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Volume IX, No. 13...Feb. 19, 2010

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Weekly Parsha

Teruma

RABBI BERNIE FOX

The Failure of the Princes to Properly Contribute to the Mishkan

And saradonyxes and other
precious stones for the ephod and
the breastplate. (Shemot 25:7)

The Mishkan was constructed of

(continued on next page)

Holidays

Megilla

*the Torah's
Fundamentals
in Action*

RABBI ISRAEL CHAIT

Written by a student

According to Tosfos, why do laws pertaining to mezuzah include the requirement of Sirtut – the horizontally scoring of the parchment at the baseline of the verses? The reason given is that mezuzah is referred to as "the truth of Torah" ("Amitus shel Torah"). What does this mean?

Mezuzah teaches about Torah itself. It is a Torah component placed on the house. But the entire Torah is from Sinai. So what is the concept behind mezuzah, that we must isolate and highlight two Torah paragraphs?

Tosfos teaches a fundamental principle: all parts of the Torah are not of equal importance. Torah has an essence, primarily, the first two chapters of the Shema Yisrael. What is this essence? It is Unity of God. "Hear Israel; God is our God, God is one". The mitzvah of mezuzah is to highlight the primary Torah concepts. These concepts also include Knowledge of God, Love of God, Torah Study, and Reward and Punishment. The Chinuch says that if a person is missing the mitzvah of Unity of God, he has nothing (although keeping all other mitzvahs). In mitzvah 417, the Chinuch

(continued on page 5)



(Teruma cont. from pg. 1)

Weekly Parsha

JewishTimes

Weekly Journal on Jewish Thought



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materials donated by Bnai Yisrael. Our parasha lists the various materials. The final items enumerated are the stones set into the garments of the Kohen Gadol. It is odd that, although these stones are very precious, they are listed last.

Rav Moshe Sternbach suggests that these stones are listed last as an allusion to the manner in which they were donated. The princes of the tribes were very wealthy. They decided that they would allow the rest of the nation to contribute first to the Mishcan. They accepted the responsibility of providing any additional materials required. The nation was very generous and donated most of the materials needed. After the nation's contribution was examined, the only items lacking were the precious stones for the Kohen Gadol's garments. Therefore, the contribution of the princes was limited to these stones. Our Sages explain that the Torah condemned the princes for this behavior. Subsequently, the princes atoned by offering extensive sacrifices and other items for the initiation of the Mishcan.[1]

Rav Sternbach points out that the condemnation of the princes is difficult to understand. They had expected to make an immense contribution. They willingly accepted this duty. Their only error was that they underestimated the enthusiasm of the nation. Why are the princes criticized for their decision? Rav Sternbach acknowledges that the princes had a rationale for their decision. Yet, the Torah indicates that a selfish motivation underlie this rationale; they were reluctant to part with their wealth.

Can this underlying motive be detected in the princes' behavior? It can be detected if the princes' decision is scrutinized more carefully. The princes were the leaders of the nation. They recognized, as leaders, that they were responsible for the ultimate success of this endeavor. This awareness of their responsibility led them to commit to providing whatever materials were not donated by the rest of the nation. However, as leaders, they had another responsibility; one which they overlooked. Leaders are responsible to teach values through demonstrating proper behaviors and attitudes. This obligation demanded that the princes teach the importance of generosity and of the Mishcan. In teaching values, actions are far more

significant than words. The princes verbalized their attitudes through pledging to provide any materials still needed after the contribution of the nation. However, they had the opportunity and obligation to make a far more meaningful demonstration. This demonstration should have been made through a generous donation at the very outset. The princes overlooked their duty to teach the nation. This error suggests, that in this instance, some internal personal conflict prevented them from clearly seeing their obligation. Their failure to fully assume the responsibility of leadership and inspire the nation with their own generous contribution suggests an element of greed in their behavior.[2]



The Structure of the Aron: from the Perspective of Halachah and from the Perspective of Homiletics

And you should overlay it with pure gold. On the inside and outside you should overlay it. And you should make a gold crown surrounding it. (Shemot 25:11)

The Torah's description of the Aron – the Ark – presents a difficult problem in halachah. According to the Torah description, the Aron was made of acacia wood. It was overlaid with gold. The gold covered the inner and outer surfaces of the Ark. Although this description provides general guidelines for the Aron's construction, it does not address important details.

Rashi explains that the Ark was composed of three separate boxes. The smallest box was made of gold. A slightly larger box was constructed from acacia wood. The largest box was made of gold. The acacia box was placed within the largest gold box. The smallest gold box was placed within the acacia box. This fulfilled the requirement of the passage. The inner and outer surfaces of the wood box were covered with gold.[3]

The Chumash refers to the gold as an "overlay". The term overlay implies that the gold was an adornment of the Ark. The essential material was apparently the wood. This is difficult to reconcile with Rashi's description of the Aron's construction. According to Rashi, the Aron was

(continued on next page)

constructed of three boxes. Each had its own structural integrity. In fact, it would seem more correct to define the gold as the essential component. The wood box was hidden within the two gold boxes!

Perhaps for this reason Rabbaynu Avraham ibn Ezra disagrees with Rashi. He maintains that the gold overlay was not created through constructing a series of boxes. Instead, he interprets this requirement literally. The overlay was a coating over the wood of the Aron.[4] We can easily appreciate the reason for Ibn Ezra's position. The Torah refers to the gold as an overlay. According to Ibn Ezra, this description is completely accurate. However, according to Rashi's understanding of the Ark's design, the Torah's characterization of the gold as an overlay does not seem accurate.

Rabbaynu Avraham ben HaRambam offers a brilliant explanation of Rashi's position. An introduction is necessary to understand his insight. The Chumash describes the dimension of the Aron. It was two cubits long, one and a half cubits wide, and a cubit and a half high.[5] This requirement presents an interesting problem. The problem is most obvious in regards to Rashi's position. According to Rashi, the Aron was composed of three boxes. Each had different dimensions. Obviously only one box could conform to the dimensions required by the Torah! To which box did the required dimensions apply? Rabbaynu Avraham ben HaRambam responds that the measurements were applied to the acacia box. This box was required to conform to the dimensions dictated by the Torah. The inner and outer gold boxes were designed to accommodate the measurements of the middle acacia box.[6]

This explains Rashi's interpretation of the Torah's description of the Aron. The application of the measurements to the acacia box indicates that this was the essential box. In this manner, the Torah acknowledges the fundamental nature of this middle box. Accordingly, it refers to the gold boxes as an overlay. It is true that these boxes had independent structural integrity. However, in function they were an overlay.

This pasuk is also the basis of a well-known homiletic lesson. The Aron contained the Luchot – the Tablets. As discussed above, it was made of wood and covered with gold on the inside and outside. Rava explains in Tractate Yoma that the layered structure of the Aron communicates an allusion to an important lesson. Any Torah scholar whose inside is not the same as his outside is not a Torah scholar.[7]

Rava's lesson seems to be intended to emphasize the importance of honesty. A Torah scholar must not be deceptive. Outward behavior cannot be a mere facade. The external appearance and behaviors must be an expression of the inner thoughts and convictions of the Torah scholar. However, this interpretation seems overly simplistic. The Mishcan and its components were intended to represent profound truths. It is difficult to imagine that the design of the Aron was intended to represent this self-evident lesson. Furthermore, if Rava intends to stress the importance of honest behavior, his lesson is poorly phrased. A person who is not honest is a fraud. Noting that the dishonest individual is not a Torah scholar is an understatement.

The Aron as designed to contain the Tablets that Moshe brought down from Sinai. Therefore, the essence of the Aron was its interior. Therefore, it was appropriate for the inside of the Aron be overlaid with gold. Why was also the outside overlaid? The gold of the outside reflected the sacred function of the Aron. The outside was the observable surface. Through overlaying this surface with gold, the sacred function of the Aron was visibly represented.

What is the effect of scholarship upon the scholar? Is the effect expressed primarily in the external aspects of the individual, or does the knowledge of the scholar alter the inner-self? In most disciplines, it is the externals that are altered. The soul of the archaeologist is not formed or altered by knowledge of archaeology. The same can be said of the mathematician and the biologist. However, Hashem expects the inner-self of the Torah scholar to be molded by the knowledge of His Torah. It is this inner-self – the soul – that is the true receptacle of the Torah. If this transformation occurs, the external behavior of the Torah scholar will naturally reflect this inner perfection. However, if the soul is not affected by Torah and only the external behaviors exist, the person does not appreciate the sacred truth of the Torah. Such an individual may have amassed much Torah information – but understanding and appreciation are absent.

Now Rava's lesson is more clearly understood. The message communicated by the inner and outer gold covering of the Aron is not merely that it is important to be honest. This lesson is self-evident. Instead, the message of the Aron is specifically addressed to the Torah scholar. Certainly, it is important for this scholar to demonstrate proper behaviors and attitudes. However, these behaviors and attitudes must be the expressions of internal convictions and knowledge. If the external behaviors and attitudes are not expressions of the internal values and wisdom, then this person is not a true Torah scholar. He has been fundamentally unchanged by his Torah learning. ■

[1] Midrash Rabba, Sefer BeMidbar 12:16.

[2] Rav Moshe Sternbach, Ta'am VeDa'at Al HaTorah, volume 1, p 173.

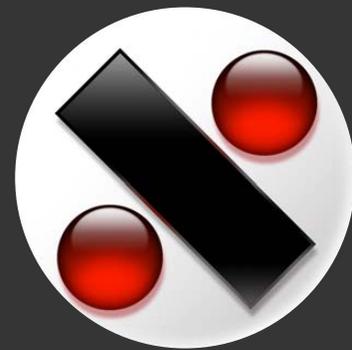
[3] Rabbaynu Shlomo ben Yitzchak (Rashi), Commentary on Sefer Shemot 25:11.

[4] Rabbaynu Avraham ibn Ezra, Commentary on Sefer Shemot, 25:10.

[5] Sefer Shemot 25:10.

[6] Rabbaynu Avraham ben HaRambam Commentary on Sefer Shemot 25:11.

[7] Mesechet Yoma 72b.



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Bribes for truth?

MOSHE ABARBANEL



If someone offers a judge a bribe, without any conditions, is it still considered a bribe? What if a litigant gives a Judge a gift and tells him, "Whatever you decide is fine"...is that a bribe? Let us examine last week's Torah portion, which states: "And a bribe you shall not take, for the bribe blinds those who have sight and perverts the words of the righteous." (Exod. 23:8) What does the Torah mean by "blinding those who have sight"? Rashi makes this posuk even more confusing by commenting as follows: "Even to judge the truth and certainly, not to pervert justice; as regarding perverting justice it already stated (Deut. 16:19) 'You shall not pervert judgment.'" So, Rashi clearly holds that this statement in Exodus is a warning against accepting bribes...even if you decide in favor truth, against the person who gave it you. But what would be wrong if the judge accepted this gift and came out with the correct ruling?

Rashi continues, " 'Blinding those that have sight': even [regarding] one learned in the Torah and who takes a bribe, in the end his mind will become confused and his learning will be forgotten and the light of his eyes will become dimmed." How would accepting this gift and deciding righteously adversely affect a wise, learned Judge? If he ignores the gift and makes the correct decision, one would think there should be no harm. Justice was done! What is Rashi trying to tell us?

Let us consider why a person typically bribes people. The briber wants to get his way. This stems from a self-centered view of the universe. This person does not care about justice, or others. His desire is rooted in an infantile view of the universe. "It is all about me and getting my way". This is very instinctual. So even if he is sophisticated and tenders a gift to a judge without any conditions, he is hoping to sway the judge towards his position. When a judge accepts this non-conditional, gift he becomes part of the briber's desire, even though he intends and acts correctly. Otherwise there is no reason to accept this gift, if he intends on deciding fairly. This will cause internal conflict in the judge. His instinctual drive (yetzer harah) will be stimulated, which fights against the intellectual part (yetzer hatov) of man. Hence Rashi "in the end

his mind will become confused." The first part of the conflict is confusion: "His learning is forgotten". As he partakes of the instinctual, it forces him to forget his Torah knowledge. This is a must, otherwise the intellectual part would dominate and force the Judge to return the money and recuse himself.

As the instinctual drive takes over it will become dominant interfering with his ability to be involved with the great ideas of the Torah "his eyes will become dim." The eyes and vision refer to mans perceptions. At this point it becomes hard for the Judge engage in Torah as he uses his position not for wisdom, but self gain. (Self gain is the same problem from which the bribing litigant suffers.) This makes it harder for him to return to his wisdom as his perception changed.

We see the greatness of the Torah. A non-conditional bribe is forbidden because of the corruption that it causes to the Judge – not because of the judgment. The Torah wants man to be perfected – not perverted – so he may serve his Creator. According to Rashi this corruption may not disturb justice, but it will disturb man's perfection.

Rambam also considers this forbidden, however he considers this a bribe. In his listing of Mitzvot he lists negative command number 274: "Do not accept bribes as Exodus 23:8 states, 'Do not take a bribe.'" Here he uses our quote and makes no distinctions. But let's examine the Rambam's Mishnah Torah. In the book of Judges, Sanhedrin chapter 23, Rambam goes into depth at what constitutes a bribe. He writes in the first halacha "Do not accept a bribe, it is not necessary to say to pervert justice but rather even to acquit the innocent and obligate the guilty – it is forbidden and you violate a negative command." In fact the Rambam includes anything a litigant might do to gain favor of the Judge with a bribe. Even a benign accidental act may cause a problem. He writes in the second halacha that a Judge who is helped out of a small canoe by a litigant, must recuse himself.

Even though the Rambam formally defines this as a bribe, both he and Rashi agree that it is forbidden, even though a proper decision was rendered by the Judge. ■



states, "If one transgresses Unity of God, and doesn't believe in His unity, blessed be He...he loses this command, and all other commands of the Torah. For all other commands depend on this one." So we see from Tosfos that all commands are not equal.

This is why mezuza requires Sirtut. Mezuza alone is the isolation of the essence of Torah. Sirtut is an emphasis of that text, of those fundamentals. When these two paragraphs are located in the Torah, they form part of a greater whole. But when separated in mezuza, and thereby distinguished, those paragraphs must be scored, "underlining" as it were, the principles found therein. But what is the relationship between mezuza and Megilla, that Megilla also requires scoring, Sirtut?

The answer is based on a Talmudic portion (Megilla 19a). The Talmud asks what Mordechai saw that he didn't bow to Haman. Mordechai sensed in the person of Haman that he deemed himself immortal and omniscient. Haman's whole inner evaluation was idolatrous. Had Mordechai bowed to Haman, he would have consented to Haman's idolatrous self image. The act of bowing per se is acceptable, as we see Jacob bowed to Esav. But in this bowing, Mordechai would philosophically defy God's unity. Mordechai therefore held that in Haman's case, one must sacrifice his own life. Once Haman represented himself as omniscient, bowing to Haman denied God's exclusive role, and must be avoided at all costs. So although halachikly Mordechai could have bowed to Haman, this bowing crossed the line of God's Unity. As such,

halachik permission no longer mattered, and the philosophy dictated his need to reject Haman's decree. We thereby learn that Megilla embodies the concept of God's Unity. Mordechai understood this concept, and its philosophy, and demonstrated that violation is not option. One must sacrifice his life to endorse the gravity of sin in idolatry. One must give his life to uphold the truth of all truths: God alone is the cause of all. And this dedication clearly illustrates the next fundamental: Love of God.

Also in Megilla are examples of man using wisdom – chochma. It is insufficient that the Torah's wisdom is limited to man's act of study. But man must also extrapolate this wisdom and apply it to his Derech haChaim – his style of life. Mordechai and Esther both embodied the application of Torah wisdom.

And we also see in Megilla the principle of Reward and Punishment: Haman was punished. However, this principle when found in the Torah is dealing with God delivering the punishments, unlike Megilla, when man seems to be the cause. The parallel is lacking. So where is the parallel...where are God's miracles of Reward and Punishment, so that Megilla parallels the Reward ad Punishment of the Torah? The story of the Megilla appears to unveil the great cunning of Mordechai and Esther, but wherein are the miracles?

The answer is as follows. Mordechai and Esther used wisdom. However, many unexpected factors occur in our daily lives and derail the best laid plans. The miracle here, was that nothing interfered with Mordechai

and Esther's plans. All the downfalls and successes in the Megilla occurred because God made certain that any potential human interference was held at bay. Nothing was allowed to interfere. Now the Megilla's rewards and punishments exactly parallel the reward and punishment of the Shima, of the Torah's "V'haya im shamoah" where God promises rain in a providential time.

The Megilla thereby mirrors the most primary Torah fundamentals. And just as mezuza's laws require he underlining of the texts to indicate the primary nature of its content, Megilla too has this requirement, to convey that it too shares the character with mezuza: a text of fundamentals.

The Megilla includes the words "Kimu v'kiblu", which means the Jews reaccepted the Torah once again. But this time – unlike at Sinai – there was no coercion of the event's "amazement". Here during Purim, the Jews reaccepted the Torah lifestyle out of a love of the fundamentals. They saw how two people using Torah wisdom were successful in averting catastrophe. They appreciated what Mordechai defended: God's Unity. They realized God's providence was essential in the unhampered success of Mordechai and Esther, as they engaged Torah wisdom in their daily lives. This highlight of "Kimu v'kiblu" attests again to the Megilla's core theme: embodying the Torah's fundamentals, just like mezuza. The Jews were attracted to those Torah fundamentals expressed in the Purim story. Their reacceptance of Torah was due to those fundamentals. ■

Letters



Letters

from our

READERS



Trust in God

Reader: Does it mean have I have a lack of emunah in Hashem if I worry about how I will pay my bills while I am unemployed? What do I do, sit back, assured that as long as I daven and do mitzvahs, Hashem will take care of me, i.e. pay my bills? I have no family to help me out financially and I keep being told that I should work on my emunah.

Rabbi: Psalm 147:11 teaches that God desires those who await His kindness. This means that God will act on their behalf.

In his Laws of Sabbatical Year and Jubilee (13:13) Maimonides writes: *"Any person whose spirit moves him, using his/her understanding, to separate himself to stand before God, to minister and serve Him...to know God...and this person walks upright as God made him, and he removes from his neck the yoke of many calculations [monetary concerns] that the masses seek: this person is sanctified as holy of holies and God will be his portion and inheritance for ever and ever and he will merit in this world sufficient means, just as is merited by the priests and Levites. Behold, King David, peace upon him, said, "God is my allotted portion and my share; You make my lot perfect". And Psalms (9:11) says, "And those*

who know Your name will trust in You; for You have not forsaken those who seek You, Hashem".

The lesson is this: those who are truly convinced in the correct idea of God, are firm in their conviction that God can do anything. Thus, they do not despair, for desperation is the reaction by those who conclude failure, based solely on physical criteria alone. They resign themselves to a state of deprivation. By doing so, they fail in their knowledge of God, and in His abilities. This is precisely why the verse says "And those who know Your name will trust in You..." Knowing "God's name", means knowing how He acts. And one who knows the truth of God's actions, knows that God can deliver a person from any state of deprivation. Therefore, desperation never enters their hearts. When Mishael, Chananya and Azarya were about to be cast into the furnace for refusing to bow to the idol, they told Nevuchadnezzar that even if God does not save them, they will not bow. Thus, it is not the conviction that God "will" save me, which is arrogance, but that He "can" save me. This knowledge of God is what keeps the righteous people in each generation in good spirits, despite their personal trouble. They delight in the system that God created, that He can save man from anything. And if they are worthy, by seeking God's wisdom as their primary focus in life, they will merit God's help. This is what is meant by the last part of that verse that guarantees success, "...for You have not forsaken those who seek You, Hashem".

The Torah's words are not a vain[1] thing, they must be studied, so we might enjoy their true ideas, God's wisdom...and then also merit in our physical lives to enjoy God's providence.

You may lack emunah, trust in God, but perhaps you are not at fault since you have not yet learned these sources. So now you can improve your emunah. No, you cannot sit back and wait for miracles. God did not design the world that way, but in the manner that only those fields that are plowed, seeded, watered, pruned and harvested will yield produce. We must strive to work: honestly, wisely, and diligently. God will do the rest:

"And if you will say, 'What shall I eat in the seventh year, behold I have not planted and we have not harvest our grain?' And I will command My blessing for you on the sixth year, and it will yield three years-worth of grain". (Lev. 25:20,21)

We must work at all times other than when commanded not to, like on Shabbos and during the Sabbatical and Jubilee years.

Notice that God says He will command His

blessing on the sixth year, but that is only if we planted crops! If we do not labor, there is nothing of which He can triple its yield. ■

"Gathered unto his people"

Lorne: Is Hashem's use of "Gathered unto his people" undistinguished from other terms like burial passing on? Or does this phrase refer to Olam Haba? Or, is Olam Haba derived from the Oral law?

Rabbi: See Sforno on Gen. 25:8, "He [Abraham] was gathered unto eternal life, joining the righteous of all generations of the past", who are referred to here as "his people" in this verse. "Gathered unto his people" refers to Olam Haba, unlike death, expiration, burial and other words. The Rabbis derive Olam Haba from other words too, and the Talmud also makes derivations from Daniel that teach resurrection. ■

[1] Deut. 32:47

Where is Sinai's External Corroboration?

(Segment of an ongoing conversation)

Bob: Many cultures have competing interests and if many different cultures write about the same event in the same way, that helps confirm the event. But if only one group writes about an event, that account is no longer reliable as they might spin the story to give them some kind of benefit.

Given the nature of the event of Sinai, that it should have been accessible either directly or indirectly to other parties, and nonetheless, other nations remained silent...the silence is deafening.

For example, if the followers of the Maharal wrote that he created a humanoid, and non-followers (consisting of Jews, Muslims, Christians, etc.) that were living in Prague at the time never mention this, that would cause me to suspect that story is not true and perhaps it was accepted by the followers of the Maharal because they truly believed he was spiritual and had magical powers and that makes them special.

Given that Egypt was a huge international metropolis, and given the plague of the firstborn, according to the Torah, killed all firstborns...did it

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Letters

not ever strike you that no other culture talks about the miracles in Egypt? I can understand possibly the official Egyptian literature not talking about it because its embarrassing. But why not personal letters (which we have found) and why not of other cultures and nations?

Rabbi: You see, it is the very point I have been making: you treat the Kuzari proof as if it is peripheral to our entire conversation. But from your comments, it is truly central. For if you accepted Kuzari's proof [1], it would not matter at all whether many nations, or one nation reported an event, provided there were mass attendees.

Mass attendees – regardless of they're being one nation or many – removes any possibility of conspiracy. Conspiracy is possible only when we're dealing with a few individuals. In that case, a common motive to lie might exist. But go to a Mets-Yankees World Series after it ended, where every attendee was a Mets fan...and do you think if the Mets lost, that all 70,000 fans would lie, saying the Mets really won? You would agree that most Mets fans would admit defeat, and there would not be a movement to lie by all 70,000. Yet, you suggest this regarding Sinai.

Bob: Yes, I would pretty much accept that the 70,000 Mets fans would not lie.

Rabbi: Good. You have now rejected your former position requiring external corroboration.

External corroboration, Bible critics, linguists claiming "numerous Torah authors" based on the Torah's style variations (i.e., Torah isn't Divine) all miss at least three vital points, and expose their flawed thinking:

1) Although they too would accept the Mets analogy above, they contradict themselves by rejecting God's revelation at Sinai. That event could not survive 3000 years, had someone concocted it. Why? Imagine me telling you that I just witnessed an event of equal proportion with millions of other witnesses, yet I could not produce a single witness. My story would not be accepted by the world as fact 3000 years later. But Sinai is accepted. The only possibility is that it did occur. Other considerations like external corroboration, or claims that other cultures' laws contained almost identical wording found in Torah, do not usurp this truth of Revelation.

2) Bible critics and linguists assume they possess greater knowledge of Torah, than brilliant individuals who studied Torah for decades. Would Bible critics and linguists also perform surgery on themselves, instead of allowing more suitable people (doctors) to perform such dangerous tasks?

3) Bible critics and linguists readily dismiss the numerous, brilliant sages and Rabbis who do support Kuzari's proof. Why don't the Bible critics and linguists, at the very least, attempt to explain why so many intelligent people defend Sinai? ■

[1] Kuzari's Proof: As the world has received oral transmission that millions witnessed Revelation at Sinai, Kuzari proves Revelation due to the impossibility of; a) fabrication, or b) ignorance: the only two possibilities of flaws in historical records. Masses removes a common motive of fabrication by all attendees. And the nature of the phenomenon (fire, mountain, shofar blasts, quakes) are all accurately comprehended without error by anyone, thereby removing ignorance.

Chabad: Endorsing Idolatrous Teachings

Last week, a friend and Torah educator emailed me a bothersome video showing Chabad children and adults chanting "Long live our Rebbe, Moshiach forever" while pointing to the dead Rebbe's empty chair...as if he is in fact sitting in it.

Last year we also received the second video, where Rabbi Cunin of Chabad, Los Angeles stated the following: "It is the Rebbe who runs this world until he comes to take us out of exile now".

Neither video presents anything new in Chabad. Chabad continually trains children and adults to observe idolatrous, Christian ghost practices with these chants and notions. This sin of these individuals is compounded by another: silence from others within Chabad. Chabad's unanimous failure to openly reject a dead man as Moshiach, and their failure to reject Rabbi Cunin's words, indicates that this is no "failure", but an official position.

Teaching the acceptance of a dead man as Moshiach is a denial of Torah fundamentals. Had any Chabad leader disagreed with Rabbi Cunin or the training of children to worship a ghost, they would have publicly rejected this over anything else, since one must reject idolatrous notions more than any other sin. Omission is commission. The silence of other Rabbis and Jewish organizations in general is disheartening, when Rabbis – more than all others – are obligated to teach. And I applaud those Rabbis who did speak out last year.

With its many acts of generosity, Chabad desires to do good, and many can learn from Chabad in this respect. However, when Torah fundamentals are violated, saying "The Rebbe runs the world", and make him into a living ghost, Chabad ultimately spreads idolatrous beliefs identical to Christianity. Their merit is lost in their sin.

One should refrain from supporting Chabad, as its leaders continue to violate Torah's most basic fundamental, teaching the Christian approach of a dead messiah. Judaism has no basis for the messiah coming from the dead, and God does not tolerate the breach of His fundamentals. ■



www.youtube.com/watch?v=KO09ryzTfTg



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Unbridled Love



RABBI MOSHE BEN-CHAIM

If you were told that three days before Passover you could fulfill the mitzvah to eat matza, you might find that difficult to accept. After all, matza forms part of Passover's mitzvos, and three day's earlier it is not yet Passover.

You now understand the problem regarding Rabbi Samuel ben Nachmani's permission for some people to read the Megilla a few days before Purim (Tal. Megilla; 2a). This permission is based on a sensitivity to not burden country people to travel too much. In their small towns, it was not common to find a professional Megilla reader. Therefore, since Mondays and Thursdays were set times at which these country people visited the large cities for purposes of trying court cases (courts were found in larger cities) Rabbi Samuel allowed these country people to read the

Megilla earlier, despite the fact that it was not yet Purim. But what source enabled Rabbi Samuel to make this allowance? Holidays – and all mitzvahs – have strict guidelines. And allowing a holiday-oriented mitzvah to be performed “before” the holiday...well...seems untimely!

Rabbi Samuel based his ruling on the second of these two Megilla verses (9:21,22):

“[21] To establish for them – that they shall make the 14th day of the month Adar and the 15th on it for every year. [22] As the days that the Jews rested on them from their enemies; and the month that was reversed for them from anguish to happiness, from mourning to a holiday, to make them days of drinking and happiness and to send portions [of food] each man to his friend, and gifts to the poor.”

Rashi explains (Ibid) from these words commencing verse 22 “As the days”, that Rabbi Samuel derived that there may be established two more days “As the days” that were already established. Now, since the days already established as Purim were the 14th and 15th of Adar, Rabbi Samuel concluded that another “pair” of days were hinted to here; days that will partake of Purim's character. Thus, it is now possible to read the Megilla on these additionally sanctioned days, the 11th and 12th. But we must now ask why Purim – and no other holiday – deserved this additional-day design. What exits in Purim alone that additional days are warranted?

Furthermore, as we know that in all Torah verses, each item is related, what is the relationship between all the items in verse 22, which include the additional days of the holiday, a

(continued on next page)

(Purim continued from previous page)

Holidays

reversed month, drinking, gifting meals, happiness, and charity?

You may readily suggest that Passover and Succos too have multiple days. However, the mitzvahs of eating matza and dwelling in the Succah have special significance on only their first days. The remaining Chol HaMoade does not share the first day's significance. And regarding Channukah, it has eight days due to the very nature of the miracle...none of those eight days are "extensions", as is the case with Purim. But Purim celebrates our defeat of the enemy on the 14th and 15th alone. Why then does the Megilla give additional significance to the 11th and 12th, making it permissible to read the Megilla then? Why is Purim alone an "extended" holiday? And can those country people also have their Purim feast that early? Rashi makes this clear that they must have their feasts on the 14th. This makes matter more difficult: what is the nature of the 11th and 12th, in that these country people may read the Megilla then, but not have their feasts?

The Megilla goes on to describe at length the nature of the lottery cast by Haman to select a day of genocide...even teaching us in verse 26 that we must call these days "Purim" (meaning lottery). As a Rabbi once taught, Haman wished to denounce any Divine Providence over the Jews by exterminating us based on a lottery, a "pur". Whichever month and day was selected randomly would be the beginning of our end. "Random" is the key word here. As Haman wished to show that Jewish fate is random and not under any Divine Providence, he used a lottery to select the day. "We can die at anytime". It then appears that the Megilla stresses the need to name Purim so as to highlight the opposite: we are in fact under God's Providence. The holiday must embody the concept of Divine Providence.

The Megilla then states that the Jews reaccepted the Torah out of love, having first accepted it out of fear at Sinai. Once the nation witnessed the wisdom, and salvation achieved by Mordechai and Esther's cunning, they reaccepted the Torah out of a love. "Kimu vKiblu" – "They arose and accepted". (9:27)

A Rabbi taught years ago that drinking brings about euphoria, and unbridled feelings of love and happiness. Drinking was therefore commanded on Purim so as to mimic the euphoric state of the Jews back then. I don't have proof but wish to suggest that this might be part of a larger picture on Purim...

Perhaps the lesson in all the laws of Purim is one thing: we must have an unrestrained and complete expression of joy and love in connection with God and His Torah. Why is Purim the day selected to embody this idea? It is because Purim was an event where a true attachment to Torah was first realized on a national level. "Kimu vKiblu" – "They arose and accepted". The Rabbis saw Purim's nature as deserving eternal commemoration, even to the point that Maimonides states that in the future, the Megilla will outshine all other works. The Rabbis instituted Purim for all times for this reason: on Purim the nation reached the height of attachment to Torah. The Shema describes this very goal: "And you shall love your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your might". The operative word here is "all". Man is obligated to reach a state where he is completely bound up in his love for God, and in "all" possible expressions. It is our life's objective to attain this attachment to the Creator. And with study, we will be continuously amazed at His wisdom, and His existence.

Why does verse 22 describe the Jews' victory in 'monthly' terms: "and the month that was reversed for them from anguish to happiness"? Surely they were victorious on the 14th and 15th, precisely why these are the holidays. What does "month" have to do with this?

Perhaps this answers why additional days were appended: one or two days of a holiday curtail the magnitude of what we are capable of. Rabbi Samuels' opinion is that Purim is a holiday of "adding". Meaning, the very nature of the Jews state was unbridled love for God and Torah. And to express this, we immerse in alcohol to mimic those feelings. But we express this in the structure of the holiday as well...we keep adding days, as if to say; that which is unbridled seeks to be extended. The euphoria brought about by alcohol embodies an unbridled state "emotionally". But to truly express unbridled love, one must also not be limited in "time", and this is expressed by adding days to the holiday. The fact that the Megilla adds more days to Purim, in the very same verse as the law to drink, may very well be this lesson: both target the same, unrestrained love. We are also taught to share our food with close friend and give charity, to insure that all Jews achieve the happiness they require: each one on his own level. Therefore, we share meals with close friends, since nothing is more deeply moving than bonding with a dear old friend. And to the poor, we open our wallets and give them what is burning in their hearts.

"Meshenichnass Adar, marbim b'simcha" – "From when Adar enters, increase in happiness" also targets this goal. It is not from Purim, but two weeks earlier that we start rejoicing. Perhaps this principle too is to embody this very idea, that an unbridled love is not time bound. Mere days cannot contain the true state of one living in line with Torah.

Another lesson regarding "Meshenichnass Adar, marbim b'simcha" is that the wheels of Providence were in motion long before the events culminated in our salvation. The Talmud states that just as one minimizes happiness when the month of Av commences, we are to increase our happiness when Adar commences. A Rabbi once taught that in doing so, we recognize the concept of God's reward and punishment. By postponing court cases during Av, we attest to God's ability to punish us with poor verdicts. No one can deny the numerous tragedies which occurred on the 9th of Av: from the Jews who sinfully denied God's ability to enter them into Israel safely, to the yearly deaths of those Jews; through both Temple destructions...we learn that these are not coincidences. These tragedies are God's hand driving our history. In contrast, but embodying the same idea, we celebrate as Adar enters, as a testimony to God's Divine Providence. Adar is a time of happiness, when God worked wonders, and will do so for His loyal servants. This is truly a Divine lesson for all of us that despair in any part of life is no option. "Even if the sword is placed on your neck, God can save you from it". (Tal. Avoda Zara 18b)

May we all use this time to reattach ourselves to Torah and God out of a love, and abandon a life of fear. Of course, this is only accomplished if we too "arise and reaccept a Torah lifestyle", beginning with the greatest mitzvah of all...Torah study. ■





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