unholy, un-Jewish practice. Is all the fun and frolic with alcohol just Judaism's version of a college frat party?!

Of course, the answer is a resounding "no."

No Jewish practice exists that is not replete with profundity and depth. This is all the more true when it comes to understanding such a strange practice as getting drunk on Purim.

If there is one fundamental lesson of the Purim story, it is that while we humans like to feel that we are running the world and controlling our destinies, at the end of the day, G-d is behind it all. As the Talmud indicates, the Jews [in the time of Mordechai and Esther] felt they were helping their political relationship with the government by attending King Achashveirosh's grand feast. In reality, their very attendance at the feast was the spiritual trigger for Haman's evil decree to annihilate the Jewish people.

What was Achashveirosh celebrating anyway? He foresaw (incorrectly) that the Temple in Jerusalem would never be rebuilt and the Jews would never again achieve independence. This is why he paraded at the feast wearing the special garments of the Jewish Temple priests.

The Jews, for their part, felt they needed to attend the feast and feared Achashveirosh's reprisals if they would boycott it. This made good political sense to them. Mordechai warned them not to go, but they ignored his advice.

Essentially, the Jews were attending a celebration of their own demise and engaged in unholy behavior at the feast. The Jews had given up hope, and thought Achashveirosh's assumptions of their downfall were probably right. Hence, they were deserving of the decree of their own destruction.

Only when the Jews turned to God, recognizing that all of their plans only brought forth disaster, did the salvation blossom. When they fasted for three days and nights, praying and repenting, they realized that only G-d could bring their deliverance...

* * *

CRUMBLING PILLARS OF SECURITY

Our modern experience is surprisingly similar.

First we thought that our finances and money were secure. The '90s' "new Internet economy" and the ever-expanding marketplace were the mantras of the day. Books were written entitled "Dow Jones 20,000" and stocks kept climbing with no end in sight. Amazon: \$400 a share, Yahoo: \$300, AOL: \$200. Everybody who was anybody was trading stocks. Day trading firms were booming. And then, out of nowhere, everything crashed. The year 2000 brought the worst stock market since the Great Depression.

Meanwhile, as we thought Israel had finally achieved some semblance of peace with the 1993 Oslo accords, the devastating violence begun in 2000, with thousands of injuries and dead, showed us differently.

We thought we could rely on the powerful United States military and intelligence to secure our existence. Then came September 11, and a whole new seemingly impossible-to-stop wave of terrorism. We are in the midst of a long, protracted war against Islamic terror, a war that will at best take years and years to win. Our fears and insecurities are here to stay.

So if we can't rely on our money and we can't rely on our military might, what can we rely on? The only answer is our Father in Heaven. Of course, we must make our own efforts to the best of our abilities. G-d will not help us if we lie in bed waiting for Him to act. But the 21st-century mind realizes all too well that it is a mistake to think we are in control of our security and destiny.

* * *

HOLY INTENT

This is what getting drunk on Purim is all about. How?

Consumption of alcohol makes a person lack normal inhibitions. Someone who gets drunk in a lewd, wild environment will most likely lose inhibitions in lewd and promiscuous ways. This is forbidden. But if someone consumes alcohol in an environment of Torah and spirituality, with intent to grow from the experience, he will be able to become more holy. We are not used to thinking along these lines, but many who have done so successfully can tell you that it is true nonetheless.

"A person is obligated to become inebriated on Purim until 'lo yada' -- he doesn't know the difference between 'cursed is Haman' and 'blessed is Mordechai'."

The key of this Rabbinic injunction is that we should reach a point of "lo yada" -- we do not know, only G-d does. We cannot control, only G-d can. This is similar to the way the Jewish people showed trust in G-d at Mount Sinai, stating, "na'aseh v'nishma" -- we will do and listen to whatever G-d commands, because we trust and know that He has our best interests at heart. So too, did the Jews of Purim express the realization that there is only one Being who we can truly and fully trust, and that is God.

In fact, the Jews' realization in the days of Mordechai was on an even higher level. For while the Sinai experience was characterized by fear and awe, the Purim experience was one of drawing close to G-d through love. "Kimu v'kiblu," the Megillah tells us: the Jews in the days of Mordechai accepted God's word in a way they never had before.

On Purim, when we become drunk, we are saying that ultimately we don't even have enough faculties to know the difference between one who is cursed and who is blessed. We try to do what seems correct, but we realize that it is only G-d who knows what is right for us. And only He controls the world.

If we can keep this in mind while in an inebriated state, and if we sing songs stressing these ideas at our Purim feast, we can hopefully carry on this higher level of trust and belief in God, into all aspects of our lives.

It seems a bit funny, but getting drunk on Purim can be a spiritual experience. L'chaim!

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<http://www.anshe.org/parsha.htm#parsha>  
Parsha Page by **Fred Toczek** - A Service of Anshe Emes Synagogue (Los Angeles)  
Tzav 5757

#### I. Summary

A. T'rumas Hadeshen. The Kohanim were given the mitzvah of "T'rumas Hadeshen" -- lifting the ashes of the daily "Olos" (Consumed Offerings). They were also told to keep the fire on the altar burning continuously. Aharon, the Kohein Godol, was instructed to bring to bring a meal-offering each morning and evening.

B. The Kohanim's Duties. Additional laws were given specifying the Kohanim's duties and the portions of the offerings they were to receive as their due. They could eat of the meal, sin, and trespass offerings only if they were ceremonially clean, and only with a Court of the Sanctuary.

C. Installation Ceremony. In an impressive ceremony conducted in the Court of the Sanctuary, Aharon and his sons were installed in their offices by Moshe, with the assembly watching. After the Kohanim had bathed, Moshe dressed Aharon in his distinctive garments, and anointed the Tabernacle and its contents (the Ark, Table of Showbread, Candlelabra, and Altar of Incense), as well as the Altar of Burnt Offering, and the laver and its base (all of which stood in the Court of the Sanctuary). He then poured the anointing oil upon Aharon's head, thus sanctifying him. Finally, the regular Kohanim were invested with their garments. A sin-offering and burnt-offering were then brought by Moshe. These rites were repeated for seven days, during which Aharon and the sons remained within the Court.

#### II. Divrei Torah

##### A. Lil'Mode U'Lilamed (Rabbi Mordechai Katz)

1. Not embarrassing others. There was no particular place specifically designated for bringing the sacrifice of the "Korbon Chatos" (the sin offering), in the Miskhan. This is significant. The Korbon Chatos was offered by one who had sinned and now wished to repent. If there was a specified location for these sacrifices, the sinners' identity would become readily known, and this might in itself discourage repentance. Because the Korbon Chatos was offered in the same place as the Korbon Olah, no one could be certain if the bearer of the Korbon had actually sinned. In this way, the matter would remain a private one between man and G-d, and the sinner would be spared public embarrassment. If Hashem's Torah laws deliberately avoid the shaming of others, then we should certainly be careful not to embarrass our fellow man.

Chazal say that whoever insults his fellow man in public forfeits his place in the world to come. (Bava Metziah 59a). The reason is a simple one. One can kill a man only once with a knife, but he can slay him many times over with a shameful word. Rabbi Akiva Eiger once invited a poor man to his home on Friday night. At the meal, a beautiful white tablecloth covered the Shabbos table. When the poor man lifted his glass of wine, it slipped out of his hand, and the red liquid spilled over the pure white cloth, leaving an ugly blotch. Seeing the poor man squirm in embarrassment, Rabbi Eiger immediately lifted his own glass of wine, and also "accidentally" spilled it over the tablecloth. As the poor man looked on in great relief, Rabbi Eiger remarked, "it seems as if the table or the floor is shaking, doesn't it?" He had been willing to make himself look careless (and to soil a nice tablecloth) just to spare the shame of another.

2. Sincere devotion, not mere habit. The word "Tzav," which begins this Parsha, means "Command". It is deliberately expressed in a form that can refer to both the past and the future. In other words, Hashem's commandments are as applicable today as they were when first promulgated. The rules governing man's behavior and man's devotion to G-d are timeless. Consequently, our observance of the Torah should not be marked by tired, listless efforts. When we pray, we should not mumble through the prayers out of habit. Rather, we should remember Whom we are addressing, and say each word carefully. The same applies to observance of Shabbos, our Torah learning and other mitzvos. They should not be routine, but rather should be moments of inspiration. We must view the Torah and our prayers as instructions from Hashem on how to act practically. If we do not realize this, and do not actually practice what we say and learn, our words and learning have no meaning or purpose.

##### B. Growth Through Torah (Rabbi Zelig Pliskin)

View each new day as the first day of your life. "Then [the priest] shall take off his garments and put on the other garments and carry forth the ashes out of the camp onto a pure place". Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch commented: the taking out of the

ashes that remained on the altar from the previous day expresses the thought that with each new day the Torah mission must be accomplished afresh, as if nothing had yet been accomplished. Each new day calls us to our mission with new devotion and sacrifice. The thought of what has already been accomplished can be the death of that which is still to be accomplished. "Carry forth the ashes out of the camp." Every trace of yesterday's sacrifice is to be removed from the hearth on the altar, so that the service of the new day can be started on completely fresh ground. The past is not to be forgotten. But it is to be retired to the background, and is not to invest us with pride before the fresh task to which each new day calls us.

### C. Wellsprings of Torah (Rabbi Alexander Zusia Freidman)

Keeping the fire burning. "And the fire of the altar shall be kept burning thereby". "Bo," the Hebrew word for "thereby" may also be rendered as "within" a person or thing. Hence, this specification may be construed to mean that "the fire of the altar shall be kept burning within him"; -- i.e., that the zeal of sacrifice is to be kept burning within the Priest (Aharon and each of his Priestly descendants) to whom the commandment was addressed. This is also a reminder to us that we should constantly keep the fire of Torah burning within ourselves.

### D. Peninim on the Torah (Rabbi A.L. Scheinbaum)

The Offering of Thanksgiving. "If he offers it for Thanksgiving". The Midrash explains that in the Messianic Era, all sacrifices will become void, with the exception of the Korban Todah, the Offering of Thanksgiving. Similarly, it is taught that all prayers will be abolished in the future except for those of thanksgiving. Why is there a need for thanksgiving in the Messianic Era? Thanksgiving is expressed in acknowledgment of Hashem's beneficence by who has been rescued from grave peril. This sacrifice is, therefore, man's method of expressing his belief that Hashem actively guides every aspect of his life. During the Messianic Era, man will not lack anything, for the world will be the essence of perfection. Why would he then have to offer thanksgiving? HoRav Chaim Zaichyk, zt'l explains that, indeed, the basis for thanksgiving will be different during the Messianic Era. Gratitude will no longer be expressed for the present, but will be conveyed retroactively for the past. Man's perception of Hashem's conduct will be greatly enhanced. Past events, which may have seemed so painful, will be perceived as a vehicle for our spiritual development. We will consequently realize that everything that Hashem has done has been for our benefit. This recognition will ultimately serve as a source of our gratitude to Him.

### E. Darash Moshe (Rav Moshe Feinstein, zt'l)

Count your blessings each day. There are two meal-offerings which can only be brought by a Kohein. One is offered the first time a Kohein performs a temple service, and when a Kohein Gadol assumes his new office. The other is offered everyday by the Kohein Gadol. It is noteworthy that the Kohein Gadol brings each day the identical offering, that of the day of his induction. This is because, although Hashem grants him a special position, is to be considered like a new gift each day. Although it was already given to him and to his descendants, it is theirs only if they deserve it. Hence, the position of Kohein Gadol is like a gift being granted anew. From here we learn that any blessing or appointment that Hashem gives must be continually deserved and the recipient must contemplate and appreciate it every day.

### F. Living Each Week (Rabbi Abraham Twerski)

1. Overcoming negativism. "The flame of the altar shall burn in it. Do not extinguish it." The pronoun "in it", referring to the altar as the antecedent, or to the Kohen as the antecedent, in which case the verse reads, "the flame of the altar shall burn within the Kohen," indicating that the service in the Sanctuary should kindle a fiery devotion "within" the Kohen. Throughout Jewish history there are records of people who are so intensely absorbed in prayer that they virtually lost contact with their surroundings. The Talmud states that when Rabbi Akiva prayed the Amidah, which requires one to remain stationary, he would begin praying in one corner of the room, and later be found in another corner because he would so completely lose himself in meditation that he was unaware that he was moving about (Berachos 31a). This is the kind of intensity and devotion in prayer that characterize many of our Tzaddikim, and this may be the meaning of the above verse, that the flame of the altar should burn within the person. The latter part of the above verse also lends itself to another interpretation. The literal translation of "do not extinguish it," can, according to Rabbi Shneur Zalman also be interpreted as "you must extinguish the negative." In other words, rid yourself of all negativism. It is no coincidence that these two concepts are contained in the same verse, because they are related. It is Rabbi Akiva, in whom the fiery devotion was manifested in his prayers, who said that the principle that underlies all of Torah is "love your neighbor as yourself." It is Rabbi Akiva who also said that man is precious because he was created in the Divine image, because he saw godliness in everyone. Apparently, the two traits go together. Should they agree that one is consumed by a burning desire to be close to G-d, to that

degree can one eliminate negativism, even to the point of finding redeeming features in the most negative occurrences.

2. Miracles Within Nature. "The flame of the altar shall burn in it. Do not extinguish it". The Chinuch states that although the flame that burns on the altar was of Divine origin, there is a mitzvah to constantly fuel the flame on the altar, so that the Divine nature of the flame is not manifest. Following our establishment as a nation in our land, miracles that were manifest and undeniably supernatural were infrequent. From then on, the conduct of the world appeared to follow immutable natural laws. It is a principle of Judaism, however, that G-d is constantly at the helm, and that He operates through the "natural" laws. Hence, the natural and supernatural are really one and the same. The truly wise person can see Divine providence in all "natural" phenomenon.

3. Expressing Gratitude. "If he offers it by reason of gratitude." In the absence of the Sanctuary, the gratitude service consists of reciting a special Berachah (blessing) in the presence of a Minyan (Quorum of 10). The text of the Berachah is, "Blessed are you, oh G-d, King of the Universe, Who does good to the undeserving and Who has rendered every kindness to me." The congregation then responds, "May He Who rendered you every kindness continue to do good to you." Expressing gratitude to G-d is a central theme in Judaism. The first words one utters upon awakening in the morning are "Modeh Ani" ("I thank You G-d") in which one expresses gratitude for another day of life. Our prayers and blessings are bound with expressions of gratitude, through which we enforce one's belief in the Divine Providence, and in the belief that all that one receives is a Divine gift rather than solely the result of one's own efforts.

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### Peninim on the Torah

by Rabbi A. Leib Scheinbaum - Parshas Tzav

PARSHAS TZAV Command Aharon and his sons saying, "These are the laws of the burnt-offering." (6:2) The Torah uses the word, tzav, command, in an atypical manner in this pasuk. The pasuk should have begun with the word, dabeir, speak, or, emor, say, to Aharon. Why did it begin with the word, "command"? Rashi explains that these laws require greater emphasis, so the Torah expresses them in stronger language, because they involve the loss of money. The Ramban questions this statement, since the Kohanim were permitted to keep the skin of the animal used from a Korban Olah. If they did not lose money, why did the Torah require such strong terminology? The Taz responds that the Kohanim were generally able to partake of the meat of the offerings, which does not apply to the Olah. Therefore, to keep only the skin meant a considerable loss for them.

It is important that we digest this statement. Neither Aharon HaKohen nor his sons were ordinary people. As Kohen Gadol and brother of Moshe Rabbeinu, Aharon was imbued with a profound love of mitzvos. Did he really need an extra warning to remind him to execute this mitzvah properly? A deeply spiritual person, he certainly transmitted to his offspring the idea that wealth is not measured by a few dollars, but rather by spiritual achievement. Is there a remote possibility that they would have been reluctant to perform the mitzvah of offering a burnt-offering simply because it did not bring in as much cash flow as other korbanos?

Horav Henoch Leibowitz, Shlita, feels that Rashi is underscoring the powerful impact that money has on all of us. Clearly, Aharon would not have refused to bring a burnt-offering just because it incurred less profit. There is a distinct possibility, however, that he would have been less zealous than he might have been for another, more "lucrative," korban. Perhaps, his enthusiasm might have waned because deep inside his subconscious he felt a monetary loss. Aharon's zerizus, sense of alacrity, in carrying out the mitzvah might have been hindered as a result of the monetary loss. It would not have been a major hindrance, but a hindrance nonetheless. In order to forewarn Aharon and prevent him from falling into the trap that money presents, the Torah emphasized the mitzvah.

The Rosh Yeshivah quotes the Kli Yakar, who cites an incident from the Talmud Yerushalmi which supports this idea. A group of thieves robbed Rabbi Yochanan of his money. He went to the bais ha'medrash where Reish Lakish asked him a question pertaining to halachah. Rabbi Yochanan did not respond. Reish Lakish repeated the question only to invoke a similar response. Finally, Reish Lakish asked, "Why do you not answer?" Rabbi Yochanan replied, "All of the limbs depend on the heart, and the heart depends on the wallet." In other words, the great sage was implying that, since his money had been stolen, his mind would be preoccupied with his loss. Thus, he was not able to respond properly to the query.

We see from this episode that the venerable Rabbi Yochanan, the great tzaddik and gaon, distinguished in piety and scholarship, was so profoundly impacted by the loss of his money that he was temporarily not in control and unable to render a clear

perspective of the halachah. It seems mind-boggling! Apparently, every person, regardless of his stature and virtue, has a natural attachment to money. Thus, when he loses it, it makes a mark on his psyche.

As much as we work on ourselves to develop a sense of priority regarding the significance of the spiritual over the material, we are still affected. The powerful pull of money, the grasp of the almighty dollar, does not leave us. We have to battle constantly to transcend that gravitational pull or succumb to its effect.

Chazal teach us in the Talmud Bava Basra 165A: "Most people stumble into some form of theft." The Mesillas Yesharim explains that while it does not mean actual grabbing money from people, it refers to rationalizing the "use" of other people's money either through questionable financial practices or through other inappropriate methods of lining our pockets. Anything that is not above board is tainted with thievery. Chazal are talking about "most" Jews, which is a reference to all of "us." The powerful attachment to money is an irresistible and universal desire which affects the high and mighty, as well as the simple and small. When it takes hold of one's jugular, it does not let go. It is only satisfied when it sees "green."

The Rosh Yeshivah concludes with an exhortation for our generation. Certainly, if Chazal made this statement, then how much more so is it true today when we measure a man by his material success. We live in a world in which the dollar reigns supreme, in which a person's house, car, and clothes and where he vacations greatly determine his status in a community. With these pressures constantly on our minds, it is all the more important that we are extremely vigilant in each and every one of our financial dealings - not only with our co-religionists, but even with those who are not. Have we forgotten the meaning of -- and punishment for -- causing a chillul Hashem, desecration of Hashem's Name? There used to be a time when people took pride in their honesty and when integrity was a character trait that was cherished and held in high esteem. Today, we brag about what we can get away with, how we pulled the wool over someone's eyes and how we "saved" some money. We worry about the kashrus of our food, but neglect to be concerned about the kashrus of our money. The Torah goes out of its way to emphasize the need for vigilance. We should take this message to heart.

The Kohen shall put on his fitted linen tunic, and he shall put on linen breeches on his flesh. he shall separate the ash. (6:3)

The daily avodah, service, in the Bais HaMikdash began with terumas ha'deshen, the separation of the ashes, of the previous day. The Kohen would don his priestly vestments, scoop up a shovelful of the ashes that had been left over from the previous day and place them on the floor of the courtyard, on the eastern side of the Mizbayach, Altar. The Mishnah in Yoma 22 maintains that while the privilege of performing most of the priestly services in the Bais HaMikdash was decided by a goral, lottery, the terumas ha'deshen was not. It was basically done on a first come, first served basis. In the event that there were a number of Kohanim "competing" for the privilege, they would use an interesting method. All of those who vied for the opportunity to serve would race up the thirty-two amah ramp (Kevesh) of the Altar. Whoever reached the four amos on the top of the ramp first won the privilege to serve.

This was all fine until one incident in which two Kohanim raced up the ramp. As both lurched forward to the top, one deliberately pushed the other, who proceeded to fall off the ramp, breaking his leg. When the Bais Din realized that the system was inherently dangerous for the Kohanim, they decreed that the goral process of selection would now be applicable to the terumas ha'deshen.

In a shmuess anthologized by Rabbi Sholom Smith in his new collection of shmuessen entitled, Horav Avraham Pam, zl, he addresses this problem. I am always amazed how a Rosh Yeshivah of Rav Pam's stature can focus on the areas of human endeavor that are often ignored. That sensitivity, however, distinguishes between the individual who is a mentch and the individual who is not. The tragic incident that occurred between the two Kohanim underscores a serious problem. A person is obsessed with a serious desire to perform a mitzvah. The problem is that in his overwhelming desire to do good, he does not care on whom or on what he steps. The Kohen wanted to grab the mitzvah of terumas ha'deshen - at any expense - even if it meant breaking the other Kohen's leg. His motivation was pure mitzvah, since no money was to be gained and no honor was to be derived from his action. It surely was not the most glorious of mitzvos. Yet, in his haste to do a mitzvah, he caused pain for another Jew.

Now, we have to ask ourselves: Is this what Hashem wants of us? Did Hashem give us mitzvos to refine our character or to soothe our egos while we step on others? When we do not carefully weigh our attitude toward a mitzvah, we can inadvertently perform an aveirah, sin. If our actions cause someone else harm, then our actions manifest a negative connotation.

The Rosh Yeshivah would often relate an incident that occurred concerning the Chafetz Chaim which illustrates this idea. The Chafetz Chaim was an individual who went out of his way to perform kindness for anyone. His love of chesed, loving-kindness, was boundless - except when it was at the expense of others. The popular

expression, "give a shirt off someone else's back," did not apply to him. Yes, he helped others, but only at his own expense.

Once the distinguished Lubliner Rav, Horav Meir Shapiro, zl, had occasion to spend Shabbos in Radin. He sent a message to the Chafetz Chaim asking if he could eat the Friday night seudah, meal, at his home. The Chafetz Chaim replied that he would be honored to have the distinguished rav and rosh yeshivah share a meal with him. The messenger returned to the Chafetz Chaim with another request: Would it be too much to ask that at the seudah, Shabbos meal, the women would eat either at a separate table or perhaps in another room (a practice not uncommon in some chassidic homes when there are guests present who are not family members). Could the Chafetz Chaim accommodate him? The Chafetz Chaim replied that, regrettably, he could not comply with his request, and, as such, he would be compelled to withdraw the invitation. He said, "I gave my wife a Kesubah, marriage contract, in which I agreed to fulfill the Shulchan Aruch's obligations of every husband: to eat his Friday night meal with his wife (Even HaEzer 70:2). How can I ask her to relinquish her right to have this?"

An incredible story! While I know that a story such as this will touch upon people's sensitivities - both pro and con, left and right - it teaches a number of lessons. First, the Lubliner Rav had a strong chassidic upbringing. Therefore, despite the opportunity for him to share a meal with the saintly gadol ha'dor, the Chafetz Chaim, he had demurred, refusing to change his tradition. Likewise, the Chafetz Chaim felt that, despite the great mitzvah of hachnosas orchim, welcoming guests, and the opportunity to accord kavod ha'Torah, pay respect to one of Klal Yisrael's pre-eminent Torah luminaries, he could not deprive his wife her due. In fact, he even refused to ask her permission to do so, knowing fully well that she would probably have agreed wholeheartedly to do so. Chesed is wonderful, but not at the expense of one's wife - or anyone else.

We cannot emphasize enough the importance of weighing one's actions to determine if they conform to mitzvah criteria or not. In fact, Rav Pam posits that there is halachic basis for this. The Rema in Orach Chaim 581:1 rules that a baal tefillah, chazzan, who leads the services for Selichos or the Yamim Noraim, High Holy Days, should ideally be a talmid chacham, Torah scholar of high moral standing, who is married and at least thirty years old. The baal tefillah has a formidable task to inspire the congregation and to entreat Hashem for mercy and forgiveness on their behalf. Therefore, he should meet these requirements. Nonetheless, the Mishnah Berurah writes that if selecting this person (who has all the necessary requirements) will cause a machlokes, controversy, in the shul, whereby there will be those who will not be "enthusiastic" about him, then the talmid chacham should decline from davening - even if it means that the other choice is someone of lesser spiritual stature. It is no mitzvah to have a proper chazzan at the expense of some people's feelings.

Stories are told of great talmidei chachamim who would curtail the divrei Torah delivered at their Shabbos meal in order to allow the poor guests that they had invited to eat as quickly as possible. These people had not eaten all day and were hungry. To stretch out the meal with Torah comments might enhance its spirituality, but would not be fair to the hungry man who was waiting all day to eat. Life constantly presents situations in which we must decide if what we are about to do is really a mitzvah. Stopping to think before we act is always advisable. It can make the difference in defining whether our actions are really worthy of being considered a mitzvah.

This is the law of the feast Peace-offering. (7:11)

The Zohar HaKadosh writes that no sacrifice is as dear to Hashem as the Korban Shelamim, Peace-offering, because it "makes peace" between Above and below. This is a well-known statement describing what is achieved by the Korban Shelamim and, thus, the reason for its name: Peace-offering. It brings about peace. It still, however, begs for greater explanation.

Horav Yaakov Yisrael Lugasi, Shlita cites the Toras HaAvos, who posits that if a Jew is "pleased" and accepts everything that Hashem does with him, however the Almighty acts toward him, he is fulfilling the criteria expected of a Jew. We are to be pleased with our lot, because it represents Hashem's decision. The avodah, service, of a Jew is to accept and acquiesce with whatever Hashem determines is right for him.

This is the underlying motif of a Korban Shelamim. A Jew offers this sacrifice out of a sense of voluntary acceptance of Hashem's actions toward him. He is grateful to Hashem. The Almighty, in turn, is pleased with this Jew, because he is reaching the zenith of service to Him. They are both at peace with one another.

We do not comprehend Hashem's ways, but then, it is not for us to understand. There are so many factors -- past and present - that are components in Hashem's decision. Our function is not to understand, but to accept-- with grace and equanimity-- His decision concerning us. When we are pleased with Him, He is pleased with us. Regrettably, such an attitude evades many of us. We accept what

we feel is positive and we kvetch, groan, and-- even at times-- express our displeasure with what we have determined to have negative connotations.

Let me add some food for thought. If we learn to be pleased with Hashem's actions concerning our welfare - even when we do not understand them-- Hashem might act accordingly regarding our less rational actions. How often do we act on the spur of the moment, without aforethought, and the results leave something to be desired? If we want Hashem to consider us in a positive light, we might begin by doing the same concerning what He decrees for us. We cannot act with a double standard.

Take Aharon and sons with him, and the garments and the oil of anointing. (8:2)

The vestments worn by the Kohanim served to set them apart from others when they performed the holy service. Anyone who viewed them bedecked in these princely vestments understood that the nature of their service was sublime. The clothes they wore sent a message to the people indicating that the one who was wearing these garments was on a high spiritual level. The fact that the Kohanim wore special vestments when they performed the Avodah, service, in the Sanctuary bespeaks the nature of the service and implies to us that the clothes we wear when we serve Hashem should reflect the solemnity and sanctity of our service. If we may be so bold as to suggest that as Torah Jews we are on call 24/7 in the service of Hashem. This mission should be reflected in the manner in which we dress and conduct ourselves. Dignity for the One Whom we serve and self-respect for ourselves should be the proper criteria for determining the style we choose. One who does not dress for the occasion demeans himself and casts aspersion on the quality of his service.

Perhaps the fact that these vestments are worn during a holy service in the Bais HaMikdash generates sanctity within them. This idea may be understood with an episode that occurred concerning the K'sav Sofer, which is cited by Horav Yitzchak Zilberstein, Shlita. A Jew in the city of Pressburg became gravely ill and was hovering at death's door. The most prominent physicians were consulted, to no avail. Various drugs were administered, and his condition did not change. It was always the same response. A doctor would visit, check the patient, peruse the chart, and shake his head negatively. He could do nothing.

The members of the family were G-d-fearing Jews who understood that one does not give up hope. One places his trust in the Almighty, the Rofeh kol basar, He Who heals all flesh. They went to the rav of the city, the venerable K'sav Sofer. After relating the patient's history and the present situation, they implored him for a brachah, blessing, that would intercede in the Heavenly Tribunal, so that their father would live.

The K'sav Sofer listened and suddenly took off the scarf that was wrapped around his neck, handing it to the family members. "Here, take this scarf and place it on the forehead of the patient, and with the help of Hashem, he will arise from his illness," said the K'sav Sofer. The rav promised. Hashem listened to his entreaty, and the patient was cured.

The students who were permanent fixtures in the K'sav Sofer's home questioned him concerning the "holy" scarf. Did he "treat" it with the holy Names of Hashem? Was it immersed in Kabbalah, mysticism? The K'sav Sofer shook his head and said, "I have been wearing this scarf for some time. It rests on my shoulders, as I constantly study Torah. It is a part of my ritual of Torah study, and Torah is the greatest healer of all ills. I feel that this scarf contains within it the medicinal and therapeutic qualities necessary to heal the patient. It has soaked up and absorbed so much Torah that it can heal."

If a simple garment that was worn by one of the gedolei ha'dor, Torah luminaries of the generation, while he studied Torah lishmah, for its own sake, had these qualities, certainly the Priestly vestments which were "designed" by Hashem and made by dedicated Jews l'shem Shomayim, for the sake of Heaven, retain a high element of Kedushah, sanctity.

.. l'zechar nishmas Henoch Reuven ben Dovid Meir HaCohen Ribakow