

Trumpus



Aish

The Hillary-ous Torah newsletter that underSanders the issues of the day!

It might be a bit punful & we might be Cruzin for a bruisin' but this issue really is chock full of diamonds & Rubios!

CHIEF RABBI LORD JONATHAN SACKS

Covenant & Conversation

The American Declaration of Independence speaks of the inalienable rights of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. Recently, following the pioneering work of Martin Seligman, founder of Positive Psychology, there have been hundreds of books on happiness. Yet there is something more fundamental still to the sense of a life well-lived, namely, meaning. The two seem similar. It's easy to suppose that people who find meaning are happy, and people who are happy have found meaning. But the two are not the same, nor do they always overlap.

Happiness is largely a matter of satisfying needs and wants. Meaning, by contrast, is about a sense of purpose in life, especially by making positive contributions to the lives of others. Happiness is largely about how you feel in the present. Meaning is about how you judge your life as a whole: past, present and future.

Happiness is associated with taking, meaning with giving. Individuals who suffer stress, worry or anxiety are not happy, but they may be living lives rich with meaning. Past misfortunes reduce present happiness, but people often connect such moments with the discovery of meaning. Happiness is not unique to humans. Animals also experience contentment when their wants and needs are satisfied. But meaning is a distinctively human phenomenon. It has to do not with nature but with culture. It is not about what happens to us, but about how we interpret what happens to us. There can be happiness without meaning, and there can be meaning in the absence of happiness, even in the midst of darkness and pain.¹

In a fascinating article in The Atlantic, 'There's more to life than being happy'², Emily Smith argued that the pursuit of happiness can result



in a relatively shallow, self-absorbed, even selfish life. What makes the pursuit of meaning different is that it is about the search for something larger than the self.

No one did more to put the question of meaning into modern discourse than the late Viktor Frankl, who has figured prominently in this year's Covenant and Conversation essays on spirituality. In the three years he spent in Auschwitz, Frankl survived and helped others to survive by helping them to discover a purpose in life even in the midst of hell on earth. It was there that he formulated the ideas he later turned into a new type of psychotherapy based on what he called "man's search for meaning". His book of that title, written in the course of nine days in 1946, has sold more than ten million copies throughout the world, and ranks as one of the most influential works of the twentieth century.

Frankl knew that in the camps, those who lost the will to live died. He tells of how he helped two individuals to find a reason to survive. One, a woman, had a child waiting for her in another country. Another had written the first volumes of a series of travel books, and there were others yet to write. Both therefore had a reason to live.

Frankl used to say that the way to find meaning was not to ask what we want from life. Instead we should ask what life wants from us. We are each, he said, unique: in our gifts, our abilities, our skills and talents, and in the circumstances of our life. For each of us, then, there is a task only we can do. This does not mean that we are better than others. But if we believe we are here for a reason, then there is a tikkun, a mending, only we can perform, a fragment of light only we can redeem, an act of kindness or courage or generosity or hospitality, even a word of encouragement or a smile, only we can perform, because we are here, in this place, at this time, facing this person at this moment in their lives.

"Life is a task", he used to say, and added, "The religious man differs from the apparently irreligious man only by experiencing his existence not simply as a task, but as a mission." He or she is aware of

¹ See Roy F. Baumeister, Kathleen D. Vohs, Jennifer Aaker, and Emily N. Garbinsky, 'Some Key Differences between a Happy Life and a Meaningful Life,' Journal of Positive Psychology 2013, Vol. 8, Issue 6, Pages 505-516.

² Emily Smith, 'There's more to life than being happy,' The Atlantic, 9 Jan. 2013.

TRUMPUS AISH IS PRIMARY-LY A PURIM PUBLICATION THAT DIDN'T ORIGINATE IN PHILLY, BUSTER, BUT TRIES TO WHIP THINGS UP & CAN GET REALLY HAIRY! SOME PEOPLE WILL GET ALL BERNIE-D UP OVER THESE HILLARY-OUS PUNS. BUT MARCO MY WORDS, IF YOU CRUZ ON OVER & COMB RIGHT IN YOU'LL HAVE A YUUUUGELY GREAT TIME! YOU CAN CONSIDER THIS GERRYMANDER THAT WHAT'S REALLY RIGHT PROBABLY LEFT AWHILE AGO! SO I SUGGEST YOU JUST CHILLAX & ENJOY THIS NON CARSON-OGENIC NEWSLETTER THAT MAY JUST KASICH YOU OFF-GUARD!



You're probably thinking, "Seriously? Politics in a Purim issue?"
Um, no. Definitely nothing serious about politics in this issue. Actually, if you're following all the current politics there's not too much serious out there either. Except that maybe we've all got some serious thinking to do if the current candidates are the best we have! Yikes! Have a happy Purim!

being summoned, called, by a Source. "For thousands of years that source has been called G-d."¹

That is the significance of the word that gives our parsha, and the third book of the Torah, its name: Vayikra, "And He called." The precise meaning of this opening verse is difficult to understand. Literally translated it reads: "And He called to Moses, and G-d spoke to him from the Tent of Meeting, saying ..." The first phrase seems to be redundant. If we are told that G-d spoke to Moses, why say in addition, "And He called"? Rashi explains as follows: And He called to Moses: Every [time G-d communicated with Moses, whether signalled by the expression] "And He spoke", or "and He said", or "and He commanded", it was always preceded by [G-d] calling [to Moses by name].² "Calling" is an expression of endearment. It is the expression employed by the ministering angels, as it says, "And one called to the other..." (Isa. 6:3).

Vayikra, Rashi is telling us, means to be called to a task in love. This is the source of one of the key ideas of Western thought, namely the concept of a vocation or a calling, that is, the choice of a career or way of life not just because you want to do it, or because it offers certain benefits,

¹ Viktor Frankl, *The Doctor and the Soul: from Psychotherapy to Logotherapy*, New York: A.A. Knopf, 1965, 13.

² Rashi to Vayikra 1:1.

but because you feel summoned to it. You feel this is your meaning and mission in life. This is what you were placed on earth to do.

There are many such calls in Tanakh. There was the call Abraham heard to leave his land and family. There was the call to Moses at the burning bush (Ex. 3:4). There was the one experienced by Isaiah when he saw in a mystical vision G-d enthroned and surrounded by angels: Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?" And I said, "Here am I. Send me!" (Isaiah 6:8)

One of the most touching is the story of the young Samuel, dedicated by his mother Hannah to serve in the sanctuary at Shiloh where he acted as an assistant to Eli the priest. In bed at night he heard a voice calling his name. He assumed it was Eli. He ran to see what he wanted but Eli told him he had not called. This happened a second time and then a third, and by then Eli realised that it was G-d calling the child. He told Samuel that the next time the voice called his name, he should reply, 'Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening.' It did not occur to the child that it might be G-d summoning him to a mission, but it was. Thus began his career as a prophet, judge and anointer of Israel's first two kings, Saul and David (1 Samuel 3).

When we see a wrong to be righted, a sickness to be healed, a need to be met, and we feel it speaking to us, that is when we come as close as we can in a post-prophetic age to hearing Vayikra, G-d's call. And why does the word appear here, at the beginning of the third and central book of the Torah? Because the book of Vayikra is about sacrifices, and a vocation is about sacrifices. We are willing to make sacrifices when we feel they are part of the task we are called on to do.

From the perspective of eternity we may sometimes be overwhelmed by a sense of our own insignificance. We are no more than a wave in the ocean, a grain of sand on the sea shore, dust on the surface of infinity. Yet we are here because G-d wanted us to be, because there is a task He wants us to perform. The search for meaning is the quest for this task.

Each of us is unique. Even genetically identical twins are different. There are things only we can do, we who are what we are, in this time, this place and these circumstances. For each of us G-d has a task: work to perform, a kindness to show, a gift to give, love to share, loneliness to ease, pain to heal, or broken lives to help mend. Discerning that task, hearing Vayikra, G-d's call, is one of the great spiritual challenges for each of us.

How do we know what it is? Some years ago, in *To Heal a Fractured World*, I offered this as a guide, and it still seems to me to make sense: Where what we want to do meets what needs to be done, that is where G-d wants us to be. ©2016 Rabbi Lord J. Sacks and rabbisacks.org

*What is the difference between a Hippo & a Zippo?
A Hippo is really heavy. But a Zippo is a little lighter!*

RABBI AVI WEISS

Shabbat Forshpeis



Why is the letter aleph in the word va-yikra, the very first word of the Book of Leviticus written smaller than the others? Smaller, suggests the Ba'al Turim, because it points to Moshe's (Moses) humility — teaching an ethical lesson. Moshe preferred the text to read va-yikar without a final aleph, as va-yikar means "by chance." Rather than state that G-d called Moshe (va-yikra) implying a constant close relationship, Moshe in his modesty wished the text to read that on occasion G-d spoke with him (va-yikar). Moshe, of course, adheres to G-d's command that the aleph be included, but does so humbly and writes a small aleph.

A second, more mystical thought comes to mind. Rav Avraham Yitzchak Kook, the first Ashkenazic Chief Rabbi of Israel insists that the soul is made up of different Hebrew letters. When performing a mitzvah (commandment) Rav Kook argues, the letters shine brightly. In other words, whatever the action required for a religious observance, it ought to reflect an inner spiritual quest — and, that quest is expressed through the illumination of the inner letters.

Perhaps this teaching explains why the aleph is smaller. The aleph being the first letter of the alphabet represents all Hebrew letters, and those letters for Rav Kook mirror the idea of the "soul aglow." A korban (sacrifice) which is the subject of G-d's calling to Moshe (va-yikra) should not remain an external empty gesture. It must be complemented by the human being's inner decision to internalize the mitzvah. Hence, the aleph is distinguished by being written small, as the goal of the sacrifice is to stir the figuratively small albeit powerful "lights of the soul" drawing one near G-d. No wonder the very word korban comes from the word karov, to come close to G-d.

A final Chassidic thought: Rav Shlomo Carlebach often told the story of the Munkatcher passport. In this story his uncle asked the Munkatcher Rebbe for a passport to travel from Munkatcher to Berlin just before WW II. Considering the climate of the times the request seemed impossible to fulfill. After many hours, the Rebbe emerged from his private chambers and gave him an empty piece of paper soaked with tears with which Shlomo's uncle was escorted everywhere in Germany with great honor.

Rav Shlomo explained that the Munkatcher passport surfaces over and over in our lives. When a bride walks around the groom, they give each other the Munkatcher passport. When children are born they close their eyes and cry, giving to and receiving from their parents the Munkatcher passport. And when we stand near the Kotel to pray before the Lord, we do

so with the Munkatcher passport. And, concluded Rav Shlomo, when we begin the Talmud, we start on the second page — daf bet. Where is daf aleph, the first page? It is empty, absolutely empty. It is the Munkatcher passport.

Rav Shlomo never explained what the Munkatcher passport meant, but for me it represents infinite love. Hence the aleph of va-yikra is small to remind us of the importance of approaching G-d with daf aleph, with the Munkatcher passport — symbolic of the unconditional love that we ought to have for G-d and that G-d has for us and that we should all have for each other. . ©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.

I started a band called 999 Megabytes — we haven't gotten a gig yet.

RABBI DOV KRAMER

Taking a Closer Look



"And He called to Moshe, and G-d spoke to him" (Vayikra 1:1). "For all communiqués, and for all messages, and for all commandments, there was a 'calling' that preceded it" (Rashi). Toras Kohanim (Rashi's source) specifies that G-d "called" to Moshe before speaking to him at the burning bush (Sh'mos 3:4), on Mt. Sinai (Sh'mos 24:16; 19:3 and 19:20 may not qualify since there is no "and He spoke to him" or "and He said to him" following the "calling," and it is the double-language of "calling" and "saying" or "speaking" that proves there was a "calling" before each communication, although there is a discussion among the commentators about which "calling" is being referred to) and in the Tent of Meeting (Vayikra 1:1), and adds that this applies to every time G-d spoke to Moshe in the Tent of Meeting (the Mishkan).

Rabbi Yitzchok Sorotzkin, sh'lita (Rinas Yitzchok III) quotes Rashi (Sh'mos 33:11), who says that from Yom Kippur until the Mishkan started operating on the 1st of Nisan, G-d's divine presence would go to Moshe's "Tent of Meeting" and speak to him there, and asks whether there was a "calling" prior to these communications as well.

Although he never comes to a full resolution, he does say that the fact that Toras Kohanim doesn't mention that there was also a "calling" in Moshe's "Tent of Meeting" implies that there wasn't. However, the Midrash says that if not for the fact that we can't apply what happened at Moshe's first divine communication to subsequent ones, we would know there was a "calling" in the Mishkan based on the fact that there was one at the burning bush. It then says that even though there was also a "calling" at Sinai despite it not being the first communication, we still can't apply what happened there to the Mishkan, since the communication at Sinai was for

(or on behalf of) the entire nation, as opposed to the communication in the Mishkan, which was not. [It is unclear why one was considered for the entire nation and one wasn't, but since it will not impact this discussion, we will put that aside for now.] An attempt is then made to apply the concept of there being a "calling" to the Mishkan by combining the two precedents (a "calling" by the burning bush and at Mt. Sinai), with the issues preventing us from knowing this from either of them (on their own) covered by the other (a "tzad hashaveh"). This is rejected because there was a fire at both the burning bush and atop Mt. Sinai, so we can't apply what happened there to the Mishkan, where there was no (uncovered) fire. Therefore, we have to be told that G-d "called to Moshe" at the Mishkan as well. [End of my attempt to translate the Midrash; here comes my takeaway.] Once we are told that there was a "calling" at all three places, though, it would seem that we can assume there was a "calling" preceding every communication from G-d to Moshe, including those in Moshe's "Tent of Meeting." [Toras Kohanim does not mention this explicitly because it is trying to explain the first verse in Vayikra, not verses in Sh'mos.]

One of the reasons given for G-d "calling" Moshe before speaking to him was to give him permission to enter the Mishkan (or the cloud that covered Mt. Sinai) despite "G-d's honor" being there (see <http://tinyurl.com/jo5837b>). When it came to Moshe's "Tent of Meeting," though, we are told that "when Moshe entered the tent, the cloud-pillar descended, and stood at the entrance of the tent, and [G-d] spoke with Moshe" (Sh'mos 33:9). Since Moshe was already in his tent when the cloud-pillar descended, and it stayed by the doorway, there was no need to "call" Moshe to give him permission to be there. Nevertheless, Rashi (40:35) says that the cloud had to leave the Mishkan before Moshe could enter, so according to him this was not the reason for the calling. Instead, he explains (Vayikra 1:1) the "calling" to be an expression of G-d's fondness for Moshe, and that fondness should have also manifested itself when G-d spoke to Moshe at his "Tent of Meeting." [Although Toras Kohanim also says that G-d called to Moshe "out of fondness," it is explaining why He called his name twice ("Moshe, Moshe"), and not just once, so we don't know if it is only the double-calling that, according to Toras Kohanim, reflects G-d's fondness for him, or the calling itself.]

Exactly when Moshe moved his tent "outside the camp," what its function was, and how long it served that function (including how long his tent remained "outside the camp") is a separate discussion; I will just point out that if its purpose was for "all who sought G-d" to "go out to [Moshe's] Tent of Meeting" (Sh'mos 33:7), the nature of the communication with G-d would be different, as instead of G-d initiating the communication to teach Moshe a commandment, Moshe would be the initiator, asking G-d for

direction in order to help those who came out "seeking G-d." If Moshe was the one who initiated the conversation, no "calling" from G-d would be needed. However, Rashi (33:11) says explicitly that Moshe would "return to the camp and teach the elders what he was taught." Unless Moshe was sharing with the elders what G-d had told him regarding those who "sought G-d," it seems that, at least according to Rashi, there were commandments taught there, which Moshe would then share with the nation's elders, and Rabbi Sorotzkin's question as to whether there was a "calling" that preceded these communications would apply.

Rabbi Sorotzkin continues by quoting Rashi in Ta'anis (21b), that G-d's divine presence stayed atop Mt. Sinai until the Mishkan was built, and all mitzvos given there were accompanied by the same fanfare that was present when the "Ten Commandments" were given. He then asks if there was also a "calling" before each of these communications, adding that even though Toras Kohanim says there was a "calling" on Mt. Sinai because it was for the entire nation, since the mitzvos taught there after the public revelation were no different (in this regard) than those taught in the Mishkan, they may not have been considered "Mt. Sinai communications." However, since after all is said and done we know that there was a "calling" before every communication in the Mishkan too, even those communications at Mt. Sinai should have had one as well. Additionally, the focus there (in Ta'anis) is on how long G-d's divine presence stayed on Mt. Sinai, not how long the mitzvos continued to be taught there. It is therefore quite possible that the "mitzvos" referred to are those taught before Yom Kippur, telling us that they were accompanied by the same "light and sound" show that occurred during the public revelation. Rashi is quite explicit (Sh'mos 33:11) that from the time Moshe descended Mt. Sinai until the Mishkan was built, any new mitzvos were taught in his "Tent of Meeting," not on Mt. Sinai. [It should be noted that the commentary on Ta'anis attributed to Rashi is likely not really Rashi (see <http://tinyurl.com/j5m557e>).] Besides, just as Toras Kohanim implies that after we are told that Moshe was "called" at the burning bush, at Mt. Sinai and at the Mishkan it applies everywhere, including Moshe's "Tent of Meeting," it would apply to all communication atop Mt. Sinai as well.

There is another issue that needs to be resolved, though, as after Toras Kohanim explains why we need to be told that there was a "calling" in the Mishkan, it adds that we might have thought it was only before the first communication there, so the Torah adds the words "from the Tent of Meeting" (even though we would know from the context that this is where it occurred) to teach us that there was a "calling" before each and every communication in the Mishkan. If we would already know that Moshe was "called" before every communication, why would we think he was only

"called" before the first communication in the Mishkan, but not subsequent ones?

The wording of this "limud" (teaching) has baffled the commentators, as instead of saying "how do we know there was a 'calling' before every communication in the Mishkan," the Midrash asks how we know there was a "calling" before "every communication in the Torah." I would therefore suggest that the Midrash is addressing the possibility that there was only a "calling" before the first communication in each location, as opposed to any subsequent communications on Mt. Sinai, in the Mishkan, and even in Moshe's "Tent of Meeting." By "proving" that there was a "calling" before every communication in the Mishkan, the Midrash is teaching us that the same is true for every communication in the other locations as well, as "for all the communications in the Torah" (with Moshe), there was a "calling" that preceded it. ©2016 Rabbi D. Kramer

*What kind of tea is hard to swallow?
Reality!*



RABBI SHLOMO RISKIN

Shabbat Shalom

"If the entire congregation of Israel commits an inadvertent violation as a result of (a mistaken legal decision of the Highest Court)...and they thereby violate one of the prohibitory commandments of G-d, they shall incur guilt" (Lev.4:13). If the Jewish state could be revived virtually from the ashes of destruction after two thousand years, then why hasn't the Sanhedrin, the great Jewish court of the First and Second Commonwealths, been revived?

During the centuries of its existence, this august body, comprised of seventy-one elders and sages who ruled on every aspect of life, brought unity to the land because their decisions were binding on the entire nation.

On the surface, reviving the Sanhedrin seems impossible because its members must be recipients of the classic Jewish ordination that traces itself back to Moses himself, and even to the Almighty, as it were, who ordained Moses, then Moses ordained Joshua, Joshua the elders, the elders the prophets, the prophets the Men of the Great Assembly. But this special ordination came to an end in the third century of the Common Era. And since intrinsic to the idea of the Sanhedrin is a living tradition of ordination, when ordination died out, so, it would seem, did the Sanhedrin and the possibility of its revival.

But a verse in this week's portion creates alternative possibilities. In his commentary to the Mishna, Maimonides writes, "if all the Jewish Sages and their disciples would agree on the choice of one person among those who dwell in Israel as their head [but this must be done in the land of Israel],

and (that head) establishes a house of learning, he would be considered as having received the original ordination and he could then ordain anyone he desires." Maimonides adds that the Sanhedrin would return to its original function as it is written in Isaiah 1:26: "I will restore thy judges as at first and thy Sages as in the beginning." Such a selection would mean an election, a list of candidates, ballots. So who does the choosing? The sages and their disciples—everyone with a relationship to Torah sages, to Jewish law. In an alternate source, however, Maimonides extends the privilege of voting to all adult residents of Israel! (Interpretations of the Mishnah, Chapter 4 of tractate B'Khorot, on the words "one who slaughters a first born animal and shows its blemish"). This idea reappears in Maimonides' Mishna Torah, Laws of Sanhedrin, Ch. 4, Law, 11, except there he concludes with the phrase, "this matter requires decision."

In 1563, a significant attempt was made by a leading sage of Safed, Rabbi Yaakov BeRab to revive classic ordination using the Maimonidean formula; in an election held in Safed, Rabbi BeRab was declared officially ordained. He proceeded to ordain several others of his disciples along with his most important student, Rabbi Yosef Karo, author of the Shulchan Aruch.

In the meantime, the rabbis in Jerusalem, led by Rabbi Levi ibn Habib, strongly opposed the Safed decision. When the question was put before Rabbi David Ben Zimra (Ridbaz), the chief rabbi of Egypt, he ruled in favor of the Jerusalem rabbis because not only had the election been restricted to one city of Israel (Safed and not Jerusalem) but the acknowledgment that "this matter requires decision" opened up the possibility that Maimonides may have changed his mind, in effect leaving the issue adjudicated.

Rabbi Yaakov BeRab, on the other hand, understood that the phrase "requires decision" referred to whether one sage was sufficient to ordain others, or three sages were required for ordination. But he was absolutely convinced that Maimonides had no doubt whatsoever about the method and the inevitability of reviving classic ordination.

Three centuries later, the first minister of religion in the new government of the Jewish state, Rabbi Yehuda Leib Maimon, renewed this controversy when he tried to convince the political and religious establishments that along with creation of the State should come creation of a Sanhedrin.

In his work *The Renewal of the Sanhedrin in Our Renewed State*, he cites the existence of a copy of Maimonides' commentary to the Mishna published along with emendations and additions written by Maimonides himself after he wrote the Mishna Torah, where he specifically writes that ordination and the Sanhedrin will be renewed before the coming of the Messiah, which implies that it must be achieved through human efforts. A

photocopy of these words, in Maimonides' own handwriting, is provided in the book by Rav Maimon.

What is the basis for his most democratic suggestion? I believe it stems from a verse which we find in this week's portion of Vayikra, quoted above, which deals with the issue of the sins of the entire congregation.

Commentators ask how can an "entire congregation" sin and Rashi identifies the "congregation of Israel" with the Sanhedrin. In other words, when it says "if the entire congregation of Israel errs" it really means that "if the Sanhedrin errs."

The Jewish people are a nation defined by commandments, precepts and laws. Therefore the institution that protects and defines the law is at the heart of the nation's existence. In fact, how the Jewish people behave, what they do, can become the law. ("A custom of Israel is Torah.")

Knowing all this, it should not come as a surprise that Maimonides wanted to revive the ordination, and found a method utterly democratic in its design. The "people" equals the Sanhedrin, the "people" can choose one leading Jew who will then have the right to pass on his ordination to others, to re-create the Sanhedrin!

And for Maimonides, it is the population living in the land of Israel which represents the historical congregation of Israel (B.T. Horayot 3b).

Apparently, Maimonides is saying that before the next stage of Jewish history unfolds, the nation will have to decide who shall be given the authority to recreate ordination and who will be the commander-in-chief of the rabbis. Will it happen in our lifetime? ©2016 *Ohr Torah Institutions & Rabbi S. Riskin*

*What would you call clumsy grapes?
Unconcoordinated!*



RABBI BEREL WEIN

Wein Online

The Purim story is a collection of unlikely events and almost irrational decisions by all parties involved in this drama. There is ample evidence of the mercurial instability of Achashveirosh and of the diabolical wickedness of Haman. What is however the most perplexing, of all of the behavior of the major participants in the story, is that of Mordecai.

What impels him to publicly disobey Haman's orders and provoke and insult him? And did he have halachic and moral justification to so endanger the Jewish community by his behavior? There is opinion in the Talmud that showing homage to Haman was not necessarily forbidden by Jewish law. And Mordecai had other practical options such as hiding and not appearing publicly when Haman appeared.

Yet Mordecai emerges in Jewish history and tradition as a hero and an exemplary role model for his courageous defiance of Haman. He is viewed as being the one whose behavior saved the Jewish people and not as one whose behavior was an endangerment. Rarely do we find potentially foolhardy and bravado behavior universally judged as being heroic, necessary and most praiseworthy.

We do find him being mildly criticized by some of his colleagues on the Sanhedrin for deserting them to enter public governmental life. Yet on the main issue – the central theme of the story of Purim itself – Mordecai is essentially the hero of Purim. The Torah in all of its books gives no one a free pass. Everyone's faults and mistakes are referred to and commented upon. Yet Mordecai, in the Book of Esther, appears to us to be without blemish or error.

Perhaps the main, practical reason for this is that ultimate success and triumph are sufficient to erase all doubts as to the wisdom of past decisions and behavior. Mordecai's persistence, fortitude and stubbornness eventually topple Haman (actually hangs him high) and destroys him. Mordecai's actions strengthen and enhance the status and position of the Jewish people as a minority in the polyglot Persian Empire.

Success always brings its own rewards. Heaven has a vote in all human activities, even if unseen and unrecognized. And there is no doubt that Heaven, so to speak, sided with Mordecai in his public stance against Haman and the idolatry and tyranny that he represented. That is the only possible explanation for the otherwise unbelievable series of events that make up the Purim story.

The traditional view of Purim is that it was a miraculous event, even though the miracles were hidden, incremental and cumulative and not of the purely supernatural kind, as those of the Exodus from Egypt. And, Mordecai's behavior is part of this hidden miraculous story. Heaven apparently responds favorably to sincere acts of courage and loyalty. And those were the qualities that Mordecai exhibited throughout the Purim story.

Mordecai's behavior was perhaps inscrutable and not understandable to the average onlooker. But, so was and apparently is Heaven's reaction and behavior to his actions.

There is an interesting and highly volatile concept in Jewish tradition that countenances behavior which somehow contradicts accepted halachic practice. Based upon the verse that appears in Psalms: "It is a time to take action for the sake of G-d; they have violated Your Torah." The Talmud allowed for a reinterpretation of the verse to state: "When it is time to act for the sake of G-d and save the Torah and Israel then in such extreme circumstances, the Torah itself can apparently be violated."

This rare exception to traditional norms was invoked by Mattisyahu in rebelling against the Syrian Greek oppressors and their Jewish Hellenist allies. Based on this principle, the great Rabbi Yehuda HaNassi allowed the Oral Law to be written down and disseminated as a book though the Torah itself counseled that the Oral Law should forever remain in its oral state.

However, this concept is very dangerous in its application, as all of Jewish history has shown us. Those who consistently violate or ignore halacha and tradition doom themselves to eventual assimilation and extinction. In all instances in Jewish history there have been very few times when this principle has actually been used.

Only rare and holy people have successfully behaved in such circumstances and I believe that Mordecai must be counted in that group. Mordecai saw that it was a time to do something for G-d, to save the Jewish people and to alter the course of history. As pointed out above, Heaven agreed with his decision and hence our joy in commemorating the Purim holiday. ©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. For more information on these and other products visit www.rabbiwein.com/jewishhistory.

Four friends are touring Europe. One is English, one is French, another is Spanish and the last is from Germany. The four friends are in Paris and see a large crowd gathering around a street performer.

They all crane their necks to see the street performer but can't seem to get a view. The performer notices the men and stands on a box. He yells out, "Can you gents in the back see me alright?" The friends respond: Yes, Oui, Si, Ja!



RABBI SHLOMO RESSLER

Weekly Dvar

The very first Passuk (verse) in Sefer Vayikra (Leviticus) describes G-d calling Moshe to tell him about all the different offerings that needed to be brought, and how they should be performed. The last letter in the word "Vayikra" (which means "called") was written smaller than the rest (the Alef). Why is this letter shrunk? Furthermore, why is the whole book called Vayikra, "And He called"?

Most commentaries explain that Moshe didn't want to make a big deal of the fact that G-d called him and no one else, and therefore wanted to use the same word without the last letter, which would still have the same meaning, but wouldn't be as affectionate a greeting (it would mean "and G-d happened upon..."). This shows us the great sensitivity and humility that Moshe had. Rabeinu Yonah offers us an insight into humility and human

nature by explaining that some people who feel that they are lacking in a quality or in knowledge sometimes compensate for it by lowering others, thereby making themselves seem like they're better by comparison. Moshe was the greatest prophet, but he was also the humblest because he was confident in himself and in his abilities, and didn't need to lower others, even indirectly.

But there's an even more powerful message Moshe could be teaching us: The one letter he chose to shrink was the Alef, which is the first letter in the Hebrew alphabet...The very first step we have to glean is that even though Moshe was a great person, he sought to downplay it by shrinking that letter. But there's yet another hidden hint for us in this word: The letter that's shrunk, Alef, actually has a meaning as a word: It means "to teach". The message being taught to us is clear... The first and most important lesson in life is to recognize our egos, and work on not letting it control us (whenever we get angry, it's because our ego is telling us that we deserve something.) The second lesson is that instead of lowering others to make us look better, we should raise our own standards, and become better. And finally, the last lesson is to take these lessons and teach and share them with someone else. ©2016 Rabbi S. Ressler and LeLamed, Inc.

*Why can't you trust the king of the jungle?
Because he's always lion!*



RABBI MORDECHAI KAMENETZKY

Hear Conditioning

Whoever misses the Divine hand that touched the Purim story is not looking. And if he claims that he heard the Megilah, he probably was not listening. Imagine, on the 14th of Nissan the Prime Minister draws lots and decides to annihilate the entire Jewish nation. Within 24 hours he has approval from the ruler of the not-so-free-world, King Achashveirosh.

Within 48 hours, the plot is foiled, the Prime Minister is hanged and his prime target is promoted to replace him! Pretty political. Pretty miraculous. And definitely divine. Yet Hashem's name is not mentioned once in the Megilah. Why? Of course, the Megilah is replete with allusions. There are acronyms that spell the name of Hashem, and our sages explain that every time the word "King" is mentioned in the Megilah, it has a divine reference. But, still, why does the last book of the Prophets, a Divinely inspired Megilah, have only veiled references to Heavenly intervention?

It was a sweltering August day when the Greenberg brothers entered the posh Dearborn, Michigan offices of the notoriously anti-Semitic car-maker, Henry Ford.

"Mr. Ford," announced Hyman Greenberg, the eldest of the three, "we have a remarkable invention that will revolutionize the automobile industry. " Ford looked skeptical, but their threats to offer it to the competition kept his interest piqued. "We would like to demonstrate it to you in person." After a little cajoling, they brought Mr. Ford outside and asked him to enter a black Edsel that was parked in front of the building.

Norman Greenberg, the middle brother, opened the door of the car. "Please step inside Mr. Ford."

"What!" shouted the tycoon, "are you crazy? It must be two hundred degrees in that car!"

"It is," smiled the youngest brother, Max, "but sit down, Mr. Ford, and push the white button."

Intrigued, Ford pushed the button. All of a sudden a whoosh of freezing air started blowing from vents all around the car, and within seconds the automobile was not only comfortable, it was quite cool! "This is amazing!" exclaimed Ford. "How much do you want for the patent?"

Norman spoke up. "The price is one million dollars." Then he paused, "And there is something else. We want the name 'Greenberg Brothers Air Conditioning' to be stamped right next to the Ford logo."

"Money is no problem," retorted Ford, "but no way will I have a 'Jew-name' next to my logo on my cars!"

They haggled back and forth for a while and finally they settled. One and one half million dollars, and the name Greenberg would be left off. However, the first names of the Greenberg brothers would be forever emblazoned upon the console of every Ford air conditioning system.

And that is why today, whenever you enter a Ford vehicle you will see those three names clearly defined on the air-conditioning control panel:

HI— NORM—MAX.

The writers of the Megilah left us with a message that would accompany us throughout our long exile. You will not always see G-d's signature openly emblazoned upon every circumstance. However,

throughout persecution and deliverance, He is always there. And just like on Purim His obvious interference is undocumented; but we know and feel it—and we search for it, and we find it! So, too, in every instance we must seek His name, find

it, and recognize it. It may not be emblazoned on the bumper; it may be hidden on the console—but it is there. For Hashem is always speaking. All we have to do is listen. Joyous Purim! ©1997 Rabbi M. Kamenetzky and torah.org

*What is Dr. Jekyll when he is himself?
De-hyde-rated!*



MEISH GOLDISH

The World Famous Story of Purim

The story of Purim is an international tale.

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

Meanwhile, Mordechai sat outside the palace, where the Chile Haman would Czech up on him daily. "I Haiti you because you refuse to bow to me!" Haman scolded Mordechai. "You're a very stubborn man. You Jews are such Bahamas! If you don't keep my words I will have all your people killed! Just Kuwait and see, you Turkey!"

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

The Jews fasted for three days and grew very Hungary. Esther approached the king and asked, 'Kenya Belize come to a banquet I've prepared for you and Haman?'

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

Esther replied, "Spain full for me to say this, but Haman is Russian to kill my people."

Haman's loud Wales could be heard as he carried Honduran this scene. Haman cried bitterly. "Iraq my brains in an effort to destroy the Jews. But that sneaky Mordechai - Egypt me! "

Haman and his ten sons were hanged and went immediately to the Netherlands. And to Sweden the deal, the Jews were allowed to kill their foes as well.

"You lost your enemies and Uganda friend," the king smiled.

And that is why the Purim story Israeli a miracle. G-d decided to China light on His chosen people.

So now, let's celebrate! Forget all your Syria's business and just Serb up some wine and Taiwan on! Happy Purim!!!

Why is the rum gone?



Pie-Rum Samayach!