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PARSHA INSIGHTS

by Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair

The Surgeon General Has Determined

“You shall make the robe of the Ephod... on its hem all around... a gold bell and a pomegranate...” (28:31-33)

It first started on my Coca Cola can. I didn’t notice it at first, but when I glanced instead at a Coke Zero can, something out of the corner of my brain twigged that it wasn’t there. Then I saw it again on a packet of cinnamon *rogelach*. Yes, it was definitely spreading. The next day I took a good look at it on the Coke can – a red circle with a graphic of a spoon and the legend underneath it saying “high sugar content.” Next time I passed the *rogelach* package, I saw it had two red roundels: High Sugar Content and High Trans Fat Content. The Israeli Packaging Standards people had finally managed to get companies manufacturing high-risk foods to apply the equivalent of a “Government Health Warning” that already existed for cigarettes. It was almost like, “Warning! Food can seriously damage your health!”

I thought to myself, “Do they really think this is going to help?” However, the next time my fingers were persuading me to pick up a *rogele*, I glanced at the two nasty roundels on the packet and, regretfully, moved on.

It’s amazing how little the fact that we know something affects us. A person isn’t frightened so much by what he *knows* as what he *sees*. Maybe that’s the reason why the

word in Hebrew for fear, “*yira*,” is spelled similarly to, and is pronounced identically to the word to see – “*yira*.” Seeing scares a person in a way that intellectual concepts completely fail to do.

As I looked at the two red roundels on the *rogelach* package, I thought to myself how great it would be if scientists could figure out a way, that before we spoke a word of *lashon hara* – defamatory speech – our brains could trigger a little red roundel to flash in front of our eyes saying, “*Avreirah* Health Warning! This remark contains high amounts of defamatory speech!”

“On its hem all around... a gold bell and a pomegranate...”

Hanging around the hem of the Ephod Robe were golden bells, each with a ringer. There were seventy-two bells, alluding to the seventy-two possible shades of white that could make someone a Metzora – a spiritually-caused physical condition that resulted from negative speech. The Ephod atoned for the sin of evil speech – but atonement requires the constant ringing reminder of where the sin begins.

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.

TALMUD TIPS

by Rabbi Moshe Newman

Tetzaveh: Berachot 58-64

Building that Wall

“One who sees Jewish homes ‘in their dwelling’ says [the beracha of] ‘Baruch ... Who establishes the border of the widow.’”

A *beraita* on our *daf* teaches this halacha, which is codified in Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim 124:10. This *beracha* is one example of numerous *berachot* taught in our *sugya* that are made when seeing special people or sights.

When exactly is this *beracha* meant to be said? What is the meaning that the homes are “in their dwelling,” *b’yishuwan*, the description of the homes in the *beraita*?

Rashi defines this as “for example during the settlement of the Second Beit Hamikdash era.” It is not readily apparent what other examples Rashi had in mind when writing this. I’ve heard it explained that Rashi understands the *beracha* to be one of thanksgiving to Hashem for the renewal of the Jewish nation’s dwelling in and thriving in their homeland. The authors of this *beracha* lived during the exile that preceded the Second Beit Hamikdash and composed it in anticipation of fulfillment of the prophecy that *Klal Yisrael* would soon return to Eretz Yisrael.

The *Poskim* explain Rashi in a variety of ways: one who sees the Beit Hamikdash; one who sees Jewish homes in Israel at the time of the Beit Hamikdash; one who sees Jewish homes in their glory, as they were during the time of the Second Beit Hamikdash. According to the first two definitions, this *beracha* would not be made today. But according to the third, it might very well be said when seeing certain dwellings in Israel today.

However, Rabbeinu Alfasi, also known as the Rif, explains that this *beracha* should be made when seeing any Beit Knesset, whether in Israel or in the Diaspora. According to his *psak*, this *beracha* would be made nowadays, worldwide.

Although the ruling in Shulchan Aruch is according to the opinion of the Rif, the Mishna Berurah writes that since the intent of the *beraita* is subject to different

views among the *Poskim*, the *beracha* should be said without “*Shem* and *Malchut*.” From the Aruch Hashulchan it seems that the custom is that the *beracha* is not said at all due to uncertainty and the rule that “when in doubt about saying a *beracha*, we are lenient and do not say it.” The straightforward reading of the Aruch Hashulchan implies that there is no custom at all nowadays to say this *beracha*, even without *Shem u’Malchut*. However, one may suggest that his intent is to not say it with *Shem u’Malchut*, but, rather, to say it without – in alignment with the *psak* of the Mishna Berurah. (Readers are invited to write to the editor with any pertinent feedback.)

The Gaon from Vilna sheds much light on the *beracha*’s wording and the focus on Hashem’s establishing the “border of the widow” in Eretz Yisrael. The Torah refers to the Jewish People in exile as being “like a widow”, but not actually a widow. (Eicha 1:1) Her “husband” Above may not seem to be with her in exile, but He will eventually be seen as returning to her when she returns to Him. The Vilna Gaon points to a *gemara* (Megillah 29a) that states Rabbi Elazar ben Hakapar says, “In the future, the shuls and yeshivahs in Bavel (i.e. the Diaspora) will be moved and affixed in Eretz Yisrael.” And when they will be established in Israel, says the Gaon, they will be placed at the periphery of Eretz Yisrael so as not to diminish the residential area available in the center of the Land. The shuls and yeshivahs will be at the border, which explains the word “*gvul*” – border – in the *beracha*. They will form a type of “border wall,” so to speak and serve as a barrier for protection of the Jewish people against all potential enemies, both physical and spiritual. (According to this explanation, it seems correct to understand that this *beracha* will not be made again until the future when there is a final ingathering of the exiles, and the shuls and yeshivahs are permanently established in Eretz Yisrael.)

- *Berachot 58b*

PURIM SPECIAL FEATURE!

by Rabbi Chaviv Danesh

All in Hashem's Hands

The commentaries point out that unlike the Exodus from Egypt, when Hashem performed open miracles throughout, the final salvation of the Jewish People in the Purim story seemed almost completely natural. Achashverosh's feast, Vashti's execution, Esther's election as queen, Haman's rise to power, Mordechai's role in saving the king's life, and the victory over Amalek did not disobey the laws of nature. However, through analyzing the Megillah, a person is given a glimpse into how every seemingly natural event was carefully orchestrated and put in place by the guiding hand of Hashem. Based on this idea, the commentaries point out that everything mentioned in the Megillah somehow contributes to revealing how Hashem was behind it all.

With this in mind, let's analyze the very first verse of the Megillah. The Megillah starts: "And it was in the days of Achashverosh, the Achashverosh who ruled from Hodu to Kush, over one hundred and twenty-seven regions." The Gemara derives from the repetition of the name Achashverosh that he was the same wicked king from beginning to end (Megillah 11a). Since this is the very beginning of the Megillah, it must contain an important lesson about Hashem's providence and involvement in the world. We must therefore ask ourselves: "What does the fact that Achashverosh was wicked from the beginning to the end teach us?"

The Mistake

The Gemara says that one of the reasons why Hashem decreed the Jewish People's destruction was because they took pleasure in Achashverosh's feast (Megillah 12a). Even though Mordechai, one of the leaders of the generation, forbade them from attending, the Jewish nation felt that it was politically correct for them to appear alongside all the other nations and citizens who attended the feast. The commentaries explain that their mistake was that they removed Hashem from the picture and based their decision on political considerations. Even though political considerations may sometimes be taken into account, once Mordechai had explicitly announced that in their situation political considerations were not a factor, they should have listened and strengthened their faith in Hashem. They should have believed with a full heart that Hashem is ultimately the One Who makes all political decisions, and that Achashverosh was no more than a puppet being controlled by Hashem, as it states, "Like streams of water is *the heart of a king in the hand of Hashem, any way He wishes to, He leads it.*" (Mishlei 21:1) Their failure to do so was considered a serious offense.

Fixing the Mistake

Mordechai and Esther both understood that in order for the decree to be overturned, the Jewish People would have to do *teshuva* for their offense of taking Hashem out of the picture. Esther therefore intentionally invited Haman to her feast in order to make it seem as though she was on Haman's side, ultimately causing the Jewish nation to lose hope in their "political clout" in the palace and turn directly to Hashem to save them (see Megillah 15b). The Jewish People responded correctly, and instead of focusing on political tactics to overturn the decree, they turned directly to Hashem and prayed for things to change. Also, instead of looking for political solutions, they looked for ways to spiritually correct their previous mistakes. Therefore, to appropriately do *teshuva* for the pleasure they had from Achashverosh's feast, they now deprived themselves of physical pleasure by fasting for three days. (Midrash Shochar Tov, Tehillim 22)

Salvation through the Wicked

Responding to their *teshuva*, Hashem turned everything upside down. Everything Haman had tried to do to destroy them now contributed to their salvation. The very night that Haman planned to convince Achashverosh to have Mordechai hanged ended up being the night on which Haman advised Achashverosh to extravagantly honor Mordechai. The very gallows that Haman prepared for Mordechai were used for his own hanging. The very day that Haman had decided would be the time to destroy the Jews was the day on which the Jews destroyed their enemies. Ultimately, Haman's own proposal to kill Vashti paved the way for the ultimate salvation of the Jewish People, by bringing Esther to the palace. The turn of events in the Purim story truly embodied the verse "Many are the thoughts that are in the heart of man but the counsel of Hashem will prevail." (Mishlei 19:21) This turn of events clearly demonstrated that Hashem can bring salvation even through the most calculated evil plans of the most wicked leaders (see Maharal on Esther 8:2, Gra on Esther 1:16).

Nothing but Hashem

But there is still one mistake the average reader of the Megillah might make. The reader may think that the salvation came about because Achashverosh had a change of heart and thus caused the surprise ending. To combat this thinking, Chazal tell us that Achashverosh remained the same wicked person, the same anti-Semite that he was at the beginning of the story. However, Hashem arranged it that his love for Esther would outweigh his hatred for the Jewish People. The Maharal explains that this is why at the very beginning of the Megillah we are told that Achashverosh did not budge from his evil ways. Only by knowing this fact can the reader truly appreciate how Hashem alone was the One who orchestrated the salvation of the Jewish People.

A primary lesson from the Purim story is to realize that Hashem runs the show, and even the seemingly most powerful people in the world are simply puppets in Hashem's hands. This lesson is especially relevant in our times, when many put their faith in presidents and world leaders, falsely thinking that they are the ones who control the destiny of their countries and citizens. The Purim story reminds us that Hashem can make salvation sprout from even the most evil plans of the most wicked leaders. Everything is in Hashem's hands! Our job is to keep the Torah and mitzahs without compromise, and to make sure not to remove Hashem from the picture. May we all merit taking this important lesson from the Purim story to heart.

ASK!

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Eradicating the Essence of Evil

Purim

Eradicating the Essence of Evil

Dear Rabbi, Who is Amalek?

Amalek was the illegitimate son of Elifaz, and the grandson of Esav. (Amalek's mother was the illegitimate daughter of Amalek's father).

The progeny of Amalek are the archetypal enemy of the Jewish People. Their very existence is diametrically

opposed to the Torah. The Sages describe the people of Amalek as being the essence of all the evil in the world.

Today, we don't know who is descended from Amalek. Around the year 600 BCE, the Assyrian conqueror Sancheriv exiled most of the world's inhabitants from their homelands and scattered them around the world. Since then, the true national identity of any people (except for the Jews) has become obscure.

The concept of "Amalek" goes a long way in helping us understand the baffling phenomenon of anti-Semitism.

Anti-Semitism has no sociological parallel. Even the word is unique: "Anti-Semitism" is the only English word describing hate towards a distinct group of people. There's no English word for French-hatred, Irish-hatred, or German-hatred, even though England fought bitter wars against all these nations.

We are the only people in the world towards whom there exists a unique, distinct hatred. This bears out the Torah's prediction that until the Mashiach's days there will exist a nation, Amalek, with an unexplainable, inborn hatred towards us.

Praise on Purim

Dear Rabbi, Why do we not say Hallel on Purim?

We recite *Hallel* on the festivals which celebrate our freedom from Egypt. *Hallel* begins with the words, "Give praise, servants of G-d." Thus, we recite "*Hallel*" to celebrate the fact that we are no longer "servants of Pharaoh," but rather that we are "servants of G-d."

The Megillah, on the other hand, begins with the Jews in exile, subservient to Achashverosh, and ends with the Jews in exile, subservient to Achashverosh. In this sense *Hallel* is inappropriate.

- Sources: *Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim 693, Mishna Berurah 7*

They Built That Wall

Dear Rabbi, Why does Jerusalem have Purim on a different day than we do?

Most people celebrate Purim on the 14th of the Hebrew month *Adar*. But in a city which was walled in the time of Joshua's conquest of Israel, Purim is celebrated on the 15th. Here's why:

Haman decreed that all Jews be killed on the 13th of *Adar*. When the day came, the Jews miraculously defended themselves. On the following day, *Adar 14*, the Jews celebrated.

In Shushan, the walled capital city of the Persian Empire, the Jews had an extra day to fight their enemies. They didn't celebrate until the 15th.

In remembrance of these events, Mordechai and Esther instituted two separate days of Purim, *Adar 14* and *15*. The 14th commemorates the national victory. The 15th – *Shushan Purim* – commemorates the victory of the Jews who lived in the walled city of Shushan.

So if you're like most Jews, you celebrate Purim on the 14th. But, if you happen to live in Shushan, or in any ancient walled city, you celebrate Purim on *Adar 15th*.

The definition of an "ancient walled city" is any city that was surrounded by a wall in the days of Joshua. Logically, the definition should be a city that was walled in the time of Mordechai and Esther, but the Sages didn't want to exclude Jerusalem, whose walls were in ruins at the time of the Purim episode.

Some people keep two days of Purim because they are in doubt whether their city is considered "walled." One example is Hebron. The Jews in Hebron keep two days of Purim because it's doubtful whether the entire wall around Hebron existed at the time of Joshua.

Another example is Tiberias, a walled city on the shore of Lake Kinneret. Tiberias was walled from the time of Joshua. The doubt arises because Tiberias has no wall along the shore. Is Tiberias considered an "open" city because it is unwalled along the shore? Or is the lake considered a "wall" since it protects the city from attack? This question is left unresolved in the Talmud.

- Sources: *Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim 688:1, 3 and 4 and Mishna Berurah 1 and 9*

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Questions

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 *tzitzit*? (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?

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

Answers

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, tzitzit, 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 -
 - (i) The claims of the litigants,
 - (ii) The court's ruling,
 - (iii) 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 *tzitzit* and the *mitznefet*.
14. 28:38 -
 - (i) It always atones, even when not being worn.
 - (ii) 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*.

WHAT'S IN A WORD?

Synonyms in the Hebrew Language
by Rabbi Reuven Chaim Klein

To Remain Silent

When Mordechai tried to convince Queen Esther to intervene on the Jews' behalf, he famously told her, "...for if you shall surely be silent at this moment, redemption and salvation will arise for the Jews from another avenue..." (Esther 4:14). The Hebrew words which Mordechai said that refer to Esther's being "silent" are *hachareish tacharishi* (see *Esther Rabbah* 8:6). As you've probably realized, *cheresh* is not the only Hebrew word that refers to "quiet" or "silence." In this essay we will visit the words *shetikah*, *dom*, *chashah*, and *hass*, which all bear that meaning as well. First we will explain the nuances between these four different words for silence. Afterwards we will turn our focus on the word *cheresh* and how it differs from the other words. In doing so we will gain a better appreciation of why Mordechai uttered the fateful words *hachareish tacharishi*, and did not use one of the other synonyms for "silence."

Rabbi Avraham Bedersi HaPenini (1230-1300) explains that the different words in question denote different types of silence: *shetikah* denotes the silence that comes after a commotion has been quelled. This root appears only four times in the Bible – two of which are in the context of Jonah's telling his shipmates that if they throw him overboard, the stormy sea will "calm down" (Jonah 1:11-12). Outside of the Bible, cognates of *shetikah* are actually used by the Targum as Aramaic translations of *cheresh*-based words (e.g., see Targum to Gen. 24:21 and Num. 30:5, 3:8).

Rabbi Bedersi further explains that *dom* refers to what he calls a "natural state" of silence. The classical example of this is when Aharon was confronted with the death of his two eldest sons, the Bible says "and Aharon was silent" (Lev. 10:3), where the word *vayidom* appears. This means that Aharon was so overwhelmed with that painful development that he could do nothing in reaction but stand in silence – he could not even think.

Rabbi Yaakov Tzvi Mecklenburg (1785-1865) explains that *dom* refers to a type of deliberate silence, whereby a person is quiet because he consciously and intentionally decides to be quiet. According to this approach, *vayidom Aharon* means that Aharon purposely disconnected himself from the matter at hand by refusing to comment on it. Interestingly, Nachmanides writes that Aharon first cried and then was silent. However, Rabbi Mecklenburg

disagrees with this assessment, arguing that if such were the reality, the Torah would have used a cognate of *shetikah* to convey his silence – not the word *dom*.

Still others explain that *dom* is a general word for "stoppage," like when Joshua stopped the sun from moving at Gibeon, the Bible reports *shemesh b'givon dom* (Joshua 10:12). The Rabbis exegetically refer to that incident as the sun being silent from "singing G-d's praises," but the literal meaning does not refer to silence at all. Obviously, when one is quiet, his lips stop moving, so "stoppage" and "silence" are quite related.

The next word for "silence" is *chashah*. King Solomon wrote that there is a time for everything, and in listing examples, he writes "There is a time to be silent (*eit lachashot*), and there is a time to speak" (Eccl. 3:7). Rabbi Bedersi does not explain the meaning of this word, but Rabbi Mecklenburg explains that the type of quiet connoted by *chashah* is a reflective, introspective sort of silence (similar to Rabbi Bedersi's understanding of *cheresh* below). Nonetheless, Rabbi Shlomo Aharon Wertheimer (1866-1935) explains that *chashah* refers to the silence of a person who holds himself back from answering another, even though he has what to answer. [Rabbi Mecklenburg also theorizes that the terms *nichush* ("divination") and *choshen* (the Kohen Gadol's "breastplate") are derived from this root.]

Finally, the verb *hass* (also not mentioned by Rabbi Bedersi) refers to the act of making others quiet (i.e., hushing them). The etymology of this word might be an onomatopoeic adaptation of the sound used to quiet others (like "shh..."). As Rabbi Shlomo Pappenheim (1740-1814) and Rabbi Mecklenburg explain it, this verb is usually employed when silencing others in order to allow them to listen to somebody else, or to show honor/awe to somebody else. Rabbi Mecklenburg proposes that the word *hasket* ("listen," Deut. 27:9) is a portmanteau partially derived from the word *hass*, in the sense of being quiet in order to hear what somebody else has to say.

Now that we have set the other words "out of the way," we can focus on the phrase *hachareish tacharishi* and why Mordechai used cognates of the word *cheresh* as opposed to the other words mentioned above.

Rabbi Bedersi explains that *cheresh* denotes an introspective silence whereby the silent party considers certain ideas but does not verbally reveal those thoughts. This is the type of silence practiced by wise men and experts (in Akkadian *charash* means “wise” or “intelligent”). In related contexts, a certain type of craftsman is called a *charash* (Ex. 35:35), and the Pharaoh’s advisors (*chartumim* in Hebrew) are called *charshei* by the Targum (to Ex. 7:22). Those people are experts in their field and silently think about how to best go about doing what they do. The artisan, in particular, tends to be quiet while he concentrates on his work. Digging into the depths of one’s mind is conceptually similar to “plowing” (*charishah*) – hence the two words are related in Hebrew. [In some places, evildoers are especially associated with this type of silence (see Prov. 3:29 and Job 4:8, with Rashi).]

A cognate of *cheresh* is also used in the famous verse which says (Ex. 14:14), “G-d will fight for you, and you will be silent (*tacharishun*),” which means that G-d will take care of the Egyptian army, while the Jews sit silently on the sidelines, contemplating how G-d wages war on their behalf.

According to this, Mordechai implored Esther to get involved in the dire situation by use of the phrase *hachareish tacharishi*, as if to tell her not to just silently think about the existential threat facing the Jews, but to verbally go out and do something about it.

Rabbi Pappenheim explains that the core meaning of the root CHET-REISH-SHIN, from whence *cheresh* is derived, is “plowing” (*charishah*), which prepares a section of land for agricultural use. From that context the meaning of this root was expanded to refer to any way of preparing or manufacturing tools out of wood, stone, or metal (a “smith” is called a *choresh*). From that context the root was further expanded to refer to anybody who deliberately ponders his actions, and from there it finally refers to anybody who is quiet.

Another derivative of this root is the word *chorshah* (“forest”), which, because of the thick foliage, is a quiet, insulated area (see I Sam. 23:15, II Chron. 27:4).

Rabbi Pappenheim stresses that the type of silence denoted by the word *cheresh* is still related to the primary meanings of this root, because it is the type of contemplative silence that is used for incubating one’s thoughts before figuring out what to say. Just like plowing prepares a field for sowing, this form of silence likewise

prepares oneself for future speech. Basically, *cheresh* is most appropriate when somebody is quiet while considering what to say next.

Accordingly, Mordechai specifically uses this word when urging Esther not to remain “silent,” as a way of stressing the urgency of the matter. Mordechai’s message was essentially that there was no time for her to silently consider what to say; action must be taken immediately.

Finally, the word *cheresh* (or *cheiresh*) in Mishnaic Hebrew refers to somebody who can neither hear nor speak (see *Niddah* 13b). In other words, even though *cheresh* in the Bible generally refers to one who is silent, in later Hebrew it means somebody who is both deaf (unable to hear) and dumb (unable to speak). Rabbi Pappenheim explains that a deaf-mute is called a *cheresh* because he is the paragon of quiet; silence surrounds him on all sides. He does not break the silence through his own speech nor does he hear anything other than silence.

There may even be Biblical precedent for such usage. When Moshe told G-d at the burning bush that he is not the right person to speak to the Pharaoh because of his speech impairment, G-d responded, “Who put a mouth for man, or makes a person mute (*ilem*) or deaf (*cheiresh*)... is it not I – Hashem? (Ex. 4:11)” If *cheiresh* just means “silent” then how is it different from *ilem*? Because of this, some commentators explain that when Moshe said *cheiresh* he really meant mute and deaf, which is exactly how the Rabbis use the word. Others explain that he really meant deaf but not mute (see *Tosafos* to *Chagigah* 2b, with *Maharsha* and *Hagahos Rashash* there, as well as *Ibn Era* to Ex. 4:11). [Rabbi Shlomo Algazi (1610-1683) writes that in Rabbinic Hebrew *cheiresh* means deaf-mute, while in Biblical Hebrew it refers to somebody who can hear but cannot talk. This is somewhat problematic, because then that term means the exact same thing as *ilem*.]

Either way, the term *cheresh* is associated with a more intense form of muteness than the other words we have encountered. Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch (to Ps. 28:1) explains that *cheresh* refers to the stillness of a person who is asked to speak or act, but instead ignores that request. Such a person acts as if he was “deaf” and did not hear the request. With this in mind we may posit that Mordechai purposely used the loaded term *hachareish tacharishi* to tell Esther that she should not ignore his call for action as though she were “deaf” and heard nothing but silence. Instead, she should be spurred into action and tell Achashverosh what is necessary for saving her nation.

LETTER AND SPIRIT

Insights based on the writings of Rav S.R. Hirsch by Rabbi Yosef Hershman

Dressed to Atone

Our Sages see significance in the juxtaposition of the priestly garments to the offerings in that both provided opportunities for atonement. They note how each of the priestly garments represents atonement for a particular misdeed, as discussed below. The Kohen Gadol's garments symbolized the moral standard that the nation was to accept upon itself. The positive symbolic expression of these dictates in the Sanctuary made clear that neither the Sanctuary nor the nation condone their violation.

The *michnasayim* represent moral purity – they covered the lower part of the body, expressing the nation's protest of sexual transgressions. The *ketonet* covered the upper part of the body, including the arms. Accordingly, it invests man's activity with the character of innocence and obedience to Torah. It atoned for murder, the worst breach of social transgressions.

The *avnet*, a sash worn at the waist, demands the consolidation of all of one's energies for the fulfillment of life's purpose. This consolidation leaves no room for sinful thoughts, and thus the *avnet* atoned for digressions of the heart.

The *mitznefet*, the head covering, reminds the high priest – who holds the nation's most honored position – that even he must keep constant watch over the purity of his personal attributes and guard himself against arrogance and pride. Thus, the head covering atoned for conceit.

The *choshen*, worn as a breastplate, subordinated the nation's will and aspirations to the Will of G-d. The breastplate bearing the *urim v'tumim* was consulted in times of doubt or confusion. Thus, the *choshen* atones for judicial errors in Jewish courts.

The *meil*, the outer coat, atoned for slander, and announced a moral duty to judge others favorably. The *meil* was trimmed with alternating bells and decorative cloth pomegranates. The numerous seeds inside the pomegranate symbolize a life full of active duties – the various and diverse roles, traits and qualities of man. Even an "empty" Jew is considered to be full of good deeds like a pomegranate (Berachot 57a). Thus, the *meil* with its pomegranates remind the Jew of the ignominy and distortion of slander.

Finally, the *tzitz*, the metal plate worn on the Kohen's forehead, atoned for brazenness. Now, brazenness is a quality that has redeeming virtue – it surely can be misused, but a firm and unwavering character is also necessary to achieve moral perfection. The positive brazenness for G-d was emblazoned on the *tzitz*'s inscription: *Kadosh L'Hashem* (Holy unto G-d); it sanctified the positive trait of unwavering firmness in the struggle against falsehood, and at the same time it protested all misuses of this trait.

- Source: Commentary, Shemot 25:43

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