

L'Chaim

The Yeshiva Centre - Chabad NSW Headquarters

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Living with the Rebbe



This week's Torah reading, Tetzaveh, is the only portion in the entire Torah following Moses' birth, in which Moses' name does not appear. (It is also, incidentally, the portion usually read during the week in which the anniversary of the Moses' passing, the seventh of Adar, falls.)

Our Sages explain that the reason for this omission was Moses' own request, made of G-d after the Children of Israel sinned with the Golden Calf: "And if not (if You will not forgive them), blot me out, I pray you, from Your book which You have written." The words of a tzadik, a holy and righteous person, are always fulfilled, even if spoken conditionally. Thus, we find that Moses' wish was granted in this week's Torah portion, for his name never appears in the entire portion.

However, when we delve into the text itself, we find an interesting phenomenon: This chapter, which specifically does not mention Moses, begins with a direct address to the very person whose name it omits! "And you shall command (ve'ata tetzave)."

A name is of lesser importance than a person's essential nature. It is a means of identification and a way of being known to others. But one does not really need a name in order to live. A newborn baby exists as an independent being from the moment it is born, and only receives its name after several days. From this we learn that the use of the grammatical second person, "you," expresses an even higher level of relationship than calling a person by his given name, which was only bestowed on him secondarily. If such is the case, then it follows that the omission of Moses' name only serves to underscore the very special essence of Moses, which was even higher than the mention of his name could express.

Moses' whole life was Torah, to the extent that we refer to the Torah as "The Five Books of Moses." But his greatness was best illustrated when the lowest elements among the Children of Israel sinned with the Golden Calf, explicitly expressing their desire to separate themselves from the Torah. Yet, Moses was willing to sacrifice that which he held most dear on their behalf. "Blot out my name from Your book," Moses pleaded with G-d, if You will not forgive them even this grave sin.

Moses and the Jews formed one entity, each of whose existence was dependent upon the other. The commentator Rashi explains; "Moses is Israel, and Israel is Moses." When even some Jews sinned, Moses suffered a spiritual blow. Even though Moses was up on Mount Sinai when the Golden Calf was actually made, he was still affected by the actions of the others.

It was Moses' self-sacrifice and his desire to forgo that which was most important to him that express a unity that is beyond mere names. It is therefore precisely the portion Tetzave, in which Moses is not mentioned, that reveals his strength and his greatness. The willingness to sacrifice oneself for every fellow Jew, even one who sins, is the mark of every true leader of the Jewish People.

Adapted from the works of the Lubavitcher Rebbe.

Experiencing Purim Today

The Purim saga centers around two people: Mordechai and Esther. Certainly, it was a series of Divine miracles, but the people who set the example and provided the catalysts to call forth those miracles were these two.

What was so unique about their conduct? When the Megila describes the way Mordechai informed Esther of Haman's decree, it states: "And Mordechai told her of all that had happened to him."

But the decree was against the Jewish people as a whole. As the king's counselor and as the uncle of the queen, it is very likely that Mordechai could have avoided being included in it! However, he had no thought of that. The decree "happened to him." This is also the tone with which he approached Esther when at first she hesitated to join him: "Do not imagine... that you will be able to escape in the king's palace any more than the rest of the Jews."

Esther heard the message and risked her life for her people.

These weren't absentee leaders, people who sat in the back and gave advice on how to deal with difficulties; they felt their lives were on the line and behaved accordingly. Why? Because the most important things in their lives were their people, and their people's mission in the world.

Once the Baal Shem Tov had a spiritual vision of a calamity that was to be visited on an outlying Jewish community. He traveled there with his students and for several days and nights engaged in spiritual activities that were able to arouse G-d's mercies and avert the decree.

Afterwards, his students asked him: "Why did you have to travel to that community? You could have carried out the same spiritual activities in your home town."

The Baal Shem Tov answered: "If I could not save them, then I would share their lot."

For a true Jewish leader, there is no difference between the fate of his people and his own personal fate. On the contrary, he has no thought of himself at all and thinks of destiny only in terms of his people.

This has an effect on the people, jarring them out of their self-concern and their involvement in their petty private affairs and pointing their attention to their national mission.

When a person sees a Mordechai or a Baal Shem Tov giving up all his personal concerns for the people, that person realizes that he too can and should focus on a goal in life that is greater than his individual self.

And as that aspiration spreads within the Jewish people, G-d creates an environment that allows it to happen, even bending the natural order - if that is what is needed be - for that to happen. This is the core of the Purim story.

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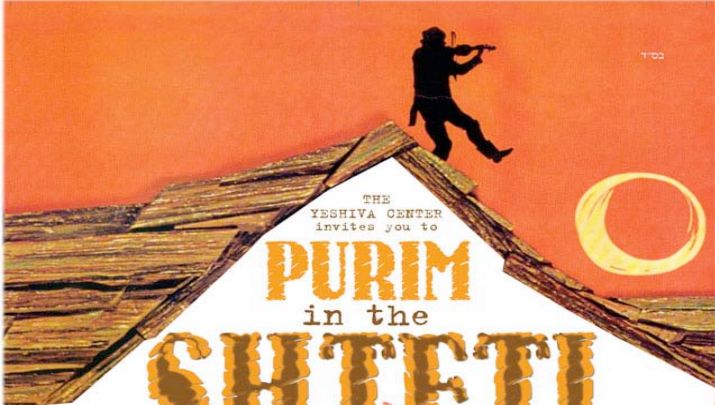
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**MASQUERADE
CONTEST!**

Parsha in a Nutshell

G-d tells Moses to receive from the Children of Israel pure olive oil to feed the "everlasting flame" of the menorah, which Aaron is to kindle each day, "from evening till morning."

The priestly garments, to be worn by the Kohanim (priests) while serving in the Sanctuary are described. All Kohanim wore: 1) the ketonet -- a full length linen tunic; 2) michnasayim -- linen breeches; 3) mitznfet or migba'at -- a linen turban; 4) avnet -- a long sash wound above the waist.

In addition, the Kohen Gadol ("high priest") wore: 5) the efod, an apron-like garment made of blue, purple and red-dyed wool, linen and gold thread; 6) the choshen, a breastplate containing twelve precious stones inscribed with the names of the twelve tribes of Israel; 7) me'il -- a cloak of blue wool, with gold bells and decorative pomegranates on its hem; 8) the tzitz -- a golden plate worn on the forehead bearing the inscription "Holy to G-d". Tetzaveh also includes G-d's detailed instructions for the seven-day initiation of Aaron and his four sons -- Nadav, Avihu, Elazar and Itamar -- into the priesthood, and for the making of the Golden Altar on which the ketoret ("incense") was burned.

This being the Shabbat before Purim, on which we celebrate the foiling of Haman the Amalekite's plot to destroy the Jewish people, the weekly Parshah is supplemented with the Zachor reading (Deuteronomy 25:17-19) in which we are

A MESSAGE FROM THE DEAN AND SPIRITUAL LEADER



The Baal Shem Tov's explanation of the Mishna "He who reads the Megila backwards has not fulfilled his obligation" is well known:

If someone reads the Megila thinking that it only relates to an historical event and that the miracle is not happening in our own times, he's missing the point. The purpose of reading the Megila on Purim is to teach us how to conduct ourselves today.

At the time of Haman's decree, the Jewish people enjoyed a relatively high standing in Persian society. Mordechai was a very respected personage in the kingdom, and having once saved the king's life, was accorded certain privileges. Esther, the queen, was the most important woman in the realm. In other words, the Jews were politically "connected." It would have been logical to think that once Haman's evil plan became known, the Jews would have capitalized on their "protektziya" and tried to influence Ahaseurus to nullify the decree. But as the Megila relates, the first thing Mordechai did was "don sackcloth and ashes and go out into the city." Only afterward did he appeal to Esther to intervene with the king. Likewise, Esther requested that the Jews fast on her behalf. Instead of trying to improve her physical appearance to win the king's favor, she fasted and prayed for three days, something which no doubt did little to enhance her looks. Both Mordechai and Esther realized that Haman's decree would not be nullified through the natural order of things, but only through teshuva, a complete and sincere return to G-d.

How is this relevant to us? Whenever a Jew encounters a difficulty or danger and thinks he can solve the problem by acting "logically," he should remember the lesson of the Megila: Working within the natural order is the second step, not the first. The rules that govern our existence are different from other peoples! The first thing to do is strengthen our connection with G-d, learning His Torah and observing His mitzvot. In that way, salvation and deliverance will surely come

Pinchus Feldman
Rabbi Pinchus Feldman OAM

Smile its Friday!..The rabbi was fed up with his congregation. So, he decided to skip the services on Yom Kippur, the holiest day on the Jewish calendar, and instead go play golf. Moses was looking down from heaven and saw the rabbi on the golf course. He naturally reported it to God. Moses suggested God punish the rabbi severely. As he watched, Moses saw the rabbi playing the best game he had ever played! The rabbi got a hole-in-one on the toughest hole on the course. Moses turned to God and asked, "I thought you were going to punish him. Do you call this punishment?!" God replied, "Who can he tell?"

Dachau's Purim Spiel

By Solly Ganor

Arriving from Auschwitz in groups of 20, they looked like walking skeletons; triangular faces with pointed chins and sunken cheeks, lips shrunken to thin blue lines, large eyes with a strange luminous sheen. They were known in concentration camp slang as "Musselman," usually the last stage before death. Their Yiddish accent sounded strange to us Lithuanian Jews. They came from the ghetto of Lodz through Auschwitz, before they were sent to our camp. Our camp was known as the "Outer camp of Dachau, #10," situated near the picturesque town of Utting by Lake Amerce, in a small forest surrounded by green meadows and beautiful landscapes.

I remember the day we were brought there, I thought to myself, "Can anything bad happen amid all this beauty?" But the beauty was in the landscape only; the Germans were sadistic murderers.

The Lodz people fell into the same deceptive trap. After Auschwitz, our camp looked like paradise. Most of them died soon after arriving, from hard labour, beatings and starvation, but they preferred to die here than in Auschwitz's gas chambers. It was from them that we heard the horrors of gas chambers and crematoriums, where thousands of our people were killed every day. Some told us that they were standing naked before the gas chambers when they were suddenly ordered to dress and were sent to our camp. The Germans must've been desperate for workers to send these walking skeletons all the way from Poland. Around March 1945, only a few remained alive. One of them was known as "Chaim the Rabbi." We never found out whether he was actually a rabbi, but he always washed his hands and made a blessing before eating. He knew the Jewish calendar dates, and also knew the prayers by heart. At times when the Germans weren't looking, he would

invite us to participate in the evening prayers.

Our Jewish camp commander, Burgin, tried to get him easier jobs. Most people died when they had to carry 100 pound cement sacks on their backs, or other chores of heavy labor. He wouldn't have lasted a day on a job like this. He once told me that if he survived, he would get married and have at least a dozen children. Around the middle of March, we were given a day off. It was a Sunday. The camp was covered with snow, but spring was in the air. We heard rumours of the American breakthrough into Germany and a glimmer of hope was kindled in our hearts. After breakfast of a slice of mouldy bread, a tiny piece of margarine, and brown water known as "Ersatz Coffee," we returned to our barrack to get some sleep.

Suddenly we saw "Chaim the Rabbi" standing in the snow and shouting, "Haman to the gallows! Haman to the gallows!"

He had on his head a paper crown made out of a cement sack, and he was draped in a blanket that had cut out stars from the same paper attached to it. Petrified, we watched this strange apparition, barely able to trust our eyes, as he danced in the snow, singing: "I am Ahasuerus, Ahasuerus, the king of Persia!"

Then he stood still, straightened himself up, chin pointed to the sky, his right arm extended in an imperial gesture and shouted: "Haman to the gallows! Haman to the gallows! And we all know which Haman we are talking about!"

We were sure that he had lost his wits, like others in those times. About 50 of us were gaping at the "rabbi," when he said: "Yidden vos iz mit aich! Jews, what's the matter with you?! Today is Purim! Let's

make a Purim Shpiel (play)!" Back home, a million years ago, this was the time of the year when children dressed up for Purim, playing and eating hamantashen. The "rabbi" remembered the exact date on the Jewish calendar. We hardly knew what day it was. Chaim then divided the roles of Queen Esther, Mordechai, Vashti and Haman among the onlookers. I received the role of Mordechai, and we all danced in the snow in our Purim Shpiel in Dachau.

But that was not the end of the story. The "rabbi" said that we will get "Mishloach Manot," our Purim food gifts. That was hardly likely to happen. But, miracle of miracles, that afternoon, an International Red Cross delegation came to our camp. It was the first time that they bothered about us. Still, we welcomed them, because they brought us the "Mishloach Manot" the "rabbi" had promised.

Each of us received a parcel containing a tin of condensed milk, a bar of chocolate, a box of sugar cubes, and a pack of cigarettes. It is impossible to describe our joy! Here we were starving to death, and suddenly on Purim, we received these heavenly gifts. Since then, we never doubted the "rabbi."

His prediction also came true. Two months later Haman/Hitler went to the gallows and shot himself in Berlin, while those of us still alive were rescued by the American army on May 2, 1945. I lost track of "Chaim the Rabbi" on our Death March from Dachau to Tyrol, but I hope he survived and had many children as he always wanted.

I recall his Shpiel whenever Purim comes around.

Solly Ganor solganor@netvision.net.il went to fight in Israel's War for Independence, was honorably discharged in 1949, joined the Merchant Marine, and fulfilled his desire to see the world. After 12 years at sea, he married his wife, Pola. They now divide their time between La Jolla, California and Herzlia, Israel.

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Moshiaich

Our Sages have stated: Even if all the festivals become obsolete, Purim will remain. In the Messianic Era, the joy and tranquility of the festivals will be a daily experience. Their light will be like that of a candle in the light of day. Yet even in that spiritually advanced climate, the loftiness of Purim will still be something to celebrate.

(Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Liadi)

It Happened Once

The bitter cold chilled the officer's bones and fear made his heart tremble. Ivan was not a coward, but the rumors of the sadistic Bolsheviks who were nearing the city of Rostov frightened him terribly. He paced the streets, waiting anxiously for the light of day. He was oblivious to the two men following at his heels, not making a sound.

Suddenly he felt powerful hands grabbing him. He screamed a loud and bitter scream, but the two held him. In the morning the body of the officer was found with the warning: "Beware! The Bolsheviks are coming!" The Jews were the most shaken by news of the Bolsheviks' approach, as the study of Torah and observance of its precepts was a serious crime to the Bolsheviks. There was only one part of the city where life went on as usual, where fear of the Bolsheviks was not felt: in the Yeshiva Tomchei Temimim. The yeshiva students continued their studies without disruption. They drew their strength from their Rebbe, Rabbi Sholom Dovber of Lubavitch - the fifth Rebbe of the Chabad dynasty. The Rebbe encouraged them to study and pray as usual, and the yeshiva bustled with life. It was Zundel the Beggar who brought the news: "The Bolsheviks are on their way into the city!" Soon Rostov became a city of flames and the Bolsheviks beat and killed anyone they chanced upon. Thus several weeks passed. The holiday of Purim was approaching. The Rebbe isolated himself and didn't speak to anyone. The students could not make peace with the Rebbe's isolation. They remembered the great joy of Purim, when Jews celebrate the victory over Haman who tried to "destroy, kill and annihilate." And then it was Purim. Not a soul smiled. Finally, two yeshiva students who could no longer bear the thought of Purim passing in such a manner, summoned up their courage and entered the Rebbe's room. After a few silent moments they heard the Rebbe's voice: "The Bolsheviks are in the city. I cannot exist together with them. But for the sake of Purim, we'll forget about the situation. Go buy plenty of vodka and let there be light for the Jews!" The good news spread through the city and the yeshiva students took their places for the Purim gathering. The Rebbe spoke and all listened. When the Rebbe concluded, an older Chasid began singing a soulful Chasidic niggun (melody). Everyone joined in, singing from the depths of their hearts. Suddenly the door burst open. At the entrance stood a Chasid. "The Bolsheviks are coming," the Chasid cried out in fear. The singing stopped at once; everyone was gripped with terror. The Rebbe, however, disregarded the news, and began singing a niggun very softly. The melody touched and calmed the frightened crowd. Having

concluded the melody, the Rebbe began saying a Chasidic discourse. The room was silent; the only audible sound was the Rebbe's voice. Suddenly the silence was broken by loud knocking. The Rebbe continued speaking as though nothing was happening. After a few moments one of the members of the Rebbe's family said: "Rebbe, the Bolsheviks are demanding that we let them in. If they see us gathered here it will be our end...G-d forbid." The Rebbe interrupted the discourse and said, "Open the door for them." In the doorway stood two tall and fearsome looking Bolsheviks, their eyes darting all about, hungry for prey. "What is this gathering? What is going on?"

Trembling, one of the Chasidim called out, "This is the Rebbe Sholom Dovber of Lubavitch. He is teaching Torah to his Chasidim. The Rebbe is busy with his talk and he cannot be bothered." He could hardly believe the words that came from his mouth. The two soldiers were astounded at the Chasid's nerve, and they turned on their heels and departed. "An open miracle!" the Chasidim exclaimed to one another. They felt protected and sang with greater fervor. Thus passed two hours. So immersed were they in their joy, that they did not hear the Bolsheviks knocking again... "Rebbe, what shall we do?" several frightened Chasidim cried out. The Rebbe freed himself from his thoughts and said, "Open for them! I don't fear them." The Chasidim understood that another great miracle was about to occur. The Bolsheviks burst through the door, their weapons in hand. The Rebbe ignored their threatening presence and said, "We will begin saying some words of Torah." The Rebbe raised his voice and began, "Amalek is first among the nations but his end will be destruction."

The Bolsheviks' faces softened. Their swords returned to their sheaths, and they watched with growing perplexity as the Chasidim listened to the Rebbe. They looked at one another and then, without a word, turned and left.

The Chasidim thanked G-d for miraculously saving them and for giving them their Rebbe in whose presence evil had no power. Everyone was deeply moved, feeling in their hearts without knowing why that this would be their last gathering with the Rebbe. Painful tears flowed from their eyes, tears of parting. A week after Purim the Rebbe became very weak, and on the second of Nissan his soul departed in holiness and purity.



Candle Lighting Times Friday 6 March 2009

City	In	Out
Sydney	7:09pm	8:03pm
Brisbane	5:58pm	6:50pm
Surfers Par	5:56pm	6:49pm
Melbourne	7:37pm	8:33pm

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