

# 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 "ונשמע" – 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: "נעשה ונשמע" – 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 "ונשמע" 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 women 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 "נעשה ונשמע" 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 נעשה without ונשמע, which Bnei Yisroel said earlier (see *Shemos* 24:3)!

Bnei Yisroel were actually making a very profound statement; when they said נעשה ונשמע 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 ונשמע mean exactly the same "it will be heard."



**Miami Edition**

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.



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# 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 arch-enemy, 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: *שונא* and *אויב*. 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 for which you stand. 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’ve said *איש צר ושונא*.



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