

Tie Dye Aish



Never underESTHERmate how fired up you can get about a groovy Torah newsletter!

CHIEF RABBI LORD JONATHAN SACKS

Covenant & Conversation

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

Why so? Is there any larger significance to the absence of Moses from this passage? The commentators offered many suggestions. One of two offered by R. Jacob ben Asher (1270-1340, author of the code known as the Tur), relates this week's sedra to an event at the beginning of Moses' leadership: his encounter with G-d at the burning bush (Ex. 3-4). Moses repeatedly expressed reluctance to undertake the mission of leading the people out of Egypt. Finally we read: "But Moses said, 'O Lord, please send someone else to do it.' Then the Lord's anger burned against Moses and He said, 'What about your brother, Aaron the Levite? I know he can speak well. He is already on his way to meet you, and his heart will be glad when he sees you. You shall speak to him and put words in his mouth; I will help both of you speak and will teach you what to do.'" (Ex. 4:13-15)

The Sages say that it was this hesitation on the part of Moses that caused part of his role -- as potential high priest -- to be taken from him and given to his brother. R. Jacob ben Asher concludes that Moses' name is missing from Tetzaveh "to spare him distress" on seeing Aaron acquire the insignia of priesthood that might have been Moses' own.

Without negating this or other explanations, there may be a more fundamental message. As I have mentioned before, one of the recurring themes of Genesis is sibling rivalry, hostility between brothers. This story is

told, at ever-increasing length, four times: between Cain and Abel, Isaac and Ishmael, Jacob and Esau, and Joseph and his brothers.

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

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

This is conveyed by the Torah in two striking phrases. The first is in the passage already cited above. G-d says to Moses: Aaron "is already on his way to meet you, and his heart will be glad when he sees you." How different this is from the tense encounters between brothers in Genesis. Aaron, we may have thought, might have many reasons not to rejoice on seeing Moses return. The brothers had not grown up together. Moses had been adopted by Pharaoh's daughter and raised in an Egyptian



TIE DYE AISH IS A PURIM NEWSLETTER THAT'S TIE DYE FOR! (C'MON, THAT WAS A GODD ONE!) COULD BE IT'SWIRLDS APART FROM WHAT YOUR USED TO BUT, DUDE, SERIOUSLY, HOW CAN YOU GO WRONG WITH A HIGHLY COLORIC PUB-LICATION SUCH AS THIS?



So how did I come up with this totally lame theme? Well, sheesh, you don't have get all huffy about that! Just cuz YOU can't hear all the voices in my head doesn't mean I can't enjoy the party in here. So, yea. No clue. But have a wonderfully groovy Purim anyway!

palace. Nor had they been together during the Israelites' sufferings. Moses, fearing for his life after his assault on an Egyptian taskmaster, had fled to Midian. Besides this, Moses was Aaron's younger brother, and it was he who was about to become leader of the people. Always in the past, when the younger had taken something the elder might have believed belonged naturally to him, there was jealousy, animosity. Yet G-d assures Moses: "When Aaron sees you, he will rejoice". And so he did (Ex. 4:27).

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

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

The unmistakable implication is that they were like a single individual. They were as one. There was no hierarchy between them:

sometimes Aaron's name appears first, sometimes Moses'. On this there is a wonderful midrash, based on the verse in Psalms (85:11) "Loving-kindness and truth meet together; righteousness and peace kiss each other."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

last brothers learned to live together in unity. ©2017 Rabbi Lord J. Sacks and rabbisacks.org

*What does a nosey pepper do?
Gets jalapeno business!*



RABBI SHLOMO RISKIN

Shabbat Shalom

"Make a forehead-plate of pure gold, and engrave on it... 'Holy to G-d'. Attach a twist of sky-blue wool to it" (Exodus 28:36-37) This week's portion of Tetzaveh, wherein Moses' name is not mentioned even once, exclusively belongs to Aaron, whose name appears more than 30 times. It is a portion devoted to the holy vestments and the consecration of Aaron's priestly descendents. This is the week of the Kohen-Priest but in actuality it is the week of the entire nation of Israel, a nation created to be wholly holy, an entire nation of priests, dedicated to G-d.

Such is the Divine charge to the Israelite nation immediately prior to the revelation at Sinai "and you shall be unto me a kingdom of Priest-Kohanim and a holy nation" (Exodus 19:6); mark every word of the commentary of Sefarno to this verse: "You shall be a kingdom of Priest-Kohanim to understand and to teach to the entire human race the necessity of the calling out in the name of the Lord, so that they might serve Him together... for from Zion shall come forth Torah(to the world)" (Sefarno Adloc.).

The day of the observant Jew begins by expressing the innate "Kohen-dom" of every single member of our nation. Before the Jew does anything else he fills a large vessel with water, his left hand pours the water over the right, and the right hand pours the water over the left, for three cycles. Just as during the priestly ablutions in the Temple so is this act of ritual washing to be performed with Koach Gavra – from ones own vitality. The blessing we make as we wash, "Netilat Yadaim" refers to the lifting or consecrating of the hands. "They shall make me a Temple so that I may dwell in their Midst" – the world must become the Temple and our every action – as priests- must be consecrated to G-d.

Our "Kohen-Dom" continues with the two Blessings we make in which we thank G-d for giving us His Torah. Our commentaries explain that the first blessing refers to the Written Law and the second the Oral Law. After the blessings we must read two selections, one from the Written Torah and one from the Talmud. It is fascinating that out of all the verses of the Written Torah our Sages choose the Priestly Benediction – "May G-d bless you and keep you..." as the blessings which we recite. We begin the day with Priestly actions and Priestly words.

On Friday evening we greet the Sabbath by kindling the candelabrum-Menorah in every Jewish home, by reciting the blessing of sanctification over wine reminiscent of the wine libations at the alter, and bless our children once again with the Priestly blessing. Our special Sabbath Hallah-bread is our form of our Sanctuaries show-bread, and the salt in which we lightly dip the Hallah represents the salt at every sacrifice; this symbolizes the teaching just as salt never spoils, so will our covenant with G-d last eternally.

On Passover we dress in special white garb (kittel) at the seder, each family brought its own pascal lamb sacrifice in Jerusalem, and we even wash our hands before eating the vegetables dipped in saltwater; all of this is reminiscent of what the Priest did in the Holy Temple. On Yom Kippur we likewise wear the white robes and dramatically repeat each word of the Priestly words of confession and expiation in a dramatic re-experiencing of the words and actions of the High Priest in the Holy Temple.

And if the Priests conducted the sacrificial services in the Temple, every Jew is capable of conducting the services in our Temple. Individuals without any priestly lineage or Levitic Lineage can recite the Amidah for the congregation, cantillate the weekly Biblical portion and call people up to the Torah. Indeed, as our Biblical reading of Tetzaveh describes the High Priest's eight special garments, it emphasizes "the tzitz" – the pure gold forehead-plate, on which is written "Holy to G-d". A twist of royal, sky-blue wool (tkhelet) was attached to this forehead-plate, evidently expressing our descent from the royalty of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, Sara, Rebecca, Rachel and Leah.

Today, the tzitzit – ritual fringes with a string of royal sky-blue wool – may be worn by every Jew, enabling the one who wears it to feel and act with the Majesty of the High Priest of old. There is no more democratic institution in our present day synagogue, where in everyone may be draped in a prayer shawl with ritual fringes, everyone together. Just ask an unJewish visitor to distinguish between the laymen and the Clergy and he will not be able to do so. We are all Kohanim-Priests and must continue to teach first Israel and then the world. ©2017 Ohr Torah Institutions & Rabbi S. Riskin

*Why aren't koalas actual bears?
They don't meet the koalafications!*



RABBI BEREL WEIN

Wein Online

Although it is obvious from the context of the previous parts of the Torah that when the Torah states "and you shall command" the you referred to is Moshe, nevertheless the name of

Moshe does not appear in this week's Torah reading. Many explanations, ideas and commentaries have been advanced over the ages as to why his name is absent from this portion of the Torah.

His name is so intertwined with the Torah that he transmitted to us, that the absence of his name strikes a perplexing and even jarring note. Since there are no mere coincidences or accidents of language and style in the Torah, this issue of the absence of the name of Moshe in this week's Torah reading merits our attention and understanding.

There is an element of Moshe's phenomenal modesty certainly present here. Moshe strove all of his life to prevent Jewish belief from becoming the cult of the personality. Moshe always made it clear that he was only the conduit for the transmission of G-d's word to the people of Israel and that the Torah was of Heavenly origin and not the work of his mind and pen.

Thus it would be completely in character for him to allow an entire portion of his teachings to Israel to appear without his name being attached to it. The Torah is represented by the great candelabra and the light that emanated from it. The fuel that fed that light – the pure olive oil, came from all of the Jewish people collectively and not from Moshe alone. It is completely understandable that the intrinsic modesty of Moshe would be reflected by the absence of his name being associated with this holy fuel and light.

The Torah reading of this week coincides with the Shabbat of Zachor. Amalek comes to destroy the Jewish people in their infancy as a nation. There has always been a tendency in the Jewish world to somehow ascribe the hatred of Jews by certain sections of the non-Jewish world to the acts, policies or personalities of the leaders of the Jewish people.

In the story of Purim, the Jews of Persia blamed Mordechai for the decrees and enmity of Haman. But Haman certainly is not satisfied with destroying Mordechai alone. He meant to destroy Mordechai's Jewish critics as well. To our enemies, the hatred is never exclusively personal. To them, a Jew is a Jew, no matter what or whom.

Thus the fact that this week's Torah reading coincides with Shabbat Zachor indicates to us that the problem is not Moshe or any other leader or individual Jew. Even when Moshe and his name are absent from the scene, Amalek, and its hatred and violence towards Jews, is present and dangerously active.

There is a tendency in the Jewish world to cast blame upon our leadership - national, organizational and religious - for all of the outside ills

that befall us. Our leadership must always be held up to scrutiny and critical standards of personal behavior and national policy. However, the outside forces that arise in every generation to attempt to destroy us do so even when our leaders are blameless and even absent from the scene completely. ©2017 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.

*Why can't you give Elsa a balloon?
Because she will Let it go!*



RABBI AVI WEISS

Shabbat Forshpeis

This week's portion deals primarily with the priestly garments. Right at the outset, the Torah states that they were worn by the Priest for "honor" (kavod). In the words of the Torah, "and you shall make Holy garments for your brother Aharon (Aaron), and they shall be for honor (kavod) and beauty (tiferet)." (Exodus 28:2)

But honor seems contrary to the Torah ideal. R. Eliezer HaKapar states: "jealousy, desire and honor take a person from the world." (Avot 4:28) Shouldn't the Torah, therefore, request a priest to aspire to achieve the highest level of humility, rather than honor?

The answer may lie in a deeper understanding of the Hebrew word kavod. Rav Ahron Soloveichik argues that the word kavod contains within it, the root of the word kaved. Kaved means "heavy" and is linked etymologically to kavod. In concrete terms, heaviness is determined by the pull of gravity upon an object. In conceptual terms, weight is determined by the degree of responsibility one has. The greater responsibility (kaved), the greater the potential honor once those obligations are fulfilled.

The meaning of our verse now becomes clear. The goal of the priestly garments is not honor, but rather to serve as a reminder that the priest has a greater responsibility to the community.

Notwithstanding its relationship with kaved, kavod can still be productive. While honor can sometimes lead to bloating of the ego which, in turn, can get in the way of real accomplishments, it can also be a powerful and important tool to help others. When one assists others, kavod is not only brought to the giver, but G-d is honored as well. Note the liturgy on Shabbat, the Keyl Adon prayer that echoes the



language of our portion when it states, pe'er v'kavod notnim lishmo, "splendor and honor are given to G-d's name".

Note the Midrash on the verse, "And you shall love the Lord your G-d with all your heart." (Deuteronomy 6:5) The rabbis note that the Hebrew for heart (Lev) is written in the plural (Levavkha). Since the heart symbolizes human nature, the use of the plural here is viewed by the rabbis as meaning that G-d is to be worshipped with both the good and bad inclinations. In the same vein, the natural human tendency to enjoy being honored can be a factor in spurring us to undertake beneficial efforts on behalf of people in need. Perhaps the honor of the priestly garments can lead the Priest to work with greater vigor for Am Yisrael.

Sometimes greater responsibility can lead to honor and, at times, honor can inspire greater commitment. It has often been said that "clothes make the man." The Torah here is completing the sentence, with the teaching that clothes are there to make us act for others. ©2017 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.

What do you get from a pampered cow? Spoiled milk!

RABBI YISSOCHER FRAND

RavFrand

Transcribed by David Twersky; Jerusalem

Technical Assistance by Dovid Hoffman; Baltimore, MD

There is a very famous statement of the Baal HaTurim in this week's parsha. The Baal HaTurim notes that this is the only parsha in the Torah after the birth of Moshe that does not mention his name. The Baal HaTurim attributes this to Moshe's offer "Erase me from your book that you have written" when he was pleading on behalf of the Jewish people after the sin of the Golden Calf.

When a wise man utters a curse -- even a conditional curse -- the curse is destined to be fulfilled. This is the fulfillment of Moshe's self-curse. Ironically, every year, the reading of this parsha falls out during the week of the Yahrzeit [anniversary of the death] of Moshe Rabbeinu.

This is a strange Baal HaTurim. Moshe's pleading on behalf of the Jewish people was a very noble deed. As a result of his efforts, the Jewish people were saved. The Succas Dovid cites a Zohar that if Noach would have waged such a forceful argument to G-d on behalf of his generation, the Flood would have never occurred. It does not seem fair that Moshe should be punished for such heroic efforts.

The Succas Dovid consequently explains that the omission of Moshe's name in Parshas Tezaveh is not a punishment. It is the price, however, that he was willing to pay. He knew that offering "erase me from



the Book You have written" was going to cost him. But he said, "I do not care. I am more worried about the Jewish people than about my honor."

The omission of Moshe's name from Parshas Tezaveh is not a punishment. It is the tribute to the self-sacrifice of Moshe Rabbeinu, who was willing to have his name erased from the Torah, in order to save the Jewish people.

There are two places where the Torah mentions accolades about Moshe. One place is in Parshas BeHaaloscha after Miriam and Aaron apparently spoke against Moshe and G-d chastised them. The other place is in Parshas V'zos HaBracha, where the Torah relates Moshe's final obituary. Seemingly, these are the only two places where the Torah provides testimony to Moshe's greatness.

The Baal HaTurim is teaching us that there is a third parsha that speaks volumes about the character and qualities of Moshe Rabbeinu. Parshas Tezaveh shows us how much Moshe Rabbeinu loved the Jewish people. He loved them so much that he was willing to forgo having his name in this parsha of the Torah in order to save them. Parshas Tezaveh provides 'silent testimony' to the greatness of Moshe. It illustrates the ultimate self-sacrifice that the leader had for his people. That is why it is not ironic, but rather most appropriate that this tribute should be paid to Moshe, specifically on the week of his Yahrzeit. ©2017 Rabbi Y. Frand & torah.org

*What do you call a man with no body & just a nose?
Nobody nose!*



ENCYCLOPEDIA TALMUDIT

The Urim V'tumim

Translated by Rabbi Mordechai Weiss

The purpose of the "Urim V'tumim" was to serve as a vehicle to ask G-d whether Israel should go to war, or to inquire as to the correct borders of the tribes (shavatim) in the land of Israel, (when the land was initially divided amongst the tribes of Israel), or whether to add to the city of Jerusalem or to the Holy Temple (the Azarot).

There are varied opinions as to the essence of the "Urim V'tumim". Some say that it was the unique stones that were incorporated in the breastplate itself, while others believe that between the folds of the "Urim V'tumim" was the ineffable name of Almighty G-d (Shem Hamiforash).

Some believe that the "Urim V'tumim" was not part of the required clothing that the High Priest (Kohen Gadol) had to wear. The Rambam (Maimonides) however believes that it was. It follows then, that according to the Rambam, when we no longer had the Urim V'tumim (as in the second Temple period) the Kohen Gadol was lacking the eight garments that he needed to wear to carry out his required tasks.

As stated above, our Sages tell us that there was no "Urim v'tumim" during the second Temple period. This is witnessed by the accounts of Josephus in his "Antiquities of the Jews" (first century BCE) where he states that "as of the writing of my book, the "Urim V'tumim" has ceased to exist for already two hundred years".

If this is the case, according to the Rambam, how could the service by the "Kohen Gadol" be performed during this time since it is forbidden for a "Kohen Gadol" to serve without the required eight priestly garments?

The answer proposed, is that the "Urim v'tumim" was indeed present during the second Temple period and it was worn by the Kohen Gadol, however it was never used for its designated use; to inquire from G-d as to whether to go to war or any of the various situations sited earlier.

Josephus's words would also have to be interpreted as referring to the power of the "Urim V'tumim" or alternatively, the use of the "Urim V'tumim" during that time was only known to the Kohen Gadol and not to the general nation, not even to Josephus who was a Kohen himself. ©2017 Rabbi M. Weiss and Encyclopedia Talmudit

What do you call an illegally parked frog?
Toad!



RABBI YAAKOV ASHER SINCLAIR

Seasons of the Moon

I remember a photograph on the cover of a book. A photograph of a road. A very long, very straight road. One of those long straight roads that you find in the heartland of America. A road that never seems to have any cars on it. The road goes up and down a little. The perspective is very compressed by the long telephoto lens. This road must go on forever.

When you move in a straight line, every step in that line is a product of the one that precedes it. Every step carries the sum of where you've come from. Every step, every moment in that straight line, demands the next step in that same line. Every moment in a straight line is both the product of every step until that moment and the map of its ultimate goal. By its very nature, a straight line must go on forever - unless of course it is opposed by an outside force. Without outside intervention, however, a straight line will never stop.

What happens when the line leaves its straight path and wanders? A line that twists and turns must eventually falter and end. Its own deviance spells its eventual demise. For something that deviates to the side has lost its connection to what preceded it. It is no longer an expression of a continuum. Every move, every second in a line which isn't straight is disconnected from that which has gone before and from that which is to come. It expresses neither history nor purpose. It is a cold frozen moment

alone among another million odd frozen moments. When the line meanders and twists, nothing has any connection to anything else. The world is random. There is no purpose. No beginning. And no end.

The Talmud tells us that "Jacob, our father, didn't die." It is for this reason that he was given the title Yeshurun - "the straight one." That which is totally straight doesn't stop. It doesn't die. It goes on and on. It connects to that which is beyond. It goes on forever.

"When Adar comes in we increase in Simcha." What is happiness? We are all familiar with it. But what is it? What is its essence? Everyone knows what it's like to be happy. But what does happiness teach us about reality?

In the Talmud, there is a measurement known as a tefach sameach. A tefach is about ten centimeters. Sameach means happy. How can a measurement be happy? A laughing slide-rule? A smiling tape-measure? A tefach sameach is a large tefach. It's still a tefach - but it's a little more. Why did the Rabbis of the Talmud choose the term "happy" to describe a measurement which was slightly on the large side? Couldn't they have called it a "maxi" tefach or a "generous" tefach?

Why a "happy" tefach?

The tefach sameach is still a tefach but it connects, it extends to that which is beyond itself. It becomes more. This is the essence of all simcha. To perceive the self becoming more. Extending one's boundaries and visions. Growing.

The tefach is the same. It stays within its boundaries but it reaches out, connecting to that which is beyond itself. That's the essence of happiness. Staying within the definition of who we are, but reaching out. Expanding our horizons without abandoning our borders.

When we see ourselves confined within ourselves, defined solely by our physical parameters, that we are who we are and no more - that's the essence of sadness. When our definition of ourselves ends with our fingertips that is sadness in its essence. But when we perceive ourselves as being connected, reaching to that which is beyond ourselves, that point of connecting who we are to what is beyond is the epitome of happiness. The feeling that we can touch the most distant echo of the Ein Sof - The Endless - is the essence of happiness. Happiness itself.

When we broaden our existence - by getting married, by having children - we feel happy. For these are ways that we go beyond ourselves while still staying who we are.

The story of Purim is like a plot line of a thriller. A roller-coaster of sudden reversal. Twisting ways. You have to discern the straight line. The Unseen Hand guiding events from above, overturning the twisting ways of Haman, the Amaleki.

The letters of Amalek spell Me'ukal which means 'twisting', 'meandering'. Amalek is the force that skews the straight line, turning it aside. Amalek is the force that wants to turn the line aside, to take order, history and purpose and turn them into a million frozen random moments. His is the power which tries to break the connection between cause and effect, between here and beyond. "Is there Anyone out there?" says his voice. The gematria of Amalek is the same as the word 'doubt'. Doubt means where I've come from is irrelevant and where I'm going to is uncertain. All I know is now. The moment.

The essence of happiness is that things are important and I have a connection to them. Things can only be important if there is a connection between cause and effect, one thing and another. Relevance is a measure of connection. In a world of random events, nothing has importance. Nothing has relevance. Nothing has significance. Nothing is going anywhere.

When Adar comes in, we increase our happiness. For this is the month when we can detect that faintest whisper of that straight line leading to forever. At the time of Purim, in this month of Adar, events were turned from "sadness to simcha and from bereavement to Yom Tov." In this month, we celebrate the victory of Yeshurun - the straight one - who goes on and on. The Jewish People carve a straight line through the history books of the world and out of this world to that which is above and beyond this world.

To the extent that we embody that straight line, we are Yeshurun, the straight one. The happy one.

That's the essence of happiness. © 2003 Rabbi Y.A. Sinclair and Ohr Somayach International

The past, present & future walked into a bar. It was tense!

RABBI YISROEL CINER

Parsha Insights

This week's parsha, Tetzaveh, deals primarily with the appointment of the Kohanim {priests} and their garments. Moshe is told: "V'atah {And you} hakrev elecha {should draw close to you} Aharon, your brother, and his sons, from amongst the Children of Israel to serve as kohanim {priests} to me. And you shall make holy garments for Aharon your brother, for honor and for glory. [28:1-2]"

Earlier in Shmos we learned that the kehunah was supposed to come from Moshe. However, when he repeatedly showed reluctance in his being sent to Paroah, Hashem said to him: "Aharon, your brother, the Levi... you will place the words in his mouth and he will speak on your behalf. [4:14-17]" At that point Aharon was appointed to be the Levithe kehunah was taken from Moshe.



The Ohr HaChaim explains that this is why the passuk {verse} stressed "V' atahAnd you!" Don't allow it to be done in a grudging, forced manner but rather, you do it. Accept My will as yours and in that way it will serve as atonement for your earlier hesitation to fulfill My will.

With this, the Ohr HaChaim affords a deeper glimpse into the words "hakrev elechadraw close to you." He explains that a person distances himself from an aspect of the essence of his neshama {soul} by going against Hashem's will. The degree of the distancing will depend on the extent of the infraction.

Moshe, by resisting Hashem's mission to Paroah, caused a breach between himself and an aspect of his neshama. Even with the result that Aharon and his descendants would now be the kohanim, Moshe needed to willingly accept this. "V'atahAnd you" should play the willing role in the official appointing of Aharon to this position.

"V'atah {And you} hakrev elecha {draw close to you}..."

By doing this you will fulfill the ultimate objective of a person who has gone against the will of Hashem. You will draw close to yourself. To that vital aspect of your essence that you have distanced yourself from. You will draw close to you. Your physical entity, the you of this world, will draw close to your spiritual essencethe eternal you.

The Ohr HaChaim then goes on to say that this gives us an understanding in a very difficult passage of the Talmud. "One is obligated to bless Hashem for evil the same way that he blesses for good. [Berachos 54.]" The same happiness that we feel when things go well should be felt when things go wrong.

He writes that the epitome of evil, the most sorry state that one can be in, is this state of being removed and out of touch with oneself. The recognition that the difficulties we encounter in life are there to enable us to reconnect to our priorities, goals and purpose. This can shed an entirely new light on our perception of these events and can even lead one to ultimately bless Hashem for evil the same way that he blesses for good.

Moshe showed his willingness to accept this decree of Hashem by making and giving those garments "for honor and for glory." By doing so, he was willingly accepting Hashem's will, correcting his previous hesitation to do so and thereby reconnecting to his true essence.

Throughout the years, the Jews in the diaspora have always expressed their solidarity with Israel -- sympathizing and empathizing with the many crises that have been endured. Having recently moved from Israel, it is eerie to see pictures of N.Y. police checking bags before allowing people to carry them into a museum and hearing advisories to prepare sealed rooms. Perhaps this is a way for us to really connect to that greater entity of Israel and by doing so, to connect to ourselves. ©2014 Rabbi Y. Ciner and torah.org

If a seagull flies over the sea, what flies over the bay?



THE BOLOGNAVIA REBBE

Halacha MiDisney

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

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

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

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

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

Sometimes after a tough day working the crowds through a steamy Florida afternoon, many of the regulars prefer to daven at home over a stiff drink. To ensure a minyan for Minchah, the Disney rabbis even count singing tableware and kitchen implements. Although this pushes the halachic envelope, each piece can cite a klal [general principle] whereby it must be included in the minyan:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

This Purim Torah is codified in the sefer Iyunei Achbarim v'Anashim [Of Mice and Men] of R' Don Yitzchak Abarvazel. R' Abarvazel was an ancestor of the Katchke Rebbe. To properly grasp the full depth of his insights, one must be at least 40 years old and have raised children—and even then, it is advantageous to first fulfill the mitzvah of ad lo yada yada yada.

M-I-C (See you in costume.)

K-E-Y (Why? Because it's Purim!)

M-O-U-S-E! © Rabbi Michael b. Velvel of Anaheim



Poo-rim Samayach!

