

A Taste of Text: Source based learning for Shabbat

This weekly sheet is brought to you by Rabbi Dr. Moshe Freedman of Northwood United Synagogue in conjunction with Shapell's/Darché Noam

PARSHAT TETZAVEH

DVAR TORAH: AMALEK ON BAVA BATRA 46B!

Amalek appears on Bava Batra 46b in a surprising place.

Periodically, in our editions of the Gemara, the word סימן appears in parenthesis along with a mnemonic, either a group of words or an abbreviation. For instance, the abbreviation עמלק שסד"ך appears in the text of Megillah 11b, in a passage about kings (like Achashveirosh) who ruled over the entire world, to help remember כורש, שלמה, סנחריב, דריוש.

On Bava Batra 46b there is a passage about people we have business relationships with but are still valid to testify about. The Gemara deals with an ערב, a guarantor on a loan, a מלוה, a lender, a לוקח, a purchaser, and a קבלן, a contractor. To help remember the four cases, the Gemara includes, in parentheses, the words עמלק סימן. The four letters of the word עמלק help us memorize the names of the four cases. This seems to be a very strange choice of a mnemonic. One would not have expected such an evil nation to appear in such a holy place. Rav Asher Weiss, shlita, refers us to Rav Yaakov Emden's notes on the Gemara: This is an especially surprising reference, he writes, since we were commanded to "Erase the name of Amalek!"

However, he continues, the opposite is true. The Gemara specifically chose this word as a strategy to overcome the power of Amalek. "If you encounter the disgusting one (the evil inclination)," says Rabbi Yishmael in Kiddushin 30b, "Drag him into the Beit Midrash." Once you have him under your control, sap out whatever spark of holiness kept him going and he'll either dissolve or explode. We can vanquish the inner Amalek through strengthening the world of the Beit Midrash, through intensely living and learning Torah.

There is another surprising group of words that Amalek is an abbreviation for. The Gra points out that the letters of עמלק also stand for: לוי, משה, עמרם, and קהת. Amalek, explains Rav Asher Weiss, wants to attack the core of the core, the essence of the essence – Moshe, son of Amram, son of Kehat, son of Levi.

But the same Moshe is also the key to the victory over Amalek. Moshe stood with upraised hands as Israel fought the war against Amalek; just looking at him inspired Israel. The attack by Amalek came in the wake of Refidim, when Israel weakened in Torah and became vulnerable (see Midrash Tanchuma Shemot, Beshalach 25). Renewed intensity about Torah is the key to victory.

The Gra tells us another remez, another hint: the end of those same four names spells the word מיתה, death: משה, קהת, לוי, עמרם. The death of Amalek comes about through connecting with the essence, through the Torah brought down to us by Moshe, son of Amram, son of Kehat, son of Levi.

SOURCE GUIDE: SHOSHANAT YAAKOV

After reading Megillat Esther, both at night and during the day, we say a piyut, a poem about Purim and the Megillah. The first line of that poem presents a number of difficulties:

<p>1. Shoshanat Yaakov The lily of Yaakov was exuberant and joyous when they, together, saw Mordechai's techelet.</p>	<p>שושנת יעקב שושנת יעקב צהלה ושמחה בראותם יחד תכלת מרדכי.</p>
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שושנת יעקב – Israel is likened to a lily (some translate שושנה as a rose) in Shir Hashirim 2:2.

צהלה ושמחה – This expression, as well as the rest of the sentence, alludes to the following verse:

<p>2. Esther 8:15-16 (15) Mordechai went out before the king with royal garb, blue and white, and a large golden crown and a wrap of linen and purple; and the city of Shushan was exuberant and rejoiced. (16) And the Jews had light, happiness, joy, and honor.</p>	<p>אסתר ח:טו-טז (טו) ומרדכי יצא מלפני המלך בלבוש מלכות תכלת וזָהָב וְעֶטְרוֹת וְהָב גְּדוּלָה וְתִכְרִיף בּוּץ וְאַרְגָּמָן וְהַעִיר שׁוֹשַׁן צְהֵלָה וְשִׂמְחָה: (טז) לַיהוּדִים הָיְתָה אוֹרָה וְשִׂמְחָה וְשׂוֹן וְיִקָּר:</p>
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Difficulties

- The people Israel are likened to many things in Tanach. Why is the expression שושנת יעקב used here to describe the people of Israel?
- Many words for joy appear in Tanach. Why are צהלה ושמחה chosen, both in this poem and in the verse?
- Why did seeing Mordechai's תכלת create such joy? Doesn't the verse also mention his golden crown and white and purple clothing?

The Flexible Shoshanah and the Unfading Techelet

The Shem Mishmuel (Purim 5673 and 5675, in Shemot Volume II) quotes his father the Avnei Nezer's approach to the first line of Shoshanat Yaakov. He explains why Israel is referred to here as a lily and why it was Mordechai's techelet that inspired such joy.

The lily has a special characteristic:

<p>3. Rashi on Tehillim 45:1 They made this psalm in honor of the Torah scholars who are as soft as lilies ...</p>	<p>רש"י על תהילים מה:א למנצח על שושנים - לכבוד תלמידי חכמים יסדו השיר הזה שהם רכים כשושנים ...</p>
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The lily is soft, pliable, flexible, and an appropriate image for those who are humble and open to change, like talmidei chachamim. Israel, in that generation, was also aptly referred to as the lily of Yaakov, for they too had just gone through a radical national change. They prayed, fasted, repented, and were miraculously saved through an awesome miracle. Our sages (Shabbat 88a) view the period of the Megillah as a second acceptance of the Torah.

However, along with radical change comes a worry that the change will not last. The baal teshuvah worries that the same flexibility and openness to change that allowed him to repent might work in the opposite direction. How does he know that he won't revert back to his old behavior? How does Israel know that they won't, God forbid, revert back to the pre-Purim miracle state?

The techelet, the blue dye that Mordechai wore, also had a special characteristic:

The techelet dye was permanent, unfading, and that set it apart from fake dyes (Menachot 43). Techelet as an image represents a type of tzadik whose righteousness is fixed and unwavering.

Am Yisrael was afraid that their change would not be permanent, but they then looked at Mordechai their leader, and their worry was erased. He was a techelet type. Mordechai did not bow down, and would never bow down – לא יכרע ולא ישתחוה, he would not (the future tense is used here) bend the knee or prostrate himself before Haman. Mordechai was like Yosef, holding his level despite the daily approaches of Potifar's wife in the Egyptian cesspool. Mordechai was an anchor who would help them hold on to their change.

שושנת יעקב – the people of Israel who had radically changed, like the soft and pliable lily – were joyous when they saw תכלת מרדכי – the unwaveringly righteous Mordechai their leader who would help them hold on to their new level.

Three Types of Joy

This approach, adds the Shem Mishmuel, explains the use here of שמחה and צהלה. To understand these two verbs we must distinguish between three different types of joy:

<p>4. Shem Mishmuel Purim 5675 Simchah comes to a person in stages and with yishuv hada'at – through peace of mind, with calm and composure. Sasson is joy that comes suddenly, like one who finds something unexpectedly. This is expressed in the verse, "I am joyous (sas anochi) over Your word like one who finds great treasure (spoils)" (Tehillim 119:162). It seems to me that tzahalah comes with absolutely no intention – even more than sasson. For one who finds a lost object at least intends to pick it up. But tzahalah comes to a person automatically, even more than he his spirit's capabilities. He is compelled to cry out in exuberance.</p>	<p>שם משמואל פורים תשעה שמחה היא הבאה לאדם בהדרגה ובישוב הדעת, וששון הוא הבא פתאום כמו המוצא מציאה שלא עלה על דעתו מקודם כענין שכתוב (תהלים קי"ט) שש אנכי על אמרתך כמוצא שלל רב. ונראה כי צהלה היא בלי ישוב הדעת כלל עוד יותר מששון, כי המוצא מציאה הוא מכוון את דעתו עכ"פ להגביה, וצהלה היא הבאה אל האדם ממילא עוד יותר מכלי כח הקיבול לשום מעצור לרוחו אלא גורם המית קול עליזות.</p>
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שמחה – Simchah develops. It is the product of thought, introspection, expectation, and comes in stages.

ששון – Sasson comes on suddenly, when someone encounters something great but unexpected.

צהלה – Tzahalah involuntarily comes to a person, causing a burst of exuberance.

Tzahalah, that comes to a person as if from nowhere, is in danger of fading away, as unexpectedly as it came. Simchah, on the other hand, has deep roots and is lasting. Israel, through their connection to Mordechai, had an awesome combination of simchah and tzahalah. They had the intensity of tzahalah with the lasting quality of simchah. This quality of being lasting and persistent, unfading, was shared by Eisav:

<p>5. Amos 1:11 Thus says God: On three sins of Edom (Eisav) ... his rage is preserved forever.</p>	<p>עמוס א:יא כֹּה אָמַר ה' עַל שְׁלֹשָׁה פְּשָׁעֵי אֱדוֹם ... וְעִבְרָתוֹ שְׁמֶרָה נֶצַח:</p>
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Mordechai triumphed over Haman – Ha'agagi, the descendent of Agag, king of Amalek, descended from Eisav-Edom – using Edom's own power, persistence, netzach. When he triumphed over Amalek he "took" that trait and brought it into holiness. Not only did Haman fall through getting executed, but Mordechai extracted his spiritual power and left Haman an empty shell.

This is how the Shem Mishmuel explains the Chanukah miracle. The Chashmonaim were victorious over the Greeks by using their brazenness (chutzpah) against them, sapping out their spiritual source.

SENSING THE INNER ESSENCE BY RABBI MENDEL FARBER

The Ramban asks why the golden altar, the Mizbach Haketoret, appears at the end of Parshat Tetzaveh instead of in Parshat Terumah along with the Aron, Shulchan, and Menorah. He answers (to the best of my understanding) that whereas the Shulchan and Menorah bring the Shechinah, bestowing physical and spiritual blessings and influence, the Mizbach Haketoret maintains the Shechinah.

How and why is the incense altar different than the other vessels?

The Shulchan represents our eating. We consume the food we eat, ingesting its physicality. The Menorah represents our sight. We observe objects through their exterior. What does the golden incense altar, the Mizbach Haketoret represent and what role does it play?

The incense altar creates a pleasant aroma, adding internal beauty to the Mishkan's external beauty. The smell of the incense adds a layer of beauty to the Mishkan, similar to the way music adds a layer of beauty to a message. A message delivered in a monotone relates its content; but when communicated musically, it reveals the feelings beneath the message. The incense altar reveals an inner dimension of the Mishkan.

When we smell we sense the pnimiyut, the internal dimension of the object. A flower that gives off a pleasant aroma isn't consumed by the one who smells it. And it isn't through seeing the flower that a person enjoys its essence. It is through the sense of smell that a person understands that there is something about the object that isn't external. We are told in the Creation story, (Bereishit 2:7), **וַיִּפַּח בְּאַפָּיו** **וַיִּשְׁמַת חַיִּים**, "Hashem breathed into man's nostrils a Neshamah, a soul of life." The nose through which our Neshamot entered into us is sensitive to the inner essence of things, their smell.

When a Kohen entered the Beit Hamikdash he saw three vessels. When he saw not only a Shulchan and a Menorah on his right and left, but also a Mizbach Haketoret in the middle of the Mishkan, he remembered that our world has more to it than physicality and exteriors, more than the food we eat and the objects we see. He is reminded that directly behind the Parochet curtain is an Aron with the invisible Luchot inside of it. The incense reveals that there is an inner essence that is the source of life for all we consume and see.

This is what the Ramban teaches us: The Shechinah is brought by the Menorah and Shulchan, but only by the Kohanim sensing that there is a Neshamah behind the Parochet can the Shechinah be maintained. The Mizbach Haketoret reminds them of that inner essence.

*This publication is compiled by the staff and Rabbonim at **Shapells/Yeshivat Darché Noam** for men and **Midreshet Rachel v'Chaya Seminary** for women in Jerusalem. Find out more about the **married couples' programme** and the **Pathways Israel** and **Pathways Plus** programmes offered at www.darchenoam.org +972-2-651-1178, 5 Beit Hakerem Street, Jerusalem.*

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