

Toronto Torah

Beit Midrash Zichron Dov

Parshat Tetzaveh/Zachor

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This issue of Toronto Torah is dedicated by Paul and Chavi Jacobs to commemorate the yahrzeit of Chavi's father, Lipmann Heller, Yom Tov Lipmann ben Meshulem Feivish z"l

This issue of Toronto Torah is dedicated by Boris Freesman in honour of Rabbi Torczyner

Remembering Who We Are

Rabbi Jonathan Ziring

"Make sacral vestments for your brother Aaron, for dignity (*kavod*) and adornment (*tiferet*)." (Shemot 28:2, JPS tr.)

G-d commands Moshe to make special garments for Aharon to wear as Kohen, describing two goals: *kavod* and *tiferet*, dignity and adornment. What is the difference between these terms? Are they suggesting one or two purposes for the garments?

Commentators offer a range of explanations for these two terms:

- Ibn Ezra suggests that the word "Dignity" reflects the honour of the place in which the Kohanim would serve. "Adornment" refers to the honour that would come to the Kohanim when they wore clothes no one else could wear.
- Rabbi Avraham ben HaRambam understands both terms as expressions of holiness, reflecting the limited legitimate use of the garments. Non-Kohanim may not wear them, and even Kohanim may use them only when serving in the Mishkan.
- In a third approach, Ramban explains both words as describing the honour granted to the Kohanim when wearing these garments.
- Rav Samson Raphael Hirsch suggests that *kavod* refers to honouring the spiritual position of the Kohen, while *tiferet* adds that the garments should be physically impressive.
- Rabbi Ovadia Seforno and Rabbi Yaakov Mecklenberg note that the

garments bring honour to G-d and inspire awe in the Kohanim.

Rabbi Yehuda Herzl Henkin (*Chibah Yeteirah*) offers a very different understanding. *Kavod* refers to the honour given to the Kohanim. However, this was not simply to **add honour**, but to negate a potential problem. Specifically, there was a danger that because the Jews knew Aharon, they would have difficulty treating him with respect, rather than friendship.

One could add that Moshe is personally commanded to make the clothes. As Aharon's brother, for him it would be most natural to relate to him as Aharon rather than as Aharon HaKohen. Ibn Ezra makes this point about Moshe as well in a different context. He suggests that the reason Moshe had to grow up as an adopted prince among Egyptians rather than among the Jews was so people would respect him. This would be hard had he grown up among the Jews because "a person cannot be a rabbi in his own community." His parents' friends would always see him as a child, as it were. ("We remember when you were a kid...") As Ibn Ezra puts it, "Had Moses grown up among his brothers and had they known him from his youth they would not have feared him because they would have considered him as one of themselves." (Extended commentary to Shemot 2:3, Strickman/Silver translation) The translators suggest that, "That is, familiarity breeds contempt." Aharon, however, did grow

up among the Jews. G-d needed a way to ensure that they would internalize Aharon's new role and accord him honour. The clothes would help psychologically, drawing attention to his position. This was critical to avoid familiarity and maintain awe in the Mishkan.

On the other hand, the word *tiferet* indicates that Aharon needed a reminder of who he was and the role he was filling. Humility may be wonderful, but that cannot justify forgetting the responsibilities of the position and the atmosphere that must be created. The grand clothes would keep Aharon in this headspace.

In general, one of the greatest threats to experiencing greatness is being closed to wonder and awe. We daven at shul daily, so we forget that it should be treated as a miniature Beit HaMikdash. We need to consider ways to maintain this perspective, no matter how often we attend. We also often fail to take ourselves seriously enough. We know we are normal people who make mistakes and need to relax, and therefore we sometimes doubt we can achieve greatness. We thus must remind ourselves that we have responsibility and potential. While we may not be the Kohen Gadol, the lessons of his clothes can help us frame our own lives.

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Outline

Responding to King Chizkiyahu's miraculously recovery from illness, Merodach, the king of Babylon, sends letters and an offering to Chizkiyahu. An excited Chizkiyahu gives the visiting delegation a tour of his treasury. (39:1-2, according to Melachim II 20:12-13. Divrei haYamim II 32:22-31 indicates the visit was for a different reason. Note, as well, that commentators debate whether the delegation was Babylonian or Assyrian.)

After the delegation leaves, Yeshayahu comes to visit the king. The prophet asks who the visitors were and what they were shown. Chizkiyahu responds that they had come to him from a far off land and that he had shown the guests everything in his treasury. Yeshayahu prophesies that in the future everything amassed by Chizkiyahu and his ancestors will be taken away to Babylon. The future members of the royal family will likewise be taken to Babylon to serve its king. Chizkiyahu responds that this prophecy is a good thing, since it indicates that these tragedies won't happen during his lifetime. (39:3-8)

Insight

The Talmud (Sanhedrin 96a) comments on this chapter by way of a story. The Talmud asks what prompted Merodach,

who lived far away from Judea, to suddenly send greetings. The answer is that when G-d miraculously lengthened the day as a sign of Chizkiyahu's recovery, this was experienced throughout the world. Merodach asked his advisors why the day had been lengthened, and they told him that this was done for the king of Judea. Merodach responded that such a holy person must be sent a royal greeting. The scribes who were present wrote a letter from Merodach to Chizkiyahu with the greeting: Peace to King Chizkiyahu, peace to the city of Jerusalem, and peace to the Great G-d. They sent the letter away with a messenger.

Later in the day, Merodach's royal scribe Nevuchadnezzar, who had been away, returned. This is the same Nevuchadnezzar who would go on to destroy the Beit haMikdash. He was disturbed by the wording of the letter. If the G-d of the Jews is so great, then He should have been mentioned first. In fact, the order of the greeting should have been reversed. Nevuchadnezzar is sent to chase down the messenger and rewrite the letter. On his way, the angel Gabriel blocks his path. Were it not for this, the Talmud says, Nevuchadnezzar would have been able to destroy the Jewish people and not only the

Temple. [This story echoes Nevuchadnezzar's praise of G-d in a letter in Daniel 3-4.]

What message is the Talmud telling us with this story?

Rabbi David Menachem explains that the Talmud is highlighting a certain amount of self-aggrandizing that Chizkiyahu engages in throughout this chapter. He is excited to tell Yeshayahu about the delegation that came to visit *him*. He shows the visitors everything stored in *his* treasury. He isn't worried about the prophecy that the Judean kingdom will be destroyed since it isn't happening during *his* lifetime. The Talmud places the contrasting view in the mouth of a young Nevuchadnezzar. The focus of praise for the miraculous cure should be on G-d. And this should come with the recognition that Chizkiyahu wasn't saved for his own sake but because of his kingdom and its capital, Jerusalem. Becoming self-centred blinds us from our obligations to our people and G-d and leaves us exposed to Divine punishment.

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Siddur Insights: Shoshanat Yaakov

Idan Rakovsky

In many congregations around the world, it is customary to recite a special poem after the reading of the Megillah on Purim night. This poem is well-known for its final lines, which are sung with different melodies during Purim:

"The lily of Jacob rejoiced and was glad, when, together, they all saw Mordechai robed in royal blue. You have been their eternal salvation, their hope in every generation." (Koren Sacks Siddur translation).

One might ask, who is the "lily of Jacob" that rejoiced and was glad? And what is the connection between Yaakov and the story of Purim?

The biblical Hebrew word for the lily flower is *shoshanah*, which sounds very similar to the Persian city of Shushan, where the story of Purim took place. Therefore, one could argue that the "lily of Jacob" is a poetic way of referring to the Jews in the city of Shushan who cheered and rejoiced when they saw Mordechai dressed in royal blue, riding a horse and led by Haman. [See Esther 6:11.]

The reference to the Jewish people as a "lily" can also be understood in a broader context, stemming from the book of Shir HaShirim. In 2:1-2, the lover (who traditionally represents G-d) refers to his beloved (who traditionally represents the Jewish people) as "the lily of the valleys... a lily among the thorns." When the Jewish people are scattered among the non-Jews in the reality of exile, they are compared to a lily growing among thorns. In the story of Purim, the Jews of

Shushan were exactly that – they lived as a persecuted minority in a land not their own.

A possible explanation for the mention of the name of Yaakov Avinu in this poem may be connected to the roots of Mordechai and Haman. The Megillah tells us that Mordechai was from the tribe of Benjamin and was a descendant of Kish, who was also King Shaul's father. [Compare Esther 2:5 and Shemuel 1 9:1.] On the other hand, the Megillah tells us that Haman was a descendant of Agag, the Amalekite king whose life was spared by the Benjaminite, King Shaul. (Shemuel 1 15) The war between Mordechai and Haman could be seen as just another act in the never-ending war between Israel and Amalek, which is expressed in different ways in every generation. Since the Amalekites are descendants of Esav, Yaakov's enemy and brother (Bereishit 36:12), this celebratory poem mentions Yaakov. As a midrash (Pesikta Rabti 13) says, "The descendants of Amalek will fall by the hands of the descendants of Rachel." These descendants, we could argue, are the Benjaminites Shaul and Mordechai.

As we sing Shoshanat Yaakov in shul on the night of Purim, we celebrate not only the triumph of Mordechai over Haman, but of the Jewish people over Amalek.

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Biography Reb Natan of Breslov Rabbi Baruch Weintraub

Nathan Sternhartz, also known as Reb Natan of Breslev or Reb Noson, was born on the 15th of Shevat 5540 (January 22, 1780), in Nemirov, Ukraine. He was married at the age of 13, as was the custom in that community at that time. Although his father and father-in-law were fiercely opposed to the new and fast-growing Jewish spiritual movement of chasidism, Nathan felt that his upbringing lacked happiness and vitality, and he was drawn to the chasidim. Fatefully, it was in 5562 (1802), when young Reb Natan was supposed to join his family business in Berdichev, that the renowned chasidic master, Rabbi Nachman, moved to nearby Breslov.

Reb Natan went to hear Rabbi Nachman and was immediately won over by the charismatic teacher, becoming his lifelong disciple. He abandoned the family business and began to accompany Rabbi Nachman, recording all he said. Later on, when Reb Natan's family saw that his devotion to Torah and mitzvot only grew with his chasidic attachment, they withdrew their objections.

Reb Natan's time with Rabbi Nachman was not long; the latter passed away in 5570 (1810). Nonetheless, in those eight years Reb Natan wrote and collected numerous *Torot* (the Chasidic nickname for the Masters teachings) from his teacher, many of them approved by Rabbi Nachman himself.

After Rabbi Nachman's death, Reb Natan concentrated on strengthening and organizing the Breslover chasidim, leading them according to the lessons he had learned from Rabbi Nachman, and spreading his writings across Eastern Europe. Reb Natan also established the custom, kept to this day among the Breslov Chasidim, of spending Rosh Hashanah at Rabbi Nachman's grave in Uman. Reb Natan also authored a few independent works. Despite his leadership role, though, Reb Natan was never appointed to become Rabbi Nachman's successor.

While he felt that all of his activities were only a continuation of his master's work, many believe that Reb Natan was essential in the founding of Breslov Chasidut. As Rabbi Nachman himself said, "Without Reb Noson, not even a *sheimos* page would remain from me."

Reb Natan died on Tevet 10, 5605 (December 20, 1844).

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Weekly Halachah: Purim Drinking Rabbi Mordechai Torczyner

The Talmud says that as part of the Purim feast, one must "*levasumei*" until he does not know the difference between "Cursed is Haman" and "Blessed is Mordechai". In various contexts, the word "*levasumei*" means to become sweet or joyous. Some halachic authorities ruled against this statement, but Rambam codified it, saying to drink wine to the point where one becomes *shikor* (a word with a spectrum of meanings) and falls asleep. This is also brought in the Shulchan Aruch.

However, halachic authorities prohibit any drinking which a) is dangerous for the drinker or others, or b) leads to a state in which one loses control to the point of trespassing Halachah and/or desecrating Hashem's Name. Rambam himself equates people who gather in order to become intoxicated with people who gather unclad and soil themselves in public. More recently, Rav Chaim Margaliyot wrote, "One should eat, drink and be happy on the holiday, but not draw himself after meat and wine and laughter and lightheadedness, for laughter and lightheadedness are not joy, but empty celebration and foolishness. We are not instructed in empty celebration and foolishness, but in joy which includes service of the Creator."

A moderate path, approved by the Rama and Mishneh Berurah, is to drink minimally at the Purim Seudah, and then fulfill the state of intoxication by taking a nap after the meal.

Worth noting: Adults in the presence of young children must be extremely careful in drinking more heavily than is normal. Immature children cannot differentiate between when adults are in control and when they are not, cannot comprehend the dangers associated with alcohol, cannot accept the idea that adults can do what children are not permitted to do, and cannot understand the difference between Purim and the rest of the year.

(Megillah 7b; Mishneh Torah, Hilchot Megillah 2:15; Moreh Nevuchim 3:8; Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim 695:2; Shaarei Teshuvah to Orach Chaim 697:1; Pri Chadash to Orach Chaim 695:2; Aruch haShulchan Orach Chaim 695:2; Mishneh Berurah 695:5)

Sefer haChinuch #17: Korban Pesach & Brit Milah By Rabbi Mordechai Torczyner

The korban pesach symbolizes our rejection of Egyptian lamb-worship and our acceptance of Hashem and the covenants Hashem made with Avraham and Sarah. One of those covenants is the brit milah. Therefore, an *arel* (an uncircumcised male) may not eat from the korban pesach, as specified in Shemot 12:48. Sefer haChinuch counts this prohibition as the Torah's 17th mitzvah. Indeed, when the Jews arrived in Israel under Yehoshua, they needed to circumcise those who had not undergone brit milah in the wilderness, before they could perform the korban pesach. (Yehoshua 5)

The korban pesach and brit milah also share another link. These are the only two commandments for which one who abstains is punished with Divine *kareit* [excommunication]. (Mishnah Keritot 1:1)

According to most authorities, the disqualification even includes someone who is uncircumcised due to health concerns. [See Yevamot 70a-b, and Mishneh Torah, Hilchot Korban Pesach 9:8-9; for a dissenting view, see Minchat Chinuch 17:1.] The disqualification also includes the father of a minor *arel*. (Mishneh Torah, Hilchot Korban Pesach 5:5) Interestingly, the talmudic sage Rava (Yevamot 71b) contended that an *arel's* mother may not eat from the korban pesach, even though only the *arel's* father is obligated to circumcise him. Maharsha explained that this is because the brit milah requirement for korban pesach is not a law of brit milah at all. The brit milah criterion here is a function of the korban pesach, a requirement that we confirm our commitment to the brit of Avraham before we may participate in our national redemption. [See, too, Minchat Chinuch 2:2 and Tzitz Eliezer 2:11.]

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Shabbat Mar. 3-4

After hashkamah R' Yehuda Mann, Halachah from the Parshah, Clanton Park

After minchah R' Mordechai Torczyner, Gemara Ketuvot, BAYT (Milevsky Bais Medrash) (men)

After minchah, Idan Rakovsky, Halachah in the Parshah, Shaarei Tefillah

Sun. Mar. 5

9:00 AM R' Zev Spitz & R' Yehuda Mann, Hilchot Bishul, Clanton Park (men): Niddah

Mon. Mar. 6 Fast of Esther

2:00 PM Idan Rakovsky, Into the Haggadah, ZOOM: <http://tiny.cc/idanrak>

8:30 PM R' Yehuda Mann, Weekly Halachah, Shomrai Shabbos *not this week*

Tues. Mar. 7 Purim

9:00 AM Idan Rakovsky, Tzidkat haTzaddik, Yeshivat Or Chaim (university men) *not this week*

1:30 PM R' Mordechai Torczyner, Wisdom of King Solomon, ZOOM: <http://tiny.cc/weeklymt> *not this week*

7:30 PM R' Mordechai Torczyner, Shemuel (Chap. 18), ZOOM: <http://tiny.cc/weeklymt> (men) *not this week*

8:15 PM R' Yehuda Mann, Post-Shovavim Shiur (Semichat Chaver Chazarah), Clanton Park (men)

8:30 PM R' Jared Anstandig, Women's Beit Midrash: PURIM, Shaarei Shomayim (university women)

Wed. Mar. 8 Shushan Purim

9:00 AM R' Jared Anstandig, Halachic Philosophy of the Rav, Yeshivat Or Chaim (university men)

7:00 PM Idan Rakovsky, Into the Haggadah, Shaarei Tefillah

8:15 PM R' Yehuda Mann, Contemporary Halachah, Clanton Park

Thurs. Mar. 9

1:30 PM R' Mordechai Torczyner, Shemuel (Chap. 31), ZOOM: <http://tiny.cc/weeklymt> (women)

8:00 PM R' Yehuda Mann, Beitzah (advanced), for location: ymann@torontotorah.com

8:30 PM Idan Rakovsky, Sefer haChinuch, Shaarei Tefillah Beit Midrash Night (men)

Fri. Mar. 10

9:00 AM R' Jared Anstandig, Parshah, Yeshivat Or Chaim (university)

10:30 AM R' Jared Anstandig, R' Mordechai Torczyner, R' Yehuda Mann, Ketuvot Perek 1 *advanced*
In-person at Yeshivat Or Chaim, on ZOOM at <http://tiny.cc/frishiur>

COMING UP!

8:00 PM to 9:30 PM Monday March 13

LEGAL ETHICS: THE MENTAL HEALTH OF THE LAWYER

Rabbi Mordechai Torczyner, on ZOOM at <http://tiny.cc/mtethics>

Register: <https://torontotorah.com/cpd> / Accredited for CPD / Laypeople welcome

10 AM Wednesday March 15

Three-Part Series Begins: ZECHARYAH: HOPE AND ARMAGEDDON

R' Mordechai Torczyner, ZOOM @ <http://tiny.cc/weeklymt> Register @ <https://torontotorah.com/wednesdays>

There is a fee

8:00 PM March 20

HAGGADAH NIGHT at BAYT (Gruda Bais Medrash)

Four 10-minute divrei torah for your Seder!

With Rabbi Yehuda Mann, Idan Rakovsky, Prielle Rakovsky, Rabbi Mordechai Torczyner

8:00 PM March 27

HAGGADAH NIGHT at SHAAREI SHOMAYIM

Four 10-minute divrei torah for your Seder!

With Rabbi Jared Anstandig, Mrs. Sarit Anstandig, Rabbi Steven Gotlib, Rabbi Mordechai Torczyner