

Toras fish

The Torah newsletter that shines bright in a dog eat dog world!

CHIEF RABBI LORD JONATHAN SACKS

Covenant & Conversation

The great leaders know their own limits. They do not try to do it all themselves. They build teams. They create space for people who are strong where they are weak. They understand the importance of checks and balances and the separation of powers. They surround themselves with people who are different from them. They understand the danger of concentrating all power in a single individual. But learning your limits, knowing there are things you cannot do – even things you cannot be – can be a painful experience. Sometimes it involved an emotional crisis.

The Torah contains four fascinating accounts of such moments. What links them is not words but music. From quite early on in Jewish history, the Torah was sung, not just read. Moses at the end of his life calls the Torah a song.¹ Different traditions grew up in Israel and Babylon, and from around the tenth century onward the chant began to be systematized in the form of the musical notations known as taamei ha-mikra, cantillation signs, devised by the Tiberian Masoretes (guardians of Judaism's sacred texts). One very rare note, known as a shalsholet ("chain"), appears in the Torah four times only. Each time it is a sign of existential crisis. Three instances are in Bereishit. The fourth is in our parsha. As we will see, the fourth is about leadership. In a broad sense, the other three are as well.

The first instance occurs in the story of Lot. Lot had separated from his uncle Abraham and settled in Sodom. There he had assimilated into the local population. His daughters had married local men. He himself sat in the city gate, a sign that he had been made a judge. Then two visitors came to tell him to leave. G-d was about to destroy the city. Yet Lot hesitates, and above the word for "hesitates" – vayitmahmah – is a shalsholet. (Genesis 19: 16). He is torn, conflicted. He senses that the visitors are right. The city is indeed about to be destroyed. But he has invested his whole future in the new identity he has been carving out for himself and his daughters. Had the

angels not seized him and taken him to safety he would have delayed until it was too late.

The second occurs when Abraham asks his servant – traditionally identified as Eliezer – to find a wife for Isaac his son. The commentators suggest that he felt a profound ambivalence about his mission. Were Isaac not to marry and have children, Abraham's estate would eventually pass to Eliezer or his descendants. Abraham had already said so before Isaac was born: "Sovereign Lord, what can you give me since I remain childless and the one who will inherit my estate is Eliezer of Damascus?" (Genesis 15: 2). If Eliezer succeeded in his mission, bringing back a wife for Isaac, and if the couple had children, then his chances of one day acquiring Abraham's wealth would disappear completely. Two instincts warred within him: loyalty to Abraham and personal ambition. Loyalty won, but not without a deep struggle. Hence the shalsholet (Genesis 24:12).

The third brings us to Egypt and the life of Joseph. Sold by his brothers as a slave, he is now working in the house of an eminent Egyptian, Potiphar. Left alone in the house with his master's wife, he finds himself the object of her desire. He is handsome. She wants him to sleep with her. He refuses. To do such a thing, he says, would be to betray his master, her husband. It would be a sin against G-d. Yet over "he refused" is a shalsholet, (Genesis 39:8) indicating – as some rabbinic sources and mediaeval commentaries suggest – that he did so at the cost of considerable effort.² He nearly succumbed. This was more than the usual conflict between sin and temptation. It was a conflict of identity. Recall that Joseph was now living in, for him, a new and strange land. His brothers had rejected him. They had made it clear that they did not want him as part of their family. Why then should he not, in Egypt, do as the Egyptians do? Why not yield to his master's wife if that is what she wanted? The question for Joseph was not just, "Is this right?" but also, "Am I an Egyptian or a Jew?"

All three episodes are about inner conflict, and all three are about identity. There are times when each of us has to decide, not just "What shall

¹ Deuteronomy 31:19.

² Tanhuma, Vayeshev, 8; cited by Rashi in his commentary to Genesis 39:8.

TORAS FISH IS THE OF-FISH-AL PURIM PUBLICATION YOU'VE PROBABLY BEEN HERRING ABOUT. IT'S BEEN CALLED "ALL WET" BUT REEL-LY IS A SWIMMINGLY SWELL NEWSLETTER (ALTHOUGH WE DO GE-FILTER IT) THAT COULD CREATE OPPOR-TUNA-TY FOR YOU. START READING THIS AND DORSAL OPEN FOR YOU! IT'LL DOLPHINATELY BE WORTHWHILE AND IF YOU DON'T THINK SO, DON'T BE KOI - LET MINNOW AND WE'LL SEA IF WE'RE GILTY (OR IF WE CAN BLAME IT ON SALMON ELSE!)



I'm reminded of the immortal words of Leah Weiss who said, "Are you gonna give me credit for coming up with this theme?" Nope. Not gonna happen. Does anyone ever even read this blurb? Seriously? Don't you have anything more important to do? Like wonder if fish sweat?

I do?" but "What kind of person shall I be?" That is particularly fateful in the case of a leader, which brings us to episode four, this time about Moses.

After the sin of the golden calf Moses had at G-d's command instructed the Israelites to build a sanctuary which would be, in effect, a permanent symbolic home of G-d in the midst of the people. By now the work is complete and all that remains is for Moses to induct his brother Aaron and his sons into office. He robes Aaron with the special garments of the high priest, anoints him with oil, and performs the various sacrifices appropriate to the occasion. Over the word *vayishchat*, "and he slaughtered [the sacrificial ram]" (Leviticus 8: 23) there is a *shalsholet*. By now we know that this means there was an internal struggle in Moses' mind. But what was it? There is not the slightest sign in the text that suggests that he was undergoing a crisis.

Yet a moment's thought makes it clear what Moses' inner turmoil was about. Until now he had led the Jewish people. Aaron his older brother had assisted him, accompanying him on his missions to Pharaoh, acting as his spokesman, aide and second-in-command. Now, however, Aaron was about to undertake a new leadership role in his own right. No longer would he be a shadow of Moses. He would do what Moses himself could not. He would preside over the daily offerings in the tabernacle. He would mediate the *avodah*, the Israelites' sacred service to G-d. Once a year on Yom Kippur he would perform the service that would secure atonement for the people from its sins. No longer in Moses' shadow, Aaron was about to become the one kind of leader Moses was not destined to be: a High Priest.

The Talmud adds a further dimension to the poignancy of the moment. At the burning bush, Moses had repeatedly resisted G-d's call to lead the people. Eventually G-d told him that Aaron would go with him, helping him speak (Ex. 4: 14-16). The Talmud says that at that moment Moses lost the chance to be a priest. "Originally [said G-d] I had intended that you would be the priest and Aaron your brother would be a Levite. Now he will be the priest and you will be a Levite." (Zevachim 102a)

That is Moses' inner struggle, conveyed by the *shalsholet*. He is about to induct his brother into an office he himself will never hold. Things might have been otherwise – but life is not lived in the world of "might have been." He surely feels joy for his brother, but he cannot altogether avoid a sense of loss. Perhaps he already senses what he will later discover, that though he was the prophet and liberator, Aaron will have a privilege Moses will be denied, namely, seeing his children and their descendants inherit his role. The son of a priest is a priest. The son of a prophet is rarely a prophet.

What all four stories tell us is that there comes a time for each of us when we must make an ultimate decision as to who we are. It is a moment of existential truth. Lot is a Hebrew, not a citizen of Sodom. Eliezer is Abraham's servant, not his heir. Joseph is Jacob's son, not an Egyptian of easy-going morals. Moses is a prophet not a priest. To say Yes to who we are we have to have the courage to say No to who we are not. There is pain and conflict involved. That is the meaning of the *shalsholet*. But we emerge less conflicted than we were before. This applies especially to leaders, which is why the case of Moses in our parsha is so important. There were things Moses was not destined to do. He would not become a priest. That task fell to Aaron. He would not lead the people across the Jordan. That was Joshua's role. Moses had to accept both facts with good grace if he was to be honest with himself. And great leaders must be honest with themselves if they are to be honest with those they lead.

A leader should never try to be all things to all men (and women). A leader should be content to be what he or she is. A leader must have the strength to know what he cannot be if he is to have the courage to be himself. ©2014 Rabbi J. Sacks & torah.org

Two fish were in a tank. One says to the other, "You man the guns and I'll drive." ¹

RABBI AVI WEISS

Shabbat Forshpeis

This week's Torah portion tells us that one type of peace offering (*Shlamim*) is known as the thanksgiving sacrifice (*Todah*). (Leviticus 7:12) Rashi notes that this



¹ Ok, now THAT's funny, right there. Get it? Fish in a tank? Oh, never mind.

sacrifice was given after experiencing a special miracle. He specifies one who has endured a sea voyage, a trip through the wilderness, a prison stay or a recovery from an illness.

To this day, those who survive difficult situations are obliged to recite the thanksgiving benediction at the Torah (birkat ha-gomel). Jewish law extends the obligation to include those who are saved from any type of peril.

The Ramban's comments in the Book of Exodus (13:16) can shed light on the importance of the thanksgiving sacrifice. For him G-d's intervention in the supernatural should give one a sense of G-d's involvement in the everyday. For example, from the splitting of the sea, an event in which G-d was so obviously manifest, one should come to recognize the input of G-d every day in containing the waters within the boundaries of the sea shore. In the words of Nehama Leibowitz, "the unusual deliverances and outstanding miracles are there merely to draw our attention to the miracle of existence." The timing of the reading of the thanksgiving offering, the Shabbat before Passover, also teaches a significant lesson. After all, on Passover, we thank G-d for miraculously taking us out of Egypt. The Haggadah comes to its crescendo as we sing Dayenu-which means enough. Some think Dayenu deals with our telling G-d that we have had enough suffering. In reality the song says the reverse. We say to G-d, had you only performed but a fraction of the larger miracle, it would have been enough. Dayenu is the quintessential statement of thanks to G-d.

The fact that the thanksgiving sacrifice is a type of peace offering is also clear. When giving to G-d, the human being achieves a level of inner peace. This is because love is not only a function of receiving, but also of giving. How I remember writing to the Rav, Rav Yosef Dov Soloveitchik, of blessed memory, upon his return to class after he lost his wife. After listening to his lecture (shiur), I was so taken that I wrote to him expressing my love and admiration. A few days later, the Rav thanked me, but told me the note was unnecessary. I responded, "Rebbe I wrote the letter for you, but even more important, for myself. I had a need to tell you, 'I love you.'" The Rav nodded and told me that he understood.

If only we would learn the message of the thanksgiving offering. To say the simple words to those who mean the most to us, but whom we often take for granted - words like today, thank you, to our closest of kin and, of course, to G-d Himself. ©2012 Hebrew Institute of Riverdale & CJC-AMCHA. Rabbi Avi Weiss is Founder and President of Yeshivat Chovevei Torah Rabbinical School - the Modern and Open Orthodox Rabbinical School. He is Senior Rabbi at the Hebrew Institute of Riverdale, a Modern and Open Orthodox congregation of 850 families. He is also National President of AMCHA - the Coalition for Jewish Concerns

What do you get if you divide the circumference of a pumpkin by its diameter?
Pumpkin Pi!

RABBI DOV KRAMER

Taking a Closer Look

"**A**nd these days of Purim will not expire from among the Jews" (Esther 9:28). The Midrash (Socher Tov, Mishlay 9:2) understands these words to mean that even though in the "next world" other holidays will no longer be observed, Purim will be. Similarly, the Yerushalmi (Megila 1:5) says that the other books of the Prophets and the Writings will (in the future) no longer be relevant; only the Five Books of the Torah and the Scroll of Esther will remain. (See Rambam, Hilchos Megila 2:18, where he defines this "future" as "in the time of Moshiach" and adds that all of our earlier problems will be forgotten, but not Purim.) What is it about Purim that allows it, and its "story," to endure even after other holidays and other Biblical books will not?



Accepting the Scroll of Esther into the Biblical canon was not a simple matter (see Megila 7a and its parallel in the Yerushalmi, Megila 1:5). Only after a source was found stating that a mention of Amalek being wiped out also belongs in the Writings was it included. Although Haman did descend from Agag (Esther 3:1), and Agag was an Amalekite king (Sh'muel I 15:8), the Purim story does not seem to be about destroying Amalek, nor is doing so mentioned in the text. Amalek continued to survive (Haman's grandsons learned Torah in B'nei B'rak, see Gitin 57b), so killing Haman and his sons did not accomplish this. Why, then, was including Esther in the Biblical canon dependant on finding a source about destroying Amalek?

The mitzvah to wipe out Amalek itself is awkwardly phrased. We are supposed to "remember" Amalek (D'varim 25:17), yet "blot out any remembrance" of them (25:19). Even though it is specifically "what Amalek did to us" that we are to remember, which can be done even after there is no longer any remnant of the evil-beyond-hope nation that perpetuated those deeds, why necessitate "blotting out their memory" if we are supposed to continue to remember them? It could be suggested that we are to "remember" (and "not forget") to blot them out, in the sense that once this is accomplished there would no longer be a need to "remember" to do so. However, since wiping them out is no longer a possibility (see B'rachos 28a, see also <http://tinyurl.com/mv2ysnh>), yet the mitzvah to "remember" them is still there, one could not have only applied as a prerequisite for the other. Why "blot out" the memory of evil if we are supposed to always remember it?

When recapping what occurred before commanding us to "blot them out," the term used regarding Amalek's attack is "happened upon you" (D'varim 25:18), implying that they didn't purposely set out to attack us, but,

after they crossed paths with us, decided to do so. However, when the attack actually occurred (Sh'mos 17:8), they "came and waged war with Israel," i.e. via a premeditated attack. The term "happened upon you" is therefore understood to mean that they attributed things to "happenstance" rather than being purposefully directed by G-d (see Rashbam on D'varim 25:18). Being that their attack came shortly after the exodus from Egypt, which included the miraculous plagues and the splitting of the sea, and Israel was (even at the time of the attack) led by the "clouds of glory," it would have been extremely difficult for anyone to deny G-d's involvement in the world. How could they consider attacking the nation that was obviously under G-d's protection, and do so based on a mindset that G-d was not involved?

Who did Amalek attack? "All who were weak, behind you" (D'varim 25:18) referring to those who had sinned and were therefore rejected by the "clouds of glory," (see Rashi) which no longer protected them. In other words, it wasn't that Amalek rejected the notion that G-d was involved with the world at all, but the notion that He stayed involved even with those who no longer merited the miracles He performed for the righteous. There are natural laws, and Amalek attributed everything that happens "naturally" to be outside of G-d's involvement (even if they thought G-d had set those laws up in the first place). Therefore, they weren't afraid of attacking those outside the "clouds of glory" even though G-d's presence was obvious right "next door," with those dwelling within them.

Ramban (Sh'mos 13:16) calls the natural laws "hidden miracles." That oil burns is no less miraculous than if any other liquid burned, but because G-d decreed that oil should always burn, we become accustomed to oil burning and it loses its "magic." Everything that occurs does so based on G-d decreeing that it do so (except for how we exercise our free will). As we say in our daily prayers, G-d "renews, every day, continuously, the act of creation." The "obvious miracles," the Ramban says, which seem to defy the laws of nature, teach us that G-d is involved in the world, and is therefore behind the "hidden miracles," i.e. nature, as well. But that's not how Amalek approached things. Despite seeing the obvious miracles, Amalek thought that the "hidden miracles" were not part of G-d's constant involvement in the world, and they could therefore "abuse the system" of natural law even if it went against G-d's will. This outlook, that G-d is only sporadically involved in the world, is what we are commanded to obliterate. Even if only a select few are worthy of G-d's divine protection (see Rabbeinu Bachye on B'reishis 18:19), that doesn't negate His constant involvement in every aspect of the world; it only affects whether He will tweak the outcome of the natural laws He almost always operates through. (For a discussion about how G-d can tweak things while working within the natural laws He set up, see <http://tinyurl.com/kntpsm9>.) There can be no remnant of the nation that

denied G-d's constant involvement even in nature, but we must remember what such a perspective led to and how G-d reacted to it.

G-d's name is not mentioned in the Scroll of Ester because His involvement was only "behind the scenes." There were no obvious miracles, but after the story unfolded, it became obvious that He had directed what happened. The point of the story is not (just) that G-d will come to the rescue when we turn to Him, but that He operates within nature too, not just through impressive, obvious miracles. This is exactly the opposite of what Amalek believed, and exactly what the commandment to obliterate Amalek is directed towards. Therefore, before the Men of the Great Assembly could add to the Biblical canon a Book whose message was specifically anti-Amalek, they needed to verify that doing so, this time in the Writings, was sanctioned. And because "in the future," whether that future is the days of Moshiach or the World to Come, "G-d will be One and His Name will be One" (Z'charya 14:9), i.e. there will be no doubt that G-d is behind everything -- even, or especially, things that are "natural" -- the Scroll of Esther, which teaches us this lesson, as well as the holiday that celebrates it, will be just as valid then as it is now. ©2014 Rabbi D. Kramer



Do you smell carrots?

RABBI SHLOMO RISKIN

Shabbat Shalom

What is the Biblical definition of proper service of the Almighty? To what extent is the sacrificial cult a critical part of Jewish Divine service, and where do we place the sacrifices in our hierarchy of expressions of Religious devotion?

What is so striking is that our Biblical portion deals with the most fundamental sacrifices, both obligatory and voluntary, which the Israelites are to bring: the daily offerings, the various sin offerings and the different gift offerings. The prophetic reading opens with the glaring indictment:

"Thus says the Lord of Hosts the G-d of Israel, 'Cease your whole burnt offerings together with your sacrifices and eat (regular) meat. Because I did not speak to your ancestors and I did not command them on the day

that I took them out from the Land of Egypt concerning issues of offerings and sacrifices." (Jer. 7:21-22)

It is almost as though our sages are warning us against too great an involvement in the ritual of sacrifices which may lead to a depreciation of ethical and moral activities as the cornerstone of Divine service. Indeed, the prophetic reading continues:

"But it was this matter that I commanded them saying, 'Listen to My voice and I shall be your G-d and you shall be My nation'" (ibid 7:23).

Professor Yeshayahu Leibowitz directs us to a later chapter in the prophecies of Jeremiah whose parallel language and repetition of what G-d taught "on the day that He took them out of Egypt" clarifies the meaning.

In chapter 34 of the Prophet Jeremiah we read:

"Thus says the Lord of Hosts the G-d of Israel, 'I made a covenant with your fathers the day that I brought them out of Egypt out of the Land of Slavery, saying: At the end of seven years every man must free his brother who has been sold to him.'" (ibid 34:13-14)

Jeremiah is teaching us that on the day after the exodus, there was one basic command which the Almighty wished to convey to His people: do not enslave your brother, do not take advantage of your brother, do not manipulate your brother, do not make your brother a means for your personal end. Certainly, this means that we may in no way harm our brother - and since the Almighty G-d created us all and is our Parent in Heaven, we are all brothers and sisters.

To be sure, there is room for offerings to G-d, for an expression of total commitment to the Divine, for communal meals together with priest-teachers within the spiritual atmosphere of the Holy Temple. Indeed, the Hebrew word korban (usually translated "sacrifice") actually means "to come near." Apparently, the sacrificial rituals are a means to an end, a way of attempting to approach the Almighty and to be able to sense His nearness; the sacrifices must be viewed within the context of "And they shall make for me a sanctuary so that I may dwell in their midst." (Ex. 25:8) The sanctuary and the Temple, the sacrifices and the prayers, are all means to the ultimate end of walking with G-d and acting in accordance with His will. Unfortunately, there are times when the means are substituted for the end, when the magnificent edifice becomes a substitute for G-d Himself, when rituals become so central that there is little room left for the acts of kindness they are supposed to inspire. After all, our human definition of G-d is a "Lord of love and compassion, kindness, patience, and truth." (Ex. 34:6) - and having G-d in our midst means that we act in accordance with His divine characteristics!

Indeed the Mishna recounts a horrible event which emphasizes the tragedy that can occur when the Temple ritual is not placed in its proper context. Our rabbis have taught: "The story is recorded that there were two

priests racing up the ramp of the altar in a contest as to who would perform the ritual of cleaning off the ashes when one seemed to be four cubits ahead of his friend, the other priest took a knife and pierced the heart of his opponent. Rabbi Zadok stood on the Temple steps and said, 'our brothers of the House of Israel, listen well, if a corpse is found between two cities the elders must bring a sacrifice, we must all make atonement. The father of the fatally injured priest found his son still in the last moments of his life, he cried out, 'may this be your atonement; my son is still in the agony of the death throttle and so the knife has not been rendered impure' From this we see that the ritual purity of the vessels had assumed greater importance than a human life." (B.T. Yoma 23a)

Jeremiah bitterly mourned the destruction of the Temple and even cursed the day of his birth because he had to be the prophet of destruction. He understood the value of the sacrifices if they were placed in proper context and were seen as a means to an end and not as an end in themselves. Hence, the prophetic reading which is usually read after our portion of sacrifices concludes with the verse cited by Maimonides at the end of his Guide for the Perplexed, a message which all of Jewish tradition understands is the central focal point of our faith. "Thus says the Lord: 'Let a wise person not glory in his wisdom, let a strong person not glory in his strength, let a wealthy person not glory in his wealth. But only in this shall the one who glories glory: understand and know Me, because I am the Lord who does loving kindness, justice and charity on earth. These are the things I want' says G-d." (Jer 9:23-24). ©2014 Ohr Torah Institutions & Rabbi S. Riskin

What was Beethoven's favorite fruit?
BANANANAAAAA!

RABBI BEREL WEIN

Wein Online

A great deal of the words in devoted to instructing duties and Temple ritual of the priestly family of Israel. We are also witness to the installation ceremony of Aharon and his children into their holy and exalted status.



this week's holy parsha are Aharon and his children in the

The Talmud debates the question whether Aharon and his family are to be seen as G-d's representatives to the people of Israel or as the representatives of the people of Israel to G-d, so to speak. The Talmud resolves this matter in a legalistic fashion but the original question remains valid. How are we to view the priests and spiritual leaders of the Jewish people? Do they represent Heaven to us in a human form and must they be regarded more as angels rather than as humans?

Or, perhaps we should view them as humble servants of the Jewish people, attempting to bridge the gap between G-dly holiness and human

weakness and frailty. Midrash teaches us that Aharon was originally loath to accept the office of the High Priest of Israel. It seems that he was aware that by accepting this role of exalted leadership he was exposing himself to Heavenly judgment, which would exact tragic consequences in his family.

Tainted with the memory of his participation in the debacle of the Golden Calf, Aharon seriously doubts that he is the right man for this position. His brother, Moshe, who also had his own personal doubts as to whether he should assume the leadership role of Israel, is enlisted by G-d, so to speak, to convince Aharon to accept the awesome responsibility of serving G-d and Israel at one and the same time, and creating the priestly family of Israel for all time.

We see in the words of the later prophet, as recorded in Trei Asar, that the people of Israel were to seek out the priest, 'for the lips of the priest were to guard and disseminate knowledge and Torah' and the priest himself was described as an angel of the Lord of Hosts.

The Talmud follows up on these words and boldly states: "If the priest truly resembles an angel of the Lord of Hosts in his private life and deportment then one should seek him out for advice, Torah knowledge and instruction. If however the priest, in his behavior and reputation, does not resemble an angel of the Lord of Hosts then one should not look to him for knowledge and instruction."

This statement sets the bar for the priest rather high. There are few people we've met in life that we would truly deem to be angelic. Perhaps this was also one of the hesitations that Aharon experienced before assuming the mantle of the High Priest of Israel.

Nevertheless, none of us can shirk G-d's service. But one must realize the dangers and pitfalls inherent in assuming any sort of leadership role in the Jewish world and especially in the Jewish religious world. I am reminded of the anecdote told about Rabbi Yisrael Lipkin of Salant who wished to send his disciple Rabbi Yitzchak Blazer to serve as a rabbi in nineteenth century St. Petersburg. Rabbi Blazer demurred, saying: "I am afraid of serving in such a position and in such a place." To which Rabbi Lipkin responded: "And therefore who shall I send -- someone who is not afraid?" Such is the nature of Jewish leadership throughout the ages from Aharon till our day. © 2014 Rabbi Berel Wein- Jewish historian, author and international lecturer offers a complete selection of CDs, audio tapes, video tapes, DVDs, and books on Jewish history at www.rabbiwein.com. For more information on these and other products visit www.rabbiwein.com/jewishhistory.

What do you call it when you feed a stick of dynamite to a steer?

Abominable!

(say it out loud slowly!)

RABBI MORDECHAI KAMENETZKY

Hear Conditioning

Whoever misses the Divine hand that touched the Purim story is not looking. And if he claims that he heard the Megilah, he probably was not listening. Imagine, the Prime Minister draws lots and decides to annihilate the entire Jewish nation. Within 24 hours he has approval from the ruler of the not-so-free-world, King Achashveirosh.

Within days, the plot is foiled, the Prime Minister is hanged and his prime target is promoted to replace him! Pretty political. Pretty miraculous. And definitely divine. Yet Hashem's name is not mentioned once in the Megilah. Why? Of course, the Megilah is replete with allusions. There are acronyms that spell the name of Hashem, and our sages explain that every time the word "King" is mentioned in the Megilah, it has a divine reference. But, still, why does the last book of the Prophets, a Divinely inspired Megilah, have only veiled references to Heavenly intervention?

It was a sweltering August day when the Greenberg brothers entered the posh Dearborn, Michigan offices of the notoriously anti-Semitic car-maker, Henry Ford.

"Mr. Ford," announced Hyman Greenberg, the eldest of the three, "we have a remarkable invention that will revolutionize the automobile industry." Ford looked skeptical, but their threats to offer it to the competition kept his interest piqued. "We would like to demonstrate it to you in person." After a little cajoling, they brought Mr. Ford outside and asked him to enter a black Edsel that was parked in front of the building.

Norman Greenberg, the middle brother, opened the door of the car. "Please step inside Mr. Ford."

"What!" shouted the tycoon, "are you crazy? It must be two hundred degrees in that car!"

"It is," smiled the youngest brother, Max, "but sit down, Mr. Ford, and push the white button."

Intrigued, Ford pushed the button. All of a sudden a whoosh of freezing air started blowing from vents all around the car, and within seconds the automobile was not only comfortable, it was quite cool! "This is amazing!" exclaimed Ford. "How much do you want for the patent?"

Norman spoke up. "The price is one million dollars." Then he paused, "And there is something else. We want the name 'Greenberg Brothers Air Conditioning' to be stamped right next to the Ford logo."

"Money is no problem," retorted Ford, "but no way will I have a 'Jew-name' next to my logo on my cars!"

They haggled back and forth for a while and finally they settled. One and one half million dollars, and the name Greenberg would be left off.

However, the first names of the Greenberg brothers would be forever emblazoned upon the console of every Ford air conditioning system.

And that is why today, whenever you enter a Ford vehicle you will see those three names clearly defined on the air-conditioning control panel: HI -- NORM -- MAX.

The writers of the Megilah left us with a message that would accompany us throughout our long exile. You will not always see G-d's signature openly emblazoned upon every circumstance. However, throughout persecution and deliverance, He is always there. And just like on Purim His obvious interference is undocumented; but we know and feel it -- and we search for it, and we find it! So, too, in every instance we must seek His name, find it, and recognize it. It may not be emblazoned on the bumper; it may be hidden on the console -- but it is there. For Hashem is always speaking. All we have to do is listen. Joyous Purim! ©2014 Rabbi M. Kamenetzky and torah.org

*How did Darth Vader know what Luke bought him for his birthday?
He felt his presents!*

Uncle Darth →



Luke, I am your feter!

RABBI YISROEL CINER

Parsha Insights

This week's parsha, Tzav, deals predominantly with different karbanos {sacrifices} that were brought. "And these are the instructions for the peace-offerings which one may offer to Hashem. If as a 'Todah' {Thanksgiving Offering} he will offer it, then he shall bring with the sacrifice, cakes of matzo mixed with oil... [7:10-12]"

This Korbon Todah {Thanksgiving Offering} was brought by one who was saved from a perilous situation. This includes four categories: those who traveled overseas, those who traveled through the wilderness, those who were released from prison and those who were healed from a serious illness. This karbon demonstrates the appreciation they feel to Hashem for His deliverance.

The word 'todah' has two seemingly disparate meanings. The very common use is as an expression of thanks. It also means an admission. 'Hoda'as (the same root as todah) ba'al din' is the admission of one side to the claims that another side made against it.

Rav Huttner zt"l explains that the common word that these two concepts share, reveals the common foundation that they are based upon.

We like to feel that we are independent -- self-made men. We have only ourselves to thank for reaching the point we're at. We might pay lip-service to "all those without whom it would have been impossible for me to

be standing here tonight to receive this honor" but deep down we feel most comfortable when it's our own back that we are patting.

An honest 'thank you' is in fact an admission. It's the first installment on a debt of gratitude. I admit that I couldn't have done it without you and I therefore thank you.

We can determine if the todah is 'admission' or 'thanks' based on the wording that follows it. An admission is followed by the word that {the Hebrew prefix of sh'} -- I admit that... Thanks, on the other hand, is followed by that which we are thanking for {in Hebrew, oll} -- thanks for...

With this Rav Huttner zt"l explains the wording in the Modim {Appreciation} part of the silent Amidah prayer {the Shmone Esrei}. The Modim prayer begins: Modim anachnu lach she'atah hu Elokainu -- we admit that you are our G-d of Power. It then continues: Nodeh l'cha ol chayeinu -- we thank you for our lives that are in Your hands.

As such, the Korbon Todah (upon which the Modim section of the Amidah prayer is based) encompasses both of these aspects. The korbon is a statement of gratitude that demonstrates the recognition and admission that we have only Hashem to thank for our deliverance.

How does this sacrifice, to the degree that it's possible, pay Hashem back for what He has done for us?

There are a number of distinct laws that apply to the Korbon Todah. The Talmud [Menachos 76] teaches that ten loaves were brought from each of the four types of bread/matzo that the passuk {verse} [7:12-13] mentions. Furthermore, whereas one has a two-day period to consume a regular Korbon Shlomim {Peace Offering}, the Korbon Todah {Thanksgiving Offering} and its forty loaves must be completely eaten on the day it is brought.

The N'tziv writes that this expansive obligation to bring forty loaves of bread/matzo on one hand, and, at the same time, the diminished one-day time period within which it must be eaten, forces a person to invite a large number of people to share this seudah {festive meal}. This meal will then lead to the purpose of this Korbon Todah -- the public proclamation and voicing of gratitude to Hashem for all that He has done for us.

The way to pay Hashem back is by teaching others to appreciate Him and to thereby sanctify His name.

It always bugs me when I hear someone respond "not bad" to the common question of "how are you?" Not bad... In other words, when I rate how Hashem is doing in His job of running the world He gets a solid 65. Not bad. Room for improvement but clearly a strong effort... When a person looks honestly at all that Hashem has done and is doing for him, even when there are difficulties, illnesses, etc. that one is dealing with, his response should be "fantastic, thank G-d!"

But the truth is, even more important than what we say is the face we show the world. The face and expression that we wear is our present-day Korbon Todah. It should show happiness and appreciation for all that Hashem has granted us and should thereby sanctify Hashem's name.

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A rabbi walks into a bar with a parrot on his shoulder. The bartender says, "Hey, that's cool! Where'd you get that?" The Parrot says, "Brooklyn! They're everywhere!"



THE BOLOGNA REBBE

Halacha MiDisney

While Disney World does maintain daily minyanim throughout the park, many poskim have declared it forbidden to pray with them. They proclaim that mice cannot serve as shlichei tzibbur, and it is well known that this practice is common at Disney synagogues. However, the chancellor of Disney World has ruled that mice are acceptable as agents, as long as they have taken upon themselves the obligations of daily tfilah. Mishlei states that there are no atheists in mouseholes.

Furthermore, on Shabbat, dwarves receive all seven aliyot. Dwarves reading from the Torah damages k'vod hatzibbur, even if all of the women are asleep (or rather, even if they appear to be dead, after swallowing a restrictive psak). Incidentally, Sleepy maintains that he is a kohen, based on family tradition passed from father to son since the days of Aharon. Other dwarves recall that Sleepy is a descendant of Honi M'agel, and hence cannot be a kohen— but this is circular reasoning.

However, even those who permit aliyot for dwarves forbid them to serve as shlichei tzibbur. Apparently, dwarves are incapable of reciting the prayers properly, as they always whistle through their avodah—even Grumpy! Someone who hears this whistling and responds "Amen" is not yotze.

Disney synagogues also count mermaids in a minyan, in an obvious end-run around the age-old regulations to keep women barefoot. Since mermaids have no feet, they (technically) cannot stand for the Amidah, even though they remain shoeless. Yesh raglayim ladavar.

Heaping scandal upon scandal, mermaids, crickets, mice and ducks all sit on the same side of the mechitzah with wooden boys—clearly violating the prohibition against kilayim.

Sometimes after a tough day working the crowds through a steamy Florida afternoon, many of the regulars prefer to daven at home over a stiff drink. To ensure a minyan for Minchah, the Disney rabbis even count singing tableware and kitchen implements. Although this pushes the halachic

envelope, each piece can cite a klal [general principle] whereby it must be included in the minyan:

The spoon counsels us "dan chaf b'zchut" [judge a spoon with merit].

The knife cites "sakin b'adam shelo b'fanav" [a knife (serves) in (stead of) a person when (a person is) not present].

The candlesticks remind us that "ner mitzvah, v'Torah or" [a candle (can do any) mitzvah, but the Torah is only leather].

The goblet intones "kos yayin malei k'virkat Adoshem" [a full cup of wine is equivalent to blessing Hashem].

The frying pan sings "laKel yeratzu k'minchah al machavat" [to Hashem it is as pleasing as Minchah davened by a pan].

The teacup refrains "sefel tov l'chol oseihem" [a cup is as good as anyone (who) does (it for) them].

The wine bottle chides "al tistakel b'kankan, elah b'ma sheyesh bo" [don't look at the bottle, rather see what's inside it].

The clock chimes in "tfilah mitzvah shehazman grama" [prayer is a mitzvah that time begins].

Several others declare "va'ani tefilati" [I am my prayer].

Still others quote R' Hillel: "b'makom she'ayn anashim hishtadel lihiyot ish"

[In a place where there aren't (enough) men, strive to be a man].

Several of the most stringent authorities complain that Disney World is open on Shabbat, so all Disney characters who are union members are prohibited from serving in public synagogue roles because they are mechalelei Shabbat b'fantasia. Lenient sources justify their work

as melachah she-aynah tzricha l'Goofy. R' Bambi says "hakol kasher l'tzvi" [anything to make a buck].

This Purim Torah is codified in the sefer Iyunei Achbarim v'Anashim [Of Mice and Men] of R' Don Yitzchak Abarvazel. R' Abarvazel was an ancestor of the Katchke Rebbe. To properly grasp the full depth of his insights, one must be at least 40 years old and have raised children—and even then, it is advantageous to first fulfill the mitzvah of ad lo yada yada yada.

M-I-C (See you in costume.)

K-E-Y (Why? Because it's Purim!)

M-O-U-S-E! © Rabbi Michael b. Velvel of Anaheim

Poo-rim Samayach!

