

LIGHT AND JOY

by Shlomo Katz

Parshios Tzav & Purim

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Today's Learning:
Shevi'it 10:5-6
O.C. 328:26-28
Daf Yomi (Bavli): Berachot 26
Daf Yomi (Yerushalmi): Bava Batra 24

We are now beginning the thirty days before Pesach in which studying the laws of the holiday takes precedence over other Torah studies. R' Yehuda Loewe z"l (Maharal of Prague; 16th century) explains that our Sages made this decree because thirty days before Pesach is when the spiritual light of the holiday begins to shine on the world.

In this light, said R' Sheftel Neuberger shlita (Yeshiva Ner Israel in Baltimore), we can understand why Purim is observed in the second month of Adar in a leap year (which has two Adars). The Gemara says that this is done in order to juxtapose one redemption to another, i.e., to juxtapose the redemption of Purim to the redemption of Pesach. This is more than a nice phrase, R' Neuberger explained. It seems that the timing of Pesach actually played a role in the date that Haman chose for

executing his evil plans. How so?

The Megillah states that Haman drew lots "from day-to-day and month-to-month." Our Sages explain that he first tried to determine what day of the week would be a propitious time to eliminate the Jewish People. To do this, he put the names of the days of the week in one box and eight lots in another box. Seven of these were blank, while the eighth said, "To destroy, to kill, and to eliminate." But his plan failed; all of the lots he drew from the second box came up blank. He then used a similar lottery to choose a month, and the month of Adar came up. (Why Adar? R' Neuberger explained that since the Jewish People deserved to be destroyed, it was the undoing of the process that had begun in Egypt in what the Torah calls "the first month," i.e., Nissan, many centuries before. Since the nation was born in the first month of the Jewish year-Nissan-it was fitting to destroy it in the last month of the Jewish year-Adar.)

It seems, however, that Haman never drew lots to choose a day of the month. He would have preferred to choose the 15th of the month, when the month's "force" is presumably strongest, but that would have been within the thirty days before Pesach when the light of Pesach already shines. The closest he could get without being in the 30-day pre-Pesach period was the 13th day. (R' Neuberger added that Haman did not necessarily make this calculation. Rather, this is the calculation that took place in Heaven regarding Haman's plan.) (Heard from R' Neuberger on Shabbat Parashat Zachor of this year)

This week's parashah continues the laws of the korbanot/sacrifices from last week's parashah. R' Elazar M. Shach z"l observes that we pray daily for the return of the sacrificial service. Yet, the haftarah for our parashah seems to downplay the importance of that service! There we read (Yirmiyah 7:22-23): "For I did not speak with your forefathers nor did I command them on the day I took them out of the land of Egypt concerning olah-offerings or shelamim- offerings. Rather, I commanded them only regarding this matter, saying, 'Hear My voice that I may be a G-d unto you and you will be a people unto Me . . .'"

Why does the prophet downplay the importance of the sacrifices? Moreover, what is the significance of the fact that Hashem did not command our forefathers "on the day [He] took them out of the land of Egypt" concerning the sacrifices? Didn't He command them regarding the sacrifices when He gave the Torah?

R' Shach explains: The purpose of the Exodus was to make us Hashem's nation. Thus we read (Shmot 19:4): "You have seen what I did to Egypt and that I have borne you on the wings of eagles and brought you to Me." As a result of the Exodus, we are charged with coming close to Hashem and with maintaining that closeness.

The laws of the Torah, including the laws of the sacrifices, are the tools that Hashem has given us to bring us close to Him. While we are not free to substitute other tools for Hashem's Torah - in any case, no other tools will work - we also should not confuse the tools - the mitzvot - with the goal - being close to Hashem. This is the prophet's message: "Do not confuse the sacrifices, which are the means, with the end." Our sages teach that the Bet Hamikdash was destroyed because our ancestors studied Torah without reciting a blessing, i.e., as a wisdom rather than as the word of G-d. Torah must be studied as the word of G-d. Mitzvot must be performed with religious feeling, not by rote. This is the lesson of the above verses, and this was the purpose of the Exodus.

(Haggadah Shel Pesach Avi Ezri p.14)

Purim

"For with joy you shall go forth, and in peace you be led. The mountains and the hills will break out in jubilant song before you, and all the trees of the field clap hands." (Yishayah 55:12)

R' Yaakov Kranz z"l (1741-1804; the Dubno Maggid) observes that the Gemara (Megillah 10b) interprets the verse after this one as referring to Haman, Mordechai, Vashti and Esther. Presumably, then, it is reasonable to interpret this verse in connection with Purim as well. Specifically, the rejoicing described in this verse would seem to be relevant to Haman's downfall.

But why would the mountains, hills and trees care about Haman's downfall? The Dubno Maggid explains with a parable:

In a certain school, there was one very difficult child, as a result of which the parents hired a teacher who was a strict disciplinarian. Naturally, all the children suffered at the hands of this strict teacher, even though they themselves had not been naughty. Eventually, the troublesome child matured and the strict teacher was dismissed, much to the relief of all the students.

Similarly, when the Jewish People sin, Hashem appoints a dictator to oppress them. The whole world suffers at the hands of this dictator. Even nature suffers when evil flourishes in the world. On the other hand, when the Jewish People repent and the evil dictator is dismissed from the world, all of nature rejoices.

The Megillah tells us that after Haman was killed, Esther put Mordechai in charge of Haman's house. Why did she do this? More importantly, why do we need to know this? The answer, says the Dubno Maggid, is that it demonstrates that Haman existed for only one purpose - to oppress the Jews and drive them to repentance. Once that purpose was accomplished, not only did he cease to exist, but every tangible memory of him, including his property, was eliminated.

(Kol Rinah Vi'shuah)

A Related Thought (in the Spirit of Purim . . .)

We read in Tehilim regarding the days of mashiach: "Then all the trees will rejoice." Why do the trees care if mashiach comes?

R' Shepps z"l (maggid shiur / instructor in Yeshiva Torah Voda'ath in Brooklyn) explained: Today, more and more sefarim / Torah works are being published, and we can no longer tell which represent the true interpretation of Torah and which do not. However, when mashiach comes, the Truth will become widely known, and there will be much less publishing taking place. With the decrease in publishing, the demand for paper will decrease as well, thus leading to widespread rejoicing among the world's trees.

(Heard from R' Avigdor Weill a"h)

R' Yosef David Sintzheim z"l

Conclusion

With the end of the French Revolution, R' Sintzheim came out of hiding and was appointed Chief Rabbi of Strasbourg. He also began to arrange his writings for publication, and, in 1799, he published the first volume of his Talmud commentary, Yad David. In this encyclopedic work, the author arranged questions, explanations and comments from hundreds of earlier Torah works according to the order of the Talmud so that a student can readily find where in those works any particular page of Talmud is discussed. The works that R' Sintzheim indexed for this project included Talmud commentaries, books about Rambam's Code, and even books of derashot / sermons. (The Yad David is currently being reprinted by Machon Yerushalayim in Israel.) During his years in Strasbourg, R' Sintzheim also wrote large portions of his other works: his Torah commentary, Shelal David; a commentary on Shulchan Aruch entitled Da'at David; an encyclopedia of halachic and Talmudic topics called Minchat Ani; and other works.

In this same period, R' Sintzheim's influence as a spokesman for Orthodox Judaism also grew. In 1806, when Napoleon convened an "Assembly of Jewish Notables," R' Sintzheim was chosen to be among its leading members. The Orthodox representatives to this body did not necessarily consider the appointment an honor, as they knew that they would be called upon to "reconcile" the position of halachah / Jewish law on various social questions with the "enlightened" law of France. Indeed, at the opening session of the Assembly, Napoleon's representative posed 12 questions that the Emperor wanted the Assembly to address including: "Is a get / Jewish divorce valid if it is not sanctioned by a French court?" and "Is a Jew permitted to lend money to a non-Jew with interest?" As the leading halachic authority in France, R' Sintzheim was caught between the need to give answers that would not misrepresent Jewish law but would not endanger the safety of France's

Jews.

When the Assembly of Jewish Notables had completed its work and issued its answers to Napoleon's questions, the Emperor convened a "Sanhedrin" to legislate those answers as the law of the Jews. The delegates to this body, of which R' Sintzheim was appointed President, were informed in no uncertain terms that their failure to comply with Napoleon's wishes would result in the expulsion of the Jews from France. To ensure the body's "success," Napoleon stacked it with rich Jews whose economic interests outweighed their Torah scholarship and commitment to halachah.

Some have argued that the compromises announced by Napoleon's "Sanhedrin" gave legitimacy to the then young Reform movement, and that this is the reason that R' Sintzheim is not well known today despite his awesome scholarship. However, R' Sintzheim's contemporaries clearly did not see him in that light. R' Moshe Sofer (the Chatam Sofer), one of the leading warriors against Reform, said in a eulogy for R' Sintzheim (printed in Derashot Chatam Sofer):

Such a person [as described earlier in the eulogy] was the tzaddik who we are engaged in eulogizing. He was very honored by, and close to, the king, and was asked many questions and he answered them, and he was greatly esteemed by the king and his ministers - nevertheless, he was great [in the eyes of] the Jews [borrowing the description of the Mordechai at the end of the Megillah]. All his days were devoted to Torah study and he reviewed the Talmud several times. All the books of the Rishonim / early scholars and Acharonim / later scholars were fluent on his lips, as one can see from his works. I knew him as a youth, and even now, through exchanging letters with him, I know his righteousness and perfection. Although he was made an adon / lord because of his knowledge of politics, he remained lord over his strength [probably meaning his yetzer hara], and they [the king and ministers] were not lords over him, and he did not give in to them, G-d forbid. Although he had to uncover a little bit, he went back and covered twice as much [paraphrasing a Talmudic expression, here used to mean that he undid any damage that he had been forced to cause]. And his perfection remained standing.

After the "Sanhedrin" was disbanded, R' Sintzheim remained in Paris as Chief Rabbi of France. Until the end of his life, he also continued to compose written works. He passed away on 7 Kislev 5573 / November 1812. (Source: Introduction to the new Machon Yerushalayim edition of Shelal David)

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The editors hope these brief 'snippets' will engender further study and discussion of Torah topics ('lehagdil Torah u'leha'adirah'), and your letters are appreciated. Web archives at **Torah.org** start with 5758 (1997) and may be retrieved from the [Hamaayan](#) page.

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