

BROTHERLY LOVE AT ITS BEST: MOSHE AND AHARON

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Parshas Tetzaveh

Brotherly Love at Its Best: Moshe and Aharon

These divrei Torah were adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Tapes on the weekly portion: CD #891 Women and Sh'lach Manos and Matanos L'evyonim. Good Shabbos!

Parshas Tetzaveh contains the mitzva to create the priestly garments for Aharon and his sons. The regular Kohen's uniform consisted of four garments and the uniform of the Kohen Gadol [High Priest] consisted of eight garments. One of these eight garments was a breast plate known as the Choshen HaMishpat.

The Talmud teaches in the name of Rav Simlai [Shabbos 139] that Aharon merited wearing the Choshen HaMishpat on his chest by virtue of the fact that "he rejoiced in his heart" [Shemos 4:14] when he saw his younger brother Moshe return to Egypt as the newly-appointed leader of the Jewish people. Moshe Rabbeinu was hesitant to accept the Divine Mission of leading the nation out of Egypt. Our Rabbis say that this hesitancy was due in large part to not wishing to "upstage" his older brother. To allay his fears, the Almighty told him that Aharon would greet him upon his return to Egypt and he would be happy for him -- rejoicing in his heart at Moshe's ascension to leadership.

The Drashas HaRa"n (Drasha 3) seeks out the deeper symbolism of this teaching. Why was this privilege of wearing the Choshen HaMishpat the appropriate reward for being happy in his heart at the fact that Moshe became the designated leader of the people? The Drashas HaRa"n explains that the Almighty both rewards and punishes in a "measure for measure" fashion (meedah k'neged meedah) in order to demonstrate Divine Providence and to show that reward and punishment are not mere happenstance but reflect Divine Justice.

The Drashas HaRa"n says that the fact that the Choshen HaMishpat was worn on Aharon's chest was a "measure for measure" reward for the happiness he demonstrated upon his brother's return to Egypt. How so? The Choshen HaMishpat contained the Urim V'Tumim. Technically speaking, the

Urim V'Tumim is not part of the Eight Priestly Garments. The proof of this fact is that in the Second Bais HaMikdash [Temple], the Kohen Gadol still wore 8 Priestly Garments even there was no Urim V'Tumim!

What was the Urim V'Tumim? If Klal Yisrael had some type of question of national import, they would go to the Kohen Gadol, he would pose the question to the Urim V'Tumim, and the lights of the letters on the Choshen haMishpat (spelling out the names of the Tribes) would illuminate in such a way as to spell out the miraculously communicated answer. The Urim V'Turim was not used for trivial matters, but for critical questions -- such as whether or not to go out to war. The Urim V'Turim served as a conduit to provide such communication between the Almighty and His Nation.

The Drashas HaRa"n points out that this method of inquiry and response was basically just a drop below the level of prophecy in terms of the Kohen Gadol receiving the Word of G-d. This would not seem to be part of the Kohen Gadol's job description. The Jewish people had Kings, Prophets, and Priests who each served a unique function within the nation. There was a certain division of labor, such that prophecy belonged to the prophets, not to either the Kings or the Priests. Why is the Kohen Gadol suddenly communicating with G-d via the Urim V'Tumim in a form of pseudo-prophecy?

The Drashas HaRa"n responds that it is because when Moshe Rabbeinu became the master of all prophets in Israel (the 'Adon haNeviim'), Aharon was not jealous of his younger brother. On the contrary, Aharon demonstrated true happiness when he greeted Moshe after Moshe's assumption of leadership and prophecy amongst the nation. Aharon received the "measure for measure" reward that the Kohen Gadol received prophecy as well! He received prophecy through his control of the Urim V'Tumim.

It is interesting that just as Aharon subjugated himself to his younger brother Moshe Rabbeinu, in the very same parsha, Moshe Rabbeinu acted in the same way towards Aharon.

One of the famous questions we have discussed over the years is why is it that Moshe Rabbeinu's named is not mentioned in Parshas Tetzaveh. His name is mentioned in every single parsha in the last 4 books of Chumash with the exception of this week's parsha!

When Moshe Rabbeinu initially declined to take Klal Yisrael out of Egypt, the pasuk says, "The L-rd was angry with Moshe (vaYichar Af Hashem b'Moshe)" [Shemos 4:14]. Rabbi Yishmael teaches [Zevachim 102] that every time the Torah uses the expression 'Charon Af' [the Anger of the Almighty] there are consequences. The only exception to this rule, he says, is the above quoted pasuk, expressing G-d's anger towards Moshe. There is not any apparent punishment received by Moshe for bringing G-d to anger in this way. Rav Yossi points out to Rabbi Yishmael that here too there is a consequence. Moshe Rabbeinu did not walk away from this 'Charon Af' unscathed.

Rav Yossi says that in Hashem's original plan, Moshe and his children were destined to be the High Priests and Priests in Israel. Aharon was destined to remain merely a Levi. However, as a result of of

Moshe's initial refusal to take Klal Yisrael out of Egypt, their roles were reversed. Moshe was punished in that Aharon became the Kohen Gadol and not Moshe Rabbeinu.

The story does not end here. When Aharon participated -- albeit reluctantly - in the sin of making the Golden Calf, the pasuk says that the Almighty wanted to take away the priesthood from Aharon. Anyone who participated in the sin of the Golden Calf lost the right to be a priest. The firstborn were destined to be the priests, but they lost that right because they participated in the sin of the Golden Calf. Aharon too was on the verge of losing this privilege, but Moshe Rabbeinu pleaded with the Almighty that He not take the priesthood away from Aharon. It was only because of this intervention and this plea on behalf of his brother that the Kehunah remained with Aharon and his sons.

Let us put ourselves into Moshe's shoes. Would we not have argued: "I was supposed to be the Kohen before I was punished. So it was given to Aharon, but now he did something wrong so he lost it. Let the Kehunah come back to its rightful place. Now it is my turn again."

Yet that is not what Moshe did. Moshe negated himself totally on behalf of Aharon and pleaded with the Almighty that Aharon should not be punished. "Aharon should keep it. It belongs to Aharon. That is the Kehunah's proper place."

This is why this parsha, which speaks of the elevation of Aharon and of the garments of the High Priest, never mentions Moshe Rabbeinu. Moshe Rabbeinu made himself as if he did not exist when it came to his brother's honor and his brother's right to ascend to the High Priesthood. Moshe is the anonymous, behind the scenes player, here. In the Parsha devoted to the Kohen Gadol, Moshe Rabbeinu does not want to be seen. He wants his older brother to have the limelight all to himself.

The classic pasukim in the Torah describing two brothers who love each other are in Tehillim: "A Song of Ascents to David: Behold how good and how pleasant is it when brothers dwell together in unity. Like the precious oil upon the head running down upon the beard, the beard of Aharon, running down over his garments." [Tehillim 133:1-2]. The phrase "brothers dwelling together in unity" (sheves achim gam yachad) refers to Moshe and Aharon. They are the quintessential "sheves achim gam yachad". Aharon was happy for Moshe's success and his elevation to leadership status and then when Moshe Rabbeinu saw that Aharon faltered, he nullified himself to ensure that Aharon retained the glory due him. Moshe and Aharon's relationship is what we would all like to see among brothers -- among our children and our siblings, namely the state of "Behold how good and pleasant is it when brothers dwell together in unity."

Purim: The Paradigm of "Hope For Each And Every Generation"

I saw the following beautiful insight in a Sefer -- Yemei HaPurim.

Following the Megillah reading, we sing the prayer "Shoshanas Yakov," which includes the statement "You have been their eternal salvation and their hope throughout the generations". What does this phrase -- v'tikvasam b'chol dor v'dor -- mean?

Prior to singing Shoshanas Yakov, we actually recite a blessing to conclude the Megilla reading: "Blessed are You, Hashem, our G-d, King of the universe, Who takes up our grievance, judges our claim, avenges our wrong; exacts vengeance for us from our foes, and Who brings just retribution upon all enemies of our soul. Blessed are you Hashem, Who exacts vengeance for His people Israel from all their foes, the G-d Who brings salvation." The language of this blessing is in the present tense (haRav es riveinu, haDan es dineinu, v'haNokem es nikmaseinu, etc.)

On Chanukah, the Al HaNissim prayer contains similar language except it is in the past tense: He fought our fight; He judged our claim; He avenged our wrong (ravta es rivam, danta es dinam, nakamta es nikmasam). The change of tense in these two similar prayers must be significant. Why on Chanukah are the verbs in the past tense and on Purim they are in the present tense?

The Vilna Gaon says regarding the pasuk, "To speak of Your Kindness in the morning, and of Your Faithfulness at night" [Tehillim 92:3] that morning (boker) connotes days of redemption. Redemption is bright like the morning sun. When Klal Yisrael are redeemed, when they are in Eretz Yisrael at peace in their land, then things appear to us like morning. Likewise, evening and nighttime are metaphors for exile. When we are in exile, it is a time of "Your Faithfulness at night," meaning we do not see the Hand of G-d, which is hidden. At such times, it appears as if we are abandoned, Heaven Forbid. The quality that sustains us through the night of our exile is our "Emunascha ba'Leylos" -- we have faith that despite our exile, the Almighty is still interested in us and still cares about us.

The paradigm of the quality of "Emunascha ba'Leylos" is the holiday of Purim. Purim is the holiday of exile, the Yom Tov of Galus. During the Persian exile, it looked for a time as though Divine Providence abandoned them. ("The decree went forth to destroy and eradicate every Jew from young to old in a single day.") The attribute of "Your Faithfulness at night" that kept them going. Purim is a paradigm of an event in history when Klal Yisrael thinks they are abandoned but then discovers that the Almighty is still interested and He still loves us. He is still fighting our battles even in the exile.

That is why the text of the Purim prayer is in the present tense - who fights our battles, who judges our claims, who avenges those who wrong us. Even in the Galus, when it appears so many times that things are lost -- until this very day we are surrounded by people who want to destroy us -- even now He is still -- in the present -- fighting our battles.

Chanukah is a miracle that occurred when we had a Beis HaMikdash. We know that the Master of the World is involved at such a time in history. That era is in the past, so we speak of the Chanukah narrative in the past tense. However, on Purim while we are still in exile, we need to hear that the Almighty not only DID IT for us in the past, but he DOES IT for us in the present as well.

Purim is OUR holiday and that is why the Sages enacted in the prayer of Shoshanas Yakov the words

"And their hope throughout the generations." Our hope is that what happened on Purim will keep happening for us even now. Our hope is not only for then but also for every generation (including the present) where they "stand up against us and attempt to destroy us".

This write-up was adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Torah Tape series on the weekly Torah portion. The complete list of halachic topics covered in this series for Parshas Tetzaveh are provided below:

CD #045 The Gartel: To Wear or Not to Wear
CD #088 Parshas Zachor and Other Purim Issues
CD #136 Purim Costumes: Anything Goes?
CD #183 Candle Lighting on Friday Night
CD #229 Purim Issues II
CD #273 Taanis Esther and The Personal Purim
CD #319 Conditional Licht Benching
CD #363 The "Mazik" On Purim
CD #407 Hesach Ha'daas and Tefilin
CD #451 How Many Shabbos Candles
CD #495 Reneging on a Tzedaka Pledge
CD #539 Matanos Le'evyonim
CD #583 The Bracha of Blossoming Trees
CD #627 Having Your Own Megilah
CD #670 A Woman's First Candle Lighting
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CD #759 Printed Mezuzos?
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