

# Toras Aish

## Thoughts From Across the Torah Spectrum

**RABBI LORD JONATHAN SACKS**

### Covenant & Conversation

**B**eethoven rose each morning at dawn and made himself coffee. He was fastidious about this: each cup had to be made with exactly sixty beans, which he counted out each time. He would then sit at his desk and compose until 2:00pm or 3:00pm in the afternoon. Subsequently he would go for a long walk, taking with him a pencil and some sheets of music paper to record any ideas that came to him on the way. Each night after supper he would have a beer, smoke a pipe, and go to bed early, 10:00pm at the latest.

Anthony Trollope who as his day job worked for the Post Office, paid a groom to wake him every day at 5:00am. By 5:30am he would be at his desk, and he then proceeded to write for exactly 3 hours, working against the clock to produce 250 words each quarter-hour. This way he wrote 47 novels, many of them 3 volumes in length, as well as 16 other books. If he finished a novel before the day's 3 hours were over, he would immediately take a fresh piece of paper and begin the next.

Immanuel Kant, the most brilliant philosopher of modern times, was famous for his routine. As Heinrich Heine put it, "Getting up, drinking coffee, writing, giving lectures, eating, taking a walk, everything had its set time, and the neighbours knew precisely that the time was 3:30pm when Kant stepped outside his door with his grey coat and the Spanish stick in his hand."

These details, together with more than 150 other examples drawn from the great philosophers, artists, composers and writers, come from a book by Mason Currey entitled *Daily Rituals: How Great Minds Make Time, Find Inspiration, and Get to Work* (New York, Knopf, 2013). The book's point is simple. Most creative people have daily rituals. These form the soil in which the seeds of their invention grow.

In some cases they deliberately took on jobs they did not need to do, simply to establish structure and routine in their lives. A typical example was the

poet Wallace Stevens, who took a position as an insurance lawyer at the Hartford Accident and Indemnity Company where he worked until his death. He said that having a job was one of the best things that could happen to him because "It introduces discipline and regularity into one's life."

Note the paradox. These were all innovators, pioneers, ground-breakers, trail-blazers, who formulated new ideas, originated new forms of expression, did things no one had done before in quite that way. They broke the mould. They changed the landscape. They ventured into the unknown.

Yet their daily lives were the opposite: ritualised and routine. One could even call them boring. Why so? Because -- the saying is famous, though we don't know who first said it -- genius is one per cent inspiration, ninety-nine per cent perspiration. The paradigm-shifting scientific discovery, the path-breaking research, the wildly successful new product, the brilliant novel, the award-winning film, are almost always the result of many years of long hours and attention to detail. Being creative involves hard work.

The ancient Hebrew word for hard work is *avodah*. It is also the word that means "serving G-d". What applies in the arts, sciences, business and industry, applies equally to the life of the spirit. Achieving any form of spiritual growth requires sustained effort and daily rituals.

Hence the remarkable aggadic passage in which various sages put forward their idea of *klal gadol ba-Torah*, "the great principle of the Torah". Ben Azzai says it is the verse, "This is the book of the chronicles of man: On the day that G-d created man, He made him in the likeness of G-d" (Gen. 5:1). Ben Zoma says that there is a more embracing principle, "Listen, Israel, the Lord our G-d, the Lord is one." Ben Nannas says there is a yet more embracing principle: "Love your neighbour as yourself." Ben Pazzi says we find a more embracing principle still. He quotes a verse from this week's parsha: "One sheep shall be offered in the morning, and a second in the afternoon" (Ex. 29:39) -- or, as we might say nowadays, *Shacharit*, *Mincha* and *Maariv*. In a word: "routine". The passage concludes: The law follows Ben Pazzi. (The passage is cited in the Introduction to the commentary *HaKotev* to *Ein Yaakov*, the collected aggadic passages of the Talmud. It is also quoted by Maharal in *Netivot Olam*, *Ahavat Re'a* 1.)

The meaning of Ben Pazzi's statement is clear:



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all the high ideals in the world -- the human person as G-d's image, belief in G-d's unity, and the love of neighbour -- count for little until they are turned into habits of action that become habits of the heart. We can all recall moments of insight when we had a great idea, a transformative thought, the glimpse of a project that could change our lives. A day, a week or a year later the thought has been forgotten or become a distant memory, at best a might-have-been.

The people who change the world, whether in small or epic ways, are those who turn peak experiences into daily routines, who know that the details matter, and who have developed the discipline of hard work, sustained over time.

Judaism's greatness is that it takes high ideals and exalted visions -- image of G-d, faith in G-d, love of neighbour -- and turns them into patterns of behaviour. Halakhah, (Jewish law), involves a set of routines that - like those of the great creative minds -- reconfigures the brain, giving discipline to our lives and changing the way we feel, think and act.

Much of Judaism must seem to outsiders, and sometimes to insiders also, boring, prosaic, mundane, repetitive, routine, obsessed with details and bereft for the most part of drama or inspiration. Yet that is precisely what writing the novel, composing the symphony, directing the film, perfecting the killer app, or building a billion-dollar business is, most of the time. It is a matter of hard work, focused attention and daily rituals. That is where all sustainable greatness comes from.

We have developed in the West a strange view of religious experience: that it's what overwhelms you when something happens completely outside the run of normal experience. You climb a mountain and look down. You are miraculously saved from danger. You find yourself part of a vast and cheering crowd. It's how the German Lutheran theologian Rudolf Otto (1869-1937) defined "the holy": as a mystery (mysterium) both terrifying (tremendum) and fascinating (fascinans). You are awed by the presence of something vast. We have all had such experiences.

But that is all they are: experiences. They linger in the memory, but they are not part of everyday life. They are not woven into the texture of our character.

They do not affect what we do or achieve or become. Judaism is about changing us so that we become creative artists whose greatest creation is our own life. (A point made by Rabbi Joseph Soloveitchik in his essay, Halakhic Man.) And that needs daily rituals: Shacharit, Mincha, Maariv, the food we eat, the way we behave at work or in the home, the choreography of holiness which is the special contribution of the priestly dimension of Judaism, set out in this week's parsha and throughout the book of Vayikra.

These rituals have an effect. We now know through PET and fMRI scans that repeated spiritual exercise reconfigures the brain. It gives us inner resilience. It makes us more grateful. It gives us a sense of basic trust in the Source of our being. It shapes our identity, the way we act and talk and think. Ritual is to spiritual greatness what practice is to a tennis player, daily writing disciplines are to a novelist, and reading company accounts are to Warren Buffett. They are the precondition of high achievement. Serving G-d is avodah, which means hard work.

If you seek sudden inspiration, then work at it every day for a year or a lifetime. That is how it comes. As every famous golfer is said to have said when asked for the secret of his success: "I was just lucky. But the funny thing is that the harder I practice, the luckier I become." The more you seek spiritual heights, the more you need the ritual and routine of halakhah, the Jewish "way" to G-d. ©2016 Rabbi Lord J. Sacks and rabbisacks.org

**RABBI SHLOMO RISKIN**

## Shabbat Shalom

"**N**ow you bring near to yourself Aaron your brother and his sons with him.... to minister to Me. You shall make vestments of sanctity for Aaron your brother, for honor and splendor" (Exodus 28:1,2) The two leaders during this interim "desert" period of 40 years were Moses the prophet and Aaron the kohen-priest. Moses's main task was to bring the Word of G-d to instruct the Israelites how to behave with each other as individuals and families and how to interact with the world at large as a nation; Aaron's main task was to maintain the religious ceremonies and celebrations in order to serve as the guardian over how the Israelites were to serve their G-d.

From this perspective, there seems to have been a fairly clear line of demarcation between affairs of state and affairs of religion. Nonetheless, because it was G-d who was the Ultimate Architect of every realm of life as well as the Ultimate Source for the laws of their governance, there could never be more than a fairly transparent curtain separating the two; after all, serving the will of the One G-d of compassionate righteousness and moral justice had to be the operating goals of both religion and state, respectively and together, as we are mandated by the Bible again and

again.

However, there is one crucial distinction: Although there must be fundamental and absolute principles of justice governing all affairs, still changing conditions in the social and economic spheres as well as differences between the two individuals standing before the judge must certainly influence the outcome of the judgment; justice dare not be blind (see Babylonian Talmud, Bava Metzia 83). Hence it is very rare that two cases, even if similar to each other, will be adjudicated in the exact same way, and a great deal of latitude must ultimately be given to the individual rendering judgment.

This is not the case in ritual law as expressed in the Sanctuary or the synagogue, as I believe we may derive from the opening verses of our biblical portion, which is dedicated to the priesthood and its functions. It is fascinating how Aaron is introduced together with his two sons, and is then presented with the special garments he must wear when serving in the sanctuary.

Unlike Moses and the prophets throughout the generations, the priesthood (kehuna) is indeed transmitted from father to son; unless the priest is properly garbed in his special vestments, he may not enter the Temple precincts. The kohen-priest, you see, is entrusted with transmitting the outer form of Judaism, its external structure; reminding us that the inner fire and internal spirit of our faith is the task of the charismatic prophet. External garb may be inherited and physical performance may be taught; but inspiration of the Holy Spirit is a divine gift and an individual acquisition independent of biology.

To be sure, there can be no meaningful religious experience without the sense of the Divine in the here and now, without the spirit of the prophet; but neither can religion be maintained without the continuation of the kohen-priest. And this continuity is equally crucial to the religious-ritual experience. From the earliest times of the pre-Socratic philosophers, humanity has desperately sought for constancy in a world of change, for transcendence in a world which is transitory, for the ability to participate in that which was here before I was born and which will still be here after I die.

This, too, is an important aspect of the quest for G-d, the search for the Divine. And so we have the human need to maintain time-honored traditions, to repeat familial customs, to pray not from an ever-changing loose-leaf but rather from an ancient text which is wine-stained and tear-worn from feasts and fasts, which go back centuries and even millennia.

AFTER THE Yom Kippur War, prime minister Golda Meir went to New York for a dinner in her honor sponsored by the Conference of Presidents of American Organizations. As the young president of a fledgling Center for Russian Jewry at the time, I was

invited and seated two tables away from the Prime Minister. I was fascinated by the undisguised boredom on her face as she was forced to sit through the unending litany of inane and sycophantic speeches, the evident relief she exuded when at long last the dinner was being served, and the ambidextrous grace she exhibited in balancing knife, fork and cigarette as she elegantly began to eat and smoke at the same time.

And then, to her obvious annoyance, an un-programmed "private" presentation of Rabbi Mordecai Kaplan's interpretation of the Haggada was handed to her just as she was taking her third bite. I know of the Haggada, which substituted the Holocaust for the Egyptian enslavement and the establishment of the State of Israel for the desert experience, and they presented it to her with great pride and flourish.

She seemed a bit exasperated, put down her utensils and flipped through the Haggada, and then, in true Israeli fashion, returned it, saying, "Thank you very much, but I'm not really interested."

The delegation of two looked shocked. "But Madam Prime Minister, surely you're not an Orthodox Jew and this Haggada brings the story up to date, to the State of Israel."

"No," said Golda, "I'm not an Orthodox Jew and I'll never be one. But I do make a Pessah Seder, especially for my grandchildren, and what is more important to me is that my grand-daughter say at my Seder the same words that my grandmother said at her Seder." That's the eternity of Israel. ©2016 *Ohr Torah Institutions & Rabbi S. Riskin*

#### RABBI BEREL WEIN

### Wein Online

**A**lmost the entire Torah reading of this week concerns itself in great detail with the garments of Aharon and his descendants as they performed their duties first in the Mishkan/Tabernacle and later in the Temple in Jerusalem. The obvious question is why should the Torah devote so much space and detail to such a technical matter. Of what major significance is what those garments looked like and of what materials they were manufactured?

I have written about this in previous years but I now have a different insight into the matter, which I wish to share with you. While here in the United States, my visit coincided with the Super Bowl football game, which dominated the attention of three hundred million people. This game is an industry unto itself, generating billions of dollars to all sorts of businesses which are somehow connected collaterally to the actual game.

One of the major streams of this collateral revenue is the sale of the uniform jerseys of the teams that participated in the championship game. Now, logically speaking, why should anyone be willing to pay an exorbitant price to wear a uniform jersey with the logo of a team that one does not belong to and the

name of some other individual who is a complete stranger to the wearer? Yet, such is the nature of human beings. It is an urge to identify with something or someone greater than the average individual. And clothing is the easiest avenue for such vicarious identification.

The Torah recognizes this when it describes the garments of Aharon and his descendants as garments of "honor and glory." Honor and glory are usually ascribed as being descriptive of the feelings and status of the wearer of these glorious garments.

However, it can also be interpreted as to how the ordinary Jew responds when he or she sees the High Priest in his holy uniform. They feel honored and glorious, part of a great faith with heroic leaders, identified with the vision and promise of Sinai.

For noble people, the detailed description of the clothing and the garments only serves to heighten this feeling of identification with something greater and more triumphant. Added to this is the generational benefit that the garments are always the same for centuries on end.

The grandfather and the grandchild have the same feeling of self-pride and spiritual identification. This feeling of belonging to the Jewish people, to its faith, past and future, is the key to Jewish survival over the centuries. And, the consistent moral standards of the Torah correspond somehow to the unchanging description of the holy garments of the priesthood of the Jewish people.

It is fascinating to note that the older the sports jersey is, the closer to the original design and fabric, the more valuable the item is to people. Well, in a much more exalted fashion, the same is true regarding the priestly garments. The original Torah is the one of eternal worth and generational value. ©2016 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](http://www.rabbiwein.com). For more information on these and other products visit [www.rabbiwein.com](http://www.rabbiwein.com)

**RABBI AVI WEISS**

## Shabbat Forshpeis

**T**he 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. ©2016 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

**"A**nd you shall make an altar [upon which to] burn incense" (Sh'mos 30:1). One of the questions the commentators ask (with numerous answers suggested) is why the "golden altar," one of the vessels that was inside the Mishkan's sanctuary, was not commanded along with the other

major vessels of the Mishkan (25:10-40), but was first commanded after the structure itself (26:1-37), the outer altar (27:1-8), the courtyard (27:8-19), the priestly garments (28:2-43), the priests' initiation rites, the seven-days of consecration (29:1-37), and the daily offerings (29:38-42). As if that isn't enough, the section of the commandment to build the Mishkan seems to come to a close, with G-d telling Moshe that He will communicate to the nation (through Moshe) in the Mishkan (29:42-43), that the Mishkan, its altar, and the priests will be sanctified (29:44), and that (after all this has been done) He will dwell amongst the nation (29:45-46), which is the ultimate purpose of the Mishkan (25:8). Why was such an integral part of the Mishkan left unmentioned until after the general commandment to build the Mishkan had concluded? [It should be noted that once the golden incense altar was commanded, it was always included whenever the vessels of the Mishkan are mentioned, and listed as one of the primary vessels, making its omission in the original commandment quite puzzling.] Although I will not attempt a thorough presentation of the answers suggested (I can sense the sighs of relief), I will use one as a jumping off point before getting to the answer that resonates most with me.

S'fornu says that the incense altar was not included with the other vessels because its intention was not to cause G-d's divine presence to descend onto the Mishkan and dwell within it. Putting aside whether this would be enough of a reason to postpone mentioning it until after the commandments regarding Mishkan were done, this line of reasoning is diametrically opposed to what the Tosafists (25:6, which I quoted last week) say was one of the reasons the incense was included in the list of materials to be donated for the building of the Mishkan (as opposed to for the service done within it); since the cloud created by the incense was necessary before G-d would "appear" in the Mishkan (Vayikra 16:2), it was considered necessary for the structure itself. Although it is not uncommon for commentators to have differing, even mutually exclusive, opinions, that one (or some) could posit that the incense was so integral to the functioning of the Mishkan -- and G-d dwelling within it -- that it had to be included in the initial list of materials even though the materials needed for other offerings (i.e. animals and grains) was not, while another can posit that the incense was so irrelevant to the functioning of the Mishkan and G-d dwelling within it that the vessel upon which it was brought wasn't even included in the main section of the instructions for building the Mishkan, seems quite odd. I will therefore attempt to show how, conceptually at least, both could be right, even if a fundamental difference of opinion between them remains.

There is a well known dispute between the commentators whether the commandment to build the

Mishkan occurred during Moshe's first set of 40 days atop Mt. Sinai, before the sin of the golden calf, or during his last set of 40 days, after G-d forgave the nation (to some extent) for the sin of the golden calf (see pg. 2 of <http://tinyurl.com/yjzszhg>). One of the points the dispute revolves around is whether the Mishkan was meant as an ideal means of serving G-d and forging/maintaining a relationship with Him, or only became necessary as part of the recovery process from the sin of the golden calf. As I have previously discussed (<http://tinyurl.com/ojht4vq>), just as some are of the opinion that the Mishkan itself only became necessary because of the sin of the golden calf, and that there were other changes that became necessary because of that sin (such as the nature of the Luchos, see Nachalas Yaakov and Beis HaLeivi, or the offerings brought to consecrate the Mishkan, see Ramban on Vayikra 9:2), it follows that even if there would have been a Mishkan had there been no golden calf, the way we related to G-d in the Mishkan, and therefore how the Mishkan was to be constructed and operated, may have changed too.

Rabbi Moshe Shamah ("Recalling the Covenant," pgs. 449-450) and Rabbi Meir Spiegelman (<http://tinyurl.com/gmkyshd>) apply this concept to the golden altar, suggesting that originally there was not going to be one, but due to the sin of the golden calf, it became necessary. Rabbi Shamah points out that offering incense saved the nation from further damage from the plague sent after they complained about Korach's followers dying (Bamidbar 17:11-14); Midrash Tanchuma (T'zaveh 15) says explicitly that the incense offering brings forgiveness. It follows, then, that after the sin of the golden calf, which left a permanent stain on the nation that created a constant need for forgiveness (see Rashi on 32:34), it became necessary for incense offerings to be brought twice daily. Since this need only arose after the sin of the golden calf, the incense altar wasn't part of the original plans for the Mishkan. Therefore, when the Torah lays out the instructions given to Moshe before the golden calf, the incense altar was not included. Instead, it was taught immediately afterwards, because it eventually became an integral part of the Mishkan.

That the instructions for the incense altar were first given at the end of the last set of 40 days is evident from the fact that the Yom Kippur service is referenced at the end of those instructions (30:10), and Yom Kippur was only established after Moshe had descended with the second set of Luchos and permission/instructions to build the Mishkan because G-d had (once again) agreed to dwell amongst the nation within it, which occurred on [the day that became] Yom Kippur (see Rashi on 18:13). Rabbi Shamah says it is also evident that the incense altar was not included when the initial instructions were given (during the first set of 40 days) because the outer

altar is referred to as "the altar" (27:1), a term that only applies if there is only one altar. [That the vessels on the other side of the curtain from the ark are listed (26:35) without mentioning the incense altar fits this explanation well, but without there having been any mention yet of an incense altar, there was no way it could be included in the list, so is part of the original question of why it hadn't been mentioned yet.] Although calling the outer altar "the altar" fits better if there was only one altar, it is referred to as "the altar" again even after the incense altar was commanded (30:18). And even though it is clear from the context that the altar outside the sanctuary must be the one referred to, if there was another altar inside the sanctuary (and referring to any altar as "the altar" implies that there are no others), that term should not have been employed there. [It could be suggested that the entire paragraph of the laver was "cut and pasted" from the instructions given during the first set of 40 days, when there was no other altar, but this opens the door to a lot of additional speculation that I will not get into here. I will add, though, that if this paragraph was "cut and pasted," it would explain why there is a new "dibur" (30:17) as if it is a separate communication, while the initial instructions were all given in just one "dibur." It should be noted that the paragraph that follows mentions the incense altar explicitly, so (according to this line of thinking) must not have been taught during the first set of 40 days.]

There is one glaring issue that still needs to be resolved, as the incense itself is mentioned as one of the materials to be donated (25:6), so obviously even the original plans including offering incense. However, incense does not necessarily need an altar to be offered, as it can be brought on a fire-pan (see Bamidbar 16:6/18 and 17:11). [As a matter of fact, according to Meshech Chochmah it is precisely because the incense offering does not need its altar to be valid (as opposed to the lamps needing the Menorah and the show-bread needing the Shulchan) that the incense altar wasn't included with the other vessels.] Rabbi Spiegelman suggests that had there been no golden calf, the incense would have only been brought when Moshe (or the Kohain Gadol) entered the inner-sanctum, not every day, as G-d would still have only "appeared" in the incense cloud (or, put differently, a cloud-covering would have still been necessary before anyone could enter the inner-sanctum).

Based on this, the idea that the incense offering was not necessary for G-d's divine presence to descend upon the Mishkan is true, had there been no golden calf that necessitated constant forgiveness. (Bear in mind that according to S'forno, if not for the sin of the golden calf there wouldn't a Mishkan would not have been needed for His divine presence to dwell within us -- see his commentary on 24:18 -- so his need for a Mishkan after the sin can be compared to the

need for a Mishkan before the sin if the nature of the Mishkan had to change after the sin.) At the same time, it is also true that after the sin of the golden calf, the incense altar became necessary for G-d's divine presence to dwell amongst us, while also being true that the incense itself was necessary even before the sin for divine communication to occur within the Mishkan, which was one of its prime purposes (see 25:22 and 29:42-43). In other words, the incense itself was necessary whether or not there was a golden calf. The incense altar, on the other hand, only became necessary because of it. © 2016 Rabbi D. Kramer

#### HARAV SHLOMO WOLBE ZT"L

### **Bais Hamussar**

**R**av Wolbe (Da'as Shlomo) comments that one who is very particular about his clothing, will only buy a suit from a tailor. A suit tailored to their specific body sits better on them than a store bought suit. In this regard, the world of ruchniyus is no different from the material world. There are "ordinary" articles of spiritual clothing, and there are articles that are "hand tailored" to fit a person.

Rabbeinu Yonah writes (Sha'arei Teshuvah 1:10) that every person should be aware that, "Hashem has blown into my nostrils a living spirit, wisdom of the heart... to enable me... to fear Him." Why does Rabbeinu Yonah emphasize that the wisdom given to us is wisdom "of the heart?" The answer can be found in the menorah oil discussed in this week's parsha.

Parshas Tetzaveh commences with Hashem instructing Moshe to command Bnei Yisrael to prepare the purest olive oil for the lighting of the menorah. In Parshas Vayakhel (35:14) this unique oil is listed among the various components of the Mishkan whose preparation required the expertise of "wise hearted men." Rashi explains that this was so because this oil was different from all other oils. Only the ripest olives from the top of the tree were used, and only the very first drop squeezed from each olive qualified to be used as oil for the menorah.

Just as the oil of the menorah needed the expertise of "wise hearted" men because it differed from ordinary oil, so too, the fear of Hashem requires "wisdom of the heart" because it differs from ordinary fear. The Navi Yeshaya (29:13), relaying Hashem's castigation of Bnei Yisrael, declares, "Their fear of Me is like commands performed by rote." Indeed they feared Hashem, but their fear was robotic. They practiced their fear by rote as if was a standard item that one acquires in any store. Their fear was not tailored to fit their individuality.

So who is the tailor that can outfit a person with a perfect garb of yiras Shamayim?

The tailor is the person himself! Each person for himself, after becoming cognizant of his specific set of virtues and deficiencies, can fashion a spiritual suit

that should fit him like a glove. The wisdom required to achieve this goal cannot be found in a sefer. No two people are the same and no two situations are the same, and thus, the guidelines set down for Reuven will not work for Shimon. Rather, this knowledge can be found by each person in the wisdom of his heart.

Just because your neighbor eats in a specific restaurant doesn't mean that you should, and just because your friend dresses in a specific manner doesn't mean that you have to. The only place to look to find the answers to what you should or should not be doing is in the mirror. Take a deep breath, smile, and define for yourself where you stand in the spiritual arena. This exercise will enable you to stop wearing borrowed clothing and begin enjoying the advantage of wearing a perfectly tailored suit! ©2016 Rabbi S. Wolbe zt"l & AishDas Society

### **PARSHA POTPOURRI**

## **Wisdom of the Heart**

by Rabbi O. Alport

**P**arshas Tetzaveh introduces us to the unique garments that were worn by the Kohanim during the time that they served in the Temple. Because these vestments were so special and holy, they couldn't simply be made by anybody who possessed the necessary skills and craftsmanship.

G-d specifically instructed Moshe to command the wise of heart to make these special garments for Aharon and his sons (Exodus 28:3). This is difficult to understand. We are accustomed to associating wisdom with the brain. Why does the Torah stress that their wisdom was found in their hearts?

Rabbi Leib Chasman explains that our understanding of wisdom is fundamentally flawed. From the Torah's perspective, a wise person is not a Harvard professor who is able to intelligently discuss esoteric topics in difficult academic subjects. If his actions don't reflect his sophisticated intellectual knowledge, the facts and theorems which he has stored in his head, or even developed and named after himself, are essentially meaningless.

For example, an expert botanist who is intimately familiar with the scientific characteristics and medicinal properties of every plant and herb in the world, yet chooses to recommend and distribute poisonous plants instead of healing ones can hardly be defined as wise. He is more accurately compared to a donkey laden with a pile of thick tomes on the subject of botany. The knowledge that he has acquired in his brain remains for him an external load which has failed to penetrate into his heart.

The Torah recognizes that the primary criterion for evaluating wisdom lies in the ability to connect one's mind, and the information stored therein, with his heart, which guides his actions. It is for this reason that G-d stressed the importance of selecting the truly wise --

the wise of heart.

This concept is illustrated by a well-known, if perhaps apocryphal, story which is told about one of the famous Greek philosophers. In between lessons, his students once encountered him in a section of town known for its immoral activities (what they were doing there hasn't been established).

Unable to reconcile his behavior with the lofty philosophical teachings that he espoused during his lectures, his students pressed him for an explanation. The legendary philosopher answered them, "When class is in session, I am your great teacher, and I share my pearls of wisdom with you. At other times, I am not the philosopher with whom you are familiar."

We live in a society which holds wisdom and its pursuers in high esteem. We benefit from this atmosphere which motivates us to pursue education and wisdom, as Judaism clearly places a high value on the importance of learning. Yet as we pursue our studies, it is important to be cognizant of the Torah's message about the true definition of wisdom. Parshas Tetzaveh teaches us to make sure that whatever we study penetrates our hearts and becomes part of us so that it influences and guides our future actions and makes us truly wise.

### **Knock Before You Enter**

by Rabbi N. Reich

Few sights were more spectacular than the Kohen Gadol, the High Priest, resplendent in full golden regalia, his vestments formed from the finest fabrics, precious metals and rare jewels. It was a vision of pure artistry and unimaginable beauty. And little wonder. What else would one expect from an ensemble designed down to its smallest detail by the Master of the Universe Himself? But the beauty of the priestly vestments went beyond simple esthetics. They glowed with inner spiritual incandescence, each intricate detail laden with secret mystical significance, each element essential to the efficacy of the Kohen Gadol as the perfect conduit between the Jewish people and Hashem.

What was the purpose of all the individual features of the vestments mentioned in this week's portion? The Torah only spells out the purpose of one of them. The Kohen Gadol wore a four-cornered robe of blue wool whose hem was adorned with alternating golden pomegranates and bells. Why bells? Because "its sound should be heard when he enters the Sanctuary before Hashem." Apparently this is a very important feature of the robe, because the Torah metes out a severe punishment for the omission of the bells. Our Sages understood that the bells are meant to teach us basic decency and decorum, that we must not invade the privacy of others by injecting ourselves into their presence without warning. Proper etiquette is to knock on the door before entering. Just as the bells

announced the Kohen Gadol's arrival in the Sanctuary so must we announce ourselves wherever we go and not barge in unexpectedly.

Nonetheless, the questions remain. Surely, Hashem knows perfectly well when the Kohen Gadol is approaching, regardless of whether or not he is preceded by the tinkling of bells. Why then does the Torah choose to teach us this lesson in this particular setting? Wouldn't it have been more appropriate to teach us this lesson in a more mundane setting involving ordinary people who can be caught unawares?

The commentators explain that the Torah is teaching us an additional lesson here, a lesson of critical importance. We might think that in the pursuit of high spiritual goals it is acceptable to bend the rules of simple decency a little bit. Not so, says the Torah. Even at the supernal moment when the Kohen Gadol enters the Holy of Holiest, the closest point of contact between a mortal and the Master of the Universe, he must still remember the rules of basic decency. He must wear bells upon the hem of his robe to announce his arrival.

In our own lives, we often get caught up in our daily urgencies, and sometimes, this leads us to overlook the rules of simple decency and courtesy. If we are late for an appointment, we rationalize, then it is all right to elbow our way through a crowd or drive a little more aggressively than we normally would. Let us remember, therefore, that nothing was more important than the Kohen Gadol entering the Holy of Holies, and yet the rules of simple decency always took precedence.



### Kindling the Menorah

by Rabbi O.C. Levene

Every morning and evening, Aharon and his children were to tend to the lighting of the Menorah, the seven-branched candelabrum in the Sanctuary. This process included cleaning the oil cups, replacing old wicks and refilling the cups with the requisite quantity of oil (Exodus 27:20).

There is great depth to the symbolism of kindling the lights of the menorah,

The prefix *Atah Tetzaveh*, "you shall command" to the precept of lighting the menorah comes to underscore how the general process of mitzvah performance is itself synonymous with kindling these lights. What does this mean?

Obviously, G-d has no need for the light of the Menorah lamps. What lies within this commandment is His demand that man mirrors His original "light". In the memorable words of the Midrash, the Creator asked His chosen ones "Just as I have kindled your light, so too, should you kindle a light for Me." (*Shemos Rabbah* 36:2).

The "light" which G-d eternally kindles is man's "soul".

And the manner in how a human being can, so-to-speak, repay back this light it to dedicate his whole existence to kindling a light for G-d. The way to achieve this is through *shemiras hamitzvos*, mitzvah observance insofar as "A mitzvah is a lamp and the Torah is light" (*Mishlei* 6:23).

In our world of darkness, G-d is concealed. The primeval "light" and the spiritual realm are hidden. And yet, it is up to the Jewish people, to reverse this.

They can achieve this by "lighting up".

Their mitzvah observance is what "lights up the world". And it is the power of His word, where engraved upon their very being, their eternal "soul", that is the roaring flame for kindling lives.

Fulfilling the dictates of the Torah "fires" the individual's enthusiasm and lifelong commitment. It is this which radically transforms every individual Jew into a mitzvah.

Yes, the Jew himself "becomes" a mitzvah.

This is because he, like the precept, becomes the "command" of His Creator. He is the one to illuminate the "light of Torah" through the radiance of his "mitzvah lamp". All the spiritual potency and energy originates by virtue of the fact that the mitzvah is divine. And he is akin to the "lamp" which is to carry the "light" into this world.

This ignites every one of his 248 limbs and 365 sinews, converting them into vessels which reflect -- exactly -- the divine will in the 248 positive commandments and 365 negative commandments that are meant to be fulfilled. Furthermore, it is responsible for purifying and sanctifying the person into a more G-dly vessel.

It is the Jew who is to kindle the lights. It is not just the lamps of the menorah that were lit in the Sanctuary. It is the person himself whose soul is kindled. It is the component of the "command" that is the primary factor. His "light" and existence is determined by the extent through which he relates to G-d.

The inspiration of mitzvah performance -- and how much it is made part of man's being -- that turns him, into the perfect vessel to reflect the divine light such that, like the lights of the Menorah lit by Aharon and his children, it shines outwards. And the illumination of the "light" of the divine glory is a factor of the Jew's commitment to G-d and how it is majestically revealed into this world.

