

What



Ever

d torah newsletta dat, lk, spkz lk a teen!

THE BOLOGNAVA REBBE

Halacha MiDisney

While Disney World does maintain daily minyanim throughout the park, many poskim have declared it forbidden to pray with them. They proclaim that mice cannot serve as shlichei tzibbur, and it is well known that this practice is common at Disney synagogues. However, the chancellor of Disney World has ruled that mice are acceptable as agents, as long as they have taken upon themselves the obligations of daily tfilah. Mishlei states that there are no atheists in mouseholes.

Furthermore, on Shabbat, dwarves receive all seven aliyot. Dwarves reading from the Torah damages k'vod hatzibbur, even if all of the women are asleep (or rather, even if they appear to be dead, after swallowing a restrictive psak). Incidentally, Sleepy maintains that he is a kohen, based on family tradition passed from father to son since the days of Aharon. Other dwarves recall that Sleepy is a descendant of Honi M'agel, and hence cannot be a kohen—but this is circular reasoning.

However, even those who permit aliyot for dwarves forbid them to serve as shlichei tzibbur. Apparently, dwarves are incapable of reciting the prayers properly, as they always whistle through their avodah—even Grumpy! Someone who hears this whistling and responds "Amen" is not yotze.

Disney synagogues also count mermaids in a minyan, in an obvious end-run around the age-old regulations to keep women barefoot. Since mermaids have no feet, they (technically) cannot stand for the Amidah, even though they remain shoeless. Yesh raglayim ladavar.

Heaping scandal upon scandal, mermaids, crickets, mice and ducks all sit on the same side of the mechitzah with wooden boys—clearly violating the prohibition against kilayim.

Sometimes after a tough day working the crowds through a steamy Florida afternoon, many of the regulars prefer to daven at home over a stiff drink. To ensure a minyan for Minchah, the Disney rabbis even count singing

tableware and kitchen implements. Although this pushes the halachic envelope, each piece can cite a klal [general principle] whereby it must be included in the minyan:

The spoon counsels us "dan chaf b'zchut" [judge a spoon with merit].

The knife cites "sakin b'adam shelo b'fanav" [a knife (serves) in (stead of) a person when (a person is) not present].

The candlesticks remind us that "ner mitzvah, v'Torah or" [a candle (can do any) mitzvah, but the Torah is only leather].

The goblet intones "kos yayin malei k'virkat Adoshem" [a full cup of wine is equivalent to blessing Hashem].

The frying pan sings "laKel yeratzu k'minchah al machavat" [to Hashem it is as pleasing as Minchah davened by a pan].

The teacup refrains "sefel tov l'chol oseihem" [a cup is as good as anyone (who) does (it for) them].

The wine bottle chides "al tistikkel b'kankan, elah b'ma sheyesh bo" [don't look at the bottle, rather see what's inside it].

The clock chimes in "tfilah mitzvah shehazman grama" [prayer is a mitzvah that time begins].

Several others declare "va'ani tefilati" [I am my prayer].

Still others quote R' Hillel: "b'makom she'ayn anashim hishtadel lihiyot ish" [In a place where there aren't (enough) men, strive to be a man].

Several of the most stringent authorities complain that Disney World is open on Shabbat, so all Disney characters who are union members are prohibited from serving in public synagogue roles because they are mechalelei Shabbat b'fantasia. Lenient sources justify their work as melachah she-aynah tzricha l'Goofy. R' Bambi says "hakol kasher l'tzvi" [anything to make a buck].

This Purim Torah is codified in the sefer Iyunai Achbarim v'Anashim [Of Mice and Men] of R' Don Yitzchak Abarvazel. R' Abarvazel was an ancestor of the Katchke Rebbe. To properly grasp the full depth of his insights, one must be at least 40 years old and have raised children—and

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

2

WHATEVER IS, LIKE, A PURIM PUBLICATION, ER, NEWSLETTER – MY BAD - YA KNOW? I MEAN IT'S LIKE ONE OF THOSE THINGYS WHERE, LIKE, PEOPLE WOULD READ AND STUFF. BUT ANYWAYS, IT'S, LIKE, SOMETHING EVEN A TEEN CAN, LIKE, UNDERSTAND.



So, lk, Y? n d wrld w%d NE1, lk, actuIy try 2 put oI a torah newsletta n, lk, txt lang? lve nt a clue. It jst seemD d logical thng 2 do @ d tym. mayB

I'm jst tryiN 2 proove 2 my kdz dat I cn undRst& deez wacko txt fings dey do. Of corZ, dey prolly knw btr. cn u ppl actuIy undRst& w@ I'm ritN hre? cn u transl8 w@ I'm sAyn N2 norml en? f u cn undRst& dis, ur prolly undR 30! ROFL ot loud!

(that wz an {-) old-guy laugh!). hpE Purim 2 evry1!
(Can't understand this? See the translation on page 8!)

even then, it is advantageous to first fulfill the mitzvah of ad lo yada yada yada.

A man in North Carolina had a flat tire, pulled off on the side of the road, and proceeded to put a bouquet of flowers in front of the car and one behind it. Then he got back in the car to wait. A passerby studied the scene as he drove by and was so curious he turned around and went back. He asked the fellow what the problem was. The man replied, 'I have a flat tire.'

The passerby asked, 'But what's with the flowers?' The man responded, 'When you break down they tell you to put flares in the front and flares in the back. Hey, it don't make no sense to me neither.'

RABBI DOV KRAMER

Taking a Closer Look

On Purim we celebrate G-d saving us from Haman and his decree "to destroy, to kill and to wipe out all of the Jews" (Esther 3:13). The Vilna Gaon (Likutay Ha-Gera, quoted by Gevuros Yitzchok 15) says there's an additional aspect to our celebration, that of our receiving the Torah. Although Moshe broke the first set of Luchos on the 17th of Tamuz when he saw the golden calf, after 40 days of Moshe beseeching G-d to forgive us (and working on us to be worthy of being forgiven), G-d told Moshe to carve

out a new set of stone tablets, upon which He would write the "Ten Commandments," indicating that the covenant that the nation had broken by worshipping the golden calf was being restored. Moshe went back up on Mt. Sinai for another 40 days, and came back down on the 10th of Tishray with the knowledge of how to achieve forgiveness (the "13 attributes"), the commandment to build the Mishkan (with all of its details), and the second set of Luchos. From then on, the 10th of Tishray became the "Day of Atonement, "Yom Kippur." The Vilna Gaon says that we should have a "seudah," a festive meal, every year on that date to celebrate our receiving the second set of Luchos, but because it is a day of fasting and prayer, this "seudah" is done on Purim instead, as Purim is also a day that was a sort of "kabbalas haTorah," since we accepted upon ourselves the additional mitzvos of Purim (Esther 9:27), and, by extension, the entire Torah (see Shevuos 39a and Shabbos 88a).

Even though we don't eat on Yom Kippur, we do have a festive Yom Tov type of meal right before Yom Kippur starts, and some have the minhag to have a "Seudas Yom Tov" when they break the fast to compensate for the "Seudas Yom Tov" that couldn't happen during the day. Why couldn't we include the celebration of getting the second Luchos then? Why do we include it 5 months later with our Purim celebration rather than only a few hours later, when we could include celebrating our personal forgiveness on that day with the communal experience of being forgiven for the golden calf and being given the second Luchos? What did they do for hundreds of years before the Purim miracle? If they celebrated on a different day, why don't we also celebrate on that day? And if they didn't celebrate receiving the second Luchos until they were saved from Haman, why not?

Chazal tell us (in several places) that when the Torah tells us that we "stood under the mountain" (Shemos 19:17), it doesn't just mean that we stood at the foot of Mt. Sinai, but that G-d held Mt. Sinai over our heads (so that we were actually underneath it) and threatened us with death if we didn't accept the Torah. In the Talmud (Shabbos 88a), Rav Acha bar Yaakov says that this undermines the whole notion of our "accepting the Torah" willingly, as it was forced upon us, to which Rava responds that after the miracle of Purim, we reaccepted the Torah, this time willingly. If the Torah was originally forced upon us, we can easily understand why they never "celebrated" getting it until after the Purim story happened, and why that was the day chosen to celebrate it. After appreciating what G-d did for us in Persia, we retroactively appreciated that He gave us the Luchos. Since this retroactive appreciation happened on Purim, this is when we celebrate receiving the second set of Luchos.

Nevertheless, if we weren't so thrilled with having to accept the Torah, after the golden calf we should have felt relief, not remorse. Yet, the

nation mourned upon hearing that they had broken the covenant, and were overjoyed that they were given a second chance, a joy that manifested itself in the zealousness with which the materials were donated for the Mishkan. How can it be suggested that they didn't want to celebrate receiving the second Luchos until centuries later if they showed how glad they were to receive them only days later?

The Meshech Chochmoh is among the commentators that explain the Talmud in a non-literal manner. After seeing the 10 plagues, being taken out of Egypt, experiencing the splitting of the sea, and having G-d provide their daily bread (the man) and water, the nation didn't really have a choice but to accept G-d's proposal of the Torah. G-d's presence was so obvious that they couldn't say "no." This can be contrasted with the miracle of Purim, which happened "behind the scenes," through many steps that could all be explained naturally. When we put all the pieces together we can see how it was G-d's hand that moved all the pieces into place, but His name isn't even mentioned in the Megilah. There was "hester panim," with G-d's face being hidden from those who didn't look for Him.

When we reaccepted the Torah even when G-d was hidden from us, there was an added layer of appreciation. We weren't keeping the Torah because we "had to," we were also keeping it because we want to, because we want to maintain our relationship with Him. On Yom Kippur we celebrate the gift of teshuva (returning), the ability to recover from our mistakes, and it was this "gift" that led to the eagerness to donate to the Mishkan. We "returned" to the covenant we had agreed to before the golden calf, the one we knew we had to accept. On Purim, though, we realized how beneficial it is to have this special relationship with G-d, and so we celebrate not just the miracle of Purim, but also receiving the second Luchos, which symbolize our covenant with Him. © 2010 Rabbi D. Kramer

Sadly, no one is safe from receiving the dreaded pink slip. Recently, a job application came across my desk at the federal personnel office in Washington, D.C. It was written on a standard form, which includes the question "Why did you leave your previous employment?" The applicant, a former U.S. Congressman, responded, "The express wish of 116,000 voters."

RABBI SHLOMO RISKIN

Shabbat Shalom

The harsh winds of anti-Semitism are once again threatening our people with an increasing number of attacks on Jews around the world. But is it possible that even anti-Semitism has a redeeming quality? Let us look to the Purim story for the answer.

Purim is a most joyous, but rather anomalous festival. It captures the universal theme of good triumphing over evil, but for this one day a year, our relatively strict Jewish way of life is replaced with a carnival - like

atmosphere of parades, drinking and masks. The Talmud even commands us "to get so drunk that we cannot tell the difference between cursing Haman and blessing Mordechai" (B.T. Megilla 7B).

In order to understand the meaning of this strange directive, as well as to answer our opening question, it is necessary to explore the identity of Purim's real hero. Is it the great Jewish beauty who wins the King's heart and becomes the voice of the Jews as she pleads before the one man who has the power to save or destroy her people?

Or is the hero the king himself who, despite being surrounded by evil men - most notably Haman - is able to rise above the prejudices towards Jews, who are scattered and dispersed across the land, keeping their own laws? When Ahashverosh permits the Jews to defend themselves against their attackers, he demonstrates the kind of wise sovereignty select monarchs have had toward their Jewish subjects throughout the ages.

Or is Mordechai the hero? This humble, saintly, self-effacing man whom Divine Providence put in the right place at the right time, allowing him to overhear the mutinous plot of two of Ahashverosh's ministers, thereby saving the king's life? Or perhaps he's the hero because he never forgets he is a Jew, refusing to bow down to Haman no matter what the consequences are.

To better understand who the real hero might be, we should pay close attention to the Talmudic dictum that on Purim, we must drink until we cannot tell the difference between cursing Haman and blessing Mordechai.

Shushan, the capital of Ahashverosh's kingdom, may very well have been like New York City or any other great melting pot. The historical period of the Book of Esther is dated between 536 and 516 BCE, the period after Cyrus permitted the Judeans to return to Israel, but before the Second Temple was built. Most of the Jews chose to remain in Persia, where they would not have to face the financial and military insecurity awaiting those who headed for Judea. Indeed, the Scroll of Esther may very well be the first work to describe what happens to a Jewish community which chooses to remain in the Diaspora; a situation which parallels our own Diaspora communities today, when Jews have the possibility of returning to Israel but most do not take advantage of the opportunity.

The Jews were the cream of Shushan society with PJY's (Persian Jewish Yuppies) showing up everywhere. Indeed, the Scroll of Esther opens with the king's invitation to attend the great feast in his palace - with no mention of kosher caterers. Even intermarriage seems so deeply entrenched that when the niece of the leading religious Jew of the city marries the king, the text only says: "...she was taken" (Esther 2:8). There is no indication she put up a fight or at least shaved her head in an attempt to make herself ugly during the year of primping in the king's harem. She does not reveal her Jewish lineage and the Ibn Ezra mentions a commentary

(which he rejects) indicating that she hides her identity in order to enhance her chances to be chosen queen.

Perhaps G-d's name does not appear because in Shushan these Jews had fallen prey to assimilation and had made no room for Him in their lives. Be that as it may, this story teaches us that the Ruler of the Universe had other plans for His people. In effect, G-d was saying: "Either you will remember that you're Jews on your own, or I'll have to remind you." And so Haman arises to persecute the Jews.

The paradigm for this historical rule of Divine Providence is to be found in the beginning of the Book of Exodus, when the Bible describes the initially prospering descendants of Jacob's family in Egypt: "...And the children of Israel were fruitful and swarmed (va'yishratsu), multiplied and waxed exceedingly mighty and the land was filled with them" (Exodus 1:7). The Midrash picks up on the verb "to swarm," which includes the root noun sherez (an impure reptile), and the fact that the Jewish people filled the land. The Bible is apparently suggesting that the Hebrews were saturating the cultural landscape of Egypt, swarming over their places of entertainment in order to indulge in every forbidden practice (Midrash Tanchuma Yashan Shemot 6).

And then what happens? "There arose a new king over Egypt" (Exodus 1:8). The party is over. Edicts begin, Jews are forbidden to socialize with Egyptians, death is in the air and pogroms occur. Male children are cast into the Nile to drown, or conscripted into the army at the age of eight. In whatever the fashion, when Jews in the Diaspora forget that they are Jews, a Gentile will remind them. His name may be Pharaoh, or Haman, or Stalin, or Hitler. And the Talmud notes that sometimes these evil anti-Semites are more effective than all the prophets that G-d sends to remind us of our Jewish identity.

Let us now return to the Esther Scroll. Ahashverosh has arbitrarily placed total power in the hands of a new Grand Vizier - Haman - who loses no time in choosing a day when the Jews of Persia may be murdered and their homes looted. Mordechai appears before the palace gates dressed in sackcloth and ashes in a high-profile demonstration on behalf of his people. He can no longer remain silent - and bids Esther (whose Persian name, which comes from the G-ddess Astarte, can also mean "hidden") to come "out of the closet" to plead for her people before the King. At that moment, placing her life on the line for her nation, Esther very possibly becomes the first ba'alat teshuva. She succeeds in her mission, the Jews in Persia are granted the right to defend themselves, and Haman is hanged. The son she bears with Ahashverosh, Darius, is the king who allows the Jews in Judea to complete their Second Temple.

On Purim, we are commanded to drink. The reason is beginning to come clear. Without Haman, the tide of assimilation would have led to Jewish oblivion. Thus, in a rather convoluted and twisted way, we owe our continued existence to this classic anti-Semite. Yes, it is natural to praise Mordechai, but had it not been for Haman, neither he nor Esther would have stepped up to the plate and emerged as Jewish leaders. And we need to drink in order to blot out the difference between the Jewish patriot and the Gentile anti-Semite who activated the Jewish patriot. We need the external stimulus of wine in order to celebrate a Jewish victory which owes its genesis to anti-Semitism! And if Jews ever think that the Diaspora is more secure than our homeland Israel, let the Scroll of Esther remind them that Diaspora assimilation and anti-Semitism are the greatest dangers of all.

© 2010 Ohr Torah Institutions & Rabbi S. Riskin

Early in my career as a judge, I conducted hearings for those involuntarily committed to our state psychiatric hospital. On my first day, I asked a man at the door of the hospital, "Can you tell me where the courtroom is?"

"Why?" he asked.

"I'm the judge."

*Pointing to the building, he whispered,
"Don't tell them that. They'll never let you out."*

RABBI BEREL WEIN

Wein Online

The purity of oil for the lamps of the menorah/candelabra is emphasized in this week's parsha's opening verse. It seems clear that the Torah requires the purest of olive oil for the fuel to light the menorah/candelabra not only for the physical and practical reason that the flame should not flicker and be weak but also for symbolic and moral reasons.

The light of Torah is dependent upon the moral purity of its source. Just as dregs and pulp contaminate the oil and prevent a steady light from emerging, so, too, grave imperfections of character and behavior weaken the teachings of Torah to students and to the masses of Israel. Recent events here in Israeli religious and secular society only serve to reinforce this standard.

The fuel for the light of Torah must also possess purity within it. King Solomon stated that "dead flies can render the finest oil repugnant." The finest oil is present but it is the dead fly in the ointment that renders the entire mixture to be repugnant.

Unfortunately and tragically there is apparently no escape from this observation about life and human behavior and attitudes. Therefore the Torah places such great emphasis upon the fuel for the lights of the

menorah/candelabra. For if the fuel is contaminated and dirtied then the menorah/candelabra is itself demeaned and cheapened in the eyes of the public and its light dimmed and darkened. The Torah makes this point directly and boldly in stating its strict requirements for the olive oil that fuels the menorah/candelabra. Its lesson should not be lost on us.

Another important lesson that emerges from this week's parsha emanates from the absence of the name of Moshe in the parsha. The Torah, its truths and values, its eternity and validity, is never dependent upon one person no matter how great that person may be perceived to be. The Torah emphasizes the mortality of Moshe as well as his human ability to fall below the heavenly standard that was set for him.

The Torah warns us not to deem humans as being perfect or infallible. The Psalmist warns us not to place our trust in humans, even great humans, but rather only in G-d and His Torah. The tendency to deify humans, even if they be scholars, leaders or holy people, is a dangerous one. It leads to the dreaded "cult of the personality" that has claimed so many victims throughout the past and modern history of the Jewish people and the world generally.

Even though the Torah is always identified with Moshe, this week's parsha shows us that the Torah exists independent of Moshe. His name need not appear for the Torah validates itself even without him. The modern tendency in the religious world to worship and idolize people is therefore a dangerous one. All humans are subject to sin and failure, temper and error. Worship in the Torah is reserved for only G-d Himself. It often takes bitter and sad occurrences to remind us of this truth. ©2010 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.

Did you hear about the banker who was recently arrested for embezzling \$100,000 to pay for his daughter's college education?

As the policeman, who also had a daughter in college, was leading him away in handcuffs, he said to the banker, "I have just one question for you.

Where were you going to get the rest of the money?"

YESHIVAT HAR ETZION

Virtual Beit Medrash

STUDENT SUMMARIES OF SICHOT OF THE ROSHEI YESHIVA
HARAV BARUCH GIGI SHLIT"A

Translated by Kaeren Fish

The commentators are divided over the question of when it was that Bnei Yisrael were commanded to build the Mishkan. Some maintain that the parshiot of Sefer Shemot recorded in chronological order, such

that the command precedes the sin of the golden calf. Others believe that the command was given after and in response to the sin, after it was clear that for Bnei Yisrael- at least at that time-G-d's transcendental reality in the world was not sufficient; they could not maintain a complete physical severance from G-d and needed some tangible manifestation of His Presence in their midst.

Rashi's well-known position (31:18) is that "The Torah does not follow chronological order. The sin of the golden calf preceded by far the command to fashion the Mishkan."

Ramban (33:7) disagrees: "Rashi wrote, 'and the Torah does not follow chronological order.' But this does not seem correct to me, for what reason is there to mention this [i.e., the command to build the Mishkan] here, in the middle of the narrative [if it did not actually take place at this point]?"

Ramban's position, here as elsewhere, is that the order of the Torah does follow the chronology of the events that it records. His approach in our context implies that the construction of the Mishkan is a fundamental, essential component in the life of the nation, rather than just an act of repair following the sin of the golden calf-since, in his view, the construction of the Mishkan had already been commanded before that incident occurred.

In his introduction to Sefer Shemot, Ramban develops this idea:

"When they left Egypt, even though they had emerged from the house of slavery still they were considered exiles, for they were in a land that was not their own, wandering about in the wilderness. And when they came to Mount Sinai and built the Mishkan, and the Holy One, blessed be He, restored His Presence to their midst, they regained the level of their forefathers, who had enjoyed G-d's Presence over their tents, and they themselves became His chariot, [as it were], and then they were considered truly redeemed. And therefore this Book (Shemot) ends with the completion of the matter of the Mishkan and of G-d's glory filling it perpetually."

Thus, the redemption of Am Yisrael did not end with the Exodus from Egypt, nor even with the giving of the Torah. Redemption means a life lived before G-d, and on the national level-Am Yisrael representing a "chariot for the Divine Presence." A person who lives a full and interesting life, but bereft of any consciousness of standing before G-d, is not redeemed. Thus, the Mishkan is an essential part of the national life of Am Yisrael, granting the nation the title of "chariot for the Divine Presence."

The presence of the Mishkan is a continuation of the experience of Sinai, and a foundation for G-d's perpetual presence in the midst of the encampment, creating a life of holiness. Without the Mishkan, Am Yisrael is not living that life of holiness before G-d.

"Then they regained the level of their forefathers'-which forefathers? Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaakov, who 'hosted' G-d in their tents, as it were,

as a matter of course: 'And G-d appeared to him at Alonei Mamrei while he sat at the entrance to his tent in the heat of the day' (Bereishit 18:1)!

G-d cannot be revealed to every individual in the nation of Israel; hence He chose to let His Presence rest in one place-the Mishkan-in order to offer every individual member of the nation the possibility of a redeemed and holy life with an awareness of G-d's Presence in their midst:

"Let them make Me a Mishkan, that I may dwell in their midst" (25:8).

The graveside service just barely finished, when there was massive clap of thunder, followed by a tremendous bolt of lightning, accompanied by even more thunder rumbling in the distance.

The little old man looked at the pastor and calmly said, 'Well, she's there.'

RABBI AVI WEISS

Shabbat Forshpeis

In both the Purim and Joseph stories, seemingly meaningless sub plots eventually turn into major focal points. In the Purim story, Mordechai exposes the plot to kill King Ahashverosh. The plotters are hanged and Mordechai's good deed is recorded in the Book of Chronicles. (Esther 2:21-23)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Some people remember out of altruism, others from selfishness. The butler and Ahashverosh are examples of the latter type-they remember only when it suits their fancy. Our challenge is to remember the actions of others and keep them in our consciousness at all times, even at the times when we have little to gain. We must remember not because it suits us, but we must do so because it's simply the right thing to do. © 2010 Hebrew Institute of Riverdale & CJC-AMCHA

Never lie to an x-ray technician. They can see right through you. ☺

RABBI JONATHAN SACKS

Covenant & Conversation

As I have mentioned before in these studies, Tetzaveh is the only sedra from the beginning of Exodus to the end of Deuteronomy, that does not contain the word "Moses". For once Moses, the hero, the leader, the liberator, the lawgiver, is offstage. Instead our focus is on his elder brother Aaron who, elsewhere, is often in the background. Indeed virtually the whole sedra is devoted to the role Moses did not occupy, except briefly that of priest in general, high priest in particular.

Why so? Is there any larger significance to the absence of Moses from this passage? The commentators offered many suggestions. One of two offered by R. Jacob ben Asher (c1270-1340, author of the code known as the Tur), relates this week's sedra to an event at the beginning of Moses' leadership: his encounter with G-d at the burning bush (Ex. 3-4). Moses repeatedly expressed reluctance to undertake the mission of leading the people out of Egypt. Finally we read: "But Moses said, 'O Lord, please send someone else to do it.' Then the Lord's anger burned against Moses and he said, 'What about your brother, Aaron the Levite? I know he can speak well. He is already on his way to meet you, and his heart will be glad when he sees you. You shall speak to him and put words in his mouth; I will help both of you speak and will teach you what to do.'" (Ex. 4:13-15)

The sages say that it was this hesitation on the part of Moses that caused part of his role-as potential high priest-to be taken from him and

given to his brother. R. Jacob ben Asher concludes that Moses' name is missing from Tetzaveh "to spare him distress" on seeing Aaron acquire the insignia of priesthood that might have been Moses' own.

Without negating this or other explanations, there may be a more fundamental message. As I have mentioned before, one of the recurring themes of Genesis is sibling rivalry, hostility between brothers. This story is told, at ever-increasing length, four times: between Cain and Abel, Isaac and Ishmael, Jacob and Esau, and Joseph and his brothers.

There is an identifiable pattern to this set of narratives, best seen in the way each ends. The story of Cain and Abel ends with murder, fratricide. Isaac and Ishmael—though they grow up apart—are seen together at Abraham's funeral. Evidently there had been a reconciliation, though this is told between the lines (and spelled out in midrash), not directly in the text. Jacob and Esau meet, embrace and go their separate ways. Joseph and his brothers are reconciled and live together in peace, Joseph providing them with food, land, and protection. Genesis is telling us a story of great consequence. Fraternity—one of the key words of the French revolution—is not simple or straightforward. It is often fraught with conflict and contention. Yet slowly, brothers can learn that there is another way. On this note Genesis ends.

But it is not the end of the story. There is a fifth chapter: the relationship between Moses and Aaron. Here, for the first time, there is no hint of sibling rivalry (some developed later—Bamidbar ch. 12 -- but was resolved by Moses' humility). The brothers work together from the very outset of the mission to lead the Israelites to freedom. They address the people together. They stand together when confronting Pharaoh. They perform signs and wonders together. They share leadership of the people in the wilderness together. For the first time, brothers function as a team, with different gifts, different talents, different roles, but without hostility, each complementing the other.

This is conveyed by the Torah in two striking phrases. The first is in the passage already cited above. G-d says to Moses: Aaron "is already on his way to meet you, and his heart will be glad when he sees you." How different this is from the tense encounters between brothers in Genesis. Aaron, we may have thought, might have many reasons not to rejoice on seeing Moses return. The brothers had not grown up together. Moses had been adopted by Pharaoh's daughter and raised in an Egyptian palace. Nor had they been together during the Israelites' sufferings. Moses, fearing for his life after his assault on an Egyptian taskmaster, had fled to Midian. Besides this, Moses was Aaron's younger brother, and it was he who was about to become leader of the people. Always in the past, when the younger had taken something the elder might have believed belonged naturally to

him, there was jealousy, animosity. Yet G-d assures Moses: "when Aaron sees you, he will rejoice". And so he did (Ex. 4:27).

The second intimation is contained in a strange text, tracing the descent of Moses and Aaron: "Amram married his father's sister Jochebed, who bore him Aaron and Moses. Amram lived 137 years... It was this same Aaron and Moses to whom the Lord said, 'Bring the Israelites out of Egypt by their divisions.' They were the ones who spoke to Pharaoh king of Egypt about bringing the Israelites out of Egypt. It was the same Moses and Aaron." (Ex. 6:20,26-27).

The repeated phrase, "It was this same", is emphatic even in translation. It is all the more so when we note two peculiarities of the text. The first is that the phrases, though at first they sound identical, in fact place the names of the brothers in a different order: the first phrase says "Aaron and Moses", the second, "Moses and Aaron". Even more striking is the grammatical oddity of the phrase. Both times, the third person singular is used. Literally, they read: "He was Aaron and Moses", "He was Moses and Aaron". The text should have said, "They"—all the more so since the pronoun "they" is used in the middle of the passage: "They were the ones who spoke to Pharaoh".

The unmistakable implication is that they were like a single individual. They were as one. There was no hierarchy between them: sometimes Aaron's name appears first, sometimes Moses'. On this there is a wonderful midrash, based on the verse in Psalms (85:11) "Loving-kindness and truth meet together; righteousness and peace kiss each other."

"Loving-kindness"-this refers to Aaron. 'Truth'-this refers to Moses. 'Righteousness'-this refers to Moses. 'Peace'-this refers to Aaron." (Shemot Rabbah 5:10)

The midrash brings prooftexts for each of these identifications, but we understand them immediately. Moses and Aaron were quite different in temperament and role. Moses was the man of truth, Aaron of peace. Without truth, there can be no vision to inspire a nation. But without internal peace, there is no nation to inspire. Aaron and Moses were both necessary. Their roles were in creative tension. Yet they worked side by side, each respecting the distinctive gift of the other. As the midrash goes on to say:

"And he kissed him' [the brothers kissed when they met] -- This means: each rejoiced at the other's greatness." (Shemot Rabbah ad loc)

A final midrash completes the picture by referring to this week's sedra and the vestments of the high priest, especially the breastplate with its Urim and Tumim: "'His heart will be glad when he sees you'-Let the heart that rejoiced in the greatness of his brother be vested with the Urim and Tumim." (Shemot Rabbah 3:17)

It was precisely the fact that Aaron did not envy his younger brother but instead rejoiced in his greatness that made him worthy to be High Priest. So it came to pass-measure for measure-that just as Aaron made space for his younger brother to lead, so the Torah makes space for Aaron to lead. That is why Aaron is the hero of Tetzaveh: for once, not overshadowed by Moses.

"Who is honoured?" asked ben Zoma (Avot 4:1). "One who honours others." Aaron honoured his younger brother. That is why Moses (not mentioned by name but by implication) is told in this week's sedra, "Make sacred garments for your brother Aaron, to give him honour and splendour" (Ex. 28:2). To this day a Cohen is honoured by being first to be called up to the Torah-the Torah that Aaron's younger brother Moses gave to the Jewish people.

The story of Aaron and Moses, the fifth chapter in the biblical story of brotherhood, is where, finally, fraternity reaches the heights. And that surely is the meaning of Psalm 133, with its explicit reference to Aaron and his sacred garments: "How good and pleasant it is when brothers live together in unity! It is like precious oil poured on the head, running down on the beard, running down on Aaron's beard, down upon the collar of his robes." It was thanks to Aaron, and the honour he showed Moses, that at last brothers learned to live together in unity. © 2010 Rabbi J. Sacks & torah.org

Atheists don't solve exponential equations because they don't believe in higher powers ☺

MEISH GOLDISH

The World-Famous Story of Purim

The story of Purim is an international tale. King Achashverosh was Finnish with his disobedient wife Vashti. "You Congo now!" he ordered her. After she had Ghana way, the king's messengers went Roman the land to find a new queen. And India end, the beautiful Esther won the crown.

Meanwhile, Mordechai sat outside the palace, where the Chile Haman would Czech up on him daily. "I Haiti you because you refuse to bow to me!" Haman scolded Mordechai.

"You very stubborn man. You Jews are such Bahamas! If you keep my words! I will have all your people killed! Just Kuwait and see, you Turkey!"

Mordechai went into mourning and tore his clothes- a custom known as Korea. He urged Esther to plead with the king. The Jews fasted for three

days and grew very Hungry. Esther approached the king and asked, 'Kenya Belize come to a banquet I've prepared for you and Haman?"

At the feast, she invited her guests to a second banquet to eat Samoa. The king asked, "Esther, why Jamaica big meal like this? Just tell me what you want. Unto half my United Kingdom will I give you."

Esther replied, "Spain full for me to say this, but Haman is Russian to kill my people." Haman's loud Wales could be heard as he carried Honduran this scene.

Haman cried bitterly. "Iraq my brains in an effort to destroy the Jews. But that sneaky Mordechai - Egypt me!"

Haman and his ten sons were hanged and went immediately to the Netherlands. And to Sweden the deal, the Jews were allowed their foes as well. "You lost your enemies and Uganda friend," the king smiled.

And that is why the Purim story Israeli a miracle. G-d decided to China light on His chosen people. So now, let's celebrate! Forget all your Syria's business and just Serb up some wine and Taiwan on! Happy Purim!!!

A blonde calls her boyfriend and says, 'Please come over here and help me. I have a killer jigsaw puzzle, and I can't figure out how to get started.'

Her boyfriend asks, 'What is it supposed to be when it's finished?'

The blonde says, 'According to the picture on the box, it's a rooster.'

Her boyfriend decides to go over and help with the puzzle...

She lets him in and shows him where she has the puzzle spread all over the table. He studies the pieces for a moment, then looks at the box, then turns to her and says, 'First of all, no matter what we do, we're not going to be able to assemble these pieces into anything resembling a rooster.'

He takes her hand and says, 'Second, I want you to relax.. Let's have a nice cup of tea, and then ..' he said with a deep sigh,

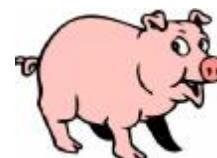
'Let's put all the Corn Flakes back in the box.'



(Here's the translation to the text language blurb in the box on page two. This is for anyone, like me, who is text language impaired!)

So, like, why in the world would anyone, like, actually try to put out a torah newsletter in, like, text language? I have not a clue. It just seemed the logical thing to do at the time. Maybe I'm just trying to prove to my kids that I can understand these wacko text things they do. Of course, they probably know better. Can you people actually understand what I'm writing here? Can you translate what I'm saying into normal English? If you can understand this, you're probably under 30!

HAHAHA! (that was an evil old-guy laugh!). Happy Purim to everyone!



"Hog"
Samayach!