

PARSHAS ZACHOR

by Rabbi Pinchas Winston

Make holy garments for Aharon, your brother, for glory and for splendor.(Shemos 28:2)

As it is well known, Moshe Rabbeinu was born and died on the 7th of Adar, 120 years to the day, indeed, to the moment. Haman knew that fact, and chose the day to exterminate the Jewish people of his time, assuming that it was good mazel for him, and bad mazel for the Jewish people. He found out the hard way that he had it backwards.

At first thought, there seems to be little if any direct connection between the holiday of Purim and Moshe Rabbeinu. Indeed, the phrase, "When Adar comes in, increase simchah" seems to have little do with the greatest prophet who ever lived, seemingly a very serious man who, when it came to the will of God, was all business. Unlike the rest of us, simchah did not have to be on his radar, so loyal was he to God, Torah, and the Jewish people.

So not true. Indeed, there is a tremendous connection between Moshe Rabbeinu, Purim, and simchah, and if this is not obvious to a person (it wasn't to me at first), then he has to reconsider his definition of simchah. And, not only this, the connection is so sublime that it not only emanates out from the above verse in this week's parshah, it also explains why, in a more positive sense, Moshe Rabbeinu is not mentioned anywhere in it, especially since it was the result of later telling God:

"Please tolerate their sin, and if not, remove me from Your book which You have written."
(Shemos 32:32)

In fact, contrary to popular belief that the exclusion of Moshe Rabbeinu's name from this week's parshah means something negative, ultimately, it is the biggest compliment God could give to Moshe Rabbeinu, alluded to by the following verse:

Moshe was very humble, more than anyone else on the face of the earth. (Bamidbar 12:3)

But, more importantly, in this verse, and through the life of Moshe Rabbeinu, we can unlock the very secret of the most important commodity in life: simchah. Trillions of dollars, and trillions of hours, have already been spent trying to find and harness it, but to little, if any avail at all. So few people have really ever achieved it, while most simply settle for artificial forms of it.

Amazingly, it is all embodied in the mann, which is why the mann fell in the merit of Moshe

Rabbeinu, and Amalek, the ancestor of HA-MANN, attacked the Jewish people right after the Torah's discussion of it. And, that is also why the battle revolved around Moshe Rabbeinu, who had to climb a mountain and keep his arms lifted heavenward for the Jewish people to win the battle, after destroying Egypt with far less effort.

In short, the quintessential battle of all history comes down to two opposing traits: arrogance versus humility, and on another level, depression versus simchah. And, for that matter, two people: Amalek versus Moshe, which is why it is Moshe's soul-in the body of Moshiach-that brings the Final Redemption (Sha'arei Leshem, p. 347).

For, as everyone knows, people with simchah harm no one, but rather, they are the nicest and most helpful people around. But, depressed and angry people are usually no help at all, and repel people with whom they have contact. The need for simchah is not just to enhance one's pleasure in life, but necessary for the battle against Amalek, in a big way.

When God told Moshe Rabbeinu about the mann, He introduced it with the following words:

"I will rain bread from heaven for you. The people will go out and collect it, a specific amount every day, which will test them to see if they will live by My law or not." (Shemos 16:4)

Hence, from this we see that the point of the mann was not that it was only food and physical sustenance. The mann was primarily a test, to see if the Jewish people would walk in the ways of God, which meant, what again? Well, the Torah tells us elsewhere what that means:

All this is because you did not serve God, your God out of joy and with gladness of heart while you possessed good things. Therefore, you will instead become servants of your enemies, whom God will send against you. [You will suffer from] famine, thirst, nakedness, and a lack of everything. He will put a yoke of iron upon your neck, until He has eliminated you. (Devarim 28:47-48)

All of the curses of Parashas Ki Savo, the overview of all anti-Semitism from that time until present day, was because the Jewish people didn't serve God with simchah? If simchah is so important, then why does the Talmud say this instead:

Rava said, "When a man is led in for judgment he is asked, 'Did you deal faithfully, did you fix times for learning, did you engage in procreation, did you anticipate salvation, did you engage in the dialectics of wisdom, did you understand one thing from another?' Yet even so, if 'the fear of God is his treasure' (Yeshayahu 33:9), it is good. If not, then it is not good." (Shabbos 31a)

As the Talmud concludes, the world was made for fear of God. And, thus, as we must now conclude ourselves, fear of God and simchah are really just two sides of the same coin. Or, should we say, of

the same kohen- which Moshe Rabbeinu would have been had he not ceded it to his brother, Aharon.

Which brings us back to this week's parshah, and the verse first mentioned above:

Make holy garments for Aharon, your brother, for glory and for splendor. (Shemos 28:2)

What was the glory and splendor that the clothing of the Kohen Gadol was supposed to project? How could the man who spent most of his time barefoot in the Mishkan, devoting himself entirely to the service of God, totally on behalf of the people he represented, seemingly without a life of his own, be the symbol of all that is glorious in Creation?

However, if you think about it, such an attitude towards life reveals, when it is truly sincere and not self-serving (as it can be for some), that one's battle against the yetzer hara has ended, with the latter having lost. Physical survival is always a matter of fight or flight, that is, looking out for Number One. But, spiritual survival is always a matter of just the opposite, of sticking around and taking responsibility for others and the world itself.

The yetzer hara claims that such an attitude towards life will kill us. The yetzer tov tries to tell us that by not living such a life, we will die regardless. The mind, when deciding who to believe, has to get to the point where it realizes, as the Torah teaches, that the physical feeds off the spiritual, and the more this is so, the more alive a person is.

Indeed, the more a Tzelem Elokim a person becomes, as he was created to be:

God created man b'tzelem Elokim-in His image; He created him in the image of God ."
(Bereishis 1:26)

And, there can be nothing more glorious for man to achieve than this, and therefore, even the clothing that the Kohen Gadol wore expressed this idea. Thus, anyone who saw the Kohen Gadol was instantly reminded of this trait of Hod-Glory, and of how the only way to truly be glorious is to become a Tzelem Elokim, which means developing your own greatness by becoming devoted to the development of that of others.

That is true fear of God.

That is true simchah.

That was Moshe Rabbeinu.

And that was the lesson of the mann.

For the main, eternal point of the mann was yaish, the gematria of the word omer, as spelled in the Torah:

The Jewish people ate mann for 40 years, until they came to inhabited land; they ate mann until they came to the border of Canaan. An omer-Ayin-Mem-Raish-is a tenth part of an ephah. (Shemos 16:35-36)

In other words, the mann stated explicitly: you have what you have, and nothing more, but that is all you need, and equal to what everyone else has, even if only relatively speaking. It was the "yaish lee kol" that Ya'akov told Eisav (Bereishis 33:11), which meant, whatever he had, it was all that he needed.

How could he know?

Because he knew God, and God knew him, and that's all he had to know.

Thus, when the rabbis teach:

Who is a wealthy person? One who is satisfied with his portion. (Pirkei Avos, 4:1)

they weren't just giving sound financial advice. They were arming us against the greatest enemy of all time, Amalek, and his descendant Haman, who can only take advantage of people who stop serving God with simchah (Tehillim 100:2), people who fail to live by the message of the mann.

For, it is the role of Amalek to breed dissatisfaction, greed, jealousy, discontentment, and ultimately, depression. It was the role of Moshe Rabbeinu to do just the opposite, and one of the most important messages he taught the Jewish people in the battle against Amalek was that simchah is something we have to create, and not wait for it to fall from Heaven. We have to make the first move.

The secret?

Moshe Rabbeinu.

How?

By understanding his essential trait, which in sefiros-language is Netzach.

The word Netzach means "eternity," but it can also mean "victory." And though these words may not be terms that one would immediately associate with Moshe Rabbeinu, they are, in fact, the most accurate descriptions of who he was: the ultimate winner, because everything he did was for the sake of Eternity.

The emotional side of victory is obvious everyday of life. However, the philosophical side is less considered, and it is the most important part, because it is what determines the definition of true victory. Believe it or not, most victories throughout history have only been pseudo-victories, and therefore, come to mean very little over time.

In a simple competition, victory also means continuity. The victor in any match earns the right to continue his struggle for supremacy in that which he competes, while the loser is forced to bow out

of the contest, at least until the next one.

However, even victory in this case can be short lived, and lose meaning over time. Such victories are tastes of eternity, which is what makes them so exciting, on a deeper level, but they are not eternity itself.

But, overcome your yetzer hara and do a mitzvah, or avoid a sin, and that is not only a victory, but even an eternal one. It is a victory that can pay you in this world and the World-to-Come (Shabbos 127a). Indeed, the Talmud says that even a sin cannot wipe away the merit of doing a mitzvah, only the regret of the person for having done it.

This was the basis of Moshe Rabbeinu's greatness. He lived in this world, but he was totally invested in the next one. At first, his own brother and sister that it was to a fault:

Miriam and Aharon complained about Moshe regarding, the Kushi woman he married. They said, "Does God speak only to Moshe? Has He not spoken also to us?" (Bamidbar 12:1-2)

But, God Himself set the record straight:

He said, "Listen to Me. To the prophets amongst you, when I appear, I reveal Myself only in a vision, and speak in a dream. Not so with My servant Moshe, who is the most trusted in all My house. With him I speak face-to-face, while he is conscious, and not in riddles; he has a true vision of God. How could you not be afraid to speak negatively about My servant Moshe?" (Bamidbar 12:6-8)

That is the trait of Netzach: living with the reality that this world is but a corridor to the next one (Pirkei Avos 4:16). This means pursuing materialism only for the sake of enhancing one's spiritual position. To one rooted in Netzach, it is only natural to place physical pleasure secondary to spiritual pleasure.

Not, perhaps, to the extent that Moshe Rabbeinu did, or had to do in order to remain on the level of prophecy that he was on, but to the extent that one's decisions clearly reflect an emphasis on the spiritual. A Netzach-oriented person will always ask when partaking of frivolous material pleasures, "Is it really worth it, in the long run, spiritually-speaking?"

The truth is, many people may ask such a question on occasion, and to the extent that they do, they have an element of Netzach within them. But, a Netzach-rooted person usually ends up with the truth, and decides and acts accordingly.

For, sacrificing eternity for the temporal goes against his nature, and it is this that gives such an individual the strength of character to walk away from the temptations of the yetzer hara that others often fall head-over-heels to fulfill. It was the lesson of the manna, and why Moshe's name is not mentioned in this week's parshah: he could be invisible to everyone else, and yet still maintain his

sense of being and purpose, b'simchah, just like a true Kohen Gadol, just like a true Tzelem Elokim.

Amalek, and later Haman, came to war against this trait, which is why he chose the day of Moshe Rabbeinu's death to plot his genocide of the Jewish people. But, as always, the "cure preceded the illness," so the 7th of Adar was also Moshe Rabbeinu's birthday, and therefore a day imbued with the trait of Netzach.

And thus, when it was all said and done, and Amalek was pushed aside for the time being:

The Jews had light and gladness, joy and honor. (Megillah 8:15)

The natural outcome once Amalek is vanquished.

Text

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