

Toras Aish

Thoughts From Across the Torah Spectrum

RABBI LORD JONATHAN SACKS

Covenant & Conversation

There are lives that are lessons. The late Henry Knobil's was one. He was born in Vienna in 1932. His father had come there in the 1920s to escape the rising tide of antisemitism in Poland, but like Jacob fleeing from Esau to Laban, he found that he had fled one danger only to arrive at another.

After the Anschluss and Kristallnacht it became clear that, if the family were to survive, they had to leave. They arrived in Britain in 1939, just weeks before their fate would have been sealed had they stayed. Henry grew up in Nottingham, in the Midlands. There he studied textiles, and after his army service went to work for one of the great British companies, eventually starting his own highly successful textile business.

He was a passionate, believing Jew and loved everything about Judaism. He and his wife Renata were a model couple, active in synagogue life, always inviting guests to their home for Shabbat or the festivals. I came to know Henry because he believed in giving back to the community, not only in money but also in time and energy and leadership. He became the chairperson of many Jewish organisations including the national Israel (UJIA) appeal, British Friends of Bar Ilan University, the Jewish Marriage Council, the British-Israel Chamber of Commerce and the Western Marble Arch Synagogue.

He loved learning and teaching Torah. He was a fine raconteur with an endless supply of jokes, and regularly used his humour to bring "laughter therapy" to cancer patients, Holocaust survivors and the residents of Jewish Care homes. Blessed with three children and many grandchildren, he had retired and was looking forward, with Renata, to a serene last chapter in a long and good life.

Then, seven years ago, he came back from morning service in the synagogue to find that Renata had suffered a devastating stroke. For a while her life hung in the balance. She survived, but their whole life now had to change. They gave up their magnificent apartment in the centre of town to a place with easier wheelchair access. Henry became Renata's constant carer and life support. He was with her day and night, attentive to her every need.

The transformation was astonishing. Before, he had been a strong-willed businessman and communal

leader. Now he became a nurse, radiating gentleness and concern. His love for Renata and hers for him bathed the two of them in a kind of radiance that was moving and humbling. And though he might, like Job, have stormed the gates of heaven to know why this had happened to them, he did the opposite. He thanked God daily for all the blessings they had enjoyed. He never complained, never doubted, never wavered in his faith.

Then, a year ago, he was diagnosed with an inoperable condition. He had, and knew he had, only a short time to live. What he did then was a supreme act of will. He sought one thing: to be given the grace to live as long as Renata did, so that she would never find herself alone. Three months ago, as I write these words, Renata died. Shortly thereafter, Henry joined her. "Beloved and pleasant in their lives, and in their death undivided." (2 Samuel 1:23) Rarely have I seen such love in adversity.

In an earlier Covenant and Conversation, I wrote about the power of art to turn pain into beauty. Henry taught us about the power of faith to turn pain into chessed, loving-kindness. Faith was at the very heart of what he stood for. He believed that God had spared him from Hitler for a purpose. He had given Henry business success for a purpose also. I never heard him attribute any of his achievements to himself. For whatever went well, he thanked God. For whatever did not go well, the question he asked was simply: what does God want me to learn from this? What, now that this has happened, does He want me to do? That mindset had carried him through the good years with humility. Now it carried him through the painful years with courage.

Our parsha begins with the words: "Command the Israelites to bring you clear olive oil, crushed for the light, so that the lamp may always burn" (Ex. 27:20). The sages drew a comparison between the olive and the Jewish people. "Rabbi Joshua ben Levi asked, why is Israel compared to an olive? Just as an olive is first bitter, then sweet, so Israel suffers in the present but



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great good is stored up for them in the time to come. And just as the olive only yields its oil by being crushed -- as it is written, 'clear olive oil, crushed for the light' -- so Israel fulfills [its full potential in] the Torah only when it is pressed by suffering." (Midrash Pitron Torah to Num. 13:2)

The oil was, of course, for the menorah, whose perpetual light -- first in the Sanctuary, then in the Temple, and now that we have no Temple, the more mystical light that shines from every holy place, life and deed -- symbolises the Divine light that floods the universe for those who see it through the eyes of faith. To produce this light, something has to be crushed. And here lies the life-changing lesson.

Suffering is bad. Judaism makes no attempt to hide this fact. The Talmud gives an account of various sages who fell ill. When asked, "Are your sufferings precious to you?" they replied, "Neither they nor their reward." (Berakhot 5b) When they befall us or someone close to us, they can lead us to despair. Alternatively, we can respond stoically. We can practice the attribute of gevurah, strength in adversity. But there is a third possibility. We can respond as Henry responded, with compassion, kindness and love. We can become like the olive which, when crushed, produces the pure oil that fuels the light of holiness.

When bad things happen to good people, our faith is challenged. That is a natural response, not a heretical one. Abraham asked, "Shall the Judge of all the earth not do justice?" Moses asked, "Why have You done harm to this people?" Yet in the end, the wrong question to ask is, "Why has this happened?" We will never know. We are not God, nor should we aspire to be. The right question is, "Given that this has happened, what then shall I do?" To this, the answer is not a thought but a deed. It is to heal what can be healed, medically in the case of the body, psychologically in the case of the mind, spiritually in the case of the soul. Our task is to bring light to the dark places of our and other peoples' lives.

That is what Henry did. Renata still suffered. So did he. But their spirit prevailed over their body. Crushed, they radiated light. Let no one imagine this is easy. It takes a supreme act of faith. Yet it is precisely here that we feel faith's power to change lives. Just as

great art can turn pain into beauty, so great faith can turn pain into love and holy light. *Covenant and Conversation 5778 is kindly supported by the Maurice Wohl Charitable Foundation in memory of Maurice and Vivienne Wohl z"l* ©2018 Rabbi Lord J. Sacks and rabbisacks.org

RABBI SHLOMO RISKIN

Shabbat Shalom

"You shall blot out the remembrance of Amalek from under Heaven; do not forget!" [Deut. 25:19]. Parshat Zachor – Deuteronomy 25:17-

19 Each year on Shabbat Zachor, the Sabbath that precedes the festival of Purim, we read from a selection in the Book of Deuteronomy about the need to remember the vicious attack on the most vulnerable of the Jews by the nation of Amalek. Interestingly, however, there is another record of the battle that appears elsewhere in the Torah, containing additional elements of the incident.

That account is in the Book of Exodus, which we read on Purim morning prior to the Megillah: "And then came Amalek and fought with Israel in Refidim...And God said to Moses, '...I will blot out ("emche") the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven!" [Ex. 17:8-16]. It is important to note that this section appears in its historical context, following the exodus and prior to the giving of the Torah.

This is not so in Deuteronomy, where the reference to Amalek appears without warning and is out of historical context. "Remember what Amalek did to you by the way, when you were coming out of Egypt; how he met you by the way, and smote your hindmost: all that were feeble in the rear, when you were faint and weary; and they did not fear God. Therefore it shall be, when the Lord your God has given you rest from all your surrounding enemies, in the land that the Lord your God gives you for an inheritance, to possess it, you shall blot out ("timche") the remembrance of Amalek from under Heaven; do not forget!" [Deut. 25:17-19].

A number of questions arise from these passages. First, the account in Deuteronomy provides many more details about the attack in question, greatly enriching our understanding of the contemporaneous account in Exodus. Why separate the dissemination of details into two sections?

Second, since the commandment is to blot out the memory of Amalek, what do its two different verb forms signify? In Exodus, God informs Moses, "I will blot out ("emche") the memory of Amalek", whereas in Deuteronomy, Moses tells the people, "YOU shall blot out ("timche") the memory of Amalek". Who is to actually do the job?

Finally, why is there a need for a special Sabbath dedicated to remembering Amalek's genocide attempt, when only several days later, we will celebrate

Purim, which records the destruction of Amalek's infamous descendant, Haman?

To answer these questions, we turn to Maimonides' Laws of Kings, where he codifies the commandment regarding the destruction of the seven indigenous nations in the land of Canaan. He concludes that this directive is no longer feasible, as "their identity and memory have been lost," due to a policy of mass population transfer ordered by King Sancherib of Assyria, which "mixed the nations" that he conquered [BT, Brachot 28a]. However, in the following paragraph, as Maimonides codifies the mandate to destroy Amalek, he omits mention of its identity having been lost [Laws of Kings, 5:4-5].

On this basis of this critical difference, my revered mentor, Rabbi Joseph Soloveitchik, z"l, cited his grandfather, Rav Chaim of Brisk, who distinguished between the physical nation of Amalek and the ideology of Amalek. The former once lived near Canaan (and which has since been rendered indistinguishable by Sancherib's population transfer), while the latter's goal is to destroy Israel and our unique message of compassionate righteousness and moral justice for the world.

Indeed, the ideology of Amalek exists in every generation, with many different identities, from Sparta-Rome, to the Ottoman Empire, to Nazi Germany, to ISIS and to modern-day Iran. They each believed that to the powerful victor belong the spoils; they each maintain that might makes right!

With this in mind, our two passages can be better understood. The verses in Exodus describe the nation of Amalek attacking the Jewish People with the aim of nothing less than total genocide. Even as we took up arms in self-defense, the Almighty promises that He will finish the job for us ("I will blot out Amalek").

But Amalek is not merely a specific nation at a specific moment of Jewish history. It is an ideology, Amalek-ism, if you will: the denial of the Israelite mission promised to Abraham the first Hebrew, that we will eventually teach all the families of the earth God's without design of a world of peace and universal love.

From this perspective, the passage in Deuteronomy that we read on the Sabbath before Purim deals with the larger issue of Amalek-ism, not simply with the ancient nation of Amalek. It is no wonder, then, that this command to destroy Amalek is not within the historical context of the exodus from Egypt. Rather, it is in the context of commandments, the means by which we are distinct and through which we will ultimately become a light unto all the nations, when everyone will accept at least the moral commands of our holy Torah, when all peoples will beat their swords into ploughshares and will make love instead of war [Is. 2].

Therefore, it is specifically on Shabbat – a taste of the idyllic World to Come – before the holiday when

we bested the original Amalek, that we are commanded to "blot out" not only Amalek but Amalek-ism, by eventually converting all nations to the acceptance of Jewish morality, at the very least! ©2018 Ohr Torah Institutions & Rabbi S. Riskin

RABBI BEREL WEIN

Wein Online

The Torah reading of this week deals with the garments and vestments of the children of Aaron, the priests and High Priest of Israel. At first glance, the garments that these men were to wear present a clash of ideas and a contradiction of policies. On one hand, the garments of the ordinary priests were simple, modest and low key – a hat, a belt in the form of a sash, trousers and the tunic. They were pure white in color and represented purity of body and soul and humility of behavior and attitude.

Even the High Priest of Israel wore these basic, simple garments at all times during his service in the Temple. However, the High Priest wore four additional garments that distinguished him and his office from that of an ordinary priest. These four garments – a golden plate on his forehead, the long outerrobe of blue, a collar decorated with tufts of wool and golden bells, and a multicolored intricately designed printed cloth with shoulder straps which held the golden plate. This chest plate had 12 precious stones and two large diamond-like stones on the shoulder straps – which were surely garments of pride, grandeur and majesty.

The garments that the High Priest wore were in essence self-contradictory, for some of the garments were meant to reflect humility and modesty, simplicity and purity, while the other garments that he wore reflected grandeur, opulence, wealth and power. In this seeming contradiction, in my opinion, lies a deep and important message, which is very relevant to us even today.

A person's basic makeup, represented by the simple garments of the ordinary priest and of the underlying garments of the High Priest himself, must always reflect humility, simplicity and purity. We are told in the Talmud that the Lord, so to speak, abhors self-grandeur and overbearing pride.

Maimonides teaches us that in matters of humility one is allowed to go to an extreme in order to avoid hubris, pride, arrogance and self-interest. Nevertheless the Torah demands of leaders and scholars a certain amount – a one-sixty-fourth measure - of assertiveness and self-pride.

For the High Priest to wear only garments of simplicity would automatically diminish his stature and influence over the people that he is meant to serve and uplift spiritually. So we must add garments of majesty and grandeur in order to allow him to fulfill his role of leadership and influence. But underneath the four garments of grandeur, he still wears the simple white

garments that represent humility and purity. Therefore on Yom Kippur, he changes his garments a number of times. Some of the service he conducts wearing only the white simple garments, while at other times he is empowered to wear his magisterial robes.

This is always the balance that the Torah demands from all of us and especially from our leaders... never to fall into the trap of hubris but always to realize that even a costume can influence the public with whose leadership he is charged. ©2018 Rabbi Berel Wein - Jewish historian, author and international lecturer offers a complete selection of CDs, audio tapes, video tapes, DVDs, and books on Jewish history at www.rabbiwein.com. For more information on these and other products visit www.rabbiwein.com

RABBI AVI WEISS

Shabbat Forshpeis

In both the Purim and Joseph stories, seemingly meaningless sub plots eventually turn into major focal points.

In the Purim story, Mordechai exposes the plot to kill King Ahashverosh. The plotters are hanged and Mordechai's good deed is recorded in the Book of Chronicles. (Esther 2:21-23)

This narrative appears unimportant until much later when Ahashverosh, unable to sleep, has the Book of Chronicles read to him. When hearing of Mordechai's actions, he arranges for Mordechai to be led through the streets of Persia with great honor. This leads to Mordechai's ascent to power. (Esther Ch. 6)

A similar episode unfolds in the Joseph story. The butler and baker have dreams that Joseph interprets. Joseph correctly predicts that the baker will be hanged and that the butler will return to his place in the palace. (Genesis Ch. 40)

Once again, a seemingly insignificant story, until years later, when Pharaoh cannot sleep and seeks to have his dreams interpreted. Here the butler steps in, telling Pharaoh of Joseph's great interpretive skills. (Genesis 41:9-13)

Rabbi David Silber points out that both the butler and Ahashverosh remember a past good deed only when it serves to benefit them. The Megillah actually explicitly states that the king was told of Mordechai's heroism immediately after it took place (Esther 2:22), yet he chose to ignore it up until the point of that famous sleepless night. Only when in personal turmoil does he remember Mordechai.

This is also the case in the story of Joseph. Although Joseph had requested that the butler remember him, he does not. Only when Pharaoh is in personal chaos and the butler senses that he could get some credit in recommending Joseph, does he come forward.

Note the parallels in language. Joseph asks the butler to remember his dreams (ki im zechartani—

Genesis 40:14). The butler fails to do so (ve-lo zachar—Genesis 40:23). Later, before Pharaoh, the butler states: "My sin I remember (mazkir) today." (Genesis 41:9) In other words, the butler realized that he failed to recall Joseph's greatness earlier. Similarly, in the Megillah narrative, Mordechai's heroism was read by the King in the book of records of the chronicles (zichronot, divrei hayamim - Esther 6:1). Not surprisingly Purim falls in the week following Shabbat Zachor.

Some people remember out of altruism, others from selfishness. The butler and Ahashverosh are examples of the latter type--they remember only when it suits their fancy. Our challenge is to remember the actions of others and keep them in our consciousness at all times, even at the times when we have little to gain. We must remember not because it suits us, but we must do so because it's simply the right thing to do.

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RABBI DAVID S. LEVIN

The Power of the Tzitz

Parashat Tetzaveh deals with the special clothes that the Kohanim wore in their service in the Temple. There were four garments worn by the Kohein Hediot, the regular Kohanim, and four special garments that were added to these for the Kohein Gadol. Among the garments for the Kohein Gadol was the Tzitz, a headband that fit over his forehead with bands that were extended from it in order to tie it in place. On this headband were written the words "Kodesh Lashem, Holy to Hashem." It is this garment that is the focus of our attention this week.

The Torah tells us, "You shall make a Tzitz of pure gold and you shall engrave on it like the engraving of a signet 'Holy to Hashem'. You shall place it on a turquoise woolen string and it shall be on the Mitznefet (that turquoise string) opposite the face of the Mitznefet it shall be. It shall be on Aharon's forehead and Aharon will bear the sin of that which is holy that the B'nei Yisrael consecrate of any gifts of their holy offerings and it shall be on his forehead always for appeasement for them before Hashem." It is not clear how the Tzitz was positioned on or attached to the Mitznefet. Rashi explains that there are conflicting opinions based on two p'sukim. In our passage we are told "And you shall place it on a turquoise woolen string," whereas elsewhere it is written "And you shall place on it a turquoise woolen string." In the first case the words indicate that the Tzitz rests on the wool yet in the second case (39:31) it implies that the woolen string is attached to it but that the Tzitz is against the forehead. In the Gemara Zevachim (19a) we find that the Kohein's hair was visible between the Tzitz and the

Mitznefet to accommodate the tefillin of the shel rosh, implying that the Mitznefet was above the Tzitz. For this reason Rashi demonstrates that the Mitznefet was actually made up of six strings which were attached two-each to either side of the Tzitz and to the top at the center in three holes. These all met at the back of the neck where the strings were tied together and held the Tzitz in place. The Ramban argues that the pasuk lists only one string for the Mitznefet and Rashi uses the verses to indicate six strings. The Ramban also disagrees that these two p'sukim about the Mitznefet are contradictory. Both Rashi and the Ramban however agree that the Torah indicates that there was a space on the hairline between the Tzitz and the Mitznefet for the tefillin shel rosh.

The breastplate which contained the stones assigned to each tribe was used by the Kohein Gadol to judge the people through a sign given to him by Hashem. HaRav Zalman Sorotzkin compares the breastplate to the tefillin shel yad, the phylacteries of the arm, and the wearing of the Tzitz to the tefillin shel rosh, the phylacteries of the head. The tefillin shel yad are like the Choshein that directs our desires and our emotions towards the service of Hashem. The tefillin shel rosh are like the Tzitz which directs our souls and our strengths toward the service of Hashem. The Kohein Gadol is different than all other Jews in that all Jews are required to have one sign on their hands and one on their heads that direct all of their beings to the service of Hashem. The Kohein Gadol wears two signs upon his hand and his head. Sorotzkin gives two reasons for this difference. First, the Kohein Gadol cannot help but be somewhat arrogant because of his elevated position and this may influence him and distract him from his service to Hashem. He therefore needs the extra set of "signs" to remind him and to separate himself from that arrogance. This is similar to the King. In Gemara B'rachot (34b) we are told that the Kohein Gadol bows at the beginning and end of every b'racha in the Shemoneh Esrei and the King, once he has bowed, does not stand upright until he completes the Shemoneh Esrei. Both the Kohein Gadol and the King must demonstrate humility to remind them of the True One Who is to be served.

The second need for two signs is seen in the Halacha that every Jew must write a Sefer Torah, yet the King must write two Sifrei Torah. This is to remind the King that it is not enough for him to study the Torah, he must spend time teaching Torah to others at the least by his example in the way that he acts. The people will follow his example and lead a life of study and service to Hashem. The Tzitz acts in that same way for the Kohein Gadol. Just as the Kohein Gadol is careful with his offerings which guarantees their holiness and purity, so the other Kohanim will follow his example and exercise care to maintain the holiness and purity of the korbanot under their responsibility.

HaRav Shimshon Raphael Hirsch explains that avon (sin or guilt) applied to the idea of kodoshim designates "removing them from the path which is set for them by their being dedicated to Hashem's Sanctuary, bringing them to a condition which would impress upon them a removal from that which was their purpose.... Their condition is one that contradicts the idea of their consecration, one that would make them invalid, pasul, for the idea of that consecration." The Tzitz with its words of Kodesh Lashem eliminates that avon, that misdirection of consecration, and imbues the sacrifice with holiness once again.

How does the Tzitz accomplish this? With a communal offering such as the daily tamid or the musaf sacrifices that accompanied every Rosh Chodesh and Holiday, the Torah tells us to bring them at their appointed times. We are told in Gemara Pesachim (77b and 80a) that if the majority of Jews are tamei the sacrifice is brought anyway and the Tzitz affects its acceptance. In addition when an individual brings a sacrifice and the blood becomes tamei it should not be sprinkled and the sacrifice is rendered unfit. If the blood was sprinkled inadvertently on the altar, the power of the Tzitz allows it to become acceptable even though the meat may not be eaten. It can still cleanse a person of his sin and offer him forgiveness.

We too can easily become distracted and misdirected by all of the irrelevant stimuli that are in our world today. We are often discouraged because we slip and lose our concentration on our path of righteousness. The words of Kodesh Lashem can still help us to refocus our lives and serve Hashem properly. May Hashem help us to become Kodesh Lashem once again. ©2018 Rabbi D.S. Levin

ENCYCLOPEDIA TALMUDIT

Adar Rishon & Sheni

Translated by Rabbi Mordechai Weiss

When there is a leap year and we add a second Adar to the calendar, our Sages ("Tanaim") in the Talmud are divided as to which month we are referring to when we simply say "Adar". Rabbi Yehudah states that when we use the term "Adar" alone, we are denoting the first Adar (Adar Rishon) and when referring to the second Adar (Adar Sheni) we must indicate "Adar Sheni". Thus when signing a document on a leap year, if we are referring to the first Adar we would only write Adar and when we refer to the second Adar we must indicate "Adar Sheni".

Rabbi Meir disagrees and states that on a leap year, when we refer to Adar alone, the reference is to the second Adar (Tractate Nedarim 63a). Most of our sages however, follow the previously stated view of Rabbi Yehudah. The Rambam (Maimonides) however follows the view of Rabbi Meir. In any case, when writing a divorce (Get) both Adars are referred to by name, either "Adar Rishon" or "Adar Sheni".

This controversy impacts on many situations. For example, if a person rents a house during a leap year, does the lease expire on the first or the second Adar? The renter might claim that it is the second Adar, but the owner could insist that it is the first Adar. In such a situation some Rabbis advise them to split the second month, while others state that the owner has the upper hand, since the property belongs to him. Thus the burden of proof is on the renter that the lease is referring to the second Adar (Hamotzi M'chavero Alav Haraya).

This controversy would also affect when a person would commemorate a Yahrzeit (the day on which a father or mother or any close relative died and the traditional Kaddish is said); hence, the tradition of some to recite "Kaddish" on both "Adars"

There is some indication in our literature that when we memorialize the death of our teacher Moses on the seventh of Adar, we refer to the second Adar because of its close proximity to the holiday of Purim.

One can ask as well, how do we announce the new month in the synagogue the Shabbat prior to Rosh Chodesh (the beginning of the month)?

In short, in all the cases cited, there seem to be different opinions and the prudent thing to do is to indicate in each instance, what month we are referring to; "Adar Rishon" or "Adar Sheni". ©2018 Rabbi M. Weiss and *Encyclopedia Talmudit*

RABBI PINCHAS WINSTON

Perceptions

“Make holy garments for Aharon, your brother, for glory and for splendor." (Shemos 28:2)

There are many ways to describe the purpose of Creation. However, they all come down to a single idea:

"If you analyze the days of old which preceded you, from the time God first created man upon the earth, and investigate from one end of heaven unto the other end of heaven, can you find anything that has occurred as great as this; has the likes of this ever been heard? Did a people ever hear the voice of God speaking out of the midst of fire, as you did, and yet survive? Did ever God take a nation from the midst of another nation, through tests and signs, by wonders, by war, by a strong hand and stretched out arm, with awe, as God, your God did for you in Egypt before your eyes? This was shown to you so that you could know that God is God, and that there is no one else aside from Him." (Devarim 4:32-35)

To appreciate what this truly means, it is important to be more specific, especially considering what the Hebrew text says: "... To know that Hashem is Elokim, and there is no one else but Him."

It is not simply a matter of knowing that "God is God," but specifically of knowing that Hashem, spelled Yud-Heh-Vav-Heh, is "Elokim," as we repeat seven

times at the end of Yom Kippur. Elokim may run the world in a quiet behind-the-scenes manner which others call "Nature," but it is really Hashem running the entire show.

To better understand what this means, the Torah later warns about an opposite reality: "I will become very angry at them on that day, and I will abandon them and hide My face from them. They will be devoured, and plagued by many evils that will distress them, and will say, 'Do we not suffer because God has left us?'" (Devarim 31:17)

"It will be as if I do not see their troubles." (Rashi) "As if," but not actually. During hester panim, when God hides His face, so-to-speak, the result is a perception of abandonment by God, as a result of what happens in history and how. God ALWAYS runs the show, and is as involved in the lives and destiny of the Jewish people as ever. It just won't appear like that in the minds of the Jewish people, the result of previously having ignored God.

Hence, the Ba'al HaTurim reveals that: "The end letters [of the Hebrew words for 'hide My face from them. They will be devoured'] have the gematria of 'Haman,' and this is what the rabbis learn in Chullin (139b), that "Anochi haster astir" hints to Esther."

Haman, the infamous descendant of Amalek, whose main offense is tampering with the perception of the Jewish people: "The hand is on God's Throne..." (Shemos 17:16)

"The hand of God is raised to swear by His Throne to have eternal war and hatred against Amalek. Why is it written Chof-Samech and not Chof-Samech-Aleph and why is the Name divided in two? God swore that His... Throne will not be whole until the name of Amalek is completely obliterated." (Rashi, Shemos 17:16)

This means that Amalek exists to create doubt regarding Hashgochah Pratis -- Divine Providence -- making it seem as if God does not see all that happens in the world of man, or at least, that He doesn't care. Hence, the gematria of his name equals 240, the same as the Hebrew word "suffek," which means "doubt."

"Amalek" can also be read, Ayin-malak -- Mem-Lamed-Kuf -- which means "severed eye," because that is what he does: he severs the MIND'S eye of the Jewish people. But apparently, it is only an eye that the Jewish people have begun to sever themselves: "Then came Amalek and attacked the Jewish people in Refidim." (Devarim 17:8)

The Torah places this section immediately after this verse (when they asked, "Is God amongst us or not?") to imply, "I am always amongst you and ready at hand for everything you need, and yet you say, 'Is God amongst us or not?' By your lives, that dog shall come and bite you, and you will cry for Me and then you will know where I am!" It is like a man who carried his son on his shoulders and went on a journey. The son saw

an article and said, "Father, pick up that thing and give it to me." He gave it to him, and so a second time and also a third time. Yet, when they met a certain man along the journey, the son asked him, "Have you seen my father anywhere?" Therefore, the father said to him, "You do not know where I am?" At which point he put him down and a dog came and bit him. (Rashi, Shemos 17:8)

Based upon this, it would seem that Amalek is the name of the spiritual void that results when the Jewish people cease to be real with the idea that "Hashem is Elokim." This is why the potential for Amalek, in the form of Haman, resulted when Adam HaRishon ate from the Aitz HaDa'as Tov v'Ra -- the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, as the Talmud states: "Where is there an allusion to Haman in the Torah? In the verse, 'Did you eat from -- hamin -- the tree?'" (Chullin 139b)

It is a play on the word "hamin," which can also be read, "Haman," establishing a connection between Haman and the Aitz HaDa'as Tov v'Ra. Hence, the main result of the eating itself, the Torah says was: "God called out to the man, 'Where are you?' He answered, 'I heard Your voice in the Garden. I was afraid because I was naked, so I hid.'" (Bereishis 3:9-10)

Hide from God? Is that even possible? No. But, a person can think that they are hiding from God if they are not real with the idea that "Hashem is Elokim." If a person takes God's silence as evidence of His absence, they can easily delude himself into believing that God goes elsewhere at times.

That's why it is not coincidental, but Hashgochah Pratis, that Parashas Zachor is usually Parashas Tetzaveh. It is the role of the kohanim through their office, and the "Nation of Priests" through their lifestyle, to make the reality of "Hashem is Elokim" apparent to everyone. If we don't, then we become evidence of just that opposite, suffering as a result and profaning God's Name in the process. ©2018 Rabbi P. Winston & torah.org

RABBI MORDECHAI KAMENETZKY

Inconspicuous Assumption

In this week's portion Moshe is charged to prepare every detail of the priesthood for his brother Aharon and his descendants. In intricate detail, the sartorial traits of every one of the priestly vestments are explicated, down to the last intertwined threads.

And though Moshe is in charge of setting up the administration and establishing the entire order of service while training his brother and nephews, his name is conspicuously missing from this portion.

Our sages explain the reason for the omission. When Hashem threatened to destroy His nation, Moshe

pleaded with Him: "And now if You would but forgive their sin! -- but if not, erase me now from Your book that You have written"(Exodus 32:32) As we all know, Moshe's plea were accepted. The nation was spared. But Moshe was not left unscathed. His request of written eradication was fulfilled in one aspect. He was left out of one portion of the Torah Tezaveh. Thus the words of the tzadik were fulfilled in one aspect. But why this portion?

Though this English-language publication is not wont to discuss Hebrew etymological derivations, it is noteworthy to mention a thought I once heard in the name of Rabbi Ovadiah Yosef. Moshe's plea "erase me now from Your book," bears an explanation. The word sifr'chah, "your book" can be broken down to two words sefer chaf -- which means the twentieth book. Thus Moshe was removed from this portion of Tezaveh, the twentieth portion of the Torah.

But why would Moshe intone such omission in this, of all the portions of the Torah? Why not omit his name in the portions that declare the tragic outcome of sin or the calamities of insurrection? Wouldn't that be a better choice for omission? Why did Moshe allude to having his name omitted in the week he charges Aharon with all the honor and glory that is afforded the High Priest?

Rav Yitzchak Blaser was once seated at a gathering of the most prominent sages of his generation that was held in his city of St. Petersburg.

Among the Talmudic sages present was Rabbi Yosef Dov HaLevi Soleveitchik of Brisk, world renown for his Talmudic genius. Rabbi Soloveitchik presented a Talmudic question that his young son, Reb Chaim, had asked. After posing the question, a flurry of discussion ensued, each of the rabbis offering his own answer to the riddle, while other rabbis refuted them with powerful rebuttals. During the entire repartee, Rabbi Blaser, who had a reputation as a Talmudic genius, sat silently. He did not offer an answer, nor did he voice approval to any of the answers given by the Rabbis.

When Rabbi Soleveitchik ultimately offered his son's own solution, Rabbi Blaser sat quietly, neither nodding in approval nor shaking his head in disagreement. It seemed as if he did not comprehend the depth of the insightful discourse. It was as if he was not even there! Bewildered, Reb Yosef Dov began having second thoughts about the renowned Rabbi Blaser. "Was he truly the remarkable scholar that the world had made him out to be?" he wondered.

Later that evening, Rabbi Soloveitchik was in the main synagogue where he got hold of the book "Pri Yitzchok," a volume filled with Talmudic exegesis authored by none other than Rabbi Blaser himself.

After leafing through the large volume he saw that the afternoon's entire discourse, his son's question, the offered and reputed responses, and the final resolution, were all part of a dissertation that Rabbi

Blaser had himself published years earlier!

"Now I realize," thought Rabbi Soleveitchik, "Rabbi Blaser is as much a genius in humility as he is in Talmudic law!"

Our sages tell us that actually Moshe was to have been chosen as the Kohen Gadol in addition to the leader of the Jewish nation. It was his unwavering refusal to accept any of those positions that lost him the opportunity to serve as Kohen Gadol. Instead, Hashem took it from him and gave it to Aharon.

Many of us would have always harped on the fact. How often do I hear the claims "I got him that job!" "I could have been in his position!" "I started that company! Had I stayed, I would be the one with the stock options!" "That was really my idea!"

Moshe, too, could have injected himself as the one who propelled and engineered Aharon's thrust to glory -- especially after a seemingly tainting experience with the Golden Calf. In his great humility, Moshe did just the opposite.

Moshe did not want to diminish Aharon's glory in any way. He wanted the entire spotlight to shine on Aharon and his great service to Klal Yisrael. Therefore, in the portion in which Moshe charges, guides, and directs the entire process of the priesthood, his name is conspicuously omitted.

One of the greatest attributes of true humility is to let others shine in their own achievement without interfering or announcing your role in their success. The greatest educators, the wisest parents, and most understanding colleagues know when to share the spotlight and when to let another friend, colleague, sibling, or child shine in their success or accomplishment. They know exactly when to be conspicuously or inconspicuously "missing from the book." © 2015 Rabbi M. Kamenetzky & torah.org

PARSHA POTPOURRI

Wisdom of the Heart

by Rabbi O. Alport

Parshas 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.

