

LIKE DA'AS IN THE WIND

by Rabbi Pinchas Winston

Friday Night:

Command the Children of Israel to bring clear olive oil, beaten for the light, so the Menorah can burn continuously ... (Shemos 27:20)

As we have pointed out in the past (and so has everyone else for that matter), Moshe Rabbeinu's name is nowhere to be found in this week's parshah. There are many explanations for this, the most common one being Moshe's remark later on after the sin of the golden calf:

Moshe returned to G-d, and said, "This people has erred greatly, and have made gods of gold. However, please tolerate their error, and if not, remove me from Your book which You have written." (Shemos 32:31-32)

It was a bold move on Moshe's part, threatening G-d like that. However, the words of a righteous person are never for naught, and though G-d didn't comply completely with Moshe's request, He did so in part--in this week's parshah, where Moshe's name is nowhere to be found.

There are other explanations for this anomaly, as the Vilna Gaon points out. He mentions that the reason for the exclusion is because, in most cases, this week's parshah always falls either the week of, or the week before the 7th of Adar, the day on which Moshe Rabbeinu (was born and) died. For this reason, G-d, Who can see until the end of all generations, built into this week's reading a hint to this day, as a memorial to the greatest leader the Jewish people ever possessed (Kol Eliyahu, T'rumah; 75).

This is interesting because, the Gra's version is of a different tone than the standard Midrashic explanation. From the Midrash, it seems that the exclusion of Moshe's name was a punishment for being so bold with G-d. G-d could have told Moshe, "Wait a second. This is G-d you are speaking with, the author of the Torah, and of your life for that matter! I will put whoever I want in My book, whether he wants to be there or not!"

Hence, we can learn from here that even the words we say with the best of intentions count for something, even if we live to regret them later.

However, from the Gra's explanation, it sounds as if the exclusion was a tribute to Moshe, a constant

yearly reminder of the day the Jewish people lost their greatest leader. Is the Gra arguing on the Midrash?

No--this is indeed a tribute to Moshe Rabbeinu. Yes, it is as the Midrash says, that Moshe's words were the cause of his own name being excluded from such a parshah. However, says the Torah to the Jewish people, remember once a year (at least), just how far your leader was prepared to go to save your lives! Look at what he gave up for you!

Moshe's loss is indeed his tribute. And what better time to make that known to us than on the day he was taken from us--his yartzeit--in a parshah that begins with a mitzvah to use olive oil? After all, we know from the story of Chanukah that olive oil used for the Menorah symbolizes devotion to G-d, and a willingness to sacrifice for Torah and the Jewish people.

Shabbos Day:

They shall make the ephod ... Take two sardonyx stones and engrave on them the names of Israel's sons. There shall be six names on one stone, and the remaining six names on the second stone in the order of their birth. (Shemos 28:6-10)

We might have thought that the story of Yosef and his brothers was only history by the time the Jewish people were instructed to build the Mishkan, and all its implements. However, as we see, their story was alive and well even in this week's parshah, because it was their names that were engraved on the Kohen Gadol's shoulder pieces, and on the Breastplate as well.

Amazingly, the way it was set up, it worked out that there were six names on each shoulder piece, and twenty-five letters each as well (Sotah 36a). In total, that made twelve names and fifty letters. Equally amazing is the way the word kohen, which means "priest," alludes to this, because the first two letters are a "chof" and a "heh," which totally twenty-five, and the last letter is a "nun," which represents fifty.

This is no coincidence. We know that the story of Yosef and his brothers was one of schism, and lest we think that only THEIR story was one of division, look at Jewish history. In fact, look at the Jewish people today, of whom it has been said, "Two Jews, three presidents." It seems as if tikun--rectification--is just another way of describing unification of the Jewish people.

This unification was made possible through the kohen--at least symbolically. It was a way of emphasizing that reversing the schismatic tendency of the yetzer hara means increasing one's holiness, which means increased awareness of Torah and devotion to the service of G-d. How else can one rise above their personalized view of creation and see life as G-d does?

As one penetrates the depths of Torah, and increases his belief in G-d and Divine Providence, the

more objective he becomes. As we have said on so many occasions, objectivity is the basis of self-honesty, and crucial for being able to care about others at least equally as we do about ourselves.

This is why the "Shema," which we say at least twice a day, and "Boruch Shem kevod ..." which we say along with it, each possess six words, and twenty-five letters each. The saying of them together represents our commitment to entering the world of Torah, and to letting Torah subjugate our yetzer haros to the will of G-d.

Well, almost twenty-five each--Boruch Shem has only twenty-four letters. But that too was not a coincidence, as the following makes clear:

Ya'akov wanted to establish the Mystery of Unity below, and composed the twenty-four letters of, "Blessed be the Name of His glorious kingdom forever." He didn't make it twenty-five letters since the Mishkan (Tabernacle) had yet to be built. Once the Mishkan was built, the first word was completed ... With regard to this it says, "G-d spoke to him from the Appointed Tent, saying ..." (Vayikrah 1:1), which has twenty-five letters. (Zohar 2:139b)

Hence, everything about the Mishkan and those who served within it, was to promote national unity, and the number fifty was the symbol of this:

You shall make 50 loops on the end of the one curtain that is the outermost in the joining, and 50 loops on the edge of the curtain that joins to the second. You shall make 50 catches of copper, and put the catches into the loops, and join the tent together, that it may be one. (Shemos 26:11)

SEUDAH SHLISHI:

Aharon must burn incense on it every morning when he cleans the lamps. (Shemos 30:7)

The Torah is talking about the Incense Altar that was set up in the Mishkan, in the chamber before the Holy of Holies referred to as the "Heichel," or "Sanctuary. The larger altar used for animal sacrifices was outside this area, in the Courtyard. Every morning, when the priest came to clean the lamps of the Menorah, he also had to burn incense on this altar covered in gold.

It is interesting that the Torah makes a connection between the cleaning of the Menorah and the daily burning of incense. The Menorah, we know from the story of Chanukah, is the symbol of miracles and self-sacrifice. It is also the symbol of the Oral Law, which is why it is representative of the Chanukah victory over the Hellenists, who tried to do away with the traditional Oral Law and replace it with one of their own.

But what connection is there to the Incense-Offering, and why is it placed together with the cleaning of the Menorah?

As is pointed out in many works, the incense represents what is referred to as "Da'as," or, "Divine

Knowledge." This is why there are eleven spices that make up the Incense-Offering (next week's parshah)--a number that is associated with the concept of Da'as.

To begin with, even though there are ten "fixed" sefiros (Keser, Chochmah, Binah, etc.), there is one more that "comes-and-goes," an eleventh sefirah called Da'as. As we see from history itself, clarity about life can be available to one generation, and lost to another. This is the result of Da'as--godly knowledge--that is affected by man's actions.

If man is moral and truth-seeking, then G-d's light is drawn down into the world, and the entire world becomes wiser. If man allows his more basic instincts to run his life (pride, desire, need for physical stimulation, etc.), then G-d withdraws His light, and the spiritual void that results also causes an intellectual void--no matter how smart man becomes.

There are many other concepts to do with Da'as that have an association with the number eleven, including the lunar year, which is shorter than the solar year by eleven days. We know from the Talmud that, during the fourth day of creation, the light of the moon was reduced, leaving creation with a need for rectification. Being eleven days shorter than the solar year, it indicates that it is Da'as that will restore the light of the moon in the days of Moshiach.

Of course, the moon is the symbol of the Jewish people.

This is the connection to the cleaning of the Menorah. The cleaning of the Menorah was to make it fitting to receive the olive oil, which is the symbol of Torah wisdom, that is, Da'as Elokim. In order for man to be a fitting container for G-d's light, he must first become a fitting, "clean" vessel to receive it. In order to receive the light of Torah, and not distort it, one must possess the proper character traits, as the following Talmudic passage indicates:

Why are the words of Torah compared to three liquids: water, wine and milk? ... This is to teach you that, just as these three liquids are best kept in ordinary utensils, such as wood or earthenware, so too is the Torah best contained by those who possess a humble spirit. The daughter of Caesar once said to Rebi Yehoshua ben Chananyah (who, apparently, was not of pleasant appearance), "Such an ugly vessel and such glorious wisdom!"

He told her, "My daughter, in what does the king, your father keep his best wine?"

"In earthenware containers," she answered him.

"The commoners keep their wine in earthenware containers," He told her,

"Shall your father do so also?"

"In what should they be kept?" she asked him innocently.

"You who are wealthy," Rebi Yehoshua remarked, "should keep it in silver or gold containers!"

She told her father, who then commanded that all his wine be kept in containers of silver and gold.

Consequently it became sour, and when the

Caesar was informed of this, he asked his daughter,

"Who told you to do this?"

"Rabbi Yehoshua ben Chananyah," she told him.
The king sent for Rebi Yehoshua ben Chananyah, and asked him,
"Why did you give her such advice?"
"This was the answer to her question." (Ta'anis 7a)

According to tradition, there are two ways to become a fitting container for the light of G-d. Developing oneself through Torah is the ideal way, as Rebi Yehoshua of the above story did. The other way is a less pleasant way--to say the least. And, unfortunately, it seems to always involve some aspect of Amalek in the process.

Melave Malkah:

Parashas Zachor

Remember what Amalek did to you along your way when you left Egypt. He confronted you on your way, and attacked the feeble stragglers who trailed behind you, while you were tired and exhausted. He did not fear G-d. Therefore, when G-d, your G-d has given you rest from all your enemies around you in the land which G-d, your G-d gives to you as an inheritance, annihilate every trace of Amalek from under heaven. Do not forget this. (Devarim 25:17-19)

As usual, Parashas Tetzaveh is Parashas Zachor, when, in advance of Purim, we remember what Amalek did to the Jewish people after they left Egypt, right before they arrived at the Sinai Desert. Haman descended from Amalek, and therefore the battle against Haman was really a battle against our old nemesis, Amalek.

The Talmud asks:

Where is there an allusion to Haman in the Torah? "From (heh, mem, nun) the tree did you eat?" (Bereishis 3:11). (Chullin 139b)

Purim was a holiday that was established after the Torah was written down. The Torah ended its narration with Moshe's death in 2448/1273 BCE, and the miracle of Purim didn't occur until the year 3408/353 BCE. The Talmud, basing itself on the well-known principle that everything is in the Torah, looked for and found a hint to the story of Purim, even though it occurred long after the close of Torah.

However, the Talmud wasn't simply looking for a matching word. Yes, it is true that the word G-d used to ask Adam if he had eaten from the forbidden Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil has the same letters as Haman. Nevertheless, the Talmud's question runs deeper: What is the source of Haman in creation? What made the existence of Amalek possible in creation in the first place? What empowered him to do evil in G-d's world?

The Talmud's deeper answer?

The eating from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, which has another name: Elona d'Sfeikah--the Tree of Doubt. That is what gave rise to Amalek, and empowered him to impose his evil ways on creation. For, as we have made note of on many occasions, the numerical value of "Amalek" (ayin, mem, lamed, kuf) is the same as that of the Hebrew word, "sufek," which means "doubt."

It is interesting how, in Hebrew, that the word "sufek" takes on a whole different meaning with the additional of two vowels: yud and vav. However, there are very few feelings of discontent greater than doubt, and yet, there are very few words that mean just the opposite than the word "sipuk," which means, "satisfaction."

Conceptually, this is what Amalek tries to do to man--to remove the yud and vav from his life, so that our "sipuk" becomes "sufek," and our sense of gratitude towards G-d turns to doubt in His existence. Kabbalistically, the letter "yud" stands for G-d, and the letter "vav" symbolizes His revelation in the world in which we live.

The process is always the same. First, Amalek makes us look at daily life in such a way as to deny us the reality of Divine Providence. The Midrash says that a blade of grass only grows because an angel stands over it, commanding it to grow. Amalek says that not even the awesome universe requires a G-d to create it or run it.

The Torah (and the truth is, logic as well) tells us that G-d is Infinite, and the Master over creation. Amalek says, "If we can attack the Jewish people even while they are under the protection of G-d, then what kind of protection is that? Is there really a G-d up there after all?"

Amalek has many ways to accomplish this task. How he does it matters less than the fact that you can look around the world today and see just how many billions of people live without belief in Divine Providence, and very few even believe in G-d in Heaven. He's good, Amalek, isn't he--quite efficient, is he not?

However, Amalek is not completely impenetrable--he is vulnerable too. In fact, one word can undo even the most elaborate of his schemes. What is that word? It is the word, "why." Amalek does not mind if you ask "how," because "how" doesn't always lead one to G-d; on the contrary, it can lead one away from G-d. But "why"? Well, if you keep asking "why" enough times, you will get to the bottom of creation, or more accurately, the "top" of creation--the Creator Himself.

"Climbing" the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil can lead away from G-d, which is where G-d found Adam, and Adam found Amalek. However, "climbing" the Tree of Life--Torah--can lead only one way, out of the realm of good and evil and the doubt they foster, and into the realm of True and False; it takes the wind out of Amalek's sails. THAT world is a world free of doubt, free of Haman, and free of Amalek. In such a world, there is only sipuk.

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REMINDER: "Redemption to Redemption: The very deep and intricate connection between the holidays of Purim and Pesach," has now been edited and is available for order. If you are interested, contact me directly at: pinahav@netvision.net.il.

Have a great Shabbos,

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