

Torah Sweets

INSIGHTS INTO PURIM BY RABBI ZISHA KOHN - BEING HAPPY WITH OUT "LOT"

Doctor Smith had a very interesting offer: if a patient is treated, he will pay 350 dollars; however, if he can't get treated, the doctor will pay 1,000 dollars. One day, a greedy man heard of the offer and decided he would scam the doctor. He complained to Dr. Smith: "I can't taste anything."

The doctor asked the nurse to bring the number 22 medicine. A patient took two drops and then spat it out, saying it was petrol. The doctor took 350 dollars. The next day, the patient went to the clinic again and said to the doctor, "I forget everything after a while."

The doctor asked the nurse to bring the number 22 medicine. The Patient was surprised and said the medicine was for tongue diseases, not memory problems. "This is your cure for the memory problem. You remember the medicine well," the doctor replied and took 350 dollars. The next day, the patient went again and told the doctor that he could not see well. The doctor gave him 500 dollars and said he couldn't cure this problem.

The patient was surprised and said, "This is five hundred dollars. You promised a thousand dollars."

"This is your cure, you can see the money well," the doctor said and collected 350 dollars.

Throughout modern history, greed on every level – government, corporate, and personal – has influenced the way society operates. People systematically take more out of the economy and society than they put back, looting it for personal comfort, convenience, and self-indulgence. The level of corruption for the sake of gains was always known but is now being exposed at a national level (look no further than the discoveries of the Department of Government Efficiency). Not shockingly, this attitude has not resulted in increased happiness. On Purim, we have four central Mitzvos: Reading the Megillah, Mishloach Manos, Matanos L'Evyonim, and having a Seudah (festive meal). The Megillah publicizes the miracle that took place. Mishloach Manos and Matanos L'Evyonim bring joy and happiness to others while allowing them to have food for a Seudah. The Seudah is meant to bring us joy and happiness. However, there is an added Mitzvah of drinking to the point of intoxication (Ad D'lo Yodah). Let's try to understand the purpose behind this seemingly strange commandment.

The Gemara (Chullin 139b) - teaching there is a source in the Torah for everything - asks, "Where is there an allusion to Haman in the Torah? As it is written (Bereishis 3:11), 'Have you perhaps eaten from the tree (Ha-min ha-eitz) from which I told you not to eat?'" The word Ha-min ("perhaps from") is spelled (in Hebrew) with the same letters as Haman. At first inspection, this appears to be a simple play on words. Upon reflection, however, we will find that there is more to this "simple allusion" than meets the eye.

The Vilna Gaon, Z"TL, offers an incredible insight into what the Gemara was teaching us. Where do we find in the Torah the source for a person such as Haman and his downfall? A person who had so many blessings in his life - more children than anyone in the world, more money than most of the world, and more power than anyone (everyone had to bow down to him) – and yet, he was miserable. How is it that one doesn't appreciate so much obvious good in their lives?

The Megillah tells us that one day, Haman came home and said (Esther 5:13), "All this (my power and riches) gives me no satisfaction as long as I see that Jew Mordecai sitting at the king's gate" - because there is one person (Mordechai) who did not bow down to him. He focused on what he didn't have instead of on what he did have. Where is this kind of behavior found?

The Gemara answers that it comes from the first couple, Adam and Chava. Hashem created the two and told them that they could have pretty much anything they wanted. They had Gan Eden at their disposal, the angels were pouring wine and roasting meat. The only thing they could not have partaken in was the Eitz Hada'as – the fruit from the tree of Knowledge, and they fell and ate. This concept of letting what we lack be our downfall was ingrained in mankind from the beginning of creation. From the sin of Eitz Hada'as, we understand Haman's attitude from the Torah. The big question is as follows. Haman was a Rasha (wicked man) so, of course, he wasn't happy with his lot.

However, we know that Adam and Chava were tremendous people; how is it they were not happy with their lot. What lesson can we glean from this and why is it learned specifically during the Purim story. Rabbi Yonasan Eibshitz, ZT"L (in Ya'aros Devash) explains as follows. Hashem tells Adam (Bereishis 2:17) "you must not eat of it (the Eitz Hada'as); for as soon as you eat of it, you shall Mos Tomus – die, die." Why the repetition of the word die? Then later (ibid. 3:4), the snake says the double language, "You are not going to die die." How can someone die twice? Rabbi Eibshitz explains that Adam wasn't just a person who wanted fruit. He was someone close to Hashem and wanted to know Him on the highest level. There are 50 levels of wisdom, and the 50th level of knowledge is understanding Hashem himself and that's a level that a person cannot reach while in this world; only one who leaves this world can achieve that. Adam thought that by eating from the Tree of Knowledge he would reach this exalted level of understanding Hashem.

Hashem told him that you will not be able to live if you eat from the tree, to which Adam countered that he was ready to die for this incredible privilege. All he wanted was to know Hashem; Hashem told him that it was not going to work. "If you go against My Word, you will not get to know Me in the next world, either – you will die both in this world and the next." You cannot reach greatness by not listening to Hashem's Will; one can't reach levels of knowledge in forbidden ways. The snake was telling Adam, "Don't worry – you won't die twice; you will reach the level you are seeking to aspire." Adam and his wife listened and faltered. Haman wanted to destroy the Jewish nation, but he knew it would not be a simple task to annihilate such a beautiful nation. So, he concocted an advanced plan to make a Seudah (meal) of

Achashveirosh, to get Jews to eat what they're not supposed to, where they're not supposed to, in order for Hashem to remember the sin of the Eitz Hada'as, which he hoped would bring death to the Jews.

To rectify this, the Sages instituted that we have the Mitzvah of Seudas Yom Tov, wherein we are supposed to reach a level through feasting of Ad D'Lo Yodah – a state of not knowing the difference between “blessed is Mordechai and cursed is Haman.” So much so, that we have a Mitzvah to provide others with the means in order to help them reach this level. We can now understand this seemingly peculiar Mitzvah of getting intoxicated.

Since the sin all started with Adam wanting to understand Hashem even while going against His Will. So, on Purim, we have the exact opposite goal: to lose our sense of knowledge/understanding and to do it because that's what Hashem said and that's His Will. We searched for da'as (knowledge) through food and now we give it up through food and say, “Hashem – it's not about us, but about doing what You want us to do because we love You.”

That being the case, we can now extrapolate a central lesson from the Yom Tov of Purim. With all this being said, we need to understand that the original sin, as explained by the Vilna Gaon above, started with Adam not being happy with the amount that he had, which then had to be corrected through Haman who was the ultimate prototype of one who does not appreciate their lot. Haman was not happy with his state of gashmeus (materialism), while Adam was not happy with his state of ruchneus (spirituality). There are many people who have a lot of good, either in ruchneus or gashmeus, and are searching for more to add to their “fortune.”

Although Hashem put this trait into humanity to help us strive for more and be greater, the negative side, authored by Haman/Yeitzer Harah compels one to discredit their successes (remember “all this is not worth anything to me,” was Haman's line). Haman had it all but one thing, and l'havdil, Adam had all the enjoyments of the world and the 49th level of knowledge but was still willing to die and give it all up for the one thing he did not have.

We must take this lesson into our lives. Hashem has given us so much good in both the spiritual and material arenas and we must be very appreciative to Him for all our blessings. In this way, we fix up our erroneous attitude. We are so happy and thankful for our lot to Hashem, like we say at the end of Modim D'Rabbanan, “[We are grateful for the privilege] of thankfully acknowledging You.” Even if we don't reach higher levels, we appreciate the ability to be able to appreciate. This way we can reach the level of more Simcha of Adar and Purim. This will herald the day of the ultimate Simcha with the coming of Mashiach when “our mouths will be filled with laughter.”

TORAH QUESTION OF THE WEEK BY RABBI MOSHE KLEIN: IS THE MIZBEACH MENTION MISPLACED?

Question: Why is the Mizbeach HaZahav (the Golden Altar) in this parsha when this parsha is primarily for the clothing of the Kohanim, and not about the vessels?

Answer: Really, bringing up the Mizbeach HaZahav should have been in Parshas Terumah, where all the vessels of the Mishkan were being discussed. Furthermore, we see in Parshas Vayakhel (Shemos 35:25) that it does just that, adding the Mizbeach with the other vessels. This question is asked by the Ramban, the Kli Yakar and others.

However, let's start with the Meshech Chochma, who writes that all the commandments of the Mishkan vessels were imperative to have the Mishkan itself. Without an Aron, there is no place for the Luchos. Without a Mizbeach, the Karbon Tamid can't be brought. Without clothing, the Kohen can't do the service. Without a Menorah, candles can't be lit. However, if the actual Mizbeach is missing, the incense can be burned on the floor. As the Gemara (Zevachim 59a) says, "the Mizbeach is just for a Mitzvah." This is why it's mentioned after all the Halachos, as it's not one of the vessels. Why is that so?

The Seforno writes that the purpose of the Mizbeach Haketores was not to bring Hashem's Schechinah (Presence). Furthermore, we see (Vayikrah 9:6) Moshe said through "bringing Karbonos the Glory of Hashem should appear." This is also not the goal of the Mizbeach, either. Rather, he writes that the purpose of the Mizbeach is to honor Hashem after He accepted all Karbonos in the morning and the evening. We are bringing a gift to Hashem, a special action towards our Creator – that's why we bring the Ketores (see Tehillim 96:9).

The Ramban, however, offers a somewhat different answer. Hashem (Shemos 29:43) states: "there I will meet with the Jews, and it shall be sanctified by My Presence." Since the honor of Hashem is there, we need to do something to glorify it. The Gemara (Shabbos 89a) comments that the Satan told Moshe the secret that Ketores holds back a plague. The Ramban explains that the Zohar (Vayikra 18) states that Ketores corresponds to Midas Hadin (the Attribute of Strict Justice), as the Pasuk (Devarim 33:10) states: "ישימו קטורה באפר" - They shall offer You incense to savor". This means that when there is anger (וחרה אפי' - ibid. 31:17) the ketores is placed in the anger to sweeten it. To simplify this deep idea, Hashem brought down His Shechina which is very powerful. It's the honor of Hashem. On our end, we need to make sure that the Midas Hadin won't be able to dominate.

The Steipler Gaon, Z"TL, wonders why is it that during the time of the Mishkan there were daily miracles like living in clouds and eating the Heavenly Manna, whereas today we don't see so many open miracles? He answers that when the Schechinah is in front of one in a revealed state, there is also an aspect of Midas Hadin. As such, one must be very careful not to activate that strict-justice trait. As such, the Ketores was there to take away Hashem's anger that was stemming from not living up to the standards.

Today, however, there are fewer miracles and hence there is less Midas Hadin, with which we would not be able to contend. Therefore, the honor of Hashem is also hidden. Furthermore, the Ramban adds that when Nadav and Avihu brought a forbidden Ketores (Vayikra 10:3), "Through those near to Me I show Myself holy, and gain glory before all the people", meaning Hashem's Midas Hadin would be manifest (equaling His Honor) which caused Nadav and Avihu to perish.

This is why Parshas Terumah does not discuss the Mizbeach Haketores, since it's coming after everything was set up and Hashem's Glory was already present. Now, the Ketores is needed so that people don't abuse or misuse (or not connect properly to) Hashem's Honor.

Why does the Ketores work that way, though? A few sources teach that Ketores comes from the word keshet (connection). Rabbi Reuven Schmeltzer (a prime Talmid of the great Rav Moshe Shapiro, ZT"L) explains that whenever there is a Midas Hadin and Hashem sees that we are truly connected through our souls, we mitigate the Din's effects. The way we accomplish that is by using the power of scent to smell, which is using our Neshama, this shows our innate connection. We recognize our holiness and gives us the power to keep the Midas Hadin - which demands that we acknowledge Hashem – at bay.

In conclusion, while we don't have the Ketores offering today, we do have the Pesukim that we read. These are meant to remind us how the Ketores held back the Midas Hadin, and that we are truly connected to Hashem whether we are "holding" in the Heavens or the mud. When a person takes a breath and remembers that this breath emanates from Hashem who breathed life into him, that will serve as inspiration for a person to keep going and growing in their spiritual life.

This week's question: Was the cheit (sin) of the Eigel Hazahav, including Aharon HaKohen's involvement, considered actual avodah zarah, or was there a different dimension to their sin? What exactly was their mistake, and how is it understood Hashkafically (in Jewish thought)?

YESODEI HASHALOM - RASHI AND SHALOM BAYIS BY RABBI YITZ GREENFIELD:
TETZAVEH

In this week's Parsha we learn about the holiness of the Mizbeach. The Torah (Shemos 29:37) tells us, "For seven days you should cleanse the Mizbeach and consecrate it; the Mizbeach should be holy of holies; whatever touches the Mizbeach becomes holy."

Rashi asks what does the Holiness of the Mizbeach mean? He explains to us that Whatever touches the Mizbeach is holy, which means that even an invalid offering that was placed on the Mizbeach, becomes holy and fit to be offered up to Hashem; it is not taken down. Once it touches the Mizbeach it is transformed. This is directly followed by Hashem telling us (Shemos 29:38-39), "This is what you should offer on the Mizbeach sheep within their first year; two each day continually. You should offer one sheep in the morning and the second sheep you should offer in the afternoon."

Rav Shalom Reuven Feinstein, Shlita, (in Nahar Sholom) asks why it was not sufficient for us to bring one karbon tamid - one each day. Why would we need two? He answers this question by saying that we certainly need two karbonos: one brought on the Mizbeach in the morning, and one brought in the afternoon, because the bringing of the karbon tamid shows our certainty that all is from Hashem. In the morning when we are filled with hope that our day goes

according to plan, we bring a karbon tamid. We declare that everything that will happen today is from Hashem.

Then, in the afternoon, when our day is winding down and things might not have gone the way we planned, then we also bring a tamid to recognize that it is completely from Hashem. Even if our plan was not Hashem's plan, we are accepting that Hashem knows best and RUNS the show. Rashi's comment about the Mizbeach being Kodesh Kedoshim now fits perfectly. Hashem decides which karbon gets brought to the Beis Hamikdash.

So, if a karbon made it to the Mizbeach that was Hashem's Plan and even if on the Mizbeach the karbon doesn't look too good, since all is from Hashem, we do not take it down from the holy status it attained. We leave it on the Mizbeach, trusting that Hashem doesn't make mistakes and just by touching the Mizbeach, the karbon became holy. The same goes for our marriages. Many times, we might observe our spouse doing or saying something that we think is less than holy or is below our spouse's dignity. Instead of getting upset and rejecting our spouse, we can take a step back and realize that Hashem gave us our spouse as a gift, as someone who can help us grow and as someone with whom we can reach sheleimus (our personal perfection).

Therefore, it behooves us to always treat our spouse with respect, and to approach our spouse with an attitude of love, kindness, compassion, and understanding. Just as the mizbeach is like the kodesh hakedoshim and anything that touches it is holy, so too our marriages are kodesh and anything that has to do with our relationship is on an elevated level. Just like we bring a karbon tamid in the morning and in the afternoon, so too, in our marriages, in the morning we inquire how our spouse slept and wish them a good day.

When we return home to our spouse, we again realize what a spectacular person we married, and we again express our love, care, and concern to our spouse as we ask about how their day went, and we give them a listening ear and the support we know Hashem wants us to provide. It is not always easy to keep our eye on the ball but let's make, but it is essential. Let us make a supreme effort to see our spouse as the treasured gift that they are and treat them accordingly. The dividends are worth the effort. May Hashem bless our homes with the with the light of Shalom Bayis.

Rabbi Greenfield, MS MFT is the author of the torah marriage toolbox course. Create more Shalom Bayis in your home Visit torahmarriage.com or email rabbigreenfield@gmail.com

SHORT AND SWEET STORY OF THE WEEK BY YONI SCHWARTZ

Rav Boruch Mordechai Ezrachi once visited a modern high school. As the boys were learning Gemara, one 12th grader's intellectual abilities stood out. Hoping to recruit this boy to his Yeshiva, Rav Ezrachi approached him with the offer. The boy politely declined. Shortly after, Rav Ezrachi discovered that this boy was on his way to become an Olympic swimmer and challenged him to contest on condition that if he wins, the boy will learn in his Yeshiva. The boy accepted for 3 o'clock the next day. Word about the competition spread like wildfire. Everybody

in the town showed up. 3:00 PM came and the race was supposed to start but the Rav was a no-show. 3:15... 3:30... 3:40... still nobody. Finally, 3:45, the doors opened with the Rav in his full-body swimsuit. The race began.

To everybody's surprise, it was neck and neck. It was a real nailbiter wondering who would win. Rolling over, everybody was shocked when the Rav beat the future Olympiad. Elul Zman came, and the boy began yeshiva and learned with incredible diligence. Shortly after, the boy asked Rav Ezrachi, "K'vod HaRav, I have two questions. How did you beat me and why did you come forty-five minutes late?" Rav Mizrachi took his hand and responded, "I had no hope of beating you. For forty-five minutes I davened my heart out to Hashem: 'Hashem! Please help me save a Jewish soul and bring your child closer to You.' That was the only way I could beat you."

Comment: In this week's Parsha, Tetzaveh, we read Hashem tell Moshe (Shemos 27:20), "Command the Jewish people to take for me pure olive oil, crushed for the lighting and kindle the continuous candle." In the absence of the Beis Hamikdash, though we lack the Menorah, we can still fulfill this commandment's spirit. Each time we feel crushed, instead of looking down to Earth and seeking physical pleasure to escape, let's look up to Heaven and pray, opening our hearts to Hashem. This way, we rekindle that candle in our hearts' chambers and elevate life's stumbling blocks to stepping stones for reaching greater heights.

SPLENDID QUOTE with RABBI MENACHEM LOMNER

"When we help others, it is our greatest benefit."

The stones that were set in the Choshen were called avnei miluim. Rashi (Shemos 25:7) says that they were there to fill the grooves in the gold. The obvious question is that the grooves in the gold were made to set the precious stones into; so, why would the stones be called "filler" stones?

This may come to teach us that there will be times when we are filling in for someone or something and we are there to help. Yet, while we are helping others, the situation is there specifically for us. The setting was made specifically for us even though we are there to "fill in".

RABBI DOVID ORLOFSKY ON THE PARSHA - TETZAVEH - DO YOUR JOB

Parshas Tetzaveh is notable not only for what it contains but also for what it lacks. From the point of Moshe Rabbeinu's birth in the second chapter of Shemos throughout the entire journey in the wilderness, Moshe's name appears in every single Parsha...except for this week, Tetzaveh. That, of course, is not a true statement, because there are Parshiyos in Devarim where Moshe's name does not appear, but that is because he is speaking – Moshe obviously did not refer to himself in the third person. In this Parsha, Moshe is not speaking, and his name is not mentioned. This is not a coincidence; the question is, why?

The answer is that in next week's Parsha, after the episode of the Golden Calf, Hashem wanted to annihilate the Jewish people. However, due to Moshe's pleading, the Jews earned a second chance. When Moshe was pleading with Hashem, he said (Shemos 32:32), "And now, if You would just forgive their sin! - but if not, erase me from Your book that You have written". Hashem said, "Okay - I will erase you." Hashem forgives the Jewish people and takes Moshe's name from one Parsha because everything one says makes a difference. Why was Tetzaveh the Parsha?

One answer is that Moshe said, "that You have written," – so the last Parsha that was written before this declaration was Parshas Tetzaveh. Of course, it's more than that, because Moshe debated with Hashem on Har Sinai for seven days. In the end, when all his arguments are exhausted, Moshe told Hashem to give the Torah through Aharon, as he is the oldest brother and Moshe don't want to take the honor away from him. Hashem said, "Don't worry Aharon will be the Kohen." Rashi (Shemos 4:14) writes that Moshe was supposed to be the Kohen, but he lost it because he was fighting with Hashem for a week.

That qualifies one to be the leader, as Avraham had to plead with Hashem to spare Sodom. This is not a Kohen's job. A Kohen is a messenger who is supposed to do what he is told. This is why in the conflict between Korach and Moshe over who should be the Kohen Gadol, Aharon is not even in the conversation. When Hashem told Moshe he will be the leader, He also said that Aharon would be happy in his heart for Moshe (see Rashi, *ibid*). This is why Aharon got to wear the Choshen (breastplate). Moshe spent an entire week fighting with Hashem so that Aharon should be the leader and therefore, he lost the priesthood. Yet, it went to his brother for whom he was fighting the entire time.

Moshe was so happy that Aharon got to be the Kohen that if Moshe had to step aside, it makes sense that it is in the Parsha where Aharon becomes Kohen Gadol, and his sons become Kohanim. This was all part of his self-sacrifice for his brother and for the Jewish nation. This makes Moshe the leader, while Aharon is the messenger for us to Hashem. Each of us has a job to either contend on behalf of the Jews or faithfully carry out Hashem's Will. If we know who we are, the Jewish people will be successful.

The email distribution of the Torah Sweets is dedicated by Mr. Moshe Chaim Guttman in honor of his wife, Rachel Zahava