

# A PHASE OF GLORY

by Rabbi Pinchas Winston

## Friday Night:

*You command the children of Israel to bring you clear olive oil ... (Shemos 27:2)*

This is the parshah that is missing Moshe's name, for no other reason than that it is a partial fulfillment of Moshe's own words from a later parshah:

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)

In a few weeks time, b"H, we will read Parashas Ki Sisa, in which we will read, once again, about the incident of the golden calf. Moshe, after purging the camp of the perpetrators, returned to G-d on the mountain to defend the remaining people, to the extent that he threw his lot in with them.

Well, the people survived, and so did Moshe, for, G-d heard and accepted Moshe's plea for Divine forgiveness; G-d took Moshe's "threat" seriously. In fact, TOO seriously, perhaps, for even though Moshe's condition was met, STILL, he was removed somewhat from G-d's book!

Maybe the message is: You don't threaten G-d under ANY circumstances, even with the best and humblest of intentions.

Then again, we find a similar scenario, way back in time, when Ya'akov was fleeing his menacing father-in-law, Lavan. Accused of stealing Lavan's idols, Ya'akov defended himself and his family by uttering with complete confidence:

*"... With whomever you find your gods, he should die. In front of our relatives, you identify what is yours from what I have and take it back ..."*

However, as the verse concludes:

*Ya'akov had not known that Rachel had stolen them. (Bereishis 31:32)*

Clearly Ya'akov had not meant that his words should have any effect on a single member of his camp, especially -- ESPECIALLY -- his beloved Rachel! Yet, as the midrash makes clear, Rachel died at the tender age of thirty-six to fulfill Ya'akov's very words, for:

*"... The curse of a wise man, even if made on condition, comes true." (Ba'al HaTurim, Shemos 27:20)*

The truth is, if anything, it should be just the other way around. Righteous people who watch their deeds and words under a spiritual magnifying glass, and are self-sacrificing for G-d, deserve "second chances." G-d knows what was going on in Ya'akov's heart when he spoke to Lavan with such tough words, and, certainly, Moshe's words were a measure of his commitment to his mission and his people!

Why "punish" both Ya'akov and Moshe, and countless other wise men and women throughout history who have said the "wrong" thing for the right reason? Because G-d deals with the righteous scrupulously, taking them to task for even their small errors?

Perhaps. And, perhaps there is another principle involved over here.

For example, in the case of Rachel, she HAD to die young. According to the Ramban, the Forefathers kept to the mitzvos, particularly in Eretz Yisroel, to which Ya'akov and his family were returning. However, if Rachel had remained married to Ya'akov as he returned home, he would have arrived married to two sisters, something the Torah would later expressly forbid!

Furthermore, we know from Parashas Vayechi that Rachel was meant to be buried at Beit Lechem, so that she could pray for the exiles as they were taken prisoner into Bavel after the destruction of the First Temple. Her "crying" acted as an important advocate on behalf of the suffering Jewish nation. That probably would not have happened had she died in Be'er Sheva or Chevron.

Furthermore, there is a principle that "Tzaddikim will, and G-d fulfills." In other words, G-d allows righteous people to place such a partnership role in creation that everything they do and say leaves a lasting impression on the master plan of creation. There is bound to be a residual effect of all they do, to which creation must respond on some level.

The same thing is true as well for Moshe in this week's parshah. There is another reason why Moshe's name is not mentioned in this week's parshah, as the Vilna Gaon explains (see Perceptions: Tetzaveh, 5759), which is for the benefit of the Jewish people. This reason AND Moshe's comment on Mt. Sinai are BOTH responsible for the same result, and this way, ALL the principles of creation can be satisfied.

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## **Shabbos Day:**

*You shall make clothing of sanctity for Aharon your brother, for honor and for beauty. (Shemos 28:2)*

*"For honor ... For the honor of G-d, the blessed One, since they are holy vestments for His service. For beauty ... That he be a priest who teaches (Divrei HaYomim 15:3), respected by all those around him (Tehillim 89:8), since they are his disciples, engraved on his heart and shoulders." (Sforno)*

In other words, alludes the Sforno, the Kohen Gadol is in that strange predicament of having many people dependent upon him -- which can result in pride -- while at the same time, he is the servant of the people -- which must result in extreme humility. And, it is within the heart and mind of the Kohen Gadol -- and every public servant throughout history -- where the two polar extremes must be resolved in a G-dly fashion.

Jewish history brings many examples of both extremes. It was the High Priest, Yissachar from the city of Berakai, who had his hands chopped off for honoring himself rather than his position. According to the Talmud (Krisos 28b), he used to enwrap his hands with something to spare them from becoming dirty while officiating. In the end, Divine Justice came down heavy upon him, and he was duly punished. After acting with the same chutzpah toward the king and queen, they had his left hand, then his right hand severed, obviously, as the Talmud says, an act of Divine measure-for-measure.

Shaul HaMelech, on the other hand, as Shmuel points out quite candidly, was too humble:

Shmuel said, *"You may be small in your own eyes, but are you not the leader of the Twelve Tribes of Israel?"* (I Shmuel 15:17)

-- and that cost him and his family the right to the Jewish kingship. All too often, it seems, it has been either abuse of power, or be abused by the power; the perfect leader is the one who can find the balance between both extremes.

We find the same predicament existing in the realm of education. Some teachers make it clear that they are there for their students, made evident by the commitment to the overall well-being of the child and his quality of education. Other teachers would have the students believe that they, the students, are there for him, and better fall in line or else! Some teachers, however, fall prey to their students' whims, and do know one any favors in the long run.

We won't talk about secular leaders and their relationships to the power of their offices ... For whom are they there?

Hence, the Sforno is pointing out a formula to balance out the mixture, regardless which "office" a person holds. He simply has to wear two "pieces of clothing" that accomplish two purposes (as opposed to "two hats" to accomplish one purpose: political survival!): honor for G-d and glory for his students.

In the case of the Kohen Gadol, we are talking about real clothing. However, in the case of anyone else, we can be talking about a presentation of self and attitude that reveals one's devotion to sanctifying the Name of G-d in deed and in word, while, at the same time expressing a respect for those whom he serves.

It is this that opens the intellectual and spiritual channels that allow the flow of G-d's light to go from educator-leader to student-recipient. Take off one of the types of "clothing," and the system fails.

Wear both "layers" of clothing, and education becomes a joyful and enhanced experience for teacher and student alike -- for those who are doing the leader, and, for those who are being led.

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## **SEUDAH SHLISHI:**

*You shall make a Breastplate of Judgment of a woven design -- like the craftsmanship of the Ephod you shall make it ... You shall fill it with stone mountings, four rows of stone ... th third row: leshem, shevo, and achlamah. (Shemos 28:15-19)*

There were, of course, twelve stones in all -- one for each of the four tribes. The stones mentioned above correspond to: jacinth (topaz in color), agate (gray stone), and amethyst (violet or purple stone), and the tribes Gad, Asher, and Yissachar.

The second time the Breastplate shows up again in the Torah, and these three stones are mentioned, is in Parashas Pekudei (Shemos 39:12). There is a significance to this that you will not find in any commentary, because it is a recent phenomenon.

I have been asked, on numerous occasions, the source of some of my more esoteric references. The answer can vary, but very often it has been from one author whose name happened to be, Rabbi Shlomo Eliyashav, zt"l, the deceased grandfather (1841 - 1925) of the current Ashkenazic Torah Giant and halachic decisor, Rabbi Shalom Eliyashav of Jerusalem.

In Kabbalistic circles, he is called the "Ba'al HaLeshem," for his great Kabbalistic works published at the beginning of the last century under the title, "Leshem Shevo v'Achlamah" -- the names of the three stones in the third row of the Ephod, the Kohen Gadol's breastplate. Rav Shlomo's vast knowledge of all aspects of Torah and his exceptional ability to clarify complicated concepts resulted in a few such, pivotal Kabbalistic works.

I have yet to find out the reason why the great rabbi chose these stones as the name by which to be identified, but, ironically, his yahrtzeit (the day on which he died and is remembered) -- the twenty-seventh day of Adar -- always tends to fall out in the week of one of the two parshios that mention the three stones. Irony, or miracle?

It is quite fitting that this little "miracle" should involve the Breastplate, whose function it was to reveal G-d's will -- a human creation that acted as an "interface" between Heaven and Earth. It was the Breastplate that the Sanhedrin, in days of old, used to consult to find out how to deal with troubling or halachic situations beyond the grasp of their knowledge base.

Halevai that we had prophets today to consult -- just any way to find out what Heaven thinks and wants. We are a generation groping in spiritual darkness, though physically, our lives feel quite complete. However, personally, I have to say that the knowledge -- the little of it that I have been able to comprehend and absorb -- that I have gained from such works that intellectually pierce the

fabric of daily life, have allowed me to grow in ways I never thought possible.

And, as I sit here finishing this d'var Torah, just hours away from my return to Eretz Yisroel, b'ezras Hashem Yisborach, I can say that the people I have spoken to and have taught along the way throughout the course of the three-and-a-half weeks I have been traveling and speaking, have expressed a similar feeling regarding the "distilled" version I have shared. They have appreciated "peeking" behind the scene of daily life to better understand the "hidden" challenges of this generations.

In many ways, such people have already begun to re-direct some of their energy away from their drive for "proficiency," in the direction of a search for prophecy. As of yet, we may not have prophets to speak of and whom we can consult, nor the Urim v'Tumim of the Kohen Gadol and its miraculous stones. However, we do have Torah, and Torah has many levels, and piercing those levels is not only the search for G-d and higher levels of meaning, but the search for self -- true self -- as well.

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### **MELAVE MALKAH:**

*... Praise G-d in His [Place of] Holiness; praise Him in the Heaven of his power ... (Tehillim 150:1)*

This tehillah is also found in P'sukei D'Zimrei, and is the last one of the entire work of Tehillim. It is short and concise, and a very good concluding statement of all of Tehillim -- and Judaism for that matter. All of what has come before, in a sense, was the build up for these final words of Dovid HaMelech.

One would think that Dovid HaMelech wrote Tehillim during a historically spiritual and peaceful period of time. Of course, that was not the case. First, he was looked down upon by his brothers. Then, later, he was hunted by the king of Israel, Shaul HaMelech. Even after he succeeded in securing the throne for himself and his dynasty, he was bothered by many enemies within and without.

As a result, Dovid HaMelech met all types in his lifetime and had to come up against them. There he stood, face-to-face, and yet, worlds apart. These were not people who feared G-d, and sometimes they were people who, on the outside, appeared to fear G-d, but on the inside, had missed the point of Torah. Their bodies were into living by Torah, because of the honor and personal benefit it brought them, but their souls were just not into it.

For such people, service of G-d was one of the lips, and we're not talking prayer either. They were too busy taking caring of personal agendas that they couldn't appreciate the grandeur of G-d's creation, which, Dovid HaMelech, in spite of his hardship, could.

That was because Dovid HaMelech lived the life of the soul in a very physical world. And, warns Dovid HaMelech, if you don't, then you won't be able to see the miracles of G-d, the hand of Divine

Providence in daily life, and, you certainly won't be inspired to sing praise to the Al'mighty!

This week's parshah has a similar allusion. The parshah starts off with the mitzvah of shemen zais zach -- to bring clear olive oil for the Menorah, before going on to the mitzvah to make clothing for the Kohen Gadol and the procedure fo investiture into the service of G-d.

What's the connection?

As we, and so many others, have said in the past, the essential message of olive oil is that, just as the oil resides hidden inside the dark, distateful olive, so, too, does the soul reside inside the very physical body ("hashemen" -- the oil -- is the same, rearranged letters as "neshamah" -- soul).

One might forget this as Kohen Gadol, especially given all the honor shown to him. Indeed, there is a long history of High Priests who abused their office during the times of the Second Temple. Dressed so royally and in such a position of importance, one could end up focussing more on the olive/body than the precious oil/soul inside, the true source of light, and praise of G-d.

The whole point of Tehillim is to help elevate a person out of the mundane reality of everyday life, in order to see the world through the eyes of one's soul. For:

*"All SOULS praise G-d ..." says Dovid HaMelech -- "All SOULS praise G-d!"*

Have a great Shabbos,  
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