

THE CHABAD WEEKLY

Vol 5, # 20

Chabad of North Beverly Hills, 409 Foothill Rd. Beverly Hills, 90210

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PURIM INSIGHTS



What is the secret of our people's survival?

By the Grace of G-d, 7th of Adar, 5713 [1953], Brooklyn, N.Y.

This week's Torah portion, Tetzaveh, describes the special clothing worn by the High Priest and the other priests as well as the consecration of the priests and the altar. Among the vestments of the High Priest was the ephod, an apron-like garment. On the ephod were two stones, concerning which the Torah states: "You shall take two onyx stones, and engrave on them the names of the Children of Israel [the Twelve Tribes]. Six of their names on the one stone, and the names of the remaining six on the other stone, according to their birth."

The Torah emphasizes that the names must be engraved in correct birth order. However, Rashi and Maimonides disagree on what this means. Rashi opines that the Tribes were listed according to the order they were born to their father Jacob. But according to Maimonides, they were engraved in the order they were born to their respective mothers: first the sons of Leah, then the sons of Bilha, then Zilpa's sons and finally Rachel's.

In order to understand the crux of Rashi's and Maimonides' disagreement, we must understand why the names were engraved on the ephod in the first place. The two onyx stones were intended to be a "remembrance" before G-d: "Aaron shall bear their names before the L-rd upon his two shoulders as a memorial." When G-d would see the names of the Twelve Tribes, it would remind Him of their righteousness, as it were.

This righteousness depended on the Tribes' unity. When the Jewish people are united in brotherly love into a single entity, they are deserving of G-d's blessing. When, G-d forbid, there is dissension and strife among Jews, G-d withholds His blessing. The names of the Twelve Tribes were engraved on the ephod to express the Jewish people's unity.

However, there are two different kinds of unity. When the Tribes are counted according to the chronological order of their birth, without regard for who their mothers were, it indicates a level of unity that supersedes individual differences or groupings. All the Tribes were the sons of Jacob. When they are counted according to their mothers, they are unified, albeit divided into disparate groups.

The unity of the Jewish people exists on both of these levels. On one level, we are unified because all Jewish souls have a common Source. On another level, we unite into a single entity - the Jewish people - as disparate, diverse individuals.

Thus Rashi's opinion reflects the first level of unity, whereas Maimonides' opinion expresses the second. For Jewish unity exists on both planes simultaneously. Adapted from Vol. 36 of Likutei Sichot From: L'Chaim 5760, #607)

The story of Purim, as related in the Book of Esther, gives us a clear analysis of the "Jewish problem." Being dispersed over 127 provinces and lands, their own still in ruins, the Jews undoubtedly differed from one another in custom, garment and tongue according to the place of their dispersal, very much in the same way as Jews in different lands differ nowadays. Yet, though there were Jews who would conceal their Jewishness, Haman, the enemy of the Jews, recognized the essential qualities and characteristics of the Jews which made all of them, with or without their consent, into "one people," namely, "their laws are different from those of any other people" (Book of Esther 3:8).

Hence, in his wicked desire to annihilate the Jews, Haman seeks to destroy "all the Jews, young and old, children and women." Although there were in those days, too, Jews who strictly adhered to the Torah and Mitzvoth, and Jews whose religious ties with their people were weak, or who sought to assimilate themselves, yet none could escape the classification of belonging to that "one people," and every one was included in Haman's cruel decree.

In all ages there were Hamans, yet we have outlived them, thank G-d. Wherein lies the secret of our survival? The answer will be evident from the following illustration. When a scientist seeks to ascertain the laws governing a certain phenomenon, or to discover the essential properties of a certain element in nature, he must undertake a series of experiments under the most varied conditions in order to discover those properties or laws which pertain under all conditions alike. No true scientific law can be deduced from a minimum number of experiments, or from experiments under similar or only slightly varied conditions, for the results as to what is essential and what is secondary or quite unimportant would then not be conclusive.

The same principle should be applied to our people. It is one of the oldest in the world, beginning its national history from the Revelation at Mount Sinai, some 3300 years ago. In the course of these long centuries our people has lived under extremely varied conditions, in most different times and different places all over the world. If we wish to discover the essential elements making up the cause and very basis of the existence of our

people and its unique strength, we must conclude that it is not its peculiar physical or intrinsic mental characteristics, not its tongue, manners and customs (in a wider sense), nor even its racial purity (for there were times in the early history of our people, as well as during the Middle Ages and even recent times, when whole ethnic groups and tribes have become proselytes and part of our people).

The essential element which unites our "dispersed and scattered people" and makes it "one people" throughout its dispersion and regardless of time, is the Torah and Mitzvoth, the Jewish way of life which has remained basically the same throughout the ages and in all places. The conclusion is clear and beyond doubt: It is the Torah and Mitzvoth which made our people indestructible on the world scene in the face of massacres and pogroms aiming at our physical destruction, and in the face of ideological onslaughts of foreign cultures aiming at our spiritual destruction.

Purim teaches us the age-old lesson, which has been verified even most recently, to our sorrow, that no manner of assimilationism, not even such which is extended over several generations, provides an escape from the Hamans and Hitlers; nor can any Jew sever his ties with his people by attempting such an escape.

On the contrary: Our salvation and our existence depend precisely upon the fact that "their laws are different from those of any other people." Purim reminds us that the strength of our people as a whole, and of each individual Jew and Jewess, lies in a closer adherence to our ancient spiritual heritage which contains the secret of harmonious life, hence of a healthy and happy life. All other things in our spiritual and temporal life must be free from any contradiction to the basis and essence of our existence, and must be attuned accordingly in order to make for the utmost harmony, and add to our physical and spiritual strength, both of which go hand in hand in Jewish life.

With best wishes for a joyous Purim, and may we live to see a world free of Hamans and all types of Amalekites, the enemies of the Jews, of their body, soul and faith, Cordially yours, [Signed: Menachem Schneerson] . - virtualpurim.org

The following is well-known and is a tradition, regarding the Kavanot (mystical "intentions") in Davening: For those intellectually incapable of meditating on those Kavanot (either because they lack knowledge, or because they cannot remember the specific Kavanot during prayer) it is sufficient that they keep one general Kavana in mind:
That his prayer be heard by G-d, with all the Kavanot described in the Kabbala literature. (FROM REBBE'S HAYOM YOM, ADAR 11)

The greatest gift of love is to turn a blind eye. The most essential glue of any union is the ability of at least one of you to say, "I understand. It's okay. Let's just get on with things." After all, that is what we continuously say to our selves, out of our great self-adoration.

-From the teachings of the Lubavitcher Rebbe; Compiled by Tzvi Freeman

PURIM SCHEDULE - 5762
Monday Evening, February 25

Maariv.....6:15pm

Followed by ...

Megilla Reading, Music, Dancing, Food, Children's Program

Tuesday, February 26

First Shacharis.....6:00 am
 First Megilla.....6:25 am
 Second Shacharis...7:00 am
 Second Megilla... 7:30 am
 Third Megilla..... 9:00 am
 Mincha..... 4:00 pm
 Maariv... 8:30 pm

EVERYONE IS INVITED!

MONDAY- TANIS ESTHER

FAST BEGINS: 5:15 AM
MINCHA: 5:30 PM
MACHATZIS HASHEKEL

DAILY MINYONIM
Shacharis: Mon -Fri: 6:00 AM & 7:30 AM
Sunday: 9:00 AM

Mincha/Maariv: 5:40 PM

There will be no classes on Monday - Tuesday, February 25 - 26.

PURIM SEUDA

The shul will be having a communal Purim Seuda on
Tuesday, February 26 at
 **Nessim's Restaurant** 
5:00 PM
 For reservations please call (310) 271-9063

SHABBAT PARSHAT TETZAVEH
Parshas Zachor
February 22, 2002

Candlelighting: 5:25 PM
Friday Mincha: 5:40 PM

LATEST TIME FOR SHEMA: 9:17 AM

SHABBAT MORNING

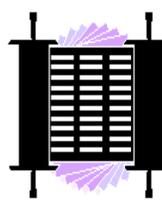
- Tanya 8:45 AM
- Shacharit 9:30 AM followed by Kiddush & Cholent
- Megilas Esther 4:30 PM
- Mincha 5:15 PM followed by Seuda Shlishit
- Shabbat ends 6:25 PM

Kidush is being sponsored by Rabbi and Mrs. Dovid Sulami.

Seuda Shlishit is being sponsored by Mr. Eliyahu Hazany in memory of his Father's yartzeheit.

Yartzeits: Helen Dattels - Adar 12, Sabina Spira - Adar 13, Emanuel Hazany - Adar 13, Chana Minkowitz - Adar 15.

Happy Birthday to Moshe Mahtaban, Aaron Yitzchak Mishael, Edward Tanenbaum, Rohda Mandel,



A Sefer Torah is being written in memory of the fathers of Rabbi & Mrs. Shusterman.
 Anyone who is interested in participating should contact Mendel Shusterman at (310) 497-2643

GOOD SHABBOS AND HAVE A FRELICHEN PURIM!