

INSIGHTS

Into The Weekly Parsha

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This week's Insights is dedicated in loving memory of Rabbi Menachem Manis (Emanuel) ben Shalom Aryeh Holzer. "May his Neshama have an Aliya!"

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Based on the Torah of our Rosh HaYeshiva HaRav Yochanan Zweig

PARSHAS TETZAVEH

Hearing is Believing

Make the robe of the ephod completely out of sky-blue wool...on the bottom place pomegranates made of sky-blue, purple, and crimson wool and in between there shall be gold bells...the sound shall be heard when he enters the Kodesh before Hashem... (28:31-35)

This week's *parsha* continues on the theme of the Mishkan by introducing the clothes that the kohanim were required to wear during their service. The Kohen Gadol had four additional garments that he wore during part of his service. One of these, known as the robe, had a unique aspect to it: the bottom hem was ringed with 36 bells, which made a gentle ringing tone when he walked.

Bal Haturim, in his commentary (ad loc), points out that there are three places in the scriptures where the word "וּנְשָׁמַע"—it shall be heard" appears. The first time is when Bnei Yisroel were at Har Sinai and they famously responded to Hashem's query as to whether they agreed to accept the Torah: "נַעֲשֶׂה וְנִשְׁמָע—we will do and we will hear" (*Shemos* 24:7). This was, ostensibly, a tremendous act of devotion to Hashem; "we will observe the *mitzvos* and then try to understand them."

This is generally understood to mean that we are committed to accepting the responsibilities of the Torah without even knowing the specific requirements. This is akin to signing a contract without reading all of the terms contained inside. This was in stark contrast to the other nations of the world who first responded to Hashem by asking what was contained in the Torah.

The second occurrence of "וּנְשָׁמַע" is the one in this week's *parsha*. The third occurrence is in Megillas Esther, when King Achashveirosh's advisor told him that the disrespect shown to the king by his wife Vashti is an affront to the entire country.

This advisor (according to some it was Haman) recommended that letters be sent out to all corners of the kingdom "and it will be heard throughout his kingdom [the king's command that woman are to treat their husbands with respect]" (*Esther* 1:20).

However, the three occurrences of this word do not all mean exactly the same; by both the Mishkan and Megillas Esther the word means "it will be heard," while by Har Sinai the word means "we will hear (later)." Why should that instance have a different meaning? Even more problematic; if "נַעֲשֶׂה וְנִשְׁמָע" is such an expression of devotion to Hashem because we are committing to do before even understanding the reason, then the ultimate expression of loyalty would be just *נַעֲשֶׂה* without *וּנִשְׁמָע*, which Bnei Yisroel said earlier (see *Shemos* 24:3)!

Bnei Yisroel were actually making a very profound statement; when they said *נַעֲשֶׂה וְנִשְׁמָע* they didn't mean "we will understand the 'why' later." They were saying, "Hashem, we trust You. We know that what You want is in our best interest. We are confident that when we perform the *mitzvos* it will be inherently understood why it is good for us, because we know that everything You ask of us is for our own good. From observing the *mitzvos* it will be heard how it is beneficial to us." Now, all three occurrences of *נַעֲשֶׂה וְנִשְׁמָע* mean exactly the same "it will be heard."

This concept, that everything that Hashem asks of us is merely for our own benefit, is lost on many who find observance of



mitzvos overwhelmingly repressive. They are like little children who cannot understand why their parents are constantly restricting them: "Don't run into the street. Don't play with fire. Don't drink bleach," or "Clean up your room," "Write thank you notes," etc. They lack the perspective that everything their parents ask of them is merely for their own long-term benefit. So too we must appreciate that whatever Hashem asks of us is solely for our sake.

Did You Know...

This week's *parsha* discusses the details of the Kohen Gadol's many garments, including perhaps the most recognizable piece, the *choshen* (breastplate). This richly embroidered vestment, ornamented with the twelve precious stones of the twelve tribes, was secured to the *ephod* (double-apron) in the center of the chest. There were also two stones on the shoulder straps of the *ephod* that supported the *choshen* (*Shemos* 28:7-28).

The Gemara (*Yoma* 21b) relates that both the *choshen* and *ephod* were lost when the Babylonians sacked Yerushalayim, in the year 3338 (423 BCE). Both of them have been missing ever since.

Several years ago, a story began to circulate that an old woman in Africa possessed a stone

Love Hate Relationship

It shall be that when Hashem, your God, gives you rest from all your enemies all around, in the land that Hashem, your God, gives you as an inheritance to possess it, you shall wipe out the memory of Amalek from under the heaven... (25:19)

There is a *mitzvah* to recall what our archenemy, the nation of Amalek, did to us: They brazenly carried out a brutal sneak attack from the rear when Bnei Yisroel left Egypt. Therefore, we are commanded to never forget their treachery.

But the verse quoted above is a little difficult to understand. The *possuk* declares that when Hashem has enabled us to conquer all our enemies we must obliterate the very memory of Amalek. However, if Hashem has already helped us defeat all our enemies, then why is Amalek still a threat to be obliterated? Are they not included in the category of “your enemies”?

At Esther’s second party with both Achashveirosh and Haman, Esther begins to explain why she invited them both to the party. Her narrative begins with a tale of woe that “her people” have endured: “We have been sold to be killed and forever lost.” Achashveirosh implores her to tell him who would have dared perpetrate such a terrible thing. Esther accuses:

“איש צר ואויב – המן הרע הזה”

The adversary and enemy is the wicked Haman!” (*Megillas Esther* 7:7).

On the surface, this seems like a straightforward accusation. But the Gemara gives us an absolutely stunning version of what actually happened. The Gemara (*Megillah* 16b) says that Esther got up and with her finger points accusingly to Achashveirosh! An angel then appeared and redirected her finger to point at Haman, at which point Esther adds the words “the wicked Haman.”

In other words, the adversary and enemy that she intended to blame was Achashveirosh himself but the angel redirected her accusation. While it’s true that Achashveirosh is the one who sold out the Jewish people to Haman for obliteration, this interpretation is almost difficult to even fathom. Where do

Chazal see anywhere in the text an allusion to indicate that was what transpired?

The Torah uses two very different words to describe an enemy: **אויב** and **שונא**. An **אויב** is an enemy who feels enmity because you have something that he wants. Remarkably, the word for one who loves you is very similar, both in spelling and phonetically – **אוהב**. The reason for this is the similarities in the concepts. Both seek to connect; a friend who loves you wants to be with you, while an enemy wants to absorb all that you are within himself. Thus, both the feelings of love and enmity come from the same place – the desire to make a union.

A **שונא** is someone far different. The source of his hatred is derived from his repulsion for you and everything you stand for. He doesn’t want to absorb you within himself, he wants to obliterate you from existence. In fact, he has no self-interest to attack you other than to seek your absolute annihilation. Amalek is this type of enemy. When Bnei Yisroel left Egypt they are described by Chazal as a boiling cauldron – anyone who attacked them would surely be severely scalded. But Amalek didn’t care; their hatred of Bnei Yisroel compelled them to attack, even if it meant their own destruction.

That’s why when the Torah says that Hashem will give you respite from “**אויבך**” it doesn’t include Amalek. This is also how Chazal know that Esther was referring to Achashveirosh – she said “**אויב**” an enemy who is motivated by self-interest. Achashveirosh was motivated by self-interest, which is why he sold-out the Jews to Haman. Thus, Chazal knew that Esther really intended to accuse Achashveirosh, until the angel came and redirected her finger to point at Haman. Had she intended to accuse Haman she would have said **איש צר ושונא**.

that she claimed to be one of the two shoulder stones of the *ephod*. The claim was that an ancestor, a Knight Templar named Croiz Arneet deTarn Auret, received the stone from a kohen in gratitude for his part in freeing Yerushalayim, and he passed it down to his family in whose possession it has been ever since.

The legitimacy of this claim is obviously difficult, if not impossible to verify. However, the stone, a dark onyx, was nevertheless brought to various experts in Jewish history as well as gemologists to examine and render an opinion.

The truly remarkable aspect of this particular stone is that directly in the middle of the stone are two very clear letters in ancient Hebrew, a *beis* and a *kuf*. Dr. Joan Goodnick Westenholz, who at that time was the Chief curator at the Bible Lands museum in Yerushalayim, identified that next to the letter *beis* was the image of a wolf.

The mystifying aspect of this stone is that there’s no known method, modern or ancient, that could have made those markings. Mr. Ian Campbell, a leading South African Gemologist and the Director of the Independent Coloured Stones Laboratory in Johannesburg, photomicrographed it (photographing via a microscope) and verified that the stone had never been cut open.

Professor M. Sharon, an expert in ancient Hebrew script, also examined the stone and identified the style of script, dating it to the era around the creation of the Mishkan. Dr. Joan Goodnick Westenholz confirmed that it is the only one of its kind in the world, and therefore priceless. Mr. Campbell stated, “How does one logically go about putting a value to something like a proven religious artifact?” Although in his professional opinion, he noted that \$200 million would be a good starting point.

So, where is this stone today? Well luckily for us, the owner has contracted a businessman who is currently searching for an investor who will purchase the onyx, though only one who will bring it back to Israel and return it to the Jewish people.