

Toras Aish

Thoughts From Across the Torah Spectrum

RABBI DOV KRAMER

Taking a Closer Look

“**M**ishenichnas Adar Marbin b'Simcha," when [the month of] Adar enters (i.e. begins), happiness is increased (Ta'anis 29a). There seems to be a bit of confusion whether this applies only to the Adar within which Purim falls, such as when there is only one Adar and, when there are two, Adar Sheini (the second Adar), or also to Adar Rishon (the first Adar). Although whether other things are celebrated or commemorated in the first or second Adar is discussed (such as when a boy born in Adar is "Bar-Mitzvahed" and is considered an adult, see O"C 55:10), whether or not to increase happiness in Adar Rishon is not mentioned by the Poskim (codifiers of Jewish Law).

What caught my attention even more, however, is that the very "law" to increase happiness at all in Adar is omitted by the major Poskim. Although it is brought by the Rif, the Rosh, the Chayay Adam and the Kitzur Shulchan Aruch, it is not mentioned by the Rambam, Tur, Shulchan Aruch or Ramuh. What makes this omission even stranger is that the Talmud has two parts to the equation, telling us that just as we must minimize our happiness in Av (when the Temples were destroyed) so too must we increase our happiness in Adar. The first part (minimizing happiness in Av) is universally quoted, while the second part is not. Why was this Talmudic Law omitted?

What practical difference does increasing our happiness in Adar make? Since "minimizing happiness" means avoiding all forms of things that bring happiness (such as weddings and other parties), "maximizing happiness" should mean doing things that bring happiness, including throwing parties and scheduling weddings specifically in Adar. The Talmud spells out another aspect for us: After Rav is quoted as saying that just as we should minimize happiness in Av we should maximize it in Adar, Rav Papa adds, "therefore, a Jew that has a court case pending with a non-Jew should avoid having [the case heard] in Av when his luck is bad, and try to have it heard in Adar when his luck is healthy." It would seem, then, that whether or

not the first Adar is included may very well depend on whether or not they share the same "luck," or "mazel."

The Levush (O"C 685) says that because a second Adar is added in order to get the lunar calendar in sync with the solar calendar, the second Adar is the real "mazel dagim" (Pisces), while the first Adar is only the completion of the mazal of Shevat ("d'lee," or Aquarius). If so, the "healthy" mazal that was either created by, or was a factor in, the Purim miracle would not apply to Adar Rishon. On the other hand, Matityahu Glazerson (Above The Zodiac, pg. 132) writes that "the second Adar has no sign associated with it," indicating that the two Adar months do not share the same mazal, and, if anything, it is only the first Adar that can be said to have a "healthy" mazal. Others suggest that they are both "mazel dagim" and that the requirement to increase happiness applies to both.

The whole idea of Jews being affected by mazal is not that simple either, and the Ritva and the Maharsha ask how these months (Av and Adar) can be said to affect the outcome of a court case if elsewhere (Shabbos 156a) the Talmud says "ain mazal l'Yisroel," the Jewish people aren't affected by mazal. This question itself needs a further explanation, as the common understanding of the Jewish people being above mazal is not that they can't be affected by it, but that they have the opportunity, by getting close to G-d through prayer and religious observance, of rising above it, thereby avoiding its affects (see Rashi). Therefore, the Talmud (in Ta'anis) may be telling us that rather than risking being on a level where mazal won't affect us, it is advisable to avoid having a court case in Av, and to try having it in Adar. Why is this advice a contraction to the notion that we have the ability to rise above mazal?

As the Maharsha (in Shabbos) explains, however, there is a difference between individuals and the nation as a whole. Individuals are affected by mazal, but can rise above it through their attachment to G-d. The nation, on the other hand, has no mazal. The Maharsha's question (in Ta'anis) can therefore be understood from this national perspective. Why is it problematic for a Jew to have his court case in Av? The Talmud seems to be saying because it is a bad month for the Jews (as evidenced by their Temples being destroyed in Av). By the same token, Adar is a good month based on Purim being in Adar. The mazal of the individuals is not under discussion, only the mazal of

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Esther Malka bas Kayla
in mind for a Refuah Shelaima**

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the Jews as a whole - yet the Jewish nation as a whole has no mazal! Why then are we concerned about mazal here? The Maharsha, based on Tosfos, answers that the Talmud does not mean "mazal" in the normal sense of the word, but that something good or bad happening on a specific day (or over a specific period of time) leaves an impression on those days in the future. Therefore, since bad things happened in Av, bad things are likely to happen in Av again (so avoid confrontations on those days).

It occurred to me that this might be what we mean when we wish each other "mazal tov" at a simcha; we are declaring that from this point on, this day will be established as having good "mazal." Just as one of the reasons for fasting on a Yahrzeit (anniversary of the death of a parent) is that the day has been established as a "day of retribution," making a bris or having a wedding (etc.) creates a positive influence on that day for years to come.

Let's take this idea one step further. Think about what would have happened had the Poskim included the Talmudic statement that we should increase happiness during Adar - almost every wedding would have purposely been scheduled in Adar, and all of that good mazal would be concentrated in that one month! The same would be true of all simchos that we have control over (i.e. making a "chanukas habayis," making a siyum, getting together to celebrate a milestone, etc.). By omitting this "law" we now have celebrations all year long (except for the three weeks and during Sefira), and there are now many, many more days that exude good mazal for generations to come. Adar already has good mazal because of Purim; rather than keeping this mazal only in Adar, it now spread to the other months as well! Could this have been a factor in leaving this law ("mishenichnas Adar Marbin b'Simcha) out?

Getting back to our first question, since it is not the month that creates (or contains) the good mazal, but the miracle of Purim, whichever month is the "real" Adar would seem to be the only one that the Talmud is referring to. Since this is generally understood to be the second Adar (see SH'uT Chasam Sofer O"C 163), this must be the month referred to. Nevertheless, as the Ramuh points out (O"C 697), it is always a good thing to be happy - even if it's not Adar, so we should try to

be happy all year round, even during Adar Rishon.
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RABBI SHLOMO RISKIN

Shabbat Shalom

“Make a forehead-plate of pure gold, and engrave on it... 'Holy to G-d'. Attach a twist of sky-blue wool to it" (Exodus 28:36-37)

This week's portion of Tetzaveh, wherein Moses' name is not mentioned even once, exclusively belongs to Aaron, whose name appears more than 30 times. It is a portion devoted to the holy vestments and the consecration of Aaron's priestly descendents. This is the week of the Kohen-Priest but in actuality it is the week of the entire nation of Israel, a nation created to be wholly holy, an entire nation of priests, dedicated to G-d.

Such is the Divine charge to the Israelite nation immediately prior to the revelation at Sinai "and you shall be unto me a kingdom of Priest-Kohanim and a holy nation" (Exodus 19:6); mark every word of the commentary of Sefarno to this verse: "You shall be a kingdom of Priest-Kohanim to understand and to teach to the entire human race the necessity of the calling out in the name of the Lord, so that they might serve Him together... for from Zion shall come forth Torah(to the world)" (Sefarno Adloc.).

The day of the observant Jew begins by expressing the innate "Kohen-dom" of every single member of our nation. Before the Jew does anything else he fills a large vessel with water, his left hand pours the water over the right, and the right hand pours the water over the left, for three cycles. Just as during the priestly ablutions in the Temple so is this act of ritual washing to be performed with Koach Gavra - from ones own vitality. The blessing we make as we wash, "Netilat Yadaim" refers to the lifting or consecrating of the hands. "They shall make me a Temple so that I may dwell in their Midst" - the world must become the Temple and our every action - as priests- must be consecrated to G-d.

Our "Kohen-Dom" continues with the two Blessings we make in which we thank G-d for giving us His Torah. Our commentaries explain that the first blessing refers to the Written Law and the second the Oral Law. After the blessings we must read two selections, one from the Written Torah and one from the Talmud. It is fascinating that out of all the verses of the Written Torah our Sages choose the Priestly Benediction - "May G-d bless you and keep you..." as the blessings which we recite. We begin the day with Priestly actions and Priestly words.

On Friday evening we greet the Sabbath by kindling the candelabrum-Menorah in every Jewish home, by reciting the blessing of sanctification over wine reminiscent of the wine libations at the alter, and bless our children once again with the Priestly blessing.

Our special Sabbath Hallah-bread is our form of our Sanctuaries show-bread, and the salt in which we lightly dip the Hallah represents the salt at every sacrifice; this symbolizes the teaching just as salt never spoils, so will our covenant with G-d last eternally.

On Passover we dress in special white garb (kittel) at the seder, each family brought its own paschal lamb sacrifice in Jerusalem, and we even wash our hands before eating the vegetables dipped in saltwater; all of this is reminiscent of what the Priest did in the Holy Temple. On Yom Kippur we likewise wear the white robes and dramatically repeat each word of the Priestly words of confession and expiation in a dramatic re-experiencing of the words and actions of the High Priest in the Holy Temple.

And if the Priests conducted the sacrificial services in the Temple, every Jew is capable of conducting the services in our Temple. Individuals without any priestly lineage or Levitic Lineage can recite the Amidah for the congregation, cantillate the weekly Biblical portion and call people up to the Torah. Indeed, as our Biblical reading of Tetzaveh describes the High Priest's eight special garments, it emphasizes "the tzitz" - the pure gold forehead-plate, on which is written "Holy to G-d". A twist of royal, sky-blue wool (tkhelet) was attached to this forehead-plate, evidently expressing our descent from the royalty of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, Sara, Rebecca, Rachel and Leah.

Today, the tzitzit - ritual fringes with a string of royal sky-blue wool - may be worn by every Jew, enabling the one who wears it to feel and act with the Majesty of the High Priest of old. There is no more democratic institution in our present day synagogue, where in everyone may be draped in a prayer shawl with ritual fringes, everyone together. Just ask an unJewish visitor to distinguish between the laymen and the Clergy and he will not be able to do so. We are all Kohanim-Priests and must continue to teach first Israel and then the world. © 2008 Ohr Torah Institutions & Rabbi S. Riskin

RABBI BEREL WEIN

Wein Online

The garments of the kohanim - the priests of Israel - occupy a great deal of space in this week's parsha. These garments were meant to bring "honor and glory" to those who donned them. But they were also meant to bring "honor and glory" to all of Israel. For when our religious leaders are objects of honor we, their followers and public supporters also share and bask in that glory.

The garments of the kohanim represent their sense of devotion and service to the G-d and people of Israel. This sense of devotion and holiness was supposed to cover the kohein at all times and to become part of his personality and worldview.

Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch points out that this was the message of the rabbis that stated that nothing was to be between the actual body of the kohein and the clothing that he wore. The garments of "honor and glory" were to become the very being, the skin if you will, of the kohein himself. Only if he constantly operated on the lofty plane of service and honor to G-d and Israel could he meet the challenge of being a kohein.

Clothes may or may not make the man but the sense of honor, duty and loyalty that the garments of the kohanim represented certainly defined the sense of greatness that was expected from him. Once having had the privilege of wearing those holy vestments, the kohein was bound forever to the concept of "honor and glory" that those garments represented and demanded.

Clothing plays a great role in current Jewish society. Certain sectors of our society identify their closeness to G-d and tradition in terms of the clothing that they wear. There is no doubt that clothing makes an impression upon those who see us and upon those who wear it. Research has shown that schools that have a dress uniform have an ability to deal with problems of student discipline more easily than the free and open schools of casual, whatever you like type of dress.

But there is a responsibility that comes with wearing special clothing. And that responsibility is to be people of "honor and glory." The Talmud states almost ironically that he who wishes to sin should travel to a place where he is unknown and to wear "black clothing" so that his behavior will not reflect on the whole of Israel.

There are differing interpretations of what "black clothing" means in this context. But it is clear that it means a type of anonymous and casual clothing that will not reflect upon the Torah community and Judaism generally. One cannot wear the garments of "honor and glory" and behave in a fashion that contradicts those values. Wearing garments is something that should never be taken lightly. For with the garments come the responsibilities and challenges as well.

In the Second Temple when the anointing oil crafted by Moshe no longer existed, the rabbis stated that just donning the garments of the priesthood became the installation ceremony of the kohanim. I think that this is true in our world and time as well. © 2008 Rabbi Berel Wein- Jewish historian, author and international lecturer offers a complete selection of CDs, audio tapes, video tapes, DVDs, and books on Jewish history at www.rabbiwein.com. For more information on these and other products visit www.rabbiwein.com/jewishhistory.

RABBI AVI WEISS

Shabbat Forshpeis

The Torah tells us in this week's portion that on the hem of the priestly robe (ephod) bells will be sewn.

As the priest enters the sanctuary with the bells on his robe- a voice will be heard ("ve-nishmah kolo"). (Exodus 28:33-35) What is the significance of these bells? And whose voice is the Torah referring to?

On its simplest level, the voice refers to that of the bells. Among his many duties, the priest would offer atonement for his own sin. As it would be embarrassing for others to be present during this personal teshuvah process, the bells signal that those present should leave, allowing the priest private moments with G-d.

An important teaching emerges. There are times when we must allow others, even our most righteous and pious, personal space to grieve, to rejoice or to reflect.

Another idea: With many people in the sanctuary, it was only fair that they know when the priest was entering so they not be taken by surprise.

A significant lesson can be derived. Whenever entering into a room, it's important in the spirit of the priestly bells to knock, protecting the privacy of those inside. Privacy is so important that Jewish Law tells us that one should be careful to knock before entering anywhere-even one's own home or a child's room. (Pesachim 112a.)

Yet another thought. If the small priestly bells could be heard, it tells us that the atmosphere of the holy sanctuary was serene - there prevailed the kind of decorum, the kind of quiet necessary for reflection.

Once again, a key message. In a place of holy worship it is important to maintain a level of silence in order for people to dialogue with G-d.

One final observation. The bells were placed aside pomegranate shaped objects. Midrashic literature teaches that since the pomegranate is so full of seeds it is symbolic of the capacity of even the greatest sinner to sprout forth goodness. Hence, when entering the sanctuary, the bells could be heard ringing out as they clang with the pomegranates to teach that even the most wicked could wake up and reconnect.

This concept can help us to understand whose voice was heard in the bells. The term ve-nishmah kolo is initially found in the Torah when Adam and Eve hear the voice of G-d in the Garden of Eden. (Genesis 3:8) All firsts in the Torah, teach us the real meaning of the term. From this perspective, it could be argued that the voice present in these verses refers to G-d-it was G-d's voice that was heard through the bells.

Some think a synagogue is meant only for the most pure. But this is not the case. A synagogue is a spiritual hospital where all of us, with our imperfect souls, come to be healed. The bells clinging to the pomegranates is a soft call telling each of us that no matter how far we've strayed, we have the capacity to hear His voice, the inner voice of G-d, and return.
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MACHON ZOMET

Shabbat B'Shabbato

by Rabbi Amnon Bazak

The portion of Tetzaveh is the only one in the Torah outside of the book of Bereishit where Moshe's name of is not mentioned at all. In fact, even though the entire portion is a long command that the Almighty gave to Moshe, it is remarkable to note that the most prominent figure in the portion is not Moshe but Aharon, and the main subject is a detailed description of the rituals related to the process of dedication to the priesthood. Aharon is mentioned by name 37 times, and every topic in the portion is directly related to him and his sons. This begins with the first commandment, for Aharon and his sons to light the lamps in the Menorah (Shemot 27:20-21) and continues with the details of the holy priestly garments (Chapter 28). The Torah then goes on to describe the seven-day dedication ceremony preparing the Kohanim for their roles (Chapter 29), and finally discusses the golden Altar where Aharon would offer the incenses (30:1-10). This emphasis on Aharon can be contrasted with the previous Torah portion of Teruma, where Moshe is the central figure and Aharon is not mentioned. Why are these two portions so different?

Evidently the difference reflects two different important aspects of the Tabernacle. The portion of Teruma describes the Tabernacle and its utensils in detail, but in the end only one goal of the structure is mentioned, as is noted with respect to the Ark and its cover (the Kaporet): "And I will wait for you there and I will speak to you from above the Kaporet" [25:22]. This implies that the objective of the Tabernacle is to facilitate the unique meetings between the Almighty and Moshe. This is similar to what happened at Mount Sinai, where it is also written, "And Moshe himself will approach G-d but they shall not approach, and the nation shall not rise up with him" [24:2]. Thus, the portion of Teruma is dedicated to Moshe, while Aharon, who did not go up the mountain (see 24:14), is not mentioned.

The portion of Tetzaveh, on the other hand, is Aharon's, but not only his. Aharon represents not only himself but the entire nation of Yisrael. From the very beginning, the priests do not come as individuals, rather, "Bring Aharon and his sons close to you from among Bnei Yisrael" [28:1]. Aharon carries with him the names of Bnei Yisrael, both on the Shoham stones on the Ephod (28:12) and on the Choshen Hamishpat (28:30). And the purpose of the Tzitz which he wears on his forehead is to atone for sins of Bnei Yisrael with respect to the holy places (28:38). The result is that the rest of the nation shows the relationship with the priests by giving them special gifts:

"And this will be for Aharon and for his sons as a permanent portion from Bnei Yisrael, as a Teruma,

and let it be a gift from Bnei Yisrael, from their Shelamim sacrifices" [29:28].

Thus, the Torah portion of Tetzaveh expresses an additional element going beyond the unique relationship between the Almighty and Moshe. At this level, the revelation of the Shechina has a special significance for the Kohanim and through them for the entire nation of Yisrael, as is emphasized at the end of the Torah portion: "And I will meet Bnei Yisrael there... And I will dwell within Bnei Yisrael, and I will be their G-d" [29:43-45].

DR. AVIGDOR BONCHEK

What's Bothering Rashi

Our parsha tells us of the making of the clothing of the priests and the High Priest, the objects which were used in the Mishkan, and the construction of the Mishkan itself. Among the garments worn by the High Priest we find the Robe. Below is a Rashi-comment and the Ramban's argument with it.

"And on its lower hem, you shall make pomegranates of blue wool, dark red wool and crimson wool, on its lower hem around. And bells of gold in their midst all around.

"A gold bell and pomegranate, a gold bell and a pomegranate on the lower hem of the robe all around." (Exodus 28:33-34)

"And bells of gold"-RASHI: "Bells together with their clappers in them."

"In their midst all around"-RASHI: "Between them all the way around. Between every two pomegranates there was one bell attached and hanging from the hem of the robe."

"A gold bell and a pomegranate, a gold bell and a pomegranate"-RASHI: "Next to it."

This is a typical Type II comment. Rashi weaves his words in between the Torah's words. Its purpose is to dispel a wrong understanding of the verse. Which misunderstanding? An Answer: Were the bells inside these woolen pomegranates or were they placed, each one, in between the pomegranates on the hem of the garment? Rashi states his view clearly-the bells were on the hem in between the pomegranates. They were not within each of the pomegranates. This view is not held by all commentators. The Ramban, for example, disagrees with Rashi and says that the bells were, in fact, placed within the pomegranates themselves. What evidence would you cite to support Rashi's view? Hint: See the surrounding verse.

An Answer: Look at verse 28:35. When the Torah speaks of this robe with its bells and pomegranates it says: "... and its sound shall be heard when he comes into the Holy place which is before Hashem and when he goes out so that he shall not die."

Certainly if we want the sound of the bells to be heard, it would be best to have them hanging out in the

open. Were they placed inside the woolen pomegranates their sound would be muffled. This seems to support Rashi's view of the position of the bells over that of the Ramban. © 2008 Dr. A. Bonchek and aish.com

RABBI ZVI MILLER

Parsha Insights

HaShem revealed to Yechezkel the Prophet the secret of the Temple. A prophecy came to him when he was standing on the Temple Mount in Jerusalem in which he saw the Glory of HaShem fill the earth. He then saw a holy light shine forth and fill the Temple.

A wind then carried him within the Temple, where he saw and experienced the Holy Splendor of the Shechinah, the Divine Presence. HaShem told him to convey the image of the Temple to the People of Israel and then they would be inspired to return to HaShem.

What is it about Yechezkel's vision of the Temple that will spiritually awaken and inspire the people to return to HaShem?

The Temple is a microcosm of the universe. The center and most important part of the Temple was the inner sanctum, the Holy of Holies. In light of the fact that the Temple was a model of the universe, the Holy of Holies corresponds to the most precious of all creations, i.e., the human soul.

Yet, without the Temple, we cannot fathom the vast dimensions of holiness and light of our souls. The special quality of the Temple was that it revealed the essence of the soul. That is, whenever a person entered the domain of the Temple they discovered the magnificent holiness and purity of their own soul!

Therefore, HaShem revealed the holiness of the Temple to Yechezkel in order to convey to the People of Israel an understanding of their true holy self.

As a result, we will be sanctified, uplifted, and inspired to come close to HaShem and follow the wise and holy ways of the Torah in peace and joy. [Based on Mishneh L'Rebbe Aaron Cutler]

TODAY: Envision being transported into the Temple and perceiving HaShem's holy light of goodness. © 2008 Rabbi Z. Miller & The Salant Foundation

RABBI ARI KAHN

MiOray HaAish

This week's Torah portion opens with a different type of dialogue than we have grown accustomed to: 'And you shall command the Children of Israel that they bring to you pure olive oil, beaten for light (fuel), to burn continuously.' [Exodus 27:20]

Instead of the familiar "and G-d spoke to Moses, saying..." the Torah simply states "and you..." The classical commentaries have all but ignored this

idiosyncrasy, but the Zohar [in the Midrash Ne'elam] notes the different language employed and provides a theological rationale.

After the sin of the golden calf, G-d offered to make Moses into his own nation. 'And now permit me to allow my anger to burn against them, and I will consume them, and I will make you (Moses) into a great nation.' [Exodus 32:10]

But Moses rejected this offer. Not only that, he was willing to sacrifice all in his valiant attempt to save his people: 'And now, if You would forgive their sin; and if not, erase me from the book which you have written.' [Exodus 32:32]

The Zohar, looking at these verses, writes: "G-d overlooked Moses' offer (to be erased from the book). Nonetheless Moses was removed from one section of the Torah, the commandments regarding the Mishkan. Which section is this? V'atah T'tzaveh, which should have contained Moses' name in each and every word, and in each and every commandment. But his name was taken out of the entire section, which has no mention of him. This is an example of the curse of a sage (being fulfilled) even when it is conditional." [Midrash Ne'elam Shiur haShirim Maamar 4]

The teaching of the Zohar is that G-d took Moses up on his "offer" to be taken out of the book, albeit only partially. According to this approach, it would seem that our Torah portion should follow the golden calf episode chronologically, but in the Torah it precedes it. The other possibility would be that Moses' name did appear in this Torah portion and was later removed as per his request. But now we ask: Why is it specifically from this Torah portion that Moses' name is removed?

The main topic of this Torah portion is the selection of Aaron and his family as the Kohanim, the priestly caste. This choice is neither justified nor explained; the Torah merely states as fact that Aaron has been chosen to be the High Priest.

Once again we are returned to the question of chronology: Does this section follow the episode of the golden calf or precede it? If the latter is the case, why would Aaron, who sinned in the golden calf episode, be rewarded with this most exalted appointment? Not only that, why should he have this entire section of the Torah devoted to him and his sons, while Moses, who desperately tried to save his people, has his name removed from the same section?

We must also ask: Why was Aaron chosen to be High Priest and not Moses? Why was Aaron chosen to bring forgiveness to the people in the role of High Priest? Could it be that Moses was eliminated by some other factor, such as his speech deficiency for example?

The answer to the last question is no. The Maharal explains that speech is a physical act which distinguishes the human race. [Gevurot Hashem, p.

112] Moses' inability to speak was not due to a limitation, but rather to an excess or abundance-Moses was somehow more than a regular person.

The Talmud and Midrash explain Moses' preparation to ascend Mount Sinai as six days in which the food was purged from his body until Moses became "like one of the angels of heaven." [Avot D'rabi Natan, Ch. 1] In other words, Moses existed on a different plane, not limited by the physical in the same way. Therefore he did not need to have that indicator of physical existence that defines most human beings. If his speech was not the reason, perhaps there was something about the duties of the High Priest that caused Moses to be eliminated as a candidate?

One of the duties of the High Priest described in this week's Torah portion is the burning of incense called k'toret. The Talmud teaches that the purpose of the k'toret was to atone for the sin of slander and gossip (lashon hara): "It was taught in the school of Rabbi Yishmael: For what (sin) does the k'toret bring atonement? Lashon Hara. Let something performed in secret atone for something done in secret." [Yoma 44a]

We now can understand why Moses was not chosen for this task. Moses transcended speech.

Furthermore, the Maharal explains how on Yom Kippur a special k'toret of the finest materials was offered. This fine k'toret was parallel to the sin of avak lashon hara literally, "dust of bad speech," a prohibition which virtually all the people were guilty of, except Moses. On Yom Kippur we do not eat or drink, just like angels-in this we endeavor to be like Moses. But Moses was already on this level-he transcended ordinary man who must strive to get there. He did not require this process of spiritual elevation, but Aaron did.

While we are beginning to see why Moses may not have been the best candidate for the priesthood, we still are puzzled as to the choice of Aaron. After Aaron participated in the sin of the golden calf, why did not G-d erase him from this book?

Aaron's selection is interwoven with his behavior during the golden calf episode. According to the Sages, after Aaron witnessed the murder of Hur, he quickly decided that it would be preferable for him to help with the golden calf and sin. Otherwise, the entire people would become guilty of both killing him and subsequently worshipping the calf, as they surely would have done had he refused. [Talmud Sanhedrin 7b]

Aaron decided that it would be far better for the Jewish people if he alone bore the guilt. Aaron was willing to sacrifice everything for his people, both in this world and the next. The only problem with this tremendous act of heroism and self-sacrifice was that idolatry was involved, good intentions notwithstanding.

These intentions had to be re-channeled. Aaron needed to express his great love of Israel and G-d in Divine service within the Temple. Rav Tzaddok Hakohen from Lublin explained that Aharon became

Kohen Gadol, not despite the golden calf, rather because of it! [See Takanat Hashavim, p. 20] This is an application of the Talmudic principle that repentance motivated by love of G-d will turn a sin into a meritorious deed. And this, at last, is the reason why this whole Torah portion is devoted to Aaron and not Moses. Moses was beyond the role of kohen. He had become one with Torah. In the words of the Zohar, surely every word and every command should have been in Moses' name. But then Moses challenged G-d to erase him from the Torah.

According to the Zohar, Moses was prepared to sacrifice everything in order to save the people, just as Aaron was. The only difference was that Aaron sinned and therefore needed forgiveness. Moses did not sin; therefore his soul had no need to be a part of this Torah portion. In other words, Moses simply transcended the events of this Torah portion. By virtue of his self-sacrifice, Moses needed no atonement. He was already angelic—he had become one with Torah, and one with G-d.

Perhaps the command of lighting of the oil lamps should have been directed toward Moses. This symbol of the light of Torah seems to fit into Moses' realm. Yet in his place stands Aaron and his children. They will be responsible for all aspects of Temple service for millennia. They will light the lamps, which will shine brightly over the generations, testimony to the sacrifice of Aaron who placed the people before himself, motivated by love of G-d and nation. © 2008 Rabbi A. Kahn and aish.com

RABBI DOVID SIEGEL

Haftorah

This week's haftorah shares with us an important perspective regarding our long dark exile and the brilliant light awaiting us at the end of it. The haftorah begins in the midst of an elaborate prophetic vision that the prophet Yechezkel was privileged to view. In the previous three chapters Hashem showed the prophet the detailed blueprints of the future and final magnificent Bais Hamikdash. In our haftorah Hashem instructed Yechezkel to share his vision with the Jewish people. Hashem said, "Tell the House of Israel the vision of the Bais Hamikdash in order that they should be embarrassed from their sins when they measure the completed structure." (43:10) Yechezkel was commanded to remind the Jewish people about their wrongdoings which ultimately led to the destruction of the previous Bais Hamikdash. They were presently in the midst of the Babylonian exile and the sight of the Bais Hamikdash was intended to remind them of all their previous faults. They could easily realize that the Bais Hamikdash would have been theirs if not for their previous sinful ways. Hashem continued, "And if they are embarrassed for all of their wrongdoings then show

them the form of the Bais Hamikdash, its specific rooms, entrances and exits.... and write this before them and they should retain its entire image and all its specifications and they will construct them." The Radak explains that the prophet Yechezkel was given specific instructions to reveal these detailed plans only after the Jewish people sensed embarrassment. Only after regretting their sinful ways which caused the destruction the first Temple would the Jews be privileged to observe the vision of the third Bais Hamikdash. Apparently the reason for this was because this edifice would be an everlasting one and could only be constructed after the world was free of sin. Therefore, even beholding the sight of the third Bais Hamikdash required special merit and only those who had forsaken their sinful ways could be privileged to view it.

But in truth, the timing of this prophecy requires serious reflection. The Scriptures reveals earlier (see 40:1) that this prophecy came to Yechezkel fourteen years into the Babylonian exile long before the second Temple was even in sight. It is therefore quite shocking for us to discover here a prophecy about the third Bais Hamikdash, rather than the second. The wounds of the first Temple's destruction were not healed and Hashem was already revealing the plans for the third Temple. Wouldn't it have been more timely and appropriate to share with the Jewish people visions of the second Temple rather than the third?!

The lesson which can be gleaned from this is a striking perspective about Hashem's mercy and kindness. Radak explains the above passages in the following manner. The Jewish people were being presented a challenge and at the same time an extraordinary opportunity. Hashem revealed to them that they could be granted the personal privilege of erecting the third and final Bais Hamikdash. If they repented and contemplated their final redemption they could be ultimately involved in every one of its aspects. Although the Jewish people were presently in exile they were shown then a glimpse of the perfect world, the one after the revival of the deceased. They were informed that it was within their ability to merit their personal return in that final era and to actually be personally involved in the construction of the third Bais Hamikdash.

Yechezkel told them to focus on every detail of the future Bais Hamikdash and commit it to memory. If they believed in and aspired to being present during that glorious era they would merit it. And if they concentrated now on the details of the construction of the Bais Hamikdash and their participation therein they would actually merit it then. The Radak quotes as his source, the famous principle of Chazal, "Whoever believes in the advent of Mashiach will merit the redemption." Radak explains that in this same vein Hashem gave the Jewish people, then in exile, the

opportunity of constructing the third Bais Hamikdash. They were informed that if they believed in it and in their participation therein they would merit it.

With the above in mind we now understand and appreciate the timely message of Hashem regarding redemption. This special revelation at its particular moment was intended to be an unbelievable comforting thought to the Jewish people. At that time they viewed themselves as rejected by Hashem and couldn't envision a glorious era awaiting themselves. They felt lost and had forfeited their cherished relationship with Hashem. Suddenly during their moments of despair Hashem revealed to them His boundless love. Hashem showed them that during those very same moments, He was focusing on their most glorious era, the era of Mashiach. He reminded them not to despair because their trying predicament was but a fleeting moment on the horizon of eternity. Hashem therefore showed them a glimpse of eternity and their personal involvement in it. He invited them to rise above their present predicament and focus on their bright future. If they could display sincere faith in Hashem they would, in fact, rebuild the final Bais Hamikdash.

Hashem's love for the Jewish people is eternal and even during our most trying times Hashem is focusing on this eternity. The Jewish people were therefore given here the fullest opportunity to repent. If they could regret their past and forsake their sinful ways eternity would be theirs. Now in the midst of their exile they could actually prepare for the construction of the final Bais Hamikdash and establish themselves as the builders of eternity. Hashem's love transcends all borders, time included, and is always focused on the eternal redemption of His people. We should learn from this never to despair and to realize that there is always a glorious moment awaiting us soon. © 2005 Rabbi D. Siegel & Project Genesis, Inc.

RABBI MORDECHAI KAMENETZKY

Bell Bottoms

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

This week the Torah tells us that even the High Priest—the holiest of mortals—as he converges on the Kodesh HaKodoshim—the holiest of places -- in the quest to perform the most spiritual of Judaic rites—must remember one simple thing. It is the same thing that the poor farmer must remember before trudging into his home: basic courtesy. Don't forget to knock. And the foremost place to teach us that lesson is the Holy of Holies. © 1996 Rabbi M. Kamenetzky and Project Genesis, Inc.