

Toras Aish

Thoughts From Across the Torah Spectrum

RABBI LORD JONATHAN SACKS

Covenant & Conversation

One of the most important Jewish contributions to our understanding of leadership is its early insistence of what, in the eighteenth century, Montesquieu called “the separation of powers.” Neither authority nor power was to be located in a single individual or office. Instead, leadership was divided between different kinds of roles.

One of the most important of these divisions – anticipating by millennia the “separation of church and state” – was between the king, the head of state, on the one hand, and the high priest, the most senior religious office, on the other.

This was revolutionary. The kings of Mesopotamian city states and the Pharaohs of Egypt were considered demiG-ds or chief intermediary with the G-ds. They officiated at supreme religious festivals. They were regarded as the representatives of heaven on earth.

In Judaism, by stark contrast, monarchy had little or no religious function (other than the recital by the king of the book of the covenant every seven years in the ritual known as hakhel.) Indeed the chief objection to the Hasmonean kings on the part of the sages was that they broke this ancient rule, some of them declaring themselves high priests also. The Talmud records the objection: “Let the crown of kingship be sufficient for you. Leave the crown of priesthood to the sons of Aaron.” The effect of this principle was to secularize power.

No less fundamental was the division of religious leadership itself into two distinct functions: that of the prophet and the priest. That is dramatized in this week’s parsha, focussing as it does on the role of the priest to the exclusion of that of the prophet. Tetzaveh is the first parsha since the beginning of the book of Exodus in which Moses’ name is missing. It is supremely the priestly, as opposed to prophetic, parsha.

Priests and prophets were very different in their roles, despite the fact that some prophets, most famously Ezekiel, were priests also.

1. The role of priest was dynastic, that of prophet was charismatic. Priests were the sons of Aaron. They were born into the role. Parenthood had no part in the role of the prophet. Moses’ own children were not prophets.

2. The priest wore robes of office. There was no official uniform for a prophet.

3. The priesthood was exclusively male; not so prophecy. The Talmud lists seven women prophets: Sarah, Miriam, Deborah, Hannah, Abigail, Huldah and Esther.

4. The role of the priest did not change over time. There was a precise annual timetable of sacrifices that did not vary from year to year. The prophet by contrast could not know what his mission would be until G-d revealed in to him. Prophecy was never a matter of routine.

5. As a result, prophet and priest had different senses of time. Time for the priest was what it was for Plato: the “moving image of eternity,” a matter of everlasting recurrence and return. The prophet lived in historical time. His today was not the same as yesterday and tomorrow would be different again. One way of putting this is that the priest heard the word of G-d for all time. The prophet heard the word of G-d for this time.

6. The priest was “holy” and therefore set apart from the people. He had to eat his food in a state of purity, and had to avoid contact with the dead. The prophet by contrast often lived among the people and spoke a language they understood. Prophets could come from any social class.

7. The key words for the priest were tahir, tamei, kodesh and chol: “pure, impure, sacred and secular.” The key words for the prophets were tzedek, mishpat, chessed and rachamim, “righteousness, justice, love and compassion.” It is not that the prophets were concerned with morality while the priests were not. Some of the key moral imperatives, such as “You shall love your neighbour as yourself,” come from priestly sections of the Torah. It is rather that priests think in terms of a moral order embedded in the structure of reality, sometimes called a “sacred ontology.” Prophets tended to think not of things or acts in themselves but in terms of relationships between persons or social classes.

8. The task of the priest is boundary maintenance. The key priestly verbs are le-havdil and le-horot, to distinguish one thing from another and apply the appropriate rules. Priests gave rulings, prophets gave warnings.

9. There is nothing personal about the role of a priest. If one – even a High priest – was unable to officiate at a given service, another could be

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substituted. Prophecy was essentially personal. The sages said that “no two prophets prophesied in the same style” (Sanhedrin 89a). Hosea was not Amos. Isaiah was not Jeremiah. Each prophet had a distinctive voice.

10. Priests constituted a religious establishment. The prophets, at least those whose messages have been eternalized in Tanakh, were not an establishment but an anti-establishment, critical of the powers-that-be.

The roles of priest and prophet varied over time. The priests always officiated at the sacrificial service of the Temple. But they were also judges. The Torah says that if a case is too difficult to be dealt with by the local court, you should “Go to the priests, the Levites, and to the judge who is in office at that time. Inquire of them and they will give you the verdict” (Deut. 17: 9). Moses blesses the tribe of Levi saying that “They will teach Your ordinances to Jacob and Your Torah to Israel” (Deut. 33: 10), suggesting that they had a teaching role as well.

Malachi, a prophet of the Second Temple period, says: “For the lips of a priest ought to preserve knowledge, because he is the messenger of the Lord Almighty and people seek instruction from his mouth” (Mal. 2: 7). The priest was guardian of Israel’s sacred social order. Yet it is clear throughout Tanakh that the priesthood was liable to corruption. There were times when priests took bribes, others when they compromised Israel’s faith and performed idolatrous practices. Sometimes they became involved in politics. Some held themselves as an elite apart from and disdainful toward the people as a whole.

At such times the prophet became the voice of G-d and the conscience of society, reminding the people of their spiritual and moral vocation, calling on them to return and repent, reminding the people of their duties to G-d and to their fellow humans and warning of the consequences if they did not.

The priesthood became massively politicized and corrupted during the Hellenistic era, especially under the Seleucids in the second century BCE. Hellenized High Priests like Jason and Menelaus introduced idolatrous practises, even at one stage a statue of Zeus, into the Temple. This provoked the internal revolt that led to the events we recall on the festival of Hanukkah.

Yet despite the fact that the initiator of the revolt, Mattityahu, was himself a righteous priest, corruption re-emerged under the Hasmonean kings. The Qumran sect known to us through the Dead Sea Scrolls was particularly critical of the priesthood in Jerusalem. It is striking that the sages traced their spiritual ancestry to the prophets, not the priests (Avot 1: 1).

The cohanim were essential to ancient Israel. They gave the religious life its structure and continuity, its rituals and routines, its festivals and celebrations. Their task was to ensure that Israel remained a holy people with G-d in its midst. But they were an establishment, and like every establishment, at best they were the guardians of the nation’s highest values, but at worst they became corrupt, using their position for power and engaging in internal politics for personal advantage. That is the fate of establishments, especially those whose membership is a matter of birth.

That is why the prophets were essential. They were the world’s first social critics, mandated by G-d to speak truth to power. Still today, for good or otherwise, religious establishments always resemble Israel’s priesthood. Who, though, are Israel’s prophets at the present time?

The essential lesson of the Torah is that leadership can never be confined to one class or role. It must always be distributed and divided. In ancient Israel, kings dealt with power, priests with holiness, and prophets with the integrity and faithfulness of society as a whole. In Judaism, leadership is less a function than a field of tensions between different roles, each with its own perspective and voice.

Leadership in Judaism is counterpoint, a musical form defined as “the technique of combining two or more melodic lines in such a way that they establish a harmonic relationship while retaining their linear individuality.” It is this internal complexity that gives Jewish leadership its vigour, saving it from entropy, the loss of energy over time.



Leadership must always, I believe, be like this. Every team must be made up of people with different roles, strengths, temperaments and perspectives. They must always be open to criticism and they must always be on the alert against group-think. The glory of Judaism is its insistence that only in heaven is there One commanding voice. Down here in earth no individual may ever hold a monopoly of leadership. Out of the clash of perspectives – king, priest and prophet – comes something larger than any individual or role could achieve. ©2014 Rabbi Lord J. Sacks and rabbisacks.org

RABBI BEREL WEIN

Wein Online

The Torah busies itself in this week's parsha to point out the necessity for an eternal light to always burn in G-d's tabernacle. The Talmud points out that the light was certainly not for G-d's benefit. The Lord is always beyond our physical needs and environment. The commentators to the Torah always searched for a deeper and more understandable meaning to this commandment.

Many ideas have been presented to explain the necessity for this eternal light. One that I wish to mention here in this essay is that the eternal light represented the eternity of Israel and its survival as a people no matter what. Just as the Lord inexplicably demanded that an eternal light be present and lit in the Tabernacle and the Temple, so too is the survival of Israel to be seen as something that is truly inexplicable.

The lights of Hanukkah are the successors to the eternal light of the Tabernacle and the Temple. They too symbolize the unlikely and miraculous, the triumph of the weak and few. This symbolic light is meant to guide us in our understanding of Jewish history and life. The otherwise seemingly unnecessary light represents G-d's guarantee of Jewish survival and of the great lesson that a small candle while burning can illuminate a great deal of darkness.

The Lord needs no light but humankind cannot operate in the darkness. The prophet Isaiah chose his words carefully when he charged Israel to be "a light unto the nations." Our mere existence and accompanying story of survival is enough to be a guide to a very dark world and lead it towards a better future and a brighter day.

When the eternal light of the national existence of the Jewish people was dimmed by the Roman legions, the Jews installed a physical eternal light in their synagogues. But just as the eternal light in the Tabernacle and Temple required human effort and physical material – pure olive oil – so too does our current eternal light require human effort and physical material.

Lighting a dark room requires ingenuity, ability, planning and the correct fixtures. Since Torah is compared to light in Scripture, and it too is an eternal light, it is obvious that the maintenance of Torah and the spread of its light also require human effort, talent and industry. Even the glorious eternal light that hangs in front of the ark in our synagogue has to have its bulbs changed and cleaned periodically.

The Lord, Who needs no light, demands from us that we provide light in the physical and spiritual sense of the word. The High Priest of Israel was charged with the daily cleaning, preparing and lighting of the eternal light in the Temple. The Lord never provided for automatic lighting but rather for a light that

would be generated and cared for by human beings in the daily course of their G-dly duties.

That remains the case today as well. Though our survival as a people is guaranteed, paradoxically, it cannot happen without our efforts and dogged commitment. We must light our lamp ourselves in order for it to burn brightly and eternally. ©2014 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

RABBI SHLOMO RISKIN

Shabbat Shalom

"And you shall make sacred garments for Aaron your brother for honor and glory" (Exodus 28:2) The Torah portion of Tetzaveh is wholly dedicated to Aaron and his children, the High Priest and the Holy Temple priesthood. We are given a precise description of the ritual by which they were consecrated for their Divine task, including the specific Sanctuary offerings which were to be brought.

But what is most jarring to the modern ear- and especially to those of us who have become accustomed to the tie-less and jacket-less informality of Israeli dress - is the painstaking description of the unique apparel of the priests, the eight special garments of the High Priest and the four special garments of the regular priests. As quoted above, the Torah itself commands, "And you shall make sacred garments for Aaron your brother for honor and glory," and the Talmud stipulates that only when properly garbed are the priests endowed with sanctity and permitted to minister in the Sanctuary (B.T. Zevachim 17b). Is the Torah then teaching us that "clothes make the man"? What about the internal characteristics of knowledge and virtue and commitment?

I believe that, upon deeper reflection, we will understand that the priestly garb is not meant to endow sanctity, but rather to inspire sanctity - as well as to instill within the priests the confidence that they can make the entire world sacred. Moreover, the Torah teaches that every Jew must see him/herself as a High Priest dressed in sacred vestments, a member of "a holy nation and a Kingdom of priests."

Immediately prior to the Revelation at Sinai, there is a strange dialogue between G-d and Moses, in which the Almighty calls out to Moses, Moses attempts to climb to the top of the mountain, G-d tells Moses to go down to the nation, Moses complains that the nation has been disallowed from ascending the mountain, and G-d again tells Moses to go down (Ex. 19:20-25). My revered teacher and mentor Rav Joseph B. Soloveitchik, ztz"l, explained that Moses thought, in accordance with the other religions, that spirituality means to leave the material world and ascend to the

celestial spheres of the Divine; therefore, G-d had to explain to Moses that Jewish spirituality means to bring G-d down into the material world and sanctify it. This is indeed the basic function of Torah: to sanctify the kitchen and dining room with Kashrut, to sanctify the bedroom with family ritual purity, to sanctify the marketplace with business ethics, to sanctify the calendar with holy days and sacred moments. Hence our Sages declare that what the Almighty truly has in this world is the four pillars of halakha (religio-legal practices).

The previous Torah portion of Terumah began with the Divine charge: "And they shall make for Me a Sanctuary so that I may dwell among them." (Ex. 25: 8) In effect, G-d gave us a world- albeit an imperfect, incomplete world with darkness as well as light, evil as well as good - and expects us to perfect it, to re-make the world into a veritable Sanctuary so that the Divine will feel comfortable dwelling among us. This is the charge as well as the challenge, the model as well as the mission of the Sanctuary. And those who are expected - at least in the first instance, - to transmit and effectuate this message are the priests, and especially the High Priest.

In order to do so, the High Priest must first see himself as being capable of carrying out such a formidable task, he must see himself as a powerful king, representing the King of all Kings, garbed in regal robes of honor and glory. And his dress expresses a message. Just as the ideal King of Israel dare not involve himself with opulent, material blandishments like numerous wives, horses, gold and silver but must demonstrate his devotion to G-d by always having with him a copy of the Torah (Deut. 17:16-20), so must the High Priest wear the "tzitz" on his forehead "always," a gold head-band on a thread of t'chelet (heavenly royal blue) on which was written "holy unto the Lord" (Ex. 28:36-38). And just as the ideal king of Israel must understand that his authority derives from his nation, that his rule must be by virtue of the will of the people and for the sake of the people (Deut. 17:18-19), so does the High Priest wear the breast-plate of justice over his heart, upon which were embroidered twelve precious stones upon which were written the names of the twelve tribes of Israel. "And Aaron shall carry the names of the children of Israel in the breast-plate of judgment upon his heart when he enters the Holy Place as a reminder before the Lord always" (Ex. 28:29). In order to succeed in his daunting task of perfecting the world in the Kingship of G-d, he must learn from his special garb to lead the priests in total devotion to G-d and the nation.

Every Israelite must also see himself as a High Priest in function, as a proud representative of a holy nation and kingdom of priests. After all, does not the male Israelite dress himself every day in his phylacteries, the head tefilin atop his forehead on the place of the High Priest's tzitz and the hand tefilin opposite his heart, the place where the breast-plate of

the High Priest expressed the names of the twelve tribes? And the tefilin are called a symbol of glory (pe'er, Ezekiel 24:17), just as the regal robes are vestments of honor and glory (tife'eret - Ex. 28:2); and in wearing the tefilin, the Jew becomes adorned with the four portions of the Torah- expressing love of G-d, fealty to commandments, the sanctity of the people of Israel and the sanctity of the land of Israel- placed in the tefilin batim (house-like repositories), much like the King is adorned with the copy of the Torah which must always accompany him.

Moreover, the second traditional Jewish garb is the talit katan ("Prayer Shawl"), featuring a thread of t'chelet (heavenly royal blue) which is a salient feature of the High Priest's tzitz and is significantly called by the Bible "tzitzit," or a "junior tzitz." Every Jew must share in the mission to perfect the world, and must be inspired to do so by wearing the priestly, regal garments which teach commitment to G-d and commitment to our nation. ©2014 Ohr Torah Institutions & Rabbi S. Riskin

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. ©2012 Hebrew Institute of Riverdale & CJC-AMCHA. Rabbi Avi Weiss is Founder and Dean of Yeshivat Chovevei Torah, the Open Orthodox Rabbinical School, and Senior Rabbi of the Hebrew Institute of Riverdale

RABBI DOV KRAMER

Taking a Closer Look

The olive oil for the Menorah must be "pure" (Sh'mos 27:20), i.e. the first drops that come out of the olives (see Rambam, Hilchos Isuray Mizbayach 7:8-9). What about the rest of the oil that can be squeezed out of the olives? They can be used for the "m'nachos," the meal-offerings brought in the Temple (M'nachos 86b). The Talmud (ibid) explains why oil that is not "extra virgin" can be used for meal-offerings: "the Torah protects the money of [the Nation of] Israel." Since it would be that much more expensive if the Torah insisted on using only the highest quality oil, it did not make such a requirement.

[Even though only "pure" oil can be used for the Menorah, Rashi explains that the amount of oil needed for the Menorah (3.5 log per day) was not that much, compared with the amount of oil needed for meal-offerings (4-6 log per meal-offering, with meal-offerings being brought with all other offerings, as well as some as stand-alone offerings). Apparently, it is only above a certain threshold that the Torah feels the need to "protect" our money, although one of the sources for this concept, an afflicted house (see Rashi on Vayikra 14:36) seems to extend the concept specifically to small amounts of money as well. It is possible to differentiate between requiring an outlay of money, such as the oil needed for the Menorah, and a loss of money, such as losing the pottery vessels one already owns, with the Torah "protecting" us from even small losses, but only

"saving" us from spending large amounts unnecessarily.]

The concept that "the Torah protects the money of Israel" is applied throughout the Talmud, but so is another concept; "there is no poverty in a place of wealth." This is used to explain why there was no need to cook a small amount of dye for replacement (Shabbos 102b), as they made more than enough dye than was initially needed (as doing otherwise would have indicated stinginess), so there was plenty left for future needs. It is also used to explain why, according to some, Temple property (or monies) could not be used for investment purposes (K'subos 106b), even if all of the profits went to the Temple treasury, as using private property to make money indicates having a need for money. (The dissenting opinion may understand the issue to be acting like a pauper, rather than having to act as if money wasn't an issue; only something that is "extra," and not needed, can it be invested. The fact that the Temple had more than it needed which could be used as a business investment would therefore not contradict the concept that "there is no poverty in a place of wealth.") Priestly garments that became spoiled cannot be washed with detergent (etc.) to get them clean (Z'vachim 88b), but must be replaced, because nobility buys new clothes rather than washing old ones. Because "there is no poverty in a place of wealth," a gold vessel was used to make slaughtering the daily offerings easier (Tamid 29a), and a gold or silver table would have been used to prepare the "Lechem HaPanim" ("show bread") rather than a marble one if metal wouldn't have caused the bread to spoil (Tamid 31b). Yet, this concept is ignored regarding the oil used for meal-offerings, relying instead on the concept that "the Torah protects the money of Israel" to allow second-tier oil to be used rather than insisting on only "pure" olive oil.

How these competing concepts can be reconciled is discussed at length by T'shuva Mei'ahavah (#4; he quotes his rebbe, the Noda B'Yehudah, in #5, which is also quoted in the Kuntros Acharon of the second volume of the latter's responsas, #7). This question is posed specifically regarding the oil for the meal-offerings in M'rafsin Igray, where several answers are suggested. The first answer suggested there is that the concept of "there is no poverty in a place of wealth" only applies when the difference between the more expensive item and the less expensive one is readily apparent. Since a layman cannot tell the difference between a jar of "pure" oil and one that has other quality oil in it, it doesn't apply here. (I'm not so sure that a layman can't tell the difference between "pure" oil and other kinds of olive oil.) The second answer suggested is that the concept of "there is no poverty in a place of wealth" only applies if the higher quality item makes a difference; there is no added benefit to making meal-offerings with "pure" olive oil. (I wouldn't share this with anyone who spends more to buy "extra virgin olive oil"

for their cooking.) The third answer given is the one suggested by the Noda B'Yehudah: meal-offerings are often brought by individuals, and the concept of "there is no poverty in a place of wealth" only applies to the Temple (and its public offerings); it was never meant to apply to individuals who would now have to spend more to bring an offering. Even though there are "public" meal-offerings too, the qualifications for all meal-offerings are the same, so even those not brought by individuals do not need "pure" olive oil. I would add that some meal-offerings were brought (and designed to be brought) specifically by those who are extremely poor (see Rashi on Vayikra 2:1); how could the Torah require the poorest of people to buy the most expensive type of oil?

When examining the other cases of "the Torah protecting the money of Israel," other issues arise. For example, the Talmud (Yuma 44b) says that except for Yom Kippur, the shovel used to remove ashes from the incense altar was silver rather than gold because "the Torah protects the money of Israel." Similarly, the mouth of the shofar used on fast days was plated with silver rather than gold, for the same reason. It would therefore seem that requiring the less-expensive silver rather than the more-expensive gold is also a function of "the Torah protecting the money of Israel." However, when discussing why the box used for the "goat lottery" on Yom Kippur was purposely not consecrated, the Talmud (Yuma 39a) says that had it belonged to the Temple it would have to be made from either gold or silver because "there is no poverty in a place of wealth." How could the Talmud say that making the box out of silver rather than wood satisfies this need if it could have also been made out of gold? Noda B'Yehudah therefore says that using silver instead of gold does not qualify as "poverty." Therefore, because "the Torah protects the money of Israel," silver is used rather than gold when both are valid options. Although to satisfy the issue of "poverty" the "lottery box" could have been either gold or silver, because of "the Torah protecting the money of Israel" it would have been (if it had been made holy) made out of silver.

It can be suggested that the difference between high-quality "non-pure" olive oil and "pure" olive oil is comparable to the difference between silver and gold; both are "fancy" enough to not be considered a state of "poverty," so the Torah only required the less-expensive "non-poverty" item in order to "protect the money of Israel."

[As far as why only "pure" olive oil could be used for the Menorah, several possibilities could be suggested. First of all, it likely makes a difference in the quality of the flame. Secondly, the Menorah was called "the pure Menorah" (Sh'mos 31:8, Sh'mos 39:37 and Vayikra 24:4), and needed to be made of "pure gold" (see Sh'mos 25:31; even the lips of its cups had to be "pure gold" despite the fire constantly blackening it, see M'nachos 88b). It is therefore consistent for its oil to be

"pure" as well. Additionally, as previously mentioned, Rashi differentiates between "protecting" a relatively small amount of money and protecting a larger amount (see also M'nachos 76b regarding using less expensive wheat for the "Lechem HaPanim" because it was made every week); since the amount of oil used in the Menorah was relatively small, there was no need to "protect" its value. However, there is a dispute regarding how they figured how much oil was needed for each night (M'nachos 89a), whether by putting in a little bit of oil at first and gradually adding more until they got it right, so as not to unnecessarily waste any oil (because "the Torah protects the money of Israel), or by filling it up to the top and gradually decreasing how much oil was put in until they got it right (because "there is no poverty in a place of wealth"). Aside from figuring out what this dispute is based on (it could depend on whether they used oil that was already consecrated so they had to avoid "poverty," or if it was not holy, so only the potential loss was considered, see Noda B'Yehudah), we see that the concept of our money being "protected" even applies to the small amount of oil that was spared by starting with less-full cups. It is possible that the standard of how much of a loss it must be to be "protected" is higher if the "unnecessary" funds are used during the actual Temple service; testing to see how much oil was needed could not have been done while fulfilling the mitzvah, or they wouldn't have risked putting too little oil in.]

There is another possibility to explain why the concept of "protecting the money of Israel" takes precedence over not acting like paupers when it comes to the type of oil that can be used for meal-offerings. There is a difference between spending more and getting a better quality product (even if that "better quality" is not absolutely necessary) and spending more than necessary and creating waste in the process. A silver or gold "lottery box" may cost more than a wooden one, but the money isn't being "wasted," as we would now have a nicer box. However, if only "pure" olive oil could be used for meal-offerings, what would be done with the rest of the oil? Could we insist that olives not be consecrated, only the first drops of oil after they come out, thereby allowing the rest to be used for mundane purposes? Would those who owned olive groves donate as much to the Temple if they could only donate the first drops of oil (and had to produce the oil themselves)? How confident could the Temple custodians be that the oil retained its status of ritual purity? It makes much more sense to allow for the olives themselves to be donated, but this creates the need to get the most out of each olive without most of it going to waste. Therefore, even though we would normally take the concept of "there is no poverty in a place of wealth" into account, in order to prevent most of the olive oil literally going down the drain, the concept of "protecting the money of Israel" takes precedence.

This can be applied to the Priestly Garments as

well. Not being able to wear Priestly Garments if they needed to be washed means they could never be used again. However, rather than just destroying them after they could no longer be worn, the material was shredded and used as wicks for the Menorah. But how could we "recycle" material for Temple use if "there is no poverty in a place of wealth"? If this concept is suspended when it causes materials to be wasted (rather than just requiring us to buy better quality material), we can understand how Priestly Garments no longer fit to be worn could be torn into pieces and used as wicks, and why oil that was not "pure" was made suitable for meal-offerings. ©2014 Rabbi D. Kramer

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

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 *raison d'être*.

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's¹ 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

¹ Rabbi Shlomo Zalman Auerbach (1910-1995) was one of the foremost Torah Scholars of our generation. Dean of Yeshiva Kol Torah, his Halachic rulings guided thousands world over. This story is adapted from *And From Jerusalem his Word* © 1995 Hanoch Teller, N.Y.C. Pub Co.

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 Kodosh 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. © 2003 Rabbi M. Kamenetzky and torah.org

RABBI SHLOMO RESSLER

Weekly Dvar

At the beginning of the Parshat Tetzaveh, the Jews are commanded to bring the purest olive oil as fuel for the lamp in the Tabernacle. Rashi explains that the purest olive oil is required for the lamp, but not for the flour offerings brought in the Tabernacle. What is the significance of this ritual detail?

R' Baruch Simon, quoting from the Chasam Sofer, explains that this rule runs contrary to how one would act at home. A person would use the purest, best tasting olive oil in food, and use a lower grade of oil as fuel, where the taste doesn't matter. However, in the Tabernacle, the best grade was used for the lamp and a lesser grade for the equivalent of food. The lamp symbolizes wisdom, Torah and the life of the spirit while the flour offering symbolizes material things. This detail regarding which oil should be used for which purpose in the Tabernacle is actually teaching a broad lesson about priorities in life. Often, the inclination is to seek out the best and to expend the most effort in material matters, while settling for "good enough" in the spiritual realm. The olive oil is teaching us that the opposite outlook is the proper one. © 2013 Rabbi S. Ressler and LeLamed, Inc.

