

Taurus



Aish

This newsletter claims "We do kabanos right...and that's no Taurus!"

CHIEF RABBI LORD JONATHAN SACKS

Covenant & Conversation

Why is the Torah so specific and emphatic, in this week's parsha, about the clothes to be worn by the Cohen and the Cohen Gadol? "These are the vestments that they shall make: a breastplate, an ephod, a robe, a knitted tunic, a turban, and a sash. Make them as sacred vestments for Aaron and his sons so that they will be able to be priests to Me" (Exodus 28:4).

In general, Judaism is sceptical about appearances. Saul, Israel's first king, looked the part. He was "head and shoulders" taller than anyone else (1 Samuel 9:2). Yet though he was physical tall, he was morally small. He followed the people rather than leading them. When God told Samuel that He had rejected Saul, and that Samuel should anoint a son of Yishai as king, Samuel went to Yishai and saw that one of his sons, Eliav, looked the part. He thought he was the one God had chosen. God, however, tells him that he is mistaken: "But the Lord said to Samuel, 'Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. The Lord does not look at the things people look at. People look at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.'" (1 Sam. 16:7)

Appearances deceive. In fact, as I have mentioned before in these studies, the Hebrew word for garment, begged, comes from the same Hebrew word as "to betray"-as in the confession Ashamnu bagadnu, "We are guilty, we have betrayed." Jacob uses Esau's clothes to deceive. Joseph's brothers do likewise with his bloodstained cloak. There are six such examples in the book of Genesis alone. Why then did God command that the cohanim were to wear distinctive garments as part of their service in the tabernacle and later in the Temple?

The answer lies in the two-word phrase that appears twice in our parsha, defining what the priestly vestments were to represent: le-kavod ul-tifaret, "for dignity [or 'honour'] and beauty." These are unusual words in the Torah, at least in a human context. The word tiferet, "beauty" or "glory," appears only three times in the Torah, twice in our parsha (Ex. 28:2, 40) and

once, poetically and with a somewhat different sense, in Deuteronomy 26:19. The word kavod, "dignity" or honour," appears sixteen times, but in fourteen (2x7) of these cases the reference is to the glory of God. The twice they appear in our parsha are the only occasions in which kavod is applied to a human being. So what is happening here?

The answer is that they represent the aesthetic dimension. This does not always figure prominently in Judaism. It is something we naturally connect with cultures a world apart from the Torah. The great empires-Mesopotamia, Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Greece and Rome-built monumental palaces and temples. The royal courts were marked by magnificent robes, cloaks, crowns and regalia, each rank with its own uniform and finery.

Judaism by contrast often seems almost puritanical in its avoidance of pomp and display. Worshipping the invisible God, Judaism tended to devalue the visual in favour of the oral and aural: words heard rather than appearances seen.

Yet the service of the tabernacle and Temple were different. Here appearances- dignity, beauty-did make a difference. Why? Maimonides gives this explanation: "In order to exalt the Temple, those who ministered there received great honour, and the priests and Levites were therefore distinguished from the rest. It was commanded that the priest should be clothed properly with the most splendid and fine clothes, 'holy garments for glory and for beauty'... for the multitude does not estimate man by his true form but by... the beauty of his garments, and the Temple was to be held in great reverence by all." (Guide for the Perplexed, III:45)

The explanation is clear, but there is also a hint of disdain. Maimonides seems to be saying that to those who really understand the nature of the religious life, appearances should not matter at all, but "the multitude," the masses, the majority, are not like that. They are impressed by spectacle, visible grandeur, the glitter of gold, the jewels of the breastplate, the rich pageantry of scarlet and purple and the pristine purity of white linen robes.

In his book *The Body of Faith* (1983), Michael Wyschogrod makes a stronger case for the aesthetic dimension of Judaism. Throughout history,

TAURUS AISH IS A SE'IR-ING, MEATY PURIM PUBLICATION.
IT'S A GORE-GEIOUS PARSHA NEWSLETTER THAT'LL
GET YOU WONDERING: "HOOFINKS UP THIS DRIVEL?"
AS UNFASHIONA-BULL AS IT MAY SOUND, THIS ISSUE
WILL JUST KEEP PLOWING NEW GROUND & CHARGING AHEAD WITH THE
REDICULOUS YOKES. OR PUNS. OR PUN-ISH-A-BULL LINES.
I GUESS YOU CAN CALL US COW-MEDIANS



Have you heard about the cow that was dropped in outer space? It became an unstoppa-bull meatier meteor! HA! (oy that was a rare one)

Legal jargon: Under no circumstances do the editors of this publication condone the dropping of cows in outer space, tickling cows in order to make them laugh & have milk come out of their noses or tipping cows (unless they provide exceptional service). The use of the phrase "Cow-abunga dude!" by Michaelangelo is also expressly forbidden and denied.
Never said it. Nope. No way. Uh Uh. Nosireebob.

he argues, art and cult have been intimately connected and Judaism is no exception. "The architecture of the Temple and its contents demand a spatial thinking that stimulates the visual arts as nothing else does. It must be remembered that among the many artefacts past civilisations have left behind, those intended for ritual use almost are always the most elaborate and aesthetically the most significant."

Wyschogrod says that postbiblical Judaism did not, for the most part, make outstanding contributions to art and music. Even today, the world of religious Jewry is remote from that of the great writers, painters, poets and dramatists. To be sure, there is a wealth of popular religious music. But by and large, he says, "our artists tend to leave the Jewish community." This he believes represents a spiritual crisis. "The imagination of the poet is a reflection of his spiritual life. Myth and metaphor are the currency both of religion and poetry. Poetry is one of the most powerful domains in which religious expression takes place. And the same is true of music, drama, painting, and dance."

Rav Abraham Kook hoped that the return to Zion would stimulate a renaissance of Jewish art, and there is a significant place for beauty in the religious life, especially in Avodah, "service," which once meant sacrifice and now means prayer.

An immense body of recent research into neuroscience, evolutionary psychology and behavioural economics has established beyond doubt that we are not, for the most part, rational animals. It is not that we are incapable of reason, but that reason alone does not move us to action. For

that, we need emotion- and emotion goes deeper than the prefrontal cortex, the brain's centre of conscious reflection. Art speaks to emotion. It moves us in ways that go deeper than words.

That is why great art has a spirituality that cannot be expressed other than through art-and that applies to the visual beauty and pageantry of the service of tabernacle and Temple, including the robes and sashes of the priests. There is a poem in the reader's repetition of Mussaf on Yom Kippur that that expresses this to perfection. It is about mareih cohen, the appearance of the High Priest as he concluded his service and emerged from the Holy of Holies: "As the brightness of the vaulted canopy of heaven, As lightning flashing from the splendour of angels, As the celestial blue in the fringes' thread, As the iridescence of the rainbow in the midst of clouds, As the majesty with which the Rock has clothed His creatures, As a rose planted in a garden of delight, As a diadem set on the brow of the King, As the mirror of love in the face of a bridegroom, As a halo of purity from a mitre of purity, As one who abides in secret, beseeching the King, As the morning star shining in the borders of the East-Was the appearance of the [High] Priest."

And now we can define the nature of the aesthetic in Judaism. It is art devoted to the greater glory of God. That is the implication of the fact that the word kavod, "glory," is attributed in the Torah only to God- and to the cohen officiating in the house of God.

Judaism does not believe in art for art's sake, but in art in the service of God, giving back as a votive offering to God a little of the beauty He has made in this created world. At the risk of oversimplification, one could state the difference between ancient Israel and ancient Greece thus: that where the Greeks believed in the holiness of beauty, Jews believed in hadrat kodesh, the beauty of holiness. There is a place for the aesthetic in avodah. In the words of the Song at the Sea: zeh Keili ve-anvehu, "This is my God and I will beautify Him." For beauty inspires love, and from love flows the service of the heart. © 2012 Rabbi J. Sacks & torah.org

A Rabbi was opening his mail one morning. Taking a single sheet of paper from an envelope he found written on it only one word: "JERK!"

At the next service, the rabbi announced, "I have known many people who have written letters and forgot to sign their names, but this week I received a letter from someone who signed his name...and forgot to write a letter."

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 God. 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 God.

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 God 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 God—it was God'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 God, and return. © 2012 Hebrew Institute of Riverdale & CJC-AMCHA. Rabbi Avi Weiss is Founder and President of Yeshivat Chovevei Torah Rabbinical School - the Modern and



Open Orthodox Rabbinical School. He is Senior Rabbi at the Hebrew Institute of Riverdale, a Modern and Open Orthodox congregation of 850 families. He is also National President of AMCHA - the Coalition for Jewish Concerns

A television weatherman was involved in an accident, and broke both his arms and both legs. He had to call in from hospital to explain about the... four casts!

RABBI DOV KRAMER

Taking a Closer Look

“**A**nd you (Moshe) shall command the Children of Israel, and they shall take to you pure olive oil, crushed for [the purpose of providing fuel for giving] light” (Sh'mos 27:20). The specifications for the oil used in the Menorah are described at the beginning of our Parasha, and then repeated in Parashas Emor (Vayikra 24:1-4). The commentators discuss why these details are taught here, right after the description of the Mishkan and its vessels and immediately before the clothes for the Kohanim are described, especially since they will be repeated later (in Vayikra).

According to Midrash HaGadol, since the commandments regarding the vessels were directed at Moshe (“and you shall make the Shulchan,” “and you shall make the Menorah,” etc.), they might have been understood to mean that Moshe himself must make them, and he can't delegate it to others. Therefore, right after the instructions for the Mishkan were given, G-d told him “and you shall command,” i.e. you don't have to do it yourself, just oversee the project to make sure it is done properly.

Even though the next commandments, regarding the priestly clothing, say explicitly that Moshe should “speak to the wise of heart, and they shall make the clothing” (28:3), clearly indicating that Moshe does not have to make it himself, it is possible that there was a difference between the making of the vessels and the making of clothing, with the former having to be done by Moshe himself while the latter was to be delegated to the “wise of heart.” It would also be possible to make a distinction between the vessels and those things used in those vessels; just because Moshe was told that he could delegate the oil production doesn't automatically mean he could do the same for making the Menorah itself. Nevertheless, telling Moshe that he could delegate the making of the oil right after the instructions for the Mishkan and its vessels were given, information that will be repeated in Sefer Vayikra, could indicate that the ability to delegate was not limited just to the oil, but applied to what was taught prior to it as well.

Ramban and S'fornu take the opposite approach, saying that it is understood that Moshe was able to (and supposed to) have others do the actual construction of the the Mishkan and the vessels. [Even if it wasn't a

given, G-d telling Moshe explicitly to appoint Betzalel to oversee the work (31:1-6) was a clear indication that G-d didn't expect Moshe to do it all himself; I'm not sure how Midrash HaGadol would deal with this point.] Therefore, in order to make sure Moshe knew that for what was about to be commanded it had to be different, special instructions had to be issued telling Moshe that he has to be the one to issue the command to those making the oil and the clothing, and he has to "bring Aharon and his sons closer;" he couldn't have someone else (even Betzalel) do them instead. From this perspective, the reason the specifications for the oil used in the Menorah were taught here (even though they will be repeated later) would be to include them in the "exceptions to the rule" that Moshe could delegate everything; when it came to the oil for the Menorah, Moshe had to issue the commandment (to those making it) himself. However, I'm not sure why this aspect couldn't be included when the details about the oil were taught in Vayikra, thereby eliminating the need to teach them here as well.

Abarbanel says that before teaching us that Aharon and his sons will be the Kohanim, and about the "clothes of glory and splendor" that the Kohanim wore, the Torah gave an example of what the role of the Kohanim was. Since they "lit the candles" every day, which meant entering the sanctuary on a daily basis, the Kohanim had to be people of distinction, and they had to dress in a dignified manner. Therefore, even if there was no need to teach us about the lighting of the Menorah at this juncture, it was necessary to give an illustration of how important, and sanctified, the Kohanim and their responsibilities were; the lighting of the Menorah was used to demonstrate this. Putting aside why the Mizbayach HaZahav, the Golden Altar used for incense, wasn't described until later in our Parasha, the bringing of the incense daily could serve the same purpose. Unless there is a compelling enough reason to wait until after the instructions for the Seven Days of Inauguration were taught, the fact that it was the oil for the Menorah that was described before the clothing of the Kohanim, rather the incense, indicates that there was a reason to specifically teach about the Menorah and its oil here.

There is another issue that needs to be resolved as well. The repetition of the instructions for the oil production was taught in the Mishkan itself, after it was up and running, and the Menorah had to have been lit already several times. How could the instructions for the kind of oil to be used in the Menorah have been issued well after the oil was needed? True, Moshe was taught what the instructions would be—that he would, in the future, command the Children of Israel that the oil would have to be made in this specific way (see Rashi on Vayikra 24:2). But since these instructions were necessary for the very first lighting of the Menorah, why were they first relayed after the Menorah had been lit numerous times (during the Seven Days of Inauguration and on the "Eighth Day")?

Last week I discussed the nature of the obligation to build the Mishkan, and how it was commanded in a way that allowed for all the donations (aside from the silver half-shekel) to be completely voluntary, made only by those with a "willing heart." When the materials needed were listed, "oil for lighting" was included (25:6), without specifying what kind of oil was needed for lighting. Although Moshe was told what kind of oil would be used, I would suggest that G-d specifically did not want Moshe to tell the nation, when he told them what to donate, what kind of oil was needed. This way, not only would the donation of oil be voluntary, but donating the very best oil without being told it was necessary would demonstrate the level of "willingness" the donor had. All that was asked for was "oil for lighting," but those who donated the oil (the Tribal Chiefs, see Sh'mos 35:7-8) made sure only the highest quality oil, extra virgin olive oil, would be used in G-d's Sanctuary. (Any lesser quality oil donated could be used for other things, such as the grain offerings.)

The oil donated, which (voluntarily) met the specifications necessary for the Menorah, was enough to last for the first week or so of the Mishkan's operation (perhaps longer). Eventually, though, it would have to be replenished (see Ramban and S'forno on Vayikra 24:2). Therefore, when G-d started to speak to Moshe from the Mishkan, he told him what to command the Children of Israel regarding the oil needed for the Menorah. Rather than the high quality oil donated being a "bonus," going beyond what was necessary, it was made clear that this was the requirement. Moshe already knew this from his conversations with G-d atop Mt. Sinai, but was told not to tell the nation this just yet, so that the donations of high quality oil would also come from "willing hearts;" it wasn't only the donation itself that should reflect the donor's willingness, but the quality of the donation as well.

In Parashas T'rumah, Moshe was told to tell the nation the materials that needed to be donated, including "oil for lighting." In Parashas T'tzaveh, after the instructions for the Mishkan and its vessels were given, Moshe was told that eventually he would tell the nation the specific type of oil needed "for lighting," but not to tell them yet. This information couldn't be included with the instructions regarding the materials to be donated, or they would have been included in the initial instructions given to the nation. But they had to be shared with Moshe, so he could know which oil to use "for lighting." It was therefore relayed after the rest of the instructions for the Mishkan (and its vessels) that he was supposed to share with the nation right away were taught. In Parashas Emor, Moshe was told to tell the nation what those required standards were. © 2012 Rabbi D. Kramer

*At a wedding rehearsal, the rabbi told the father of the bride, "As you give your daughter's hand to the bridegroom, you should say something nice to him."
The father, a grocery store manager, took the advice. During the wedding ceremony, he placed the bride's hand on his son-in-law's arm and said,*

"No deposit, no return."

RABBI SHLOMO RISKIN

Shabbat Shalom

“Now you bring near to yourself Aaron your brother, and his sons with him from amongst the Children of Israel... to minister to Me. You shall make vestments of sanctity for Aaron your brother, for glory and splendor" (Exodus 28:1, 2)

"If the Sanctuary-Temple is the forerunner of the synagogue, then the Kohen-Priest is the forerunner of the contemporary rabbi. A rabbi can serve as a prophet, as a Kohen-priest, or, at best, as a combination of the two. What is the nature of the priestly and prophetic vocations and the differences between them?

We begin our inquiry with an examination of the Ark. This was the first of the sacred objects fashioned for the Sanctuary, which housed the holy tablets upon which were engraved the Ten Commandments. But why is the ark gold plated rather than made of pure gold - as are the ark-cover, the cherubs and the menorah? Gold plate is less valuable than pure gold - and the ark-cover is merely a protection for the Ark and is therefore less significant than the ark itself! So why is the sacred Ark made from gold plated acacia wood?

I would suggest that wood, which is derived from trees, symbolizes growth, development, fruits and future. Gold, by contrast is a precious metal deeply buried in the earth which neither ages nor tarnishes, neither decays nor destructs expressing eternal value. Our Holy Torah must comprise both of these elements: eternity and creative advancement, timelessness as well as timeliness. The Holy Ark must be formed by vegetative tree-wood encased by gold which does not decay.

This dialectic combination of wood and gold is expressed in an equally striking manner by the two main leaders of the Israelites during the Biblical period, the prophet and the priest, Moses and Aaron. These two functionaries differed from each other in two ways. Firstly, the Kohen-priest derived his exalted office from his ancestors stretching all the way back to Aaron, elder brother of Moses. It was a matter of yihus, or ancestry. The prophet, on the other hand, could have been born into any family, his position was dictated exclusively by his personal charisma and spiritual passion. Secondly, the Kohen-priest wears special garb, - four unique garments for the regular Kohen-priest and eight unique garments for the Kohen Gadol High Priest. Without these clothes, their divine service was disqualified. The Navi-prophet, by contrast, has no unique garb, his message and persona being the only significant aspect of his ministry.

These differences speak volumes about the specific function performed by each of these prototypical leaders. Religion in general and

Judaism in particular provide two crucial and complementary components for which humanity yearns: a sense of participation in eternity, which is so important in our fast-changing world of flux, as well as a sense of purpose in a cosmos which too often seems to be governed by happenstance.

The Priest-Kohen is minister of the Sanctuary and keeper of the Traditions. He is responsible for the continuity, the structure, the permanence of our faith expressed by time-honored ceremonials performed generation after generation. This is true of our prayer services, celebrations and life-cycle events. For this reason, the Kohen-priest receives the teachings from his parents and bequeaths them to his children, expressing the eternal chain of Jewish being which existed before each of us was born and will continue after each of us will die. This structure of continuity is symbolized by the unique external garb of the Kohen-priest, which was - and one day will again be transmitted from generation to generation.

But remembrance of past does not suffice unless it is relevant to the present. Continuity requires commitment, structure yearns for significance, permanence cries out for passion. We dare not repeat rituals merely because they were performed by our forebears. Our religious rite must not be allowed to degenerate into empty, habitual performance. The structured psalms must sensitize our souls, the detailed laws must infuse us with freely-given love, and the emphasis on structure must allow for spiritual spontaneity. Fealty to the past cannot blind us to the challenges of the future. It was the charismatic prophet who extracted purpose and pathos from permanence and precedent. It was he who made G-d's passion and fire infuse the laws and traditions with meaning for the moment. The Kohen-priest is the eternal gold of the Sacred Ark, and the prophet is the ever-growing tree- wood of the Sacred Ark.

And the tree grows and develops organically, reaching upwards and outwards, but still deeply rooted in the ancient and eternal earth. This challenging of integrating the old and the new confronts us as we face the challenges of the rights of women to learn, to lead and to be freed from enslaving relationships in the 21st century. Likewise, we must deal with the "other". In our generation, these are the converts and the would-be-converts who come from different cultures and varied ethnic backgrounds, especially the new-immigrants to Israel from the former Soviet Union. These men and women are now Israeli citizens, but many of them are not yet Jewish according to Jewish law, even though they are living and sacrificing in our midst. We dare not forget the very roots our Jewish being, "And the Almighty created the human being in His image, in the image of G-d He created them, male and female created He them;" "You shall love the stranger for you were strangers in the land of Egypt!"

In the immortal words of Rav Kook, "May the old be renewed, and may the new be sanctified." © 2012 *Ohr Torah Institutions & Rabbi S. Riskin*

*A man in Florida calls his son in New York and says, “I hate to tell you this, but after fifty years of marriage your mother and I decided we’re getting a divorce. I’m telling you now, so you and your sister shouldn’t go into shock later when I move out.”
The son says, “Don’t do ANYTHING till we get there! We’ll be there tomorrow night.”
The father agrees, “All right.”*

The old man hangs up the phone and hollers to his wife, “Okay, they’re coming for Pesach. Now, what are we going to tell them for Rosh Hashannah?”

RABBI BEREL WEIN

Wein Online

The breastplate/choshen of the High Priest was ordained to be securely attached to the ceremonial apron/ephod that covered the body of the High Priest. The Torah specifically mentions that the breastplate/choshen should not be allowed to slide away from that apron/ephod. The commentators to Torah discuss the significance of this rule. Why is it so important that the breastplate/choshen should remain attached to the apron/ephod while the High Priest is wearing the priestly garments? What is the moral message that the Torah wishes to impart to us by this requirement?

Again, the answers to these questions and the observations of the great sages of Israel over the ages are varied and many. I have always felt that the Torah is imparting a message to us, that the spiritual side of humans- the breastplate/choshen that rests upon the heart, the seat of human emotion and spirit-is inextricably bound up with the bodily and physical needs and demands of the human body itself as represented by the apron/ephod.

The two garments, the breastplate/choshen and the apron/ephod, like our souls and bodies during our lifetimes are inseparable. The two opposites- of spirit and physicality are meant to balance and influence each other. A human being cannot, in this world, be wholly physical, for, if so, one is little more than an animal. Nor can humans achieve a fully spiritual state of existence, for God said to Moses that “no humans can see me and live.” It is the integration of these two human traits that creates the main challenge in our lives and eventually defines us as a Jew and as a human being.

The Torah abhors schizophrenic behavior. The old slogan of the Haskala: “Be a Jew at home and a regular person/citizen in the street” proved to be an unattainable goal. Either the Jew at home had to give way, which is what most often happened, or the man in the street had to defer to the homegrown Jew.

The Torah therefore wished to create a whole person who would be comfortable with one’s Jewishness and mission both at home and in the street. All Jews, not only the High Priest, have to wear the

breastplate/choshen attached to the apron/ephod; to combine within one and the same person a physical existence and a spiritual one as well.

The numerous commandments that the Torah ordains for our performance in all facets of our lives are meant to help us create a whole unified person for ourselves. We are to sanctify the mundane and create spirit where apparently only physicality exists. And, at the same time, the fact is that in our lifetime we are of this world with all of the physical limitations that this fact of human existence imposes upon us.

This duality of purpose and existence is itself the secret of human society and points to the eternal necessity for God’s guidance and Torah blessings. In following His tenets we find our whole-inner and outer-self. In this way we are all entitled to wear the garments of the High Priest both at home and in the street all the days of our lives. © 2012 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.

*What do you get when you cross a snippy sheep with a cranky cow?
I don’t know, but is it ever in a baaaaaaaaaad moooooooooood!*

RABBI LABEL LAM

Dvar Torah

Purim is almost here and little children are picking out their costumes as adults are choosing wines. Our sages tell us, “If we are not prophets then we are the children of prophets!” What does that mean? If holy and devoted Jews have been doing something for generations then there must be a holy source. We can legitimately ask why these ubiquitous practices of wearing masks and drinking whatever quantity of wine play such a large role in our Purim celebration. One thing is for sure. It is neither an arbitrary nor a flippant matter and there may be a powerful connection between the two.

The entire Megilla, the story of Purim turns on and is lubricated by wine. Why so? The Talmud informs us of a deep dynamic about wine, “When the wine goes in the secret goes out!” The numerical value for the word wine (70) is the same as that for secret (sod=70). After a 180 day party on the very last day of a local 7 day party King Achashverosh became intoxicated with wine and his lowly stature became manifest as he asked for his queen Vashti, his only true claim to royalty, to display her beauty to the assembled. When she refused her life was terminated and Esther was invited into the play.

When Esther wished to appeal to King Achashverosh to repeal his decree against the Jews she cleverly invited Haman to the party where wine

again played an important role. Haman left the party high on his own success and, based on the urging of his wife, erected a tower 50 cubits high to hang Mordechai who refused to bow down. His haughty rage against Mordechai that swelled to a destructive degree which backfired on him can be traced again to wine. Therefore friends don't let friends...

HASHEM's name is not explicitly mentioned even once in entire Megillas Esther. Megillas Esther means literally revealing the hidden. The verse in Devarim about the end of times reads, "I will certainly hide my face from you on that day!" The emphatic expression of hiding, employing the word "Esther" twice, the Talmud points out is the source of Esther in the Torah. It seems that The Almighty is hiding at that time and this time too, and through the unfolding of the ultra-dramatic episode of Purim a great point is exposed. It is as if the mask is removed and a Divine face is subtly revealed.

When the wine of Torah goes in the biggest secret is revealed. When we wear masks and costumes on Purim some want to say that we are demonstrating and acknowledging the hiddenness of HASHEM and automatically our own self alienation. The Zohar expresses it this way, "Israel, the Torah, and Holy One blessed be He are one!" When one is distant from Torah he is far from HASHEM and from himself and other Jews.

Stated affirmatively, when one is connected to HASHEM, to that extent he is close to Torah and able to perceive his own value and the value of his fellow Jews. Starting from any one of the three in the equation leads to a strengthening of the other two! Until the secret is revealed the world is a place of deception and suspicion. Costumes and masks both conceal and reveal and so it's hard to know from without what's really going on within.

One evening at a nearby Schul where everyone was attired head to toe in formal prayer attire Dovi entered and stood out like a giant weed and not because he was a head taller than everyone else but rather because of his manner of dress. He was wearing a baseball cap, work boots, shorts and a tee shirt with Tzitzis draped on the outside.

One of locals decided to take it upon himself to have a shmuz with Dovi about the proper dress code for Davening. After all, one would not go to an important job interview in less than his best and plus it impacts your state of mind in a positive way when you dress up. It's not for nothing that the Shulchan Aruch sets a clear wardrobe standard for approaching prayer. The fellow was prepared to speak gently so his words would be accepted too.

After the evening prayer service he waited for Dovi and he waited. He watched in amazement for the next 20 minutes as he stood intensely enveloped in prayer. Afterward this fellow approached Dovi and shared with him, "I was going to instruct you about how to dress properly in Schul but now I realize that I should be learning from you!"

On Purim we realize a happy secret. The world is rich with hidden goodness. As the Lotto motto goes, "Hey! You never know!" © 2012 Rabbi L. Lam & torah.org

A three-legged dog walks into a saloon in the Old West. He slides up to the bar and announces: "I'm looking for the man who shot my paw!"

REBBETZIN HOLLY PAVLOV

From Sadness to Joy

“Just as when the month of Av begins, we curtail joy, so, when the month of Adar begins, we increase joy" (Ta'anit 29a). On the surface, it would seem that there is no inherent connection between the two months of Av and Adar. Each reflects a different historical event: During the month of Av, the Temple was destroyed; during the month of Adar, the miracle of Purim occurred. And yet, the Rabbis of the Talmud see a clear conceptual link between them. How could such disparate events and commemorations be linked?

The ninth of Av is a time of deep mourning for the Jewish people. The roots of this mourning are found in the episode of the twelve spies sent by Moshe to check out the promised land. They came back with a report that discouraged the nation from entering the land of Israel, causing the nation to weep over their seeming inability to conquer the land of their fathers. Upon seeing the nation cry, Hashem declared, "Since you wept for no reason, I will give you cause to weep for generations to come." Thus, a process in Jewish history was set in motion which culminated with the exile after the destruction of both Temples on the ninth of Av.

Was Hashem so angry that He meted out a punishment as a form of vengeance? Surely not! Indeed, this punishment was meant to correct a flaw in the understanding of Clal Yisrael, the people of Israel. According to the Sefat Emet, the sin of the spies was the desire to remain in the world of the desert, a world of revealed miracles, of a spiritual life so powerful that they need not worry about material needs. They yearned to maintain this lifestyle, and did not want to enter Israel, a land where the natural and miraculous are so closely intertwined, that spirituality is only attained through a physical connection with the land.

This flaw in Israel's understanding eventually led to their exile from the land. Rav Chaim Ya'akov Goldvicht, of blessed memory, explains: To teach Clal Yisrael how to live in the land of Israel, Hashem exiled them to foreign lands where He is hidden within nature, where they would have to seek spirituality in places where it did not obviously exist. In exile, life was exactly the opposite of life in the desert. Only when they discovered how to use the physical world to reach out to Hashem, would they return to their own land and use their knowledge to serve Him.

So they were sent into exile, to a place of hester panim, where Hashem's face is hidden from view, where His presence is not readily felt. Megilat Esther tells us how the Jews fared in exile. In Shushan, a city of overabundant material wealth, the Jews reconfirmed their deep connection with Hashem. When confronted with the lack of clarity that exile brings, Esther asked, "What this was and why this was?" (Esther 4:5) She wants to understand how a Jew confirms his connection with our Father in Heaven when He cannot be seen. Mordeci's response, "Who knows if for this reason you have attended royalty," (Esther 4:6), is meant to indicate to Esther that while nothing in the physical world is clear, especially in exile, we believe that Hashem is the guiding force responding to our needs and even anticipating them. During the month of Adar, in Shushan, the nation reaffirmed their commitment to Torah, to a spiritual life; they reasserted their acceptance of Torah and Mitzvot. They were no longer in the desert, a place of total spirituality, nor were they in Israel, a land where the material and the spiritual work in tandem. They were deep in exile, in darkness, banished from the throne of G-d, yet it is here that they find Him. Therefore, the process of rebuilding the Temple began. For only when the Jews learn to understand and use the physical world to achieve spirituality will they fully appreciate and understand the land of Israel and be ready to return.

When the month of Av begins, we decrease our joy for at this time we were forced out of Zion. The beginning of the month of Adar brings us great joy because this is when we begin the process of our return to Zion. Just as Av ushers in sadness as we mourn the destruction we brought upon ourselves, so Adar ushers in happiness as we rejoice the commencement of the rebuilding of the Temple and the return to the land of miracles. © 2002 Rebbetzin H. Pavlov and She'arim

Eight-year-old Sally brought her report card home from school.

Her grades were good — mostly A's and a couple of B's. However, her teacher had written across the bottom: "Sally is a smart little girl, but she has one fault.

She talks too much in school. I have an idea I am going to try, which I think may break her of the habit."

Sally's dad signed her report card, putting a note on the back: "Sally gets it from her mother. Please let me know if your idea works." ©

SHLOMO KATZ

Hama'ayan

The Midrash Ha'ne'elam (quoted in Torah Sheleimah) explains that Moshe Rabbeinu's name does not appear in

our parashah because he said, after the sin of the Golden Calf (Shmot 32:32), "And now if You would but forgive their sin! -- but if not, erase me from Your book that You have written." Says the midrash: Moshe cursed himself conditionally, and Hashem in fact forgave Bnei Yisrael's sin as a result of his plea. Even so, he was erased from one of the lofty parashot in the Torah which speaks of the building of the mishkan. Moshe Rabbeinu's name should have been written in connection with every aspect and every mitzvah in this parashah, but it was erased. This teaches that the curse of a Torah scholar comes true even if it was uttered conditionally. [Until here from the midrash]

R' Menachem Mendel Kasher z"l (1895-1983; prolific author of Torah works) explains, citing earlier commentators: Even though the verse quoted above appears in next week's parashah, it is a general rule that the Torah is not necessarily written in chronological order.

Why was this parashah chosen as the one from which Moshe's name would be excluded? R' Kasher writes, again citing other works: Originally, Moshe, not Aharon, was to have been the Kohen Gadol. However, when Moshe refused to go to Pharaoh to demand Bnei Yisrael's freedom and he suggested that Aharon go in his place, the Torah says (Shmot 4:14), "The wrath of Hashem burned against Moshe and He said, "Is there not Aharon your brother, the levi?" He meant: Aharon would have been a levi, and you a kohen, but now it will be the reverse. Therefore, Moshe's name is omitted from the parashah that discusses the garments of the kohanim.

Some, however, explain the absence of Moshe's name in our parashah as a sign of distinction. The parashah opens, "Now you shall command Bnei Yisrael..." Because this parashah is the conclusion of the description of the mishkan, Hashem wanted to give honor to Moshe by giving him a role in commanding Bnei Yisrael, without the usual introduction, "Hashem spoke to Moshe." (Torah Sheleimah)

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Have an unbelieva-BULL Purim!

Roses are red
Violets are blue
Most poems rhyme
But this one doesn't!

**Poor-Rhyme
Samayach! 😊**