

OHRNET

SHABBAT PARSHAT TEZAVEH-ZACHOR-PURIM · 13 ADAR 5764 · MAR. 6, 2004 · VOL. 11 NO. 20

PURIM Symbols and Cymbals

BY RABBI MENDEL WEINBACH

“It’s Purim and we have nothing to give for *shalach manot!*” This was the anguished cry of one of the most famous survivors of the Holocaust, Rabbi Michael Ber Weismandel of blessed memory.

Here he was in the bunker together with other Jews hiding from the Nazi murderers whom he had succeeded in outwitting until then. When he boarded the cattle cars headed for Auschwitz he carried with him some emery wire which he later used to cut a hole in the wall of the train through which he leaped to safety. The desperate messages which he subsequently sent to the free world alerted his fellow Jews to the tragedy which was taking place in occupied Europe.

Rabbi Weismandel would eventually reach the U.S. and establish the great Neitra Yeshiva in Mt. Kisco, New York. But at this point in his odyssey of escape he was faced with the dilemma of how to fulfill the mitzvah of sending gifts of food to a friend mentioned in

Megillat Esther. He solved his problem as well as possible by presenting a fellow fugitive with two cubes of sugar. But what about the group of young women at the other end of the bunker who did not even possess that resource for a token gift? This great spiritual mentor had been disturbed that these girls had, out of boredom, resorted to reading some indecent magazines which had found their way into the bunker. He turned to them and said:

“I am certain that every one of you is anxious to fulfill the mitzvah of *shalach manot* but has nothing to give. My suggestion to you is to give *shalach manot* to the “Friend” in Heaven Who is keeping you alive while so many of your brothers and sisters are dying. But what can you give to such a friend? Make a commit-

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FANCY DRESS

“...for glory and for splendor.” (27:2)

In light of the critical economic situation here in Israel, the government has been cutting back drastically on renewing visas for foreign workers and summarily deporting those who are here illegally.

A few years ago, we had a cleaning lady from Romania called Valerica. Her mode of dress was the standard Romanian generic stonewashed Levis topped with a T-shirt that proclaimed the megatour of some Heavy Metal Band like Blind Widow or some other denizen of the musical illiterati.

A couple of days ago my wife happened to be walking down Rechov Shmuel Hanavi when she saw a lady who bore a striking resemblance to Valerica. However, this lady was dressed in a long skirt, a modest blouse and her hair was covered with a beret. My wife looked again and said “Valerica? Is it you?” “Yes, it’s me” she replied. My wife’s curiosity was piqued, “But what...? What happened? Did you become Jewish?” With a malignant snort she replied, “Of course not! It’s only for show. If I don’t dress up like this, the police will spot me and kick me out of the country!”

I couldn’t help but be struck by the irony: Some sixty years ago, Jews were afraid to walk the streets of Bucharest unless they were dressed as conspicuous Romanians, and some sixty years later this Romanian was afraid to walk the streets of Jerusalem (obviously with far more benign consequences) unless she was dressed like a Jew.

Clothes conceal, but they also reveal.

This week’s Torah portion starts with a description of the clothes of the *kohanim*. The Torah uses two abstract nouns to define the purpose of these garments: “for glory and for splendor.”

The Malbim says that the “glory” of the garments of the *kohanim* was that they revealed the innate holiness that G-d had given to the *kohanim*. However, these clothes were also for the “splendor” that would come from the efforts of the *kohanim*.

“Glory” refers to the gifts G-d gives man. “Splendor” refers to what we can achieve by ourselves.

The reading of this week’s Torah portion comes just before Purim. On Purim there is a widespread custom to dress up in masquerade costumes. What is the connection between Purim and costume?

In Tractate Megilla (12a), the students of Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai ask him why the Jews of Persia at the time of Purim were judged to be worthy of destruction. He said to them “You tell me.” They said “Because they had pleasure from the feast of that evil man (Achashverosh). However, if that was true, so only the Jews of Shushan who participated in the feast should have been culpable, not every Jew in Persia. So they said back to Rabbi Shimon, “You tell us.” He said, “Because they bowed to the idol of Nevuchadnetzar.”

But they only did that for show.” They only bowed out of fear of being put to death, not

because they were really worshipping idols

“They only did it for show, so G-d only did it for show. As it says in the passage ‘He did not answer from his heart.’” G-d only allowed Haman’s genocide plan to proceed as far as it did to frighten the Jews into repenting and mending their ways.

Our dressing up on Purim is to remind us that this whole world is just a show. That this whole world is a mask that hides the existence of G-d. The word for “world” in Hebrew, *olam*, has the same root as *ne’elam*, which means “vanished” or “hidden.”

What we see is not necessarily what is. It is our job to pry the mask from the face of the world and reveal Who is behind it.

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PARSHA OVERVIEW

G-d tells Moshe to command the Jewish People to supply pure olive oil for the *menorah* in the Mishkan (Tent of Meeting). He also tells Moshe to organize the making of the *bigdei kehuna* (priestly garments): A breastplate, an *ephod*, a robe, a checkered tunic, a turban, a sash, a forehead-plate, and linen trousers. Upon their completion, Moshe is to perform a ceremony for seven days to consecrate Aharon and his sons. This includes offering sacrifices,

dressing Aharon and his sons in their respective garments, and anointing Aharon with oil. G-d commands that every morning and afternoon a sheep be offered on the altar in the *Mishkan*. This offering should be accompanied by a meal-offering and libations of wine and oil. G-d commands that an altar for incense be built from acacia wood and covered with gold. Aharon and his descendants should burn incense on this altar every day.

ISRAEL Forever

THE NATIONAL SYMBOL

Almost every country has its own national symbol. The Americans have their bald eagle, the British their lion, and the French “le Coq”. Israel’s national symbol is the menorah.

The menorah, which was daily lit in the Mishkan sanctuary in the desert and in the Beit Hamikdash in Jerusalem, symbolizes wisdom. Our Sages saw in the menorah, whose lighting is discussed at the opening of this week’s Torah portion, the channel for wisdom flowing from its Divine source to the Jewish people.

The olive oil that was used for lighting the menorah had to be of the purest quality possible. This was a signal to our people throughout the generations that the study of Torah, which is the only road to gaining the Divine wisdom channeled through that menorah, must remain unadulterated if

it is to produce its sacred light – a light for our people and a “light unto the nations”.

This is an important lesson for Israeli government officials who have presumed the right to dictate to religious schools in Israel what their curriculum should include. In addition to the danger of polluting the pure oil of the menorah of our day, this intervention is an expression of ultimate chutzpa. Study after study has shown that the secular schools in Israel have a great deal to learn from the religious ones both in scholastic achievement and in behavior towards teachers and fellow students.

Let not those who have turned the country’s schools into blackboard jungles haughtily dictate to those schools where the menorah burns brightly as a beacon for Israel forever.

THE HUMAN SIDE OF THE STORY

HAPPY BIRTHDAY SURPRISE

When Knesset Member Rabbi Avraham Ravitz (United Torah Jewry) was on his way home one evening last month after a long, hard day in Israel’s parliament, he was accosted by Rabbi Moshe Frank, chairman of the Jerusalem branch of Degel Hatorah, which is a major component of the religious party Ravitz represents. Both of these respected political figures served in the past as heads of the Israeli Department of Yeshivat Ohr Somayach and have a special place in their hearts for this institution. So when Rabbi Frank told Rabbi Ravitz that a big philanthropist was now visiting Ohr Somayach and Rabbi Ravitz’s services were urgently required to help influence him into financing a major project he agreed to make the effort.

When they arrived at the Yeshiva’s dining hall Rabbi Ravitz was greeted by a singing crowd of former students and ex-colleagues, and only then realized that a surprise seventieth birthday party had been arranged for him and that he was the philanthropist being honored for having done so much for so many people returning to their Jewish roots. One look at the large crowd of alumni gathered in the campus where their return from assimilation began was enough to perceive that the best birthday present Rabbi Ravitz could ever receive was the knowledge that so many of his students of the past have become distinguished scholars and teachers of Torah and that the Israeli branch of Ohr Somayach continues to produce such wonderful products.

OHRNET magazine is published by Ohr Somayach Tanenbaum College

P.O.B. 18103, Jerusalem 91180, Israel • Tel: +972-2-581-0315 • Email: info@ohr.edu • www.ohr.edu

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PARSHA Q&A ?

1. What two precautions were taken to assure the purity of oil for the *menorah*?
2. How was Aharon commanded to kindle the *menorah*?
3. What does *tamid* mean in reference to the *menorah*?
4. What does *kehuna* mean?
5. Name the eight garments worn by the *Kohen Gadol*.
6. To what does Rashi compare the *ephod*?
7. In which order were the names of the Tribes inscribed on the *ephod*?
8. The stones of the *ephod* bore the inscription of the names of the sons of Yaakov. Why?
9. For what sins did the *choshen mishpat* atone?
10. What are three meanings of the word *mishpat*?
11. What was lacking in the *bigdei kehuna* in the second *Beit Hamikdash*?
12. Which garment's fabric was woven of only one material?
13. When the *Kohen Gadol* wore all his priestly garments, where on his head was the *tefillin* situated?
14. What does the word *tamid* mean in reference to the *tzitz*? (two answers)
15. Which garments were worn by a *kohen hediot*?
16. During the inauguration of the *kohanim*, a bullock was brought as a sin offering. For what sin did this offering atone?
17. Moshe was commanded to wash Aharon and his sons to prepare them to serve as *kohanim* (29:4). How were they washed?
18. What was unique about the bull sin-offering brought during the inauguration of the *kohanim*?
19. How did the oil used for the meal-offering differ from the oil used for the *menorah*?
20. What does the crown on the *mizbeach haketoret* symbolize?

PARSHA Q&A!

Answers to this Week's Questions!

All references are to the verses and Rashi's commentary unless otherwise stated.

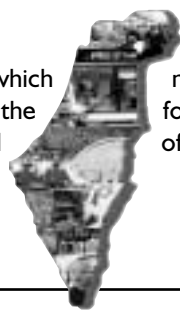
1. 27:20 - The olives were pressed and not ground; and only the first drop was used.
2. 27:20 - He was commanded to kindle it until the flame ascended by itself.
3. 27:20 - It means that it should be kindled every night.
4. 28:3 - Service.
5. 28:4,36,42 - *Choshen*, *ephod*, *me'il*, *ketonet*, *mitznefet*, *avnet*, *tzitz*, and *michnasayim*.
6. 28:6 - A woman's riding garment.
7. 28:10 - In order of birth.
8. 28:12 - So that G-d would see their names and recall their righteousness.
9. 28:15 - For judicial errors.
10. 28:15 - 1) The claims of the litigants 2) The court's ruling 3) The court's punishment.
11. 28:30 - The *Urim V'Tumim* — the "*Shem Ha'meforash*" placed in the folds of the *choshen*.
12. 28:31 - The fabric of the *me'il* was made only of *techelet*.
13. 28:37 - Between the *tzitz* and the *mitznefet*.
14. 28:38 - 1) It always atones, even when not being worn. 2) The *Kohen Gadol* must always be aware that he is wearing it.
15. 28:40,42 - *Ketonet*, *avnet*, *migba'at*, and *michnasayim*.
16. 29:1 - The sin of the golden calf.
17. 29:4 - They immersed in a *mikveh*.
18. 29:14 - It is the only external sin-offering that was completely burned.
19. 29:40 - Oil for the *menorah* comes only from beaten olives. Oil for meal-offerings may come from either beaten olives or from ground-up olives.
20. 30:3 - The crown of *kehuna*.

LOVE OF THE LAND - THE NAMES

Selections from classical Torah sources which express the special relationship between the People of Israel and Eretz Yisrael

HAIFA — THE BEAUTIFUL COAST

It takes only one look at the lovely seashore which adjoins the city of Haifa to appreciate what the Torah scholar Rabbi Ishtori Haparchi suggested



might be the source for its name. *Hof Yafeh* is Hebrew for "beautiful coast" and Haifa may well be a combination of those two words.

BLOOD IN THE HOLE

“You shall not follow in their statutes” (*Vayikra 18:3*) is the Torah’s warning against any imitation of heathen practices.

In our *gemara* this is applied to prohibiting the slaughtering of an animal or fowl in a manner which causes its blood to fall into a hole, because this was the practice of idol worshippers. Should one wish to perform *shechita* in his own yard and avoid dirtying it he is instructed to do the slaughtering away from the hole he has prepared so that the blood will fall upon the ground and then flow into that hole. This is permissible because anyone who sees him do so will not suspect him of an idolatrous practice but will attribute his action to a desire to keep his yard clean. Should he perform the *shechita* in a public area he is forbidden to use a hole for gathering the blood even in this fashion because people who see him will not attribute his action to a desire for cleanliness but will rather suspect him of being an idol worshipper.

Why did the idol worshippers want the blood of a slaughtered species to gather in a hole? Two different approaches are offered by our commentaries and their debate has halachic ramifications.

Rabbeinu Tam states that the idolaters gathered blood in a hole in order to later use it in the worship of their idol. Since they would do so only in a clean hole he rules that the ban on doing *shechita* over a hole does not apply to a messy hole.

This view is already challenged by *Tosefot* who raises the question that according to Rabbeinu Tam there should be no need for one doing *shechita* in his own yard to go through the complicated effort mentioned in the *gemara* when he simply can do the *shechita* over a messy hole. The conclusion of *Tosefot* that one should avoid doing *shechita* even over a messy hole is supported by Rashba who explains that the reason why idol worshippers slaughtered over a hole was that it was their idolatrous practice to gather around a

blood-filled hole and hold a feast there. The cleanliness of the hole containing the blood was therefore not a factor.

• *Chullin 41b*

A MIRACULOUS SURVIVAL

Iyov was an extremely righteous man whose faith in G-d was tested by Divinely imposed suffering which included loss of children and fortune and severe physical pain. His ability to intellectually cope with his tragedy despite his conviction that he was innocent of sin is the subject of the sacred *Sefer Iyov*. But his ability to survive physically is the subject of a debate in our *gemara*.

As a challenge to Rabbi Yossi bar Yehuda’s opinion that a punctured gall renders an animal *treifa*, the other Sages cite a passage in which Iyov complains to his consoling friends that “He poured my gall upon the ground” (*Iyov 16:13*). Since Iyov remained alive despite a punctured gall, they argue, this is proof that such a condition is not fatal in either man or animal and therefore does not make an animal a *treifa*.

The rejoinder to this challenge comes from the very same passage. Iyov also complains of his kidneys being cleaved, a condition about which there is a consensus that it renders an animal *treifa*. The conclusion must be that Iyov was miraculously sustained by Heaven, so that no proof can be brought from his situation.

The source for this miraculous dimension is the dialogue between G-d and Satan regarding Iyov’s faith. After G-d praised Iyov’s loyalty despite his loss of children and fortune, Satan argued that if he were afflicted with physical suffering Iyov would falter. G-d then instructed Satan: “Behold, he is in your hand but watch out not to take his life” (*ibid 2:6*). This was comparable, say our Sages, to telling someone to smash the wine barrel but make sure to retain its contents – something which only a miracle can achieve.

• *Chullin 43a*

The Weekly Daf

by RABBI MENDEL WEINBACH

Published by Targum Press / Distributed by Feldheim

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PURIM COSTUMES – THE INSIDE STORY

From: Stephanie in Detroit

Dear Rabbi,
What is the significance of wearing costumes and the like on Purim?

Dear Stephanie,

A simple Jew was once traveling on a journey. He arrived at a certain town near nightfall, and desperately sought lodgings at the town inn. To his dismay, he learned that there was no room in the inn since a group of soldiers were staying there. He pleaded until the innkeeper let him stay in the room of the General, who was away for the night, on condition that he leave at the crack of dawn. Awakened by the innkeeper while it was still dark outside, the rushed, weary-eyed traveler mistakenly wore one of the General's uniforms and left. Seeing his military-clad reflection in one of the store windows the simple Jew exclaimed, "That foolish inn keeper woke up the General instead of me!"

All too often we mistakenly define ourselves by how we appear and by what we do. We similarly judge others in the

same way, as do others judge us. We are all deceived then by external appearances, which often "mis-reflect" the real person within the external attire.

This is a theme in the Purim story. The Jews wrongly partook of the gluttonous, showy feast of King Achashverosh, which the King had intended to culminate in the improper "unveiling" of his Queen, Vashti (Esther 1:1-13). While the Jews' appearance at the banquet was wrong, it was more an external reflection of their being "under the influence" of their surroundings, than of a true, inner desire to do wrong. Ultimately, they revealed their real identity hiding behind the facade, fasting and praying fervently in repentance to G-d (Esther 4:1-3).

Purim, then, is a time for reflecting on the idea that people are not always as they appear on the outside. The custom of wearing costumes, especially those of mundane or even evil people or non-kosher animals on Purim makes us ask, "Who is the Jew behind that masquerade of impurity?" And when the person removes his mask, we shout with surprise, "Oh, it's you — I should have recognized you!" This teaches us that no matter how far a Jew appears to be from G-d and the Torah, it's merely an intoxicated masquerade. Behind it all, within, is a holy, familiar Jew — a brother or sister to love, appreciate and respect.

WHAT'S THE RIGHT THING TO DO? _____

REAL-LIFE QUESTIONS OF SOCIAL AND BUSINESS ETHICS

JOINING IN ON A SIYUM

Question: A friend of mine who is a serious student of Talmud invited me to a *mesiba* (party) that he is making in honor of his having completed an entire *mesechta* (Tractate) of the Babylonian Talmud. Is there any point in my being a part of this *siyum* even though I did not study and complete that *mesechta*?

Answer: The Talmud (*Mesechta Sabbat* 118b) relates that the Sage Abaye made a *mesiba* for all the students in his yeshiva when even only one of them completed a *mesechta*. This is the source for the halachic ruling that such a *mesibat siyum* is considered a *seudat mitzvah* for all the participants.

Two reasons are given by the commentators for this Sage's policy of celebrating a *siyum*.

One is the Midrash relating to the feast that King Solomon made for all his servants when he was granted the wish for superior wisdom which he made in a prophetic dream. This, notes the Midrash, is the source for making a

celebration upon completing the Torah. Just as the increase of wisdom of one man was a cause for celebration for his entire entourage, so too is the increase of Torah knowledge a reason to celebrate. This is why we celebrate on Simchat Torah upon completion of an entire year's public reading of the Torah. This, too, is the reason for celebrating a *siyum* on even one *mesechta*.

A second reason is based on one of the Talmudic explanations of why the fifteenth day of the Month of Av is considered a special day in our calendar. This was the day when the *Kohanim* climaxed their work of preparing wood for use on the altar in the Beit Hamikdash, a climax that they celebrated with a feast. The great joy with which they performed this mitzvah throughout the year reached its peak with this climax and demanded expression. The joy with which one studies the Talmud, page-by-page, reaches its peak with the completion and a *mesibat siyum* is in order.

As far as you are concerned, aren't you happy to participate in the other *simchot* of your friend?

Re: The Origin of the Torah (Ohrnet Bo)

I read the question and answers about the Torah. It was extremely fascinating. However, I have one question, and I don't think anyone living now has the exact knowledge of this. But I'm not sure. Here's the question: Where is the original (written) Torah now? Was it buried with Moses or do we not know what ever happened it? Thanks.

• Scott

Ohrnet replies:

Dear Scott,

The original Torah was preserved in the First Temple until its destruction, Since then it's whereabouts are unknown. The earliest Sefer Torah we have is in the Hebrew University in Jerusalem that dates back to the times of Rabbainu Nissim, circa. thirteen hundred CE.

Re: The Long Wait (Ohrnet Yitro)

I have been to weddings in smaller halls that serve the entire meal and then move the tables back so that the people have room to dance. Then again at some weddings if the couple comes in early people tend to leave early and don't stay for the meal. There should be a happy medium.

• Rachel P.

Ohrnet Comments:

Dear Rachel,

Good point! But (and there had to be a "but" after that statement), many people try to juggle the needs of the family and the guests (and sometimes even the young couple). Sometimes the way that it is done is by having a short meal and then lots of dancing at the end that many extra people are invited to. Sometimes no extra people are invited to just come for the dancing and the meal is longer with the dancing in between the courses.

Re: Ohrnet Subscriptions

I was told that it is possible to "subscribe" to your marvelous weekly parsha sheets, free of charge, by sending an email to you. Is this correct? If so, I would greatly appreciate receiving them, if possible.

Thank you very much. May you have a tremendous amount of *hatzlacha* (success).

• Happy E.

Ohrnet replies:

Yes, we are Happy to do so!

DID YOU KNOW THAT...

...Ohr Somayach's renowned one-year program for highly motivated and academically superior university students and young professionals is called "The Center" because this is where these young people on the threshold of careers meet each other and their superb teachers dedicated to providing them with Torah background for their lives.

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PURIM

Symbols and Cymbals

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ment to stop polluting your precious souls with the stuff you are reading and that will be the ideal gift.”

A touching story indeed. But since when do we refer to G-d as a friend?

The source for this is a passage in the Proverbs of King Solomon (*Mishlei 27:10*) which advises “Do not forsake your friend and the friend of your father.” No one is more deserving of this title than the Creator whose friendship to man in every generation is expressed in innumerable ways.

When a gentile asked the Sage Hillel to convert him to Judaism but agreed to undergo this transformation only if he could be taught the entire Torah during the time he was able to stand on one leg, Hillel encapsulated the entire Torah for him by cautioning him: “What is hateful to you, don’t do to your friend.” (*Mesechta Shabbat 31a*)

The explanation of this enigmatic condensation offered by the great Talmudic commentator Rashi is that the friend to whom Hillel referred is the same One mentioned by King Solomon. Just as you would find it extremely hateful for your friend to ignore your wishes, Hillel told the conversion candidate, so must you, on becoming a Jew, avoid ignoring the wishes of your Friend in Heaven.

As we clash the cymbals of rejoicing on Purim for the miracle of our Friend in Heaven saving our ancestors from the Holocaust planned by Haman, let us pay attention to the symbols of salvation implicit in our

mitzvot of the day. When we send our *shalach manot* to our earthly friends in the grand fashion which Providence has enabled us to do, let us imagine that we are thus symbolically sending a gift to our Heavenly Friend, not only in appreciation for what He did for us thousands of years ago, but for what He is doing for us today. When we hear the blessing before the morning reading of the Megillah praising G-d as the “One Who performed miracles for our ancestors in those days in this season”, we are supposed to bear in mind that this blessing applies to the mitzvah of *shalach manot* as well. The Chassidic master, Rabbi Levi Yitzchak of Berditchev, suggests that the inner meaning of the term “in this season” is that the revelation of G-d’s friendship to His people that was experienced by our ancestors “in those days” surfaces again in our own time during the Purim season.

As we go shopping and do our baking and cooking in preparation for *shalach manot*, let us listen to our cymbals of celebration reverberating throughout the generations and direct our gift to our Friend above in the form of a commitment to avoid ignoring His wishes.

At a time when Jews in Israel are daily faced with the threat of terror bombings and Jews throughout the world face growing anti-Semitism, we are in desperate need of making this gift and praying that our Friend above will reciprocate with the gift of another Purim miracle in our own day.

חג פורים שמח!

We wish our readers a happy and joyous Purim!