

SHABBAT SHALOM FROM CYBERSPACE

SEPHARDIC CONGREGATION ANNOUNCEMENTS AND SCHEDULE

“SHABBAT TESAVEH/ZACHOR/PURIM - Haftarah: Shemuel I 15:1-34

Shabbat Zachor - This Shabbat, we will read an extra portion of Torah which commands us to remember what Amalek did to us and our obligation to wipe him out. All men are required to hear this special reading and even women should try to fulfill this obligation.

Ta’anit Esther will be on Wednesday, March 7 / Purim will be celebrated on Thursday, March 8.

To subscribe or to unsubscribe, please reply to ShabbatShalomNewsletter@gmail.com

SCHEDULE

FRIDAY NIGHT

- Mincha at 5:30 – Followed by Kabbalat Shabbat and Arbit (Candle Lighting: 5:30)
- Dinner for those who have reserved Shabbat Across America

SOLD OUT for March 2 – Friday Night Dinner in the Shul celebrating Shabbat Across America. Mincha Friday afternoon at 5:30 followed by Kabbalat Shabbat so dinner at about 6:30.

We especially want to thank Rabbi Colish, Rebetzin Ida, and Penny for all their hard work. We want to thank the sponsors as well and hope you email Penny or reply and tell us you are coming. Sponsors to date are: The Sisterhood, Ely Altarac, Azizo, Bibi, Cohn, Kahn, Barbara Levy, Mizrahi, Ovadia, Elisheva Reinheimer, Wagner, And Waldman families. Tizkeh Lemsvot. Barbara Halio is also going to sponsor shabbat across America.

Please prepare a two minute thought on what Shabbat means to you

SHABBAT SCHEDULE

- Shahrith: 9:00 followed by Kidush (Please say Shema by 8:36AM at home) Kiddush this week sponsored by the Yusupov family to commemorate yehrtzeit of their father Simcha Ben Shlomo Yusupov and by Marina Samilov to commemorate the yehrtzeit of her mother Chana Bat Gud
- Benai Asher Youth Program – Expanded
- Mincha following Kiddush – Amidah not before 12:35
- Women’s Learning Group 4:15 Alternating speakers, seudat shlishit served, at the Lemberger’s 1 East Olive. Class is always cancelled if there is inclement weather.
- Arbit at 6:50pm followed by Havdalah – Shabbat ends at 6:31pm
- This Sunday is Funday with Riki. Time 10:45 am - 11:45 am. The project is a noise maker for Purim! \$5 per project. We have 24 projects and they will distributed on a 1st come basis via email zerizah@aol.com.

WEEKDAY TEFILLA SCHEDULE

- Shahrith Sunday 8:00, Mon-Fri at 7:00 (6:55 Mondays and Thursdays)

WEEKDAY TORAH CLASS SCHEDULE

- “Mystical Torah Insights” 9:00 – 9:30 Sunday Mornings with breakfast with David Bibi or Rabbi Colish
- Kosher Kitchen Series 9:30AM – Led by Rabbi Colish –
- “Pathway to G-d” Mon-Fri 6:30 AM – based upon the Ramchal’s Derech Hashem with Rabbi Colish
- Men’s Halacha Class Tuesday Nights 8:30-10:30: Basar BeChalav – David will be away. We will confirm if Michael will still do the class.
- “Sephardic Women’s Prayer” Tuesday nights at the Bibi’s @ 8PM with Rabbi Colish. - deep insights, simple translations and a how to guide.
- Joint Movie Night with and AT The Lido Synagogue continues on Motzei Shabbat, March 3rd at 7:30PM. Coordinated by Elsa Farbiarz. \$5 a person. The movie is Turn Left at the End of the World... As a family from India moves into a desert neighborhood in Southern Israel in the 1960's, the family's eldest, beautiful daughter discovers friendship and romance with the lovely local French girl. The film also explores the hardships and surprises that come with the integration of multiple families from different ethnic backgrounds (from the

diaspora) and their struggle with immigration and prejudice.

- PURIM – This year Taanit Esther is on Wednesday March 8th and we read the Megillah on Wednesday night. The Sisterhood invites all to a post Megillah break fast meal along with entertainment for the children). We read the Megillah again Thursday morning. Times to follow.

- Chantelle wanted me to remind you all Many of our members have requested that we send out Purim cards to members of our Synagogue in lieu of Mishloach Manot in order to save so much food from being wasted. Herman and Rebecca Ovdia have graciously accepted to undertake this project. The Purim cards will be delivered in person to members at the reading of the Megillah. We will mail cards to those not with us for Purim. The cost is \$54 to send to the entire congregation of \$1.00 per name. Checks should be made out to Sisterhood of the Sephardic Congregation. Email your list to Rebecca at uft183@yahoo.com. If you have any questions feel free to call Rebecca 516-432-5690 or Hindy 516-431-8664.

DON'T FORGET ... the cards don't absolve each of us of the misvah of Mishloach Manot so that on the day of Purim each of us must still send two items of food to at least one person.

A number of you have asked ..."How much for the half shekel and how much is the minimum for Matantot LaEvyonim...." Well here is the answer.

Machasit haShekel

The minhag is to collect the Zecher LeMachsit HaShekel which is a remembrance of the half shekel . Our minhag is to give it at mincha of Taanit Esther before the reading of the Megillah. One should make sure to call it Zecher LeMachsit HaShekel and not Machsit HaShekel.

According to Sephardim, one should give three coins which are in total worth 9 grams of pure silver of the time. However, one also fulfills this obligation using other forms of money. This year it amounts to about \$10 per person.

Our custom is to give Zecher LeMachsit HaShekel for every member of the household, including women and little children.

Someone who takes separates a tenth of one's income for Tzedaka (Maaser) shouldn't use that money for Zecher LeMachsit HaShekel nor for Matanot LeEvyonim.

Matanot LaEvyonim

The Rambam (Chapter 2 of Hilchot Megilla) writes: "One must distribute monetary gifts or food items to the poor on Purim day, no less than one gift to two poor people, as the verse states, 'And gifts to the poor'. It is more important for one to distribute more gifts to the poor than to spend a lot on one's feast or send gifts to many friends, for there is no greater and more splendid happiness than to gladden the hearts of the poor..."

Although the letter of the law dictates that there is no set amount for this gift, it is preferable to spend more on

Matanot La'Evyonim then on the Purim feast or Mishloach Manot. Figure out how much you are spending on all those Mishloach manot baskets and then add something. One should preferably give enough so that the poor will be able to make use of the sum for the Purim feast. We suggest a minimum of \$20 per person.

We are again collecting money for Matanot LaEvyonim. We would like to give support to a number of needy families in our own Long Beach community and in Eretz Yisrael. Contact DavidBibi@gmail.com to donate or give to ELY ALTARAC

- FROM THE YOUNG ISRAEL OF LONG BEACH: March 10th from 7:30-10:30 pm. The Young Israel of Long Beach in partnership with Gush Etzion, Har Bracha, Kadesh Barnea and Wellner Wineries Natural & Kosher, Sugar River and Les Petites Fermieres Cheeses Osem and Pereg Are thrilled to invite you to our annual Pre-Passover Wine & Cheese Tasting Event 120 Long Beach Blvd

Editors Notes

I am not sure if you have been following the story about the boys in Beren Academy who as Sabbath observers were willing to forfeit a playoff game in Texas and whose game has now been rescheduled so that the boys could play.

My friend Mark Rosenman interviewed the Schools Rabbi and two of the players on his show, Sports Talk NY last night. Mark said to me that these boys

especially Aaron Hakakian were amazing. What a Kiddush Hashem.

Thinking about the fact that there are only 35 boys in the entire high school, the roster represents about a third of the student body.

I listened to the interview and these boys set an example on what is truly important. They didn't complain. They accepted the decision. Their parents and teachers should take great pride in them.

To listen to the interview, please go to the following link:

http://www.theplayerspoint.com/THEPLAYERSPOINT/SPORTSTALK/PODCASTS/Entries/2012/2/29_THE_ROBERT_M_BEREN_ACADEMY_BASKETBALL_STORY.html

Shabbat Shalom

David Bibi

Thanks to Albert Levy for suggesting the following

Unplug Yourself
By Emanuel Feldman, on
February 16th, 2012
This article first appeared in
Mishpacha.

Could it be that the venerable New York Times actually imitates Mishpacha magazine? Could they possibly be taking their ideas from the Orthodox and using them as their own? Highly unlikely, but the facts are curious.

Exhibit A: My December 2011 Mishpacha column dealt with the stranglehold of modern technology on our modern necks. We have no time to be alone with ourselves, I wrote: iPads, iPhones, iTablets, and iApps leave us no time for the only "I" that really matters.

Exhibit B: Four weeks later, the Jan 1, 2012, New York Times featured a column by famous British travel writer Pico Iyer, entitled "The Joys of Quiet." Iyer extols the virtues of letting go of our modern technological baggage and returning to the peace and quiet of being utterly alone with ourselves. Sound familiar?

Let's give the Times the benefit of the doubt. Perhaps this was merely a coincidence. In any case, the Times column is fascinating, as Iyer describes a \$2,285.00 per night hotel perched atop the Big Sur cliffs in California, overlooking the Pacific Ocean. Part of its amenities: there are no TVs in the rooms. People come there for the stillness and the quiet. The next big thing in the travel industry, he writes, are "black hole resorts" which are extremely expensive. Among other luxuries, wireless is not available in the rooms. And there is a new "Freedom" software that allows one to disable for eight hours all Internet connections (apparently for those who have no willpower of their own — EF).

Evidently, busy and creative people are trying to find ways to unplug themselves from that which was once touted as life's panacea: Time-saving gadgets, all-in-one adult toys like tiny phones that also take pictures, handle e-mail, log on to the Internet, and plug us in to the world. Enough, many are saying. Stop the world and let me off! I want some quiet so I can think and observe the world around me. Unplug me. Give me some relief from all the fancy thingumajigs and apps and all the social media that advertisers have convinced us that we simply MUST have. These time-saving devices leave us no time at all. Post-modern man is beginning to understand French philosopher

Blaise Pascal's comment that all of man's problems come from his inability to sit quietly in a room alone.

What struck me most keenly was Iyer's description of some writer friends who, in an effort to preserve their sanity, observe an "Internet Sabbath" every weekend, "turning off their online connections from Friday night to Monday, trying to revive ancient customs like family meals and conversation."

Hello? It's hard to believe that a professional world traveler like Iyer never encountered Orthodox Jews. From Bangkok to Brussels, from Melbourne to Mumbai, from Cape Town to Cape Canaveral, there are Jews observing "Internet Sabbaths" and more, complete with family meals and conversations that center on intellectual, religious, and nonstressful things like Biblical readings. Although our Shabbos practices are ancient, it turns out — despite the common view that its restrictions seem to constitute a difficult straitjacket — they are very au courant: traditional Shabbos foods, welcoming guests, singing zmiros, the reunification of the family every seventh day, a fusion of the material and spiritual. No need for radical escapes like visiting hermitages or moving to rural areas, as Iyer suggests. With the halachic Shabbos, waves of peace wash over us. Everything is unplugged. We get re-plugged into our own souls, we say hello to ourselves, we learn to sit quietly — because we realize that although we have more and more ways to communicate, we have, as Thoreau remarked, less and less to say.

How wondrously strange that the venerable Shabbos Kodesh — which the Creator Himself sanctified after the Six Days of

Creation, and which is the fifth of the Ten Commandments — is now being transmogrified into the cutting edge of postmodern life, with society's pacesetters trying to replicate it. But we are not surprised. Long ago, G-d Himself said to the Jews, "I have a special gift in my treasure-house, and its name is Shabbos" (Tractate Shabbos 10a).

Memo to the New York Times: You want to observe the Joys of Quiet? Do an investigative report on the traditional Orthodox Shabbos. You will find several living examples not far from your New York offices.

PURIM

Attached is a great chart on the timeline for the story of Purim. It was put together by Rabbi Hillel Haber from Shaare Torah. I thought it was really a helpful chart and he would like to share it with as many people as possible and spread torah. Please let us know what you think. Thanks to Nathan Dweck.

Summary of The Weekly Torah Reading:

1st Aliya: The Parsha opens with the commandment to use pure olive oil in lighting the Menorah. Aharon and his four sons were selected to be the Kohanim. The basic garments of a Kohain consisted of a turban, shirt, pants, and belt. The Kohain Gadol wore four additional garments: the Me'ill - a long outer robe; the Ayphod - a quilted vest or bibbed apron; the Choshen - jeweled breastplate; and the Tzitz - engraved, golden, forehead plate. The quilted vest is described in this Aliya along with the two Shoham stones. These were

engraved with the names of the 12 Tribes and set on the shoulders of the Kohain Gadol.

2nd Aliya: The cloth settings for the Shoham stones are described along with the jeweled breastplate. The method of fastening the breastplate to the quilted vest is explained. The breastplate was a quilted garment set with 12 stones, each engraved with the name of a Tribe.

3rd Aliya: The long outer robe is described. The hem of this garment was edged with small bells intended to announce the presence of the Kohain Gadol as he walked through the Bais Hamikdash. (From this the Gemara derives that a husband, prior to entering the door of his own home, out of respect for his wife, should announce his arrival by knocking on the door.) The engraved, golden forehead plate and the Kohain Gadol's turban are described, along with the four basic garments worn by all Kohanim. All the garments were hand made of the finest white linen. The special vestments of the Kohain Gadol were woven from a special thread spun from five different colored threads, including a thread made of pure gold.

4th, 5th, & 6th Aliyot: The seven day ceremony consecrating the Kohanim into their priestly service is detailed along with the consecration of the Mizbeach - Altar.

7th Aliya: The last vessel to be described is the inner, golden Altar, used to burn the daily incense offering. This offering, as well as the daily preparation for the lighting of the Menorah, could only be performed by the Kohain Gadol. The special mixture of incense called the Kitores, could only be formulated for this

purpose. (The renowned biblical archeologist, Vendell Jones, claims to have unearthed a hidden cache containing 600 kilos of the Kitores, buried before the 1st Bais Hamikdash was destroyed.)

HALACHA YOMI

On the Shabbat preceding Purim, which is actually this coming Shabbat, after the opening of the Holy Ark immediately following Shacharit prayers, two Sifrei Torah are removed; in the first one, we read the weekly Parasha (Tetzaveh) and in the second one we read the portion of "Zachor Et Asher Asa Lecha Amalek" ("Remember what Amalek has done to you"). This Torah portion is referred to as "Parashat Zachor". (Parashat Zachor is located at the end of Parashat Ki Tetzeh.)

According to most Poskim, the reading of Parashat Zachor is a Torah obligation. Since the Halacha is well-known that "Mitzvot require intention" (Shulchan Aruch Chapter 60, Section 4), one must take care while listening to Parashat Zachor to have in mind to fulfill the Torah obligation of remembering the actions of Amalek and obligation to annihilate them. Similarly, the one reading from the Torah must have in mind that the entire congregation will be fulfilling their obligation by listening to his reading.

One who, due to pressing circumstances, could not hear the reading of Parashat Zachor on this Shabbat should have in mind to fulfill his obligation the next time this portion is read, which is on the Shabbat of Parashat Ki Tetzeh. In this situation, one must ask the person reading the Torah to have him in mind while reading so that he may fulfill his obligation. Maran Harav Ovadia

Yosef Shlit"א writes that nevertheless, one should preferably read Parashat Zachor from a Chumash on Shabbat Zachor.

There is a dispute among the Poskim whether or not women are obligated to hear the reading of Parashat Zachor. The Sefer HaChinuch and others hold that women are exempt from hearing Parashat Zachor since the underlying reason for reading this portion is to remember the actions of Amalek in order to wage war against them and women do not usually take part in active combat nor are they commanded in the Mitzvah of fighting; therefore, they are not obligated to hear the reading of Parashat Zachor. (Clearly, there is no distinction between an average woman and a woman of uplifted spirit who would like to go out to war for the Torah does not command women to wipe out Amalek since women do not usually take part in conquest.) However, many Poskim are of the opinion that women are obligated to hear Parashat Zachor (which is indeed the prevalent custom). Thus, those women who act stringently and attend synagogue (in the women's section, obviously) to hear Parashat Zachor are indeed praiseworthy. A woman who has small children and cannot leave them to hear Parashat Zachor is exempt from hearing Parashat Zachor.

Nowadays, it is customary in many places to take out a Sefer Torah and read Parashat Zachor especially for women after prayers have concluded; in this way, women will indeed be able to hear Parashat Zachor while someone else attends to the children at home. This is indeed a fine custom

EXCERPTS FROM THE JERSEY SHORE TORAH BULLETIN

"However it seemed contemptible to [Haman] to lay hands on Mordechai alone." (Megilat Esther 3:6)

Haman gets very angry at Mordechai for not bowing down to him. He decides to kill Mordechai, but that's not enough. Haman decides he will kill all the Jews. The verse says that it was contemptible (Vayibez) and beneath him to kill only Mordechai. The Midrash now describes Haman as "contemptible one, son of a contemptible one (bazui ben bazui)." For one verse says: "Esav showed contempt for the birthright" (Beresheet 25:34) and here it says, "It seemed contemptible to him to lay hands on Mordechai alone." We learn that since the Torah used the same word, there must be a relationship between Haman and Esav.

Rabbi Eliezer Ginzberg explains the connection. By selling the birthright, Esav demonstrated that he didn't realize the importance of the service of one true servant of Hashem. Similarly Haman felt it was below him to kill only Mordechai. He failed to realize the tremendous effect that a single saddik's service of Hashem has on the entire universe. Thus he regarded it as beneath him to smite a single individual. For a man of such eminence, anything short of complete genocide was simply unbecoming.

The same principle is seen in the Sages' statement, "If the Holy Temple is not rebuilt during a person's lifetime, it is considered as if it had been destroyed in his lifetime." At first glance, this seems strange, since rebuilding the Temple is a communal obligation, and it doesn't seem

right to hold one individual responsible for not fulfilling it. We see from this that the Sages understood the power of a single man's holy service. As far as they were concerned, a single righteous individual has the power to tilt the balance of the entire world, and cause all of mankind to repent and embrace the ways of Hashem. Shabbat Shalom and Happy Purim. Rabbi Reuven Semah

The holiday of Purim gets its name from the pur, the lottery which Haman used to determine the day on which to destroy the Jews. This seems to be a very minor detail in the whole scheme of the Purim story. Why choose this aspect to give us the name of the holiday?

The answer is that Haman comes from Amalek, who believes everything in this world is random happenings. Amalek was willing to buck the Creator Himself as the cause of everything that takes place and Haman followed in his grandfather's footsteps. There is nothing more symbolic of chance than a lottery. This was the method that Haman chose to decide the fate of the Jews. The entire story of Purim shows how all random events are linked up to bring about the great miracle of Purim. Therefore, the name Purim is meant to bring home to us that our destiny is carefully planned with precision and detail. Just as a lottery is really the will of Hashem, so too are our every day happenings, from the greatest events to the smallest detail.

When we read the story of Purim, we should strengthen our faith in Hashem, thereby meriting to have miracles and salvation speedily in our days. Amen. Happy Purim and Shabbat Shalom! Rabbi Shmuel Choueka

RETURNING THE FAVOR

"In the Ohel Moed...Aharon and his sons shall arrange it from evening until morning, before Hashem." (Shemot 27:21)

The whole idea of lighting a Menorah before Hashem seems superfluous. Does Hashem need the light? He is the Source of all illumination. The Midrash addresses this question and explains that, indeed, Hashem does not need the light of the Menorah. Rather, He commands us to light for Him, just as He provided illumination for us in the wilderness. He is giving us the opportunity to repay the favor. It is a well-known Midrash, but it takes someone of the caliber of Rav Yeruchem Levovitz, z"l, to view the Midrash as teaching us a lesson in etiquette. When we receive a favor from someone, the usual reaction is to want to repay our benefactor. What if he shrugs off the favor: "It was nothing," "Don't bother," "Anytime." "I do not want anything in return." It does not always happen this way, because some of us thrive on recognition, but is refusing payback appropriate?

Hazal teach us that, in fact, it is proper that the benefactor allow the beneficiary to pay him back, to return the favor. Someone who is truly sensitive to his friend's feelings will not want him feeling beholden to him. He will not want him to feel he is indebted to him. He should give him the opportunity to return the favor, regardless of its significance or lack thereof.

In his Orchot Chaim, the Rosh states that this idea applies as well when someone offends us and wants to excuse himself. Allow him to explain. Do not say, "Forget about it." If he acted horribly and has a reason for his ignoble behavior, let him clear his chest and wipe the slate clean. By forgiving him and ignoring his

reason, one is only adding to his heavy heart. Hear him out, even if his excuse is nonsensical. Allow him the satisfaction of thinking that he settled his debt, that he has made amends.

Some of us thrive when others are in our debt - regardless of its negative impact on the debtor. It is all part of the game of manipulating people to satisfy an intemperate ego, the result of insecurity activated by low-self esteem. Hazal are teaching us a way of life that ultimately leads to personal contentment that is not at the expense of another person. (Peninim on the Torah)

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A free society used to mean that the subjects under the rule of a particular government were free from oppression and discrimination. Today, a free society means the people are free from responsibility and no one is accountable. This is not what the founders intended when they created the land of the free, and it is not what Hashem intended when he freed us from Egyptian bondage.

The verse states: "They are my slaves that I freed from Egypt" (Vayikra 25:55). The Torah's attitude towards life is that all actions are subject to scrutiny and accountability. Also, people are expected to accept different degrees of responsibility based on their positions, intelligence, and ability. Life is certainly not a "free ride."

When you are about to say the magic words "it is not my fault," catch yourself before the words

leave your lips. Consider that "it" just might be something that you are responsible for causing, and perhaps there is a price you should pay for the incident. It only takes a little maturity to shake off the "no strings attached" mentality and accept responsibility for your actions or lack of performance. It may hurt for a minute, but it will be beneficial for many years to come. (One Minute With Yourself – Rabbi Raymond Beyda)

"Let a royal decree be issued from him [the king]." (Esther 1:19)

Rav Shemuel ben Ozida explained that this Memuchan was none other than Haman. He introduced a new law to be added permanently to the constitution of Persia and Media, giving the king the right to sentence someone to death without consulting with his ministers or advisors. G-d arranged for this incident to take place in preparation for the ultimate salvation of the people of Yisrael from Haman's plan. If this law had not been introduced, then at the moment when Ahashverosh's rage at Haman reached its peak, he would not have been able to simply command that he be hanged on the gallows that he had prepared for hanging Mordechai. He would have had to submit his recommendation to the High Court.

Now, however, since Haman had pushed through the law empowering the king to have people executed without trial, Ahashverosh was able to dispose of Haman without any complications. Had he found it necessary to bring him to trial, it may be that Haman would have found a way to finagle himself out of being prosecuted.

This is the reason that Megillat Esther includes this seemingly

absurd episode. It is very much a part of the Purim miracle. (Yalkut Yosef)

“Harbona said...” Besides, there is the hanging post that Haman prepared for Mordechai, the one who spoke in the king’s favor. It is standing in Haman’s house, fifty cubits high.” (Esther 7:9)

Rabbi Elazar taught (Megillah 16a) that this Harbona himself was a wicked person and conspired together with Haman to murder Mordechai. Nevertheless, since he saw that Haman’s plan was foiled, he immediately became turncoat.

What clue did Rabbi Elazar use to reveal the true character of Harbona? Rav Yaakov Kranz of Dubno explained this using a parable of a blind beggar who, over the years, collected a considerable sum of money. He kept this treasure in a leather packet under his arm. He hired a young man to lead him about in his travels.

One day, as they were making their way to the next town, the beggar realized suddenly that his packet was missing. He began screaming in frustration, describing the difficulties he had endured while collecting this money and the many times he had tripped and fallen as he had gone from place to place. He was absolutely inconsolable.

Hearing his cries, people came from all directions to help search for the lost packet. The young guide pretended to join in the search, but in reality he himself had stolen the packet. After hearing how anguished the blind man had become, he felt remorse for his lowly action. He came over to the poor man and said excitedly, “I found it. I found the packet, and the one-hundred-fifty rubles are intact in it.”

The blind man took back his packet, but then he grabbed the young man and began beating him severely. The youngster cried out, “Is this the thanks I get for finding your money?”

“Finding my money?” exclaimed the blind man. “You stole my packet, for it not how could you have known how much money it contains? You must have had it for some time and you were able to sit down and count it.”

In the same way, although Harbona knew that Haman had prepared a high hanging post for Mordechai, how could he have known exactly how tall it was? It must be that he was one of Haman’s advisors who gave him the idea to hang Mordechai! (Yalkut Yosef)

**RABBI ELI MANSOUR
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Is Moshe Mentioned in Parashat Tesaveh?

When studying the weekly Torah portion, we are generally accustomed to analyzing what’s written – the text, the events described, the words that are used, the sequence of presentation, and so on. When it comes to Parashat Tesaveh, however, a lot of attention is given also to what is NOT in the Parasha. Many of our commentators noted the conspicuous absence of Moshe’s name from Parashat Tesaveh, a feature that they found surprising. Ever since the story of Moshe’s birth in Parashat Shemot, he obviously plays a central role and is mentioned in every other Parasha. Moreover, in the opening verse of the Parasha, where God introduces a new set of commands, we expect to find

the standard introduction of “Vayedaber Hashem El Moshe Lemor” (“God spoke to Moshe, saying”). Instead, the Parasha begins with the word “Ve’ata” – “And you” – as though specifically omitting Moshe’s name.

The common explanation for the absence of Moshe’s name is that this was the fulfillment of a statement made by Moshe after the sin of the golden calf. God threatened to annihilate Am Yisrael, Heaven forbid, in the wake of that grave incident, and to create a new nation from Moshe. But Moshe pleaded on the nation’s behalf, and insisted that if God refused to forgive the nation for their sin, “then erase me, if You please, from Your book” (Shemot 32:32). Meaning, Moshe did not want to form a new nation if God annihilated Beneh Yisrael. God accepted Moshe’s prayer and spared Beneh Yisrael, but the words of a Sadik have such power that they are fulfilled even if they are spoken on condition. Thus, Moshe’s demand to be “erased” from God’s book had to be fulfilled – and thus his name was omitted from one Parasha, Parashat Tesaveh.

Different theories have been suggested for why specifically Parashat Tesaveh was selected as the Parasha from which Moshe’s name would be “erased.” One explanation is that Parashat Tesaveh is read around the time of 7 Adar, the Yartzheit of Moshe Rabbenu, and it is therefore an appropriate context for “erasing” his name. Others note that Moshe requested that His name be erased “Mi’sifrecha” (“from Your book”), which may be read as “Mi’sefer Chaf” – “from the twentieth book.” Parashat Tesaveh is the twentieth Parasha in the Torah, and Moshe’s statement was thus fulfilled through his omission from this Parasha.

But there is also another reason why Moshe's name was omitted specifically from this Parasha. Moshe's name consists of three letters – "Mem," "Shin," "Heh." The name of the letter "Mem" is spelled "Mem," "Mem"; the name of the letter "Shin" is spelled "Shin," "Yod," "Nun"; and the name of the letter "Heh" is spelled "Heh" "Alef." If we combine all the secondary letters, meaning, all these letters besides the three letters that actually form Moshe's name, we arrive at a total numerical value of 101. ("Mem" is 40, "Yod" and "Nun" are together 60, and "Alef" is 1.) This is also the numerical value of "Michael," the name of the angel of kindness. Moshe had within him the qualities of this special angel. This is expressed after the sin of the golden calf, when God announced that He would send an angel to accompany the nation to Eretz Yisrael, rather than accompany them Himself (33:2). Moshe begged God to rescind this decree, and God agreed. The angel God wanted to send was Michael, and Moshe was therefore able to avert this decree because he himself had the quality of Michael. He was able to demand that Michael not be sent to the nation because he was like Michael. The angel Michael therefore came to join Beneh Yisrael only later, after Moshe's death, just before Beneh Yisrael began their conquest of the land (see Yehoshua 5:13-15).

Our Sages also teach us that Michael is the angel of memory. Thus, for example, the Gemara (Hagiga 9) states, "One who reviews his material 100 times is not the same as someone who reviews his material 101 times." The angel of forgetfulness is the Satan himself, who is known by the letters "Samech" "Mem" – which have a combined numerical value of 100. If a person studies

his material only 100 times, he is still under the power of Satan, who makes him forget his Torah knowledge. But once a student learns the material 101 times, he comes under the power of Michael – whose name has the numerical value of 101 – and this allows him to retain his knowledge. Moshe was the one who brought us the Torah, and it was therefore crucial for him to have this quality of retention, the quality of Michael, within him.

In many editions of the Humash, the number of verses in each Parasha is mentioned after the Parasha, along with a "Siman" – a word that alludes to this number. At the end of Parashat Tesaveh, it is written that there are 101 verses in this Parasha, and the "Siman" is Michael – which has the numerical value of 101. Thus, Moshe's name indeed is in this Parasha, albeit in a subtle form. God had to omit Moshe's name from a Parasha to fulfill his request of "Erase me from Your book," but even so, He did it in a way that Moshe's name would not be absent entirely. Moshe Rabbenu was so beloved to God that even when his name had to be omitted, it was omitted from a Parasha that alludes to Moshe in a different way – by containing 101 verses, alluding to Moshe's special "angelic" quality, his resemblance to the angel Michael.

Rabbi Wein

The breastplate/choshen of the High Priest was ordained to be securely attached to the ceremonial apron/ephod that covered the body of the High Priest. The Torah specifically mentions that the breastplate/choshen should not be allowed to slide away from that apron/ephod. The commentators to Torah discuss the significance of this rule. Why is it so important

that the breastplate/choshen should remain attached to the apron/ephod while the High Priest is wearing the priestly garments? What is the moral message that the Torah wishes to impart to us by this requirement?

Again, the answers to these questions and the observations of the great sages of Israel over the ages are varied and many. I have always felt that the Torah is imparting a message to us, that the spiritual side of humans – the breastplate/choshen that rests upon the heart, the seat of human emotion and spirit – is inextricably bound up with the bodily and physical needs and demands of the human body itself as represented by the apron/ephod.

The two garments, the breastplate/choshen and the apron/ephod, like our souls and bodies during our lifetimes are inseparable. The two opposites - of spirit and physicality are meant to balance and influence each other. A human being cannot, in this world, be wholly physical, for, if so, one is little more than an animal. Nor can humans achieve a fully spiritual state of existence, for God said to Moses that "no humans can see me and live." It is the integration of these two human traits that creates the main challenge in our lives and eventually defines us as a Jew and as a human being.

The Torah abhors schizophrenic behavior. The old slogan of the Haskala: "Be a Jew at home and a regular person/citizen in the street" proved to be an unattainable goal. Either the Jew at home had to give way, which is what most often happened, or the man in the street had to defer to the homegrown Jew.

The Torah therefore wished to create a whole person who would be comfortable with one's

Jewishness and mission both at home and in the street. All Jews, not only the High Priest, have to wear the breastplate/choshen attached to the apron/ephod; to combine within one and the same person a physical existence and a spiritual one as well.

The numerous commandments that the Torah ordains for our performance in all facets of our lives are meant to help us create a whole unified person for ourselves. We are to sanctify the mundane and create spirit where apparently only physicality exists. And, at the same time, the fact is that in our lifetime we are of this world with all of the physical limitations that this fact of human existence imposes upon us.

This duality of purpose and existence is itself the secret of human society and points to the eternal necessity for God's guidance and Torah blessings. In following His tenets we find our whole – inner and outer – self. In this way we are all entitled to wear the garments of the High Priest both at home and in the street all the days of our lives.

**Sir Jonathan Sacks
Chief Rabbi of the United
Hebrew Congregations
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Why is the Torah so specific and emphatic, in this week's parsha, about the clothes to be worn by the Cohen and the Cohen Gadol? "These are the vestments that they shall make: a breastplate, an ephod, a robe, a knitted tunic, a turban, and a sash. Make them as sacred vestments for Aaron and his sons so that they will be able to be priests to Me" (Exodus 28: 4).

In general, Judaism is sceptical about appearances. Saul, Israel's first king, looked the

part. He was "head and shoulders" taller than anyone else (1 Samuel 9: 2). Yet though he was physical tall, he was morally small. He followed the people rather than leading them. When God told Samuel that He had rejected Saul, and that Samuel should anoint a son of Yishai as king, Samuel went to Yishai and saw that one of his sons, Eliav, looked the part. He thought he was the one God had chosen. God, however, tells him that he is mistaken:

But the Lord said to Samuel, "Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. The Lord does not look at the things people look at. People look at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart." (1 Sam. 16: 7)

Appearances deceive. In fact, as I have mentioned before in these studies, the Hebrew word for garment, begged, comes from the same Hebrew word as "to betray" – as in the confession Ashamnu bagadnu, "We are guilty, we have betrayed." Jacob uses Esau's clothes to deceive. Joseph's brothers do likewise with his bloodstained cloak. There are six such examples in the book of Genesis alone. Why then did God command that the cohanim were to wear distinctive garments as part of their service in the tabernacle and later in the Temple?

The answer lies in the two-word phrase that appears twice in our parsha, defining what the priestly vestments were to represent: le-kavod ule-tifaret, "for dignity [or 'honour'] and beauty." These are unusual words in the Torah, at least in a human context. The word tiferet, "beauty" or "glory," appears only three times in the Torah, twice in our parsha (Ex. 28: 2, 40) and once, poetically

and with a somewhat different sense, in Deuteronomy 26: 19.

The word kavod, "dignity" or honour," appears sixteen times, but in fourteen (2x7) of these cases the reference is to the glory of God. The twice they appear in our parsha are the only occasions in which kavod is applied to a human being. So what is happening here?

The answer is that they represent the aesthetic dimension. This does not always figure prominently in Judaism. It is something we naturally connect with cultures a world apart from the Torah. The great empires – Mesopotamia, Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Greece and Rome – built monumental palaces and temples. The royal courts were marked by magnificent robes, cloaks, crowns and regalia, each rank with its own uniform and finery.

Judaism by contrast often seems almost puritanical in its avoidance of pomp and display. Worshipping the invisible God, Judaism tended to devalue the visual in favour of the oral and aural: words heard rather than appearances seen.

Yet the service of the tabernacle and Temple were different. Here appearances – dignity, beauty – did make a difference. Why? Maimonides gives this explanation:

In order to exalt the Temple, those who ministered there received great honour, and the priests and Levites were therefore distinguished from the rest. It was commanded that the priest should be clothed properly with the most splendid and fine clothes, "holy garments for glory and for beauty" ... for the multitude does not estimate man by his true form but by ... the beauty of his garments, and the Temple was to be held in

great reverence by all. (Guide for the Perplexed, III:45)

The explanation is clear, but there is also a hint of disdain. Maimonides seems to be saying that to those who really understand the nature of the religious life, appearances should not matter at all, but "the multitude," the masses, the majority, are not like that. They are impressed by spectacle, visible grandeur, the glitter of gold, the jewels of the breastplate, the rich pageantry of scarlet and purple and the pristine purity of white linen robes.

In his book *The Body of Faith* (1983), Michael Wyschogrod makes a stronger case for the aesthetic dimension of Judaism. Throughout history, he argues, art and cult have been intimately connected and Judaism is no exception. "The architecture of the Temple and its contents demand a spatial thinking that stimulates the visual arts as nothing else does. It must be remembered that among the many artefacts past civilisations have left behind, those intended for ritual use almost are always the most elaborate and aesthetically the most significant."

Wyschogrod says that postbiblical Judaism did not, for the most part, make outstanding contributions to art and music. Even today, the world of religious Jewry is remote from that of the great writers, painters, poets and dramatists. To be sure, there is a wealth of popular religious music. But by and large, he says, "our artists tend to leave the Jewish community." This he believes represents a spiritual crisis. "The imagination of the poet is a reflection of his spiritual life. Myth and metaphor are the currency both of religion and poetry. Poetry is one of the most powerful domains in which religious

expression takes place. And the same is true of music, drama, painting, and dance."

Rav Abraham Kook hoped that the return to Zion would stimulate a renaissance of Jewish art, and there is a significant place for beauty in the religious life, especially in Avodah, "service," which once meant sacrifice and now means prayer.

An immense body of recent research into neuroscience, evolutionary psychology and behavioural economics has established beyond doubt that we are not, for the most part, rational animals. It is not that we are incapable of reason, but that reason alone does not move us to action. For that, we need emotion – and emotion goes deeper than the prefrontal cortex, the brain's centre of conscious reflection. Art speaks to emotion. It moves us in ways that go deeper than words.

That is why great art has a spirituality that cannot be expressed other than through art – and that applies to the visual beauty and pageantry of the service of tabernacle and Temple, including the robes and sashes of the priests. There is a poem in the reader's repetition of Mussaf on Yom Kippur that that expresses this to perfection. It is about *mareih cohen*, the appearance of the High Priest as he concluded his service and emerged from the Holy of Holies:

As the brightness of the vaulted canopy of heaven,
As lightning flashing from the splendour of angels,
As the celestial blue in the fringes' thread,
As the iridescence of the rainbow in the midst of clouds,
As the majesty with which the Rock has clothed His creatures,
As a rose planted in a garden of delight,

As a diadem set on the brow of the King,
As the mirror of love in the face of a bridegroom,
As a halo of purity from a mitre of purity,
As one who abides in secret, beseeching the King,
As the morning star shining in the borders of the East –
Was the appearance of the [High] Priest.

And now we can define the nature of the aesthetic in Judaism. It is art devoted to the greater glory of God. That is the implication of the fact that the word *kavod*, "glory," is attributed in the Torah only to God – and to the cohen officiating in the house of God.

Judaism does not believe in art for art's sake, but in art in the service of God, giving back as a votive offering to God a little of the beauty He has made in this created world. At the risk of oversimplification, one could state the difference between ancient Israel and ancient Greece thus: that where the Greeks believed in the holiness of beauty, Jews believed in *hadrat kodesh*, the beauty of holiness. There is a place for the aesthetic in *avodah*. In the words of the Song at the Sea: *zeh Keili ve-anvehu*, "This is my God and I will beautify Him." For beauty inspires love, and from love flows the service of the heart.