

# SHABBAT SHALOM FROM CYBERSPACE

TESAVEH

Haftarah: Yehezkel 43:10-27

FEBRUARY 20, 2016 11 ADAR I 5776

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## Editors Notes The Spirit Within

I have heard it said that among Jews, a birthday is no holiday, but the anniversary of a death is something that a Jew always remembers. As I write this, it is the 7th Adar and we discussed this morning that the 7th of Adar is traditionally thought of as the *yahrzeit* of Moshe Rabeynu, Moses, our teacher. (This year being a leap year, we generally commemorate the anniversary in the second Adar, within the month we celebrate Purim.) Moshe's *yahrzeit* usually falls during the week in which we read the *perasha* *Tetzaveh*. Strange enough, this week's portion instead of beginning with the typical, "And G-d said to Moses saying", begins with the words, "And You". Over and over again we hear, *VeAtah* ... And you, while the name of Moses is omitted. This is unique, as from the birth of Moses at the beginning of the book of *Shemot*, Moses' name is in every portion save this one.

Although many reasons are given for this omission, the *Vienna Gaon* comments that, Moses' name is absent in the portion we read during the week of his *Yahrzeit* to show that in a physical, revealed sense, he is no longer with us.

At the same time the *Rabbis* tell us that when you study and repeat the Torah of a teacher, that person remains alive. In studying the Torah of Moses somewhere in this world, every minute of every day by countless people, we can really understand the statement that, Moshe has never died. Through the Torah, Moses is spiritually very much alive even after his death.

I heard from Rabbi Aaron Hamaoui, the leader of the *Kol Sasson* and *Benei Shaul* synagogue in the Greater Boston area, that although Moses' name is not mentioned in this portion, it is hidden as the spirit remains even after the body is gone. At the end of each portion, there is a note indicating the number of verses in the *perasha*. *Tesaveh* has 101 verses,

The name Moshe is spelled 'mem'-shin-'hay.' As the name of each letter is actually a word, each letter has its revealed part and its hidden part. The word for the letter 'mem' is written 'mem'-mem.' The first 'mem' is revealed and the second is hidden. The word for the letter 'shin' is spelled 'shin'-yud-'nun.' The 'shin' is revealed, while the 'yud' and 'nun' are hidden. Lastly, the letter 'hay' is spelled 'hay'-aleph.' The 'hay' is revealed and the 'aleph' is hidden. The numerical value of the hidden letters of Moses' name, the mem (40), the yud (10), the nun (50) and the aleph (1), equal 101-which is the number of *pessukim* in this week's portion.

This theme of revealed and hidden, of the physical and spiritual seems to repeat itself throughout the portion. The portion begins with a couple of verses telling us about the oil needed for lighting the menorah by the *kohanim* and quickly leaves that subject and for most of the *perasha* we are provided with detailed instructions for fabricating the vestments of the *kohanim* and more specifically, the *kohen gadol*, the high priest. *Tesaveh* ends with a description of the Incense Altar with the priests being commanded to burn incense upon this altar twice daily.

*Rashi* comments that only the purest and highest quality olive oil was reserved for lighting the menorah. But the oil of meal offerings could be made from a lesser quality oil. The *Midrash* observes that better oil is typically reserved for food preparation, while lower quality oil is typically used for our lighting needs. In the tabernacle though, the highest quality oil was reserved for use in the menorah. Within Judaism, matters of the spirit, as symbolized by the sacred oil needed to light the menorah, always take precedence over matters of the physical.

The Torah then describes in detail, the majestic and magnificent garments created for the high priest. The *Talmud* brings many stories of people enamored by the beauty and majesty of the priestly garments. *HaRambam*, *Maimonides* explains that the priests were given very beautiful garments so that the people would be inclined to revere and honor the temple within which the priests served. There is tremendous importance to this physical beauty. Yet we are taught that each piece of clothing was made with a specific atonement in mind. It was the spiritual quality that by far superseded any physical quality. And it was the job of the priest to heal and nourish the soul, more than anything else.

Too often in life and especially when we make parties, we focus on the physical only, the food, the flowers, the clothing and the place. I'll never forget the guy who was spending a hundred grand on a bar mitzvah for his son who asked me where he could get the cheapest pair of tefilin. All that money on a party feels like dumping a Ferrari off a cliff after having had the pleasure of driving it for a few hours and for the tefilin which will last a lifetime and are really what the bar mitzvah is all about, he requests the cheapest! I could only imagine a body with no spirit.

A couple of weeks ago I attended a majestic and magnificent wedding on Thursday night followed by a Friday night dinner at the Pierre Hotel and Shabbat lunch at the Metropolitan Club next door, both of which were as amazing as the wedding. I used the same terms majestic and magnificent for these parties as I used for the garments of the High Priest. On a physical level, there was nothing more one could ask for,

But what was really special was when we sat for Sheva Berachot on Friday night. We pulled our chairs around one of the tables and before we began Birkat HaMazon, the father of the groom addressed his son and new daughter in law. He explained that the physical trappings that Hashem blessed us with are wonderful and should be appreciated, but they are fleeting. A man comes to the world with nothing and no matter what he accumulates, he leaves with nothing except the good that he has done. He stressed that we should never forget that the spiritual is what really nourishes us and that these blessings we would be saying with intent and love would provide spiritual fuel for a lifetime. He spoke of his father who was very successful, but his greatest successes were in moving the community towards a greater connection, appreciation and observance of mikveh and candle lighting. He spoke of a time when we ended our weddings in going away outfits and really went away on our honeymoons the next morning not even knowing what sheva berachot were. He wrote of being in St Moritz for his honeymoon and meeting a local chabad rabbi who invited his new wife and him to lunch where they did sheva berachot with all those present. He explained that those blessings he and his bride heard that day still echoed within them. He begged them that as they took their first steps as newlyweds, they should never forget to appreciate and search for nourishment for the soul.

What a beautiful message; one every parent is incumbent on bequeathing to their children. It is truly the message of this week's perasha, from the

absence of Moses, the message of the oil, and the clothing of the priests all the way to the end when we read of the Ketoret – the incense offering. The Kli Yakar explains that in contrast to the Outer Altar where sacrifices offered were to atone for the sins committed by the body, symbolized by the animals sacrificed representing our animalistic tendencies; the Inner Altar and the Ketoret offered represent the soul. The Inner Altar was inside the sanctuary. It was not open to the elements. Yet its smoke rose straight up. I believe that this is to remind us that it is the internal, it is the soul and the spirit which connects us to G-d and although the physical is important, it is our job to infuse into the physical the spirit, much as the soul enlivens the body.

The rabbis tell us that the soul of Moses was made up of all of our souls. Each of us has a piece of Moses within us. Maybe all these factors within parshat tesaveh read on the week of Moses' passing are there to remind us that each of us has this inner Moses, and it's up to us to bring it out; to bring out the spirit.

### **Jewish self-loathing**

**By Alicia Colon - Published August 13, 2014**

I recently watched the new program "Manhattan" which is about the Manhattan Project in Los Alamos, New Mexico that gave us the atom bomb. A young physicist arriving at the site is introduced to the project as being 'Shangri-La' and having the 'highest combined IQ than any town in the country, and more Jews in Babylon.' When it comes to science, it is no secret that most believe that Jews are overwhelmingly intelligent. But when it comes to politics, that percentage dwindles considerably for so many still vote for Democrats who are not friends of Israel.

As a Roman Catholic, I find their lack of support for this tiny democrat country surrounded by enemies to be inexplicable. It's as if these self-loathing Jews want no connection to Israel; that it has no right to defend itself against genocide. They think orthodox and observant Jews should get over the holocaust because it could never happen again especially in America. I hope that the blatant anti-Semitism that has erupted since the Gaza war has opened their peanut brains because they are so wrong about it never happening again.

Another 'Kristallnacht' erupted in Paris where the hordes of Muslim immigrants burned Jewish businesses and attacked synagogues with axes and knives. A Rabbi from Brooklyn was killed Saturday on his way to Temple in Miami. Just another robbery,

you might say, or another clear target of bigotry. Jews in Brooklyn were targets of the knockout game perpetrated by young blacks which is another irony dismissed by liberals.

In the 1960's Jews were dominant players in the civil rights movement and two Jewish members of C.O.R.E were murdered by the K.K.K. in Mississippi while on a voter registration campaign. Yet Jews are despised by the militant Black Panthers of today and of old. Who can forget Jesse Jackson referring to NYC as Hymietown? I've listened to those militant blacks preaching anti-Semitic remarks on Broadway soapboxes and cursing Israel as murderers of Palestinians. I've always wondered why those supporters of the impoverished Palestine refugees never questioned how Yasser Arafat became a billionaire whose wife lived lavishly in Europe while the refugees starved.

Why do blacks and other minorities feel so much antipathy towards their Jewish neighbors? Is it because they are in the main-Democrats? Is it because that party indoctrinated them with the envy syndrome; constantly railing against the one percenters?

Remember Cynthia McKinney? On Power Line, John Hinderaker wrote; "Cynthia McKinney was one of the looniest Democrats of her generation. A 9/11 Truther, she lost not one but two Democratic primaries because she was considered too far out. Her father's explanation that she was in trouble because "the Jews have bought everybody."

Have they?

Are they so successful because they have bought everybody off as the race demagogues allege? Or is it because like all successful individuals, they work extra hard and maintain strong family ties that sustain them through the rough years?

I'm considered one of the minorities and I grew up in Spanish Harlem at a time when I had Jewish neighbors as poor as my family. When they started rising up the economic ladder through the fruits of their labor, they shared their bounty with us. It took us a lot longer because our family as in so many Hispanic families was quite dysfunctional.

What I will never understand is why so many Jewish liberals vote for Democrats who fail to support our only democrat ally in the Middle East. Israel would not exist today without Republican Richard Nixon supplying the Israelis with the vital aircrafts needed to defeat the enemy in that last war in 1973. PM Golda Meir said Nixon saved Israel and he did so over the

objection of RINOs in his own party and the Democrats who wanted Israel brought down a peg to promote their own peace initiative with the PLO.

The United Nations routinely censures Israel for defending itself from slaughter while ignoring the murderous dictators and human rights violators. It has become an impotent, cowardly and corrupt institution and should be removed from the United States and transferred to one of the nations ruled by despots. Here's a bit of news for this ignorant organization- America and Israel are good and moral nations.

They are the first to respond to international disasters. Tsunamis, earthquakes, cyclones, whatever has created a deadly life threatening crisis. I read an article in the Algemeiner Blog by Danielle Haberer who described Israel perfectly:

**"Having risen from the depths of a dark past, Jews have a unique obligation to respond to the suffering of the world. This obligation is a guiding principle at the core of Israeli society. The Jewish State cannot be a bystander. In their undertakings as "upstanders," Israelis have provided humanitarian aid to people all over the globe, from Boston to Oklahoma, to Haiti, to Japan, to Gaza, to Syria, and many more, dealing with a wide array of dire situations, from natural disasters to medical emergencies, to refugee crises, to wars, to genocide."**

Yet it is the height of stupidity when those most in need of aid turn Israelis away thanks to demonizing demagogues in their own country. The mainstream media fails to report the humanitarian efforts of Israel because it is in their own interests to portray Israel as a heartless murderer of Palestinian children thus maintaining their access to Muslim countries. Ironically many in the press are Jewish self-loathers. Never once do they compare the minuscule global aid given by the more wealthy Muslim nations to the munificent efforts of Israel. Has any non-Muslim been treated in a Muslim hospital?

As a Catholic, my religion's sacred sites are protected by Israelis in Jerusalem. Jihadists routinely destroy temples and artifacts dating back millennia that belong to ancient religions other than their own. These radical Muslims are not good and moral people. Both the United States and Israel could blast Mecca and Medina off the map but they do not because they are good and moral nations.

Why is that so hard to accept?

### Summary of the Perasha - Tesaveh – A description of the clothing of the Kohen

- 1- Hashem tells Moshe to make priestly clothing for Aharon. A description of the efod (the apron).
- 2- A description of the hoshen mishpat (the breastplate).
- 3- A description of the me'iyl (the robe) and the tsits (headplate).
- 4- Hashem describes to Moshe the process of inaugurating Aharon and his sons as kohanim (7 days of korbanot, anointing oil and wearing the special clothes)
- 5- Hashem describes to Moshe the process of inaugurating Aharon and his sons as kohanim.
- 6- A description of the olat tamid (the daily olah offering)
- 7- A description of the golden mizbeyach (which the incense was brought on)

#### FROM THE JERSEY SHORE NEWSLETTER "You shall make garments of sanctity for Aharon your brother for glory and for splendor." (Shemot 28:2)

The Torah describes the garments of Aharon as garments of glory and splendor. Aharon wore these special garments when he served Hashem in the Mishkan. Rabbi Shimshon Pincus adds that every Jew serves Hashem and his garments must be special. There are three requirements that Jewish garments must fulfill. They must be modest and not like the fashions of the day that aspire to reveal the body instead of covering it. They mustn't have Shaatnez. Lastly, the Jew wears garments of misvah, such as siset. The siset is a garment of spiritual light that saves a person from injury in the same way a mezuzah protects one's house. So too a kippah, which is like a crown, and like a candle of Hashem on his head that protects him from harm.

Rabbi Binyomin Pruzansky tells an amazing true story of the garment of Jews we call siset. The story takes place in Gaza during an operation that took place a number of years ago. As the fierce fighting in Gaza continued, the list of the dead and wounded grew longer. In America the Jewish people looked for ways to increase the spiritual armor that protected these young soldiers. People prayed for individual soldiers, said Tehillim for them, and learned Torah on their behalf. One project that caught on in shuls and communities throughout the country was a campaign to supply the soldiers with siset, the strongest armor a Jew can wear.

Rabbi Moshe Tuvia Lief participated in this project and raised money to purchase siset for tens of thousands of Israeli soldiers who did not have their own. After the war Rabbi Lief heard a story that illustrated the life-saving power of this protection.

The soldiers of the Yahalom Counter-Terrorist Unit were a subdivision of the IDF's renowned Golani Brigade. They were assigned a delicate and dangerous mission that would take them, undercover, into enemy territory to search for a certain group of terrorists. To do the job, they had disguised themselves in Hamas uniforms, but underneath, they wore siset they had just received from the American siset campaign.

They entered the building in Gaza and began searching for the terrorists, knowing that any moment they could be discovered and shot. All at once, the mission went wrong. Shots rang out from hidden places in the building. The soldiers returned fire, while running to the roof of the building to lose their attackers or at least draw them into the open.

As they reached the roof of the building they saw a welcome sight. Glinting above them in the blazing sun, an Israeli helicopter had come to save them. But in one terrifying moment, their relief turned into panic. The helicopter was not positioning itself for a rescue; it was getting ready to fire! Suddenly, the men realized that because of their disguises, they had become targets. There were only seconds left before the helicopter would open fire. There was no time to make radio contact, and no place to take cover. The group's leader screamed out to his men, "Take out your siset!" Frantically the men grabbed for their siset and began jumping up and waving them in the air. Viewing the strange sight, the helicopter gunner held his fire. No matter what the men on the roof were wearing on the outside, their siset had shown instantly who they were on the inside. They were saved. Rabbi Reuven Semah

**One of the eight garments that the Kohen Gadol wore was the me'il - the robe which** was made of totally blue wool. It also had bells attached to the bottom so that when the Kohen Gadol walked it would be heard that he was approaching. The Torah emphasizes that these sounds should be heard when he enters the Holy Chamber and this way he will merit to live.

The Rabbis learn from here that although there are deep and esoteric reasons for these bells, on a simple level they are there to announce the arrival of the Kohen Gadol. We learn from here the importance of derech erness, common protocol. When we enter a room or a house, even our own, we should always knock so as not to startle others. If there are strangers inside, how much more so should we not enter without permission. Sometimes we think that since we're involved in a misvah it's OK to bypass derech erness. From the Kohen Gadol who is doing the biggest misvah we see otherwise. As the famous statement goes "Derech erness precedes the Torah." Rabbi Shmuel Choueka

## AUTOBIOGRAPHY

### Rabbi Raymond Beyda

When we were in school, we were taught that the true story of a person's life is called a biography. It should include basic facts regarding time and place of birth, education, family background, and people who influenced the hero. Then the author should offer information about the subject's accomplishments. What great things did this person achieve? Which traits should elicit our admiration and respect? How did certain choices and decisions ultimately lead to success and fame? And why would anyone want to read an account of this individual's life?

An autobiography is somewhat different. While it is also the story of a person's life, it is not told in third person. It is a first-person account narrated by the subject of the book.

Each of us is writing his or her autobiography. You many never lift a pen or write a word, but your decisions and your actions are "writing" the autobiography of your life.

This is not just figurative. Rabbi Kohen and Rabbi Yehoshua Diskin in the name of Rabbi Levi (Midrash Rabba, Ruth, Chapter V) state: "In the past, if a person performed a misvah, the prophet would write it down. Today, if one performs a misvah, who writes it down? Eliyahu (the prophet) writes it down, and the Mashiah and the Holy One Blessed-Be-He endorse it."

Even if it is not interesting it is being written. Try to find time every day to ask yourself a few questions: "Is this something I would want to include in my autobiography? Am I proud of this deed?...Years after I am gone, will this make for interesting reading?"

Affirmative responses to these simple queries will yield a "story" you would be proud to have others read.

**RABBI ELI MANSOUR**  
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**Timing Is Everything**

The Torah in Parashat Tesaveh describes the Bigdeh Kehuna, the special garments worn by the Kohanim. In addition to garments worn by all Kohanim, the Torah requires making especially magnificent garments for the Kohen Gadol, including a beautiful, ornate breastplate laden with precious stones.

The Gemara in Masechet Shabbat tells a fascinating story relevant to this Parasha. A gentile man once walked outside a Yeshiva and heard the Rabbi teaching his students about the Bigdeh Kehuna. The

man heard the teacher describe the spectacularly beautiful garments worn by the Kohen Gadol, and he decided he wanted to become a Kohen Gadol. So, he went to the house of the great sage Shammai, and said that he wished to convert to Judaism so that he could be the Kohen Gadol and wear the magnificent garments of the high priest.

Shammai was known for having little patience or tolerance for nonsense. He angrily rejected the man's request and chased him from his home.

Still undeterred, the man went to the other great Rabbi at the time, Hillel, who was renowned for his patience and indulgence. Hillel warmly welcomed the man and agreed to lead him through the process of conversion.

After the man converted to Judaism, Hillel said to him, "A person cannot become king until he studies proper royal protocol. In order to become Kohen Gadol, you need to learn Torah." The man agreed, and began studying.

Over the course of the studies, he came across the verse, "Ha'zar Ha'kareb Yumat," which warns that a "foreigner," or non-Kohen, who performs the priestly rites is liable to death. The convert was frightened by the prospect that he would be liable to death if he becomes a Kohen. And so he ran to Hillel and asked to whom the verse refers.

"Even David, King of Israel," Hillel explained, "is liable to death if he performs the rites assigned to the Kohanim."

The man realized that if even King David has no right to serve as a Kohen, then certainly he, a convert, cannot become a Kohen. He humbly accepted this fate, continued studying, and became an accomplished Torah scholar.

The question arises, why didn't Hillel make the man aware from the outset that he is barred from serving as Kohen Gadol? Why did he go along with this person's plan, waiting for him to discover on his own that he has no possibility of becoming Kohen Gadol?

Some Rabbis explain that when it comes to religious growth, timing is everything. When the man first approached Hillel, Hillel understood that in his current state of enthusiasm over the Bigdeh Kehuna, he was not prepared to accept the message of "Ha'zar Ha'kareb Yumat." At that moment, it would be futile to explain to him that the duties and privileges of the priesthood are reserved for the descendants of Aharon. The man at that point was simply not in the

mindset to hear or accept this message. Hillel thus wisely waited for the man to come to this realization on his own. He perceptively knew that when the convert arrives at this information through his own, voluntary efforts, rather than through instruction and lecturing, he would be prepared to accept it.

This is a crucial lesson relevant to education, parenting, and our efforts to influence the people around us. People are not often receptive to criticism and haranguing. They are simply not prepared to accept it. Very often, we are better off keeping silent, giving the person time, and waiting for him to grow and develop, to come to the understanding on his own. We cannot immediately jump to criticize and correct everything we see that is wrong. We must wait for the opportune moment, for the time when the person is receptive to change, or wait for the person to learn the lesson on his own, at his own pace, in a manner that is right for him.

Hillel serves as a great model of patience and wisdom in education. He shows us that religious growth is a gradual process, and we must patiently allow each person and each child to grow and develop at his own pace.

#### **VICTOR BIBI - SOD HAPARASHA**

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#### **Rabbi Wein BERNIE**

I rarely if ever write about politicians. Politics always dominates the news because it is at one and the same time very personal and nevertheless very consequential nationally and internationally. But it is a pretty vicious sport, so my pacifist nature overrules my otherwise inquisitive nature. But there is a phenomenon in the American political scene that I feel is worthy of my commenting on it.

There is a United States senator who represents a small state, Vermont. The people of this small state are different in outlook and temperament than most of the rest of America. They regularly elected to the House of Representatives and then to the Senate a Jew born in Brooklyn, a self-described socialist who is an independent who always votes with the Democratic Party.

To me the wonder is that no one comments upon the fact that this senator, who is running for President, is Jewish! And, add to that, he is a person born in World War II, raised as a secular socialist and throughout

his political and legislative career has espoused very left-wing socialist views.

He was always regarded as a somewhat benevolent, quirky senator from a small state. Now he is surprisingly a possible – though he is still a very long shot - contender for the presidency of the United States. He is the first Jew in the history of the United States to win a presidential primary election, having crushed Hillary Clinton in the recent New Hampshire primary.

How ironic but tellingly true that the first Jew to get this far in a presidential race is a left-wing socialist with no real identity with the Jewish people and the Jewish faith!

The twentieth century has provided us with ample examples of such Jews who have risen high in politics and government. Leon Blum, Walter Rathenau, Leon Trotsky, Bela Kun, etc. were all Jews who rose to power but whose policies and beliefs eventually led to national and international disaster.

Much of the ideals of the Left are based on Torah values. Fairness to workers, non-exploitation of the defenseless and the lower class, compassion for others and helping the less fortunate are all Torah values. The problem lies not so much in the ideas, as it does in the implementation of those ideas. That is where secular socialism has wrecked societies and literally killed millions of otherwise innocent people.

Bernie is the unrepentant Jewish socialist whom I knew so well in my youth. They were convinced that they were the wave of the future and that the old-fashioned Jew – especially the observant religious Jew – was doomed to extinction. The old-fashioned socialist Jew has morphed into the modern, liberal, assimilationist American Jew. And those are the qualities to which the vast majority of American Jews subscribe.

The triumph of the Left in America is based on its triumph in capturing the hearts, minds, belief and pocketbooks of most of American Jewry. So then why does Bernie Sanders resonate less with American Jews than does his rival, Hillary Clinton?

Part of the reason for this is that Jews distrust other Jews being in power. This is a subconscious but very omnipresent lesson of centuries of exile and anti-Semitism. There are many in the Jewish community who feel that Jews in power inevitably exacerbate the latent anti-Semitism which exists.

In Israel governing is made very difficult simply because Jews have to govern over other Jews. After thousands of years of abject servitude, it is painful to have to make the necessary mindset adjustment to a Jewish government. So, I have little hope that Bernie will make it big with the American Jewish community while Hillary will certainly prove popular, no matter her past, her policies, her personality or any other qualities she may possess.

We are a strange people. When Senator Joseph Lieberman was the nominee of the Democratic Party for Vice-President I remember that many Jews who regularly voted Democratic were very hesitant that year to vote that way. They were deathly afraid of a Jewish Vice-President of the United States of America.

Of course Lieberman was and is a different type of Jew than is Bernie. But to the non-Jewish society, a Jew is a Jew, is a Jew. All of Jewish history testifies to this fact. And this should be of some influence regarding how the American Jewish community should view itself in the general milieu of American society. Meanwhile, Bernie, thanks for the memories and the ride.

### **Chief Rabbi Sir Jonathan Sacks Inspiration & Perspiration**

Beethoven rose each morning at dawn and made himself coffee. He was fastidious about this: each cup had to be made with exactly sixty beans, which he counted out each time. He would then sit at his desk and compose until 2:00pm or 3:00pm in the afternoon. Subsequently he would go for a long walk, taking with him a pencil and some sheets of music paper to record any ideas that came to him on the way. Each night after supper he would have a beer, smoke a pipe, and go to bed early, 10:00pm at the latest.

Anthony Trollope who as his day job worked for the Post Office, paid a groom to wake him every day at 5:00am. By 5:30am he would be at his desk, and he then proceeded to write for exactly 3 hours, working against the clock to produce 250 words each quarter-hour. This way he wrote 47 novels, many of them 3 volumes in length, as well as 16 other books. If he finished a novel before the day's 3 hours were over, he would immediately take a fresh piece of paper and begin the next.

Immanuel Kant, the most brilliant philosopher of modern times, was famous for his routine. As Heinrich Heine put it, "Getting up, drinking coffee, writing, giving lectures, eating, taking a walk,

everything had its set time, and the neighbours knew precisely that the time was 3:30pm when Kant stepped outside his door with his grey coat and the Spanish stick in his hand."

These details, together with more than 150 other examples drawn from the great philosophers, artists, composers and writers, come from a book by Mason Currey entitled *Daily Rituals: How Great Minds Make Time, Find Inspiration, and Get to Work*. [1] The book's point is simple. Most creative people have daily rituals. These form the soil in which the seeds of their invention grow.

In some cases they deliberately took on jobs they did not need to do, simply to establish structure and routine in their lives. A typical example was the poet Wallace Stevens, who took a position as an insurance lawyer at the Hartford Accident and Indemnity Company where he worked until his death. He said that having a job was one of the best things that could happen to him because "It introduces discipline and regularity into one's life."

Note the paradox. These were all innovators, pioneers, ground-breakers, trail-blazers, who formulated new ideas, originated new forms of expression, did things no one had done before in quite that way. They broke the mould. They changed the landscape. They ventured into the unknown.

Yet their daily lives were the opposite: ritualised and routine. One could even call them boring. Why so? Because – the saying is famous, though we don't know who first said it – genius is one per cent inspiration, ninety-nine per cent perspiration. The paradigm-shifting scientific discovery, the path-breaking research, the wildly successful new product, the brilliant novel, the award-winning film, are almost always the result of many years of long hours and attention to detail. Being creative involves hard work.

The ancient Hebrew word for hard work is *avodah*. It is also the word that means "serving God". What applies in the arts, sciences, business and industry, applies equally to the life of the spirit. Achieving any form of spiritual growth requires sustained effort and daily rituals.

Hence the remarkable aggadic passage in which various sages put forward their idea of *klal gadol ba-Torah*, "the great principle of the Torah". Ben Azzai says it is the verse, "This is the book of the chronicles of man: On the day that God created man, He made him in the likeness of God" (Gen. 5:1). Ben Zoma says that there is a more embracing principle, "Listen, Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one." Ben

Nannas says there is a yet more embracing principle: "Love your neighbour as yourself." Ben Pazzi says we find a more embracing principle still. He quotes a verse from this week's parsha: "One sheep shall be offered in the morning, and a second in the afternoon" (Ex. 29:39) – or, as we might say nowadays, Shacharit, Mincha and Maariv. In a word: "routine". The passage concludes: The law follows Ben Pazzi.[2]

The meaning of Ben Pazzi's statement is clear: all the high ideals in the world – the human person as God's image, belief in God's unity, and the love of neighbour – count for little until they are turned into habits of action that become habits of the heart. We can all recall moments of insight when we had a great idea, a transformative thought, the glimpse of a project that could change our lives. A day, a week or a year later the thought has been forgotten or become a distant memory, at best a might-have-been.

The people who change the world, whether in small or epic ways, are those who turn peak experiences into daily routines, who know that the details matter, and who have developed the discipline of hard work, sustained over time.

Judaism's greatness is that it takes high ideals and exalted visions – image of God, faith in God, love of neighbour – and turns them into patterns of behaviour. Halakhah, (Jewish law), involves a set of routines that – like those of the great creative minds – reconfigures the brain, giving discipline to our lives and changing the way we feel, think and act.

Much of Judaism must seem to outsiders, and sometimes to insiders also, boring, prosaic, mundane, repetitive, routine, obsessed with details and bereft for the most part of drama or inspiration. Yet that is precisely what writing the novel, composing the symphony, directing the film, perfecting the killer app, or building a billion-dollar business is, most of the time. It is a matter of hard work, focused attention and daily rituals. That is where all sustainable greatness comes from.

We have developed in the West a strange view of religious experience: that it's what overwhelms you when something happens completely outside the run of normal experience. You climb a mountain and look down. You are miraculously saved from danger. You find yourself part of a vast and cheering crowd. It's how the German Lutheran theologian Rudolf Otto (1869-1937) defined "the holy": as a mystery (mysterium) both terrifying (tremendum) and fascinating (fascinans). You are awed by the

presence of something vast. We have all had such experiences.

But that is all they are: experiences. They linger in the memory, but they are not part of everyday life. They are not woven into the texture of our character. They do not affect what we do or achieve or become. Judaism is about changing us so that we become creative artists whose greatest creation is our own life.[3] And that needs daily rituals: Shacharit, Mincha, Maariv, the food we eat, the way we behave at work or in the home, the choreography of holiness which is the special contribution of the priestly dimension of Judaism, set out in this week's parsha and throughout the book of Vayikra.

These rituals have an effect. We now know through PET and fMRI scans that repeated spiritual exercise reconfigures the brain. It gives us inner resilience. It makes us more grateful. It gives us a sense of basic trust in the Source of our being. It shapes our identity, the way we act and talk and think. Ritual is to spiritual greatness what practice is to a tennis player, daily writing disciplines are to a novelist, and reading company accounts are to Warren Buffett. They are the precondition of high achievement. Serving God is avodah, which means hard work.

If you seek sudden inspiration, then work at it every day for a year or a lifetime. That is how it comes. As every famous golfer is said to have said when asked for the secret of his success: "I was just lucky. But the funny thing is that the harder I practice, the luckier I become." The more you seek spiritual heights, the more you need the ritual and routine of halakhah, the Jewish "way" to God.

[1] Mason Currey, *Daily Rituals*, New York, Knopf, 2013.

[2] The passage is cited in the Introduction to the commentary HaKotev to Ein Yaakov, the collected aggadic passages of the Talmud. It is also quoted by Maharal in *Netivot Olam*, Ahavat Re'a 1.

[3] A point made by Rabbi Joseph Soloveitchik in his essay, *Halakhic Man*.

**AS HEARD FROM RABBI AVIGDOR MILLER Z'TL  
"And headgear you shall make for them, for  
honor and beauty" (28:40)**

Migbaot (headgear) is the same word as Giv'ah (a hill, an elevation), for the wearer appears taller because of the headgear. The Cohen wears a crown of honor and beauty to: 1) demonstrate his superiority as a servant of Hashem and to show the importance of the service. 2) But this crown, and the other vestments which he must wear during the service, are intended also to teach the Cohen himself that he is elevated, for thereby he becomes impressed by his function as the designated servant of Hashem. This is the principle that the garments affect the attitude of the wearer, and thus they become true Cohanim. "In the time when their garments are upon them, their Kehunah is upon them" (Zevachim 17B). (Similarly, the Jew covers his head to make him aware of his function as the chosen servant of Hashem: "Send out My people so that they shall serve Me" - 7:16).

The principle of the influence of garments is demonstrated: when Adam and his wife made coverings of fig leaves to conceal their nakedness (Beresheet 3:7), Hashem afterward "made for Adam and his wife tunics" (ibid 3:21) in order to clothe man in dignity ("for honor") to demonstrate his superior function of being created to serve his Creator.

In this matter, the two elements are discernable.

1) The wearing of garments is a demonstration that the wearer acknowledges that Hashem is looking, and therefore he is ashamed to expose his body, just as Adam declared to G-d (Beresheet 3:10). Thus the decency of clothing proclaims to the world the Presence of the Creator. Similarly, when the Cohen wears the garments of service to Hashem he thereby publicly proclaims the necessity to serve Hashem and to acknowledge Him as the Creator and Benefactor.

2) When Adam and his wife (& children) put clothing upon their bodies to conceal their beastly aspects and to demonstrate Awareness of G-d to whom their lives should be dedicated in gratitude and thanksgiving for creating them and elevating them above all other creatures, a great change occurs in the minds of the wearers. They themselves are most profoundly influenced by the lessons of the garments. Similarly, the Cohen himself is the chief beneficiary of the lessons of his vestments, and he becomes more intensely aware of Hashem's presence. This 1) demonstration of the service of Hashem and 2) this added Awareness of the Cohen himself atone for Israel.

Because of the effect of the garments upon the wearer, we understand therefrom that the wearing of the garments constitutes in itself an important form of service to Hashem. The Cohen clothes himself in the vestments which identify him as a servant devoted to the servant of the King., and he thus dedicates himself mentally to this great function. This is in itself an achievement of immense value. The donning of the vestments is in itself an act of service and atonement.

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