



During Purim, we were threatened with annihilation. But with devotion to Torah and conviction that God is fully capable, we were victorious. Haman was no peace partner...neither is Hamas. Purim celebrates a Mordechai who treasured Jewish life, and knew God would assist if we lived by his word. Don't you think these histories are true? Then act accordingly Israel.

ESTD
1997

JewishTimes

Dedicated to Scriptural and Rabbinic Verification
of Authentic Jewish Beliefs and Practices

Volume V, No. 20...March 10, 2006

WWW.MESORA.ORG/JEWISHTIMES

Download and Print Free

IN THIS ISSUE

PARSHA: TETZAVEH	1-3
PURIM STORY	1,4-7
ETHICS: TEACHERS & FRIENDS	8
BOOK OF JOB: PART IV	9
HALACHA Q&A'S ON PURIM	10
LETTERS	11,12
OPEN LETTER	13

ADVERTISE AT MESORA
SEE OUR SITE FOR OTHER FREE FEATURES

MESORA.ORG/ADVERTISE

Clickable Ads

Advertise in the JewishTimes. Our ads are now hyperlinked, driving more traffic to your websites and emails.

Click
Here!

Weekly Parsha

Tetzaveh

RABBI BERNARD FOX

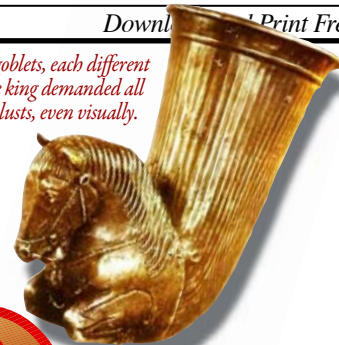
"And you should make a Breast-plate of Judgment of a woven design. Like the design of the Ephod you shall make it. You shall make it of gold, blue, purple, scarlet wool and twisted linen." (Shemot 28:15)

The Kohen Gadol wore eight garments. These consisted of the

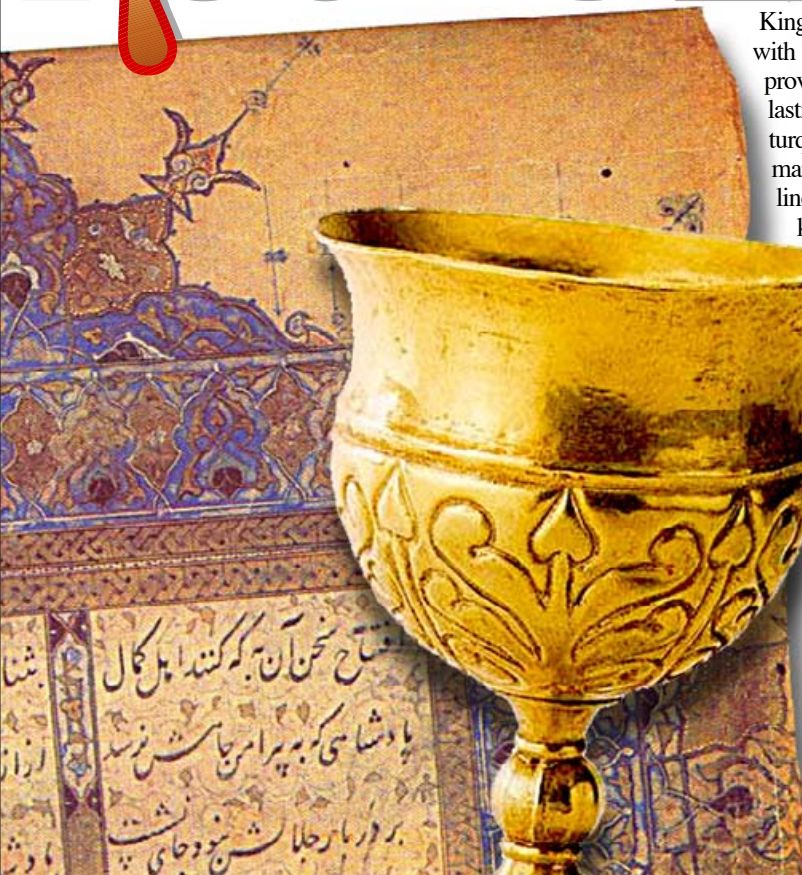
(continued on next page)

the STORY of Purim

The king gave them wine in gold goblets, each different than the other. (Esther 1:7) The king demanded all aspects of his feasts catered to his lusts, even visually.



RABBI MOSHE BEN-CHAIM



King Achashverosh ruled in Shushan, with his reign extending over 127 provinces. He created a lavish banquet lasting 180 days. Tapestries of white, turquoise and purple hung from pillars of marble. Variegated marble paved paths lined with beds of gold and silver. The king decreed that wine should be older than the guest who imbibed it. For this ploy, I give credit to the king. I wondered why he wished this to be. Certainly, any ruler's position is in constant jeopardy: on the one hand, you must placate your viceroys and ministers to remain popular and in power. On the other hand, a leader's firm hand must be displayed. Aged wine was a solution: The king treated his guests with honor by providing wine older than themselves, a respectful drink, securing his popularity. But he also kept his officers humble - by implication the king said, "This wine was around long before you." Reminding one of a time

(continued on page 4)

(Tetzaveh cont. from pg. 1)

Weekly Parsha

JewishTimes

Weekly Journal on Jewish Thought



The JewishTimes is published every Friday and delivered by email. Subscriptions are FREE. To subscribe, send any email message to: subscribe@mesora.org

Subscribers will also receive our advertisers' emails and our regular email announcements.

Contacts:

We invite feedback or any questions at this address: jewishtimes@mesora.org
Ph(516)569-8888 Fx(516)569-0404

Advertising:

<http://www.Mesora.org/Advertising>

Donations:

<https://www.Mesora.org/Donate>

Content at Mesora.org:

JewishTimes Archives:

<http://www.Mesora.org/JewishTimes>

Philosophy Archives:

<http://www.Mesora.org/Philosophy>

Weekly Parsha Archives:

<http://www.Mesora.org/WeeklyParsha>

Audio Archives:

<http://www.Mesora.org/Audio>

Interactive, Live, Audible Classes:

<http://www.Mesora.org/LiveClasses>

Database Search:

<http://www.Mesora.org/Search>

Articles may be reprinted without consent of the JewishTimes or the authors, provided the content is not altered, and credits are given.

four garments worn by every kohen and an additional four special vestments. One of the special vestments was the Choshen Mishpat – the Breast-plate of Judgment.

The Choshen hung from the shoulders of the Kohen Gadol. The vestment was made of woven cloth. Embedded into the Choshen were precious stones representing the shevatim – the tribes of Bnai Yisrael.

The Choshen had a unique function. Questions could be posed to the Kohen Gadol. He would respond by consulting the Choshen. Maimonides explains this process based upon the Talmud. The question would be brought to the Kohen Gadol. He would immediately be overcome with the spirit of prophecy. The Kohen Gadol would look at the Choshen. The response would be transmitted to him in a prophetic vision. The answer was expressed through the letters engraved upon the stones of the Breast-plate.[1]

According to Nachmanides the process of posing a question to the Kohen Gadol for a response from the Choshen is included in a positive command. What is this positive command?

In order to answer this question and understand Nachmanides' position, we must consider a set of pesukim at the end of Chapter 18 of Sefer Devarim. These passages begin with an admonition to not emulate the practices of the nations that lived in Canaan. The Torah then outlines various mystical practices and routines used by these nations to predict the future. Then, the Torah tells us that we must wholeheartedly follow Hashem. The section ends with laws regarding prophets. We are commanded to obey true prophets and to punish false prophets.[2] The overall message of these passages is fairly clear. The people of Canaan had developed various primitive rituals and procedures for influencing their environment and predicting the future. Hashem commands Bnai Yisrael to not adopt these heathen customs. Hashem tells Bnai Yisrael that He will provide them with prophets. These prophets will communicate with Hashem and the people should rely on the prophets for guidance and leadership.

However, one passage is difficult to understand. After Hashem admonishes Bnai Yisrael against adopting the practices of the nations of Canaan and before commanding the people to obey His prophets there is a transitional pasuk. In this passage, Bnai Yisrael are told that they must wholeheartedly follow Hashem. What is the meaning of this passage?

Nachmanides contends that this passage is designed to connect the preceding and follow-

ing passages. We are not to rely on fortune tellers and heathen rituals designed to predict the future. Instead, we are to follow Hashem wholeheartedly. How do we fulfill this requirement? We fulfill it through our obeying His prophets.

How is obedience to Hashem's prophets an expression of wholehearted commitment to Hashem? Nachmanides explains that all of the methods used by the nations of Canaan to predict the future were based on the premise that this future is fixed and predetermined. He uses astrology and an example. Astrology is based on the assumption that the configuration of the stars appearing in the nighttime sky exercises an absolute causal influence on the event in this world. Astrology posits that by understanding this influence – or reading the stars – we can predict with certainty events in this world. If the predictions of astrologers are sometimes incorrect, this is because they have not correctly read the signs in the heavens. But the information is in the heavens for the astrologer that can properly unravel the message.

Nachmanides explains that this premise is inconsistent with the outlook of the Torah. According to the Torah, the events that occur in this world are not predetermined. Hashem is omnipotent. He rules over the universe and our world. He has the ability to suspend or disregard the laws of nature. According to Nachmanides, the astrologer does not fail simply because he has not correctly read the signs in the heavens. He fails because these signs are not absolute indications of the future. The stars may influence events in this world but they do not determine the future. Ultimately, only Hashem's will determines the future. No astrologer or fortune teller can know Hashem's will.

However, Hashem does reveal His will to His prophets. Therefore, only these prophets can actually know the future. If we must seek knowledge of the future, we are to turn to these prophets and not to astrologers and fortune tellers.

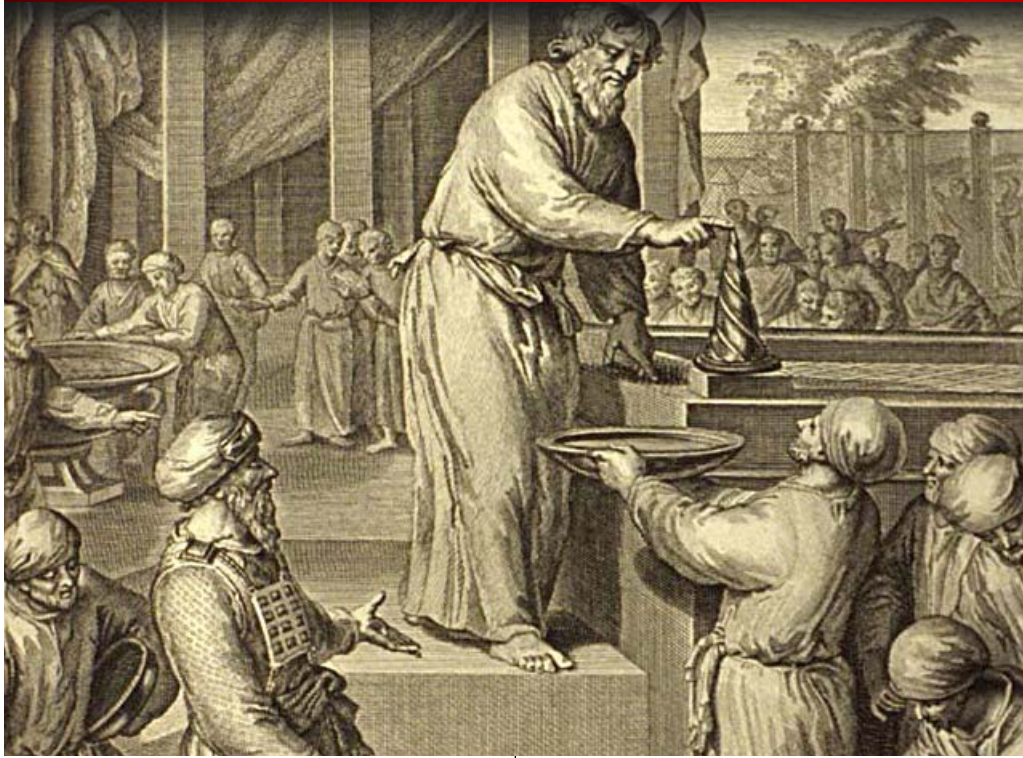
Based on this analysis, Nachmanides concludes that relying on astrology or other portents of the future is a denial of a fundamental tenet of the Torah. This is because reliance on these methods of predicting the future is predicated on the assumption that the future is fixed and that it is not ultimately determined by Hashem's will.

Now the meaning of the admonition to wholeheartedly follow Hashem emerges. We are required to accept the proposition that only Hashem's will determines the future and that only through His prophets can we truly know the future. According to Nachmanides this admonition to wholeheartedly follow Hashem – to

(continued on next page)

(Tetzaveh continued from page 2)

Weekly Parsha



accept the proposition that His will alone determines event in this world – is a positive command.[3] According to his reasoning it follows that by turning to Hashem's prophets or by posing our questions to the Kohen Gadol wearing the Choshen, we fulfill the mitzvah of wholeheartedly following Hashem.[4]

Maimonides does not regard this passage as a positive command. In other words, according to Maimonides, the admonition to wholeheartedly follow Hashem is not a mitzvah. Why did Maimonides not regard this instruction as a mitzvah? Nachmanides suggests a possible explanation. According to Maimonides, general admonitions to observe the commandments of the Torah are not in themselves mitzvot. In order for an admonition to be counted as a commandment, it must engender a specific obligation or prohibition. General admonishments do not meet this criterion and therefore cannot be counted among the 613 mitzvot.[5] Nachmanides suggests that according to Maimonides, the admonition to wholeheartedly follow Hashem is directing us to observe the commandments of the Torah. Because it is a general admonition, Maimonides does not include it in his enumeration of the 613 mitzvot.[6]

Megilat Esther suggests a similar explanation for Maimonides' position. According to Megilat Esther, the admonition to wholeheartedly follow Hashem is a positive formulation of the negative commandments in the preceding pesukim. As noted above, the preceding passages command Bnai Yisrael to not resort to

and rely upon fortune-telling and other portents. These passages include a number of negative commandments that prohibit specific practices. The directive to wholeheartedly follow Hashem reiterates these prohibitions in a positive formulation. Maimonides maintains that in instances in which a positive directive merely reiterates the substance of a prohibition, the positive formulation is not generally counted as a separate mitzvah.[7] Megilat Esther suggests that Maimonides applies this principle to the admonition to wholeheartedly follow Hashem and therefore, does not count it as a separate mitzvah.[8]

However a careful analysis of a related issue suggests an alternative explanation of Maimonides' position. In order to develop this explanation, it is necessary to return to Nachmanides' comments. As explained above, according to the Torah it is prohibited to rely on portents, fortune-tellers, and even astrology. According to Nachmanides, this prohibition is fundamentally an assertion that the events of this world are ultimately determined by Hashem. But Nachmanides is careful not to assert that astrology and other methods of predicting the future are baseless. Instead, he asserts that these methods are flawed. They are predicated on the belief that the future is solely controlled by the stars or natural forces. They assume that by understanding and "reading" these forces the future can be predicted. They do not acknowledge that such predictions are not absolute and can be overridden by Hashem. In other words, Nachmanides accepts that natural forces

influence events in this world and that the affect of these forces can be predicted. However, he asserts that such predictions are not reliable because they do not account for Hashem's ability to override the natural laws.

In contrast, Maimonides contends that the methods utilized by the nations of Canaan were nonsensical and nothing more than superstitions. Maimonides asserts that one who believes that these methods have some validity and contain an element of truth is a fool. He does not attribute any credibility to these methods of predicting the future. Maimonides does not regard the study of portents and signs as a flawed approach to predicting the future. He emphatically declares that they are utter foolishness. It is this context the Maimonides makes reference to the admonition to wholeheartedly follow Hashem. According to Maimonides, this admonition tells us to be completely committed to the truth and to not revert to superstitions and their implicit primitive outlook.[9]

We can now appreciate Maimonides' decision to not count this admonition as a commandment. According to Maimonides, the admonition tells us to act intelligently and not regress to the superstitious and foolish beliefs of the heathen nations of Canaan. The admonition does not engender or prohibit a specific performance. Instead, it directs us to adopt a general outlook and to be completely faithful to this outlook. Accordingly, Maimonides does not count this general directive as a commandment. ■

[1] Rabbaynu Moshe ben Maimon (Rambam / Maimonides) Mishne Torah, Hilchot Klai HaMikdash 10:11.

[2] Sefer Devarim 18:9-22.

[3] Rabbaynu Moshe ben Nachman (Ramban / Nachmanides), Commentary on Sefer Devarim 18:13.

[4] Rabbaynu Moshe ben Nachman (Ramban / Nachmanides), Critique on Maimonides' Sefer HaMitzvot -- Positive Commands that Maimonides Neglected to Include.

[5] Rabbaynu Moshe ben Maimon (Rambam / Maimonides) Sefer HaMitzvot, Principle 4.

[6] Rabbaynu Moshe ben Nachman (Ramban / Nachmanides), Critique on Maimonides' Sefer HaMitzvot -- Positive Commands that Maimonides Neglected to Include.

[7] Rabbaynu Moshe ben Maimon (Rambam / Maimonides) Sefer HaMitzvot, Principle 9.

[8] Rabbaynu Yitzchak DeLeon, Megilat Esther, Commentary on Maimonides' Sefer Hamitzvot, Comments on Nachmanides' Critique.

[9] Rabbaynu Moshe ben Maimon (Rambam / Maimonides) Mishne Torah, Hilchot Avodah Zarah 11:16.

(Purim continued from page 1)

Purim

when he was not yet around is quite humbling, and an affective maneuver to keep subjects in check.

The Celebration

The king was celebrating his faulty calculation that redemption would not occur for the Jews. His outright denial was seen in his use of the Temple's vessels for his haughty affair. Rabbi Yossi son of Chanina commented that the king dressed in the High Priest's clothing during this affair. (Talmud Megilla, 12a) This was a further extension of his denial, as if to say that the institution of the High Priest was nonsense, and that King Achashverosh better deserved this clothing. It is understood that one leader – Achashverosh – would be jealous of another, the High Priest. (The Rabbis teach that one tradesman is always jealous of another in his field.) Thus, the king jealously denied any honor due to the High Priest by donning his garments. The Talmud teaches that the king was equally anti-Semitic as was Haman. For when Haman later offered to pay for a war against the Jews, the king told Haman to keep his money – the king covered the war's expense. But this very feast celebrating the lack of truth to the Jews' salvation is itself openly anti-Semitic.

Most people view Haman alone as the villain of the Purim story. However, we see clearly that the king was equally anti-Semitic. Keep this idea in mind, for it returns as a pivotal piece of information regarding another central character.

Exchanging Queens

During his feast, the king boasted that his Chaldean wife Vashti surpassed the beauty of other women. He demanded her to appear before him and other officials naked. She refused. Haman the wicked suggested she be killed for such an insult to the king, and this was so. An interesting metaphor is found in Talmud Megilla 12b explaining why Vashti refused, "Gabriel came and attached a tail to her."

A psychologically healthy individual does not desire to face his instinctual side; nudity exposes a purely animalistic aspect of man. We learn that Queen Vashti tormented the Jewish women by forcing them to work in the nude. (The Talmud says Vashti received payment, measure for measure; she abused others with nudity, so she too was afflicted in this measure.) So we learn that Vashti was a friend to nudity. Why then did she refuse to come unclothed?

Vashti desired to expose herself when summoned by Achashverosh. But the Talmud states she didn't, as "Gabriel came and attached a tail to her". What does this mean? What is a "tail"? Why this organ? A tail is the one organ possessed by animals and not



man. A tail is definitively "animal", as opposed to any other organ. "Tail" symbolizes Vashti's own instincts. Vashti was normally inclined towards sensuality and nudity, as seen by her working of nude women. But Divine intervention strengthened her ego above her lusts in this one instance. Due to Divine intervention – Gabriel – Vashti did not wish to show her "tail", admitting her animalistic side. We learn that Vashti's ego - her dignity – won out this time, and did not surpass her lusts.

Man's ego will normally sway his decisions more than his instinctual need for gratification. But Vashti's self-image was less important to her, than

was her desire to act lustfully. We understand Achashverosh's selection of her as a marriage partner. These two people both enjoyed the life of sensuality, and physical pleasures. The last few words on Megilla 12a state, "He with large pumpkins, and she with small pumpkins." Meaning, they both desired similar "currency", i.e., immoral behavior.

The statement, "Gabriel came and attached a tail to her", indicates that Vashti's disappearance was essential to the Jews' salvation. Otherwise, a Divine act of God sending Gabriel to intervene would not be required.

(continued on next page)

(Purim continued from previous page)

Purim

Salvation Already in Place

Along with killing Vashti, Haman advised that a letter be issued stating that unlike Vashti's opposition displayed, a man is to be the ruler of his house. When received by the townspeople, they disregarded the king's letter as they viewed it as foolish. The Talmud states that due to the absurdity of this first letter demanding domestic, male domination, the townspeople also disregarded the second letter calling for the destruction of the Jews: "Were it not for the first letter, not a remnant of the Jews would be left." (Megilla 12b) Rashi states that since the people dismissed the king as foolish based on the first letter, they did not attack the Jews until the day commanded. Had they never viewed the king as a fool, they would have preempted the verdict of annihilation, and killed the Jews sooner. We now realize something: Haman's second letter – his advice to annihilate the Jews – was actually countered by his first letter. This is consistent with the previous statement that God never intended to annihilate the Jews, only to scare them into repentance. That is, even before the second "deadly" letter, a prior letter conveying the king's foolishness already set the groundwork to save the Jews. Thus, God's salvation was part of the plan first, meaning, this salvation was primary. Only after the salvation was in place, did He allow the apparent threat to enter the stage.

After the death sentence of Vashti, a new queen was sought. This now paved the way for Esther to be placed in the palace as queen, which occurred soon afterwards. Later, after Esther's appointment as queen, Mordechai overheard a discussion between two men plotting the king's assassination. They spoke in a foreign language, but as an adviser, Mordechai knew their language. Mordechai informed Esther to warn the king. The matter was investigated, and the would-be assassins were killed.

Haman's Ego – His Downfall

Afterwards, Haman was elevated in position. He moved the king to agree to a decree that he be bowed to. When confronted with Haman's decree to prostrate before him, all obeyed, all but Mordechai the pious. Haman was filled with rage at Mordechai for his violation, and Haman conjured charges against Mordechai, then against the rabbis, and finally he planned to annihilate the Jews as a whole. Letters were sent throughout the kingdom to this effect. Mordechai responded by wearing sackcloth, mourning this fate, and praying for God's salvation.

Mordechai's Declaration

We learn that Mordechai joined the exiled Jews in Shushan of his own will – he was not forced to be there. This may explain his overt opposition to Haman. Mordechai's refusal to prostrate to Haman was not only correct in its own right, but it also opposed the very flaw of the Jews. Mordechai made a public statement that bowing is idolatrous, as Haman made himself as an object of worship. (Megilla 19a) His refusal would awake the Jews to their flaw. It may very well be that Mordechai understood the flaw of that generation and therefore chose to move them to repentance with such an overt repudiation of idolatry.

We find more on this topic in the Talmud: The students of Rabbi Shimone bar Yochai asked him why the Jews deserved extermination. It could not be due to their participation in the feast of that wicked man Achashverosh. For if this were the reason, we would find no just reason why Jews who did not attend were also subject to death. Rabbi Shimone bar Yochai concluded that the Jews deserved punishment because earlier, they had prostrated themselves before Nevuchadnetzar's idol. However, the Talmud concludes that as the Jews only prostrated out of fear, and not based on any conviction in the idol, God too was not going to truly exterminate the Jews, but He desired merely to instill fear in them. (Megilla 12a) We thereby learn that it is a severe crime to recognize idolatry in this fashion, even outwardly. We also learn that Mordechai was correct to oppose idolatry, even though his act would result in such a threat.

Esther's Intervention

Haman succeeded at convincing the king to annihilate the Jews. Mordechai communicated to Esther that she must intervene, using her position to save the Jews. She was reluctant at first, as one who approaches the king uninvited faces death. Mordechai told her that if she did not act, salvation would come from another direction, and her house would not be saved. Esther agreed, but devised a cunning plan, in addition to her request that all Jews fast with her.

The Talmud says that on Esther's approach to the king, she encountered a house of idolatry, at which moment, the Divine Presence removed from her. Why was this so? Why could the Divine Presence no longer accompany her? It is not as though God's presence is "there" with her. God has no relationship to the physical world, and therefore does He exist in physical space. Why should Esther's proximity to a house of idols warrant God to remove His Shechina from her? Furthermore, if Esther deserved Divine Providence, and had no choice but to pass by this house of idols en route to the king, what fault is it of hers? There are no

grounds to suggest any fault of Esther. In fact, God's removal of His presence at this time is not a punishment.

Maharsha suggests that Esther initially viewed Haman alone as the sole villain. She did not realize that the king was also against the Jews. Now, as she was approaching the king, passing the house of idols, God's Presence left. Perhaps God was teaching that, number one; the issue at hand is concerning idolatry, i.e., the sin of the Jews. That is why the Shechina – God's Presence – left at the precise point she neared the house of idols, and not because if any infringement an idol can impose on God's "whereabouts". God causes His Shechina to leave Esther, thereby teaching that His Shechina left the Jews for this reason, i.e., their approach to idolatry by bowing to Nevuchadnetzar's idol. God intended to alert Esther to information essential for her to calculate an intelligent plan.

As she was about to approach the king, if she was bereft of crucial information about who are her enemies, she could not effectuate a salvation. . . thus, lesson number two: God intended to indicate that the Jews' enemies included another party – the king himself. Knowing this, Esther could now devise a plan, which would address all factors at play. God wished that Esther be successful. The Talmud records that when Esther ultimately raised her finger to point to the culprit, she pointed at the king, but God caused her finger to move towards Haman. Esther saw that the king was the ultimate enemy, but salvation could not arise if she accuses the only man who can save the Jews. God assisted again to save the Jews.

We learn that as Esther approached the king, God indicated new information essential for her success: the removal of His Shechina was due to the Jews' idolatry, and their punishment was being directed by someone other than just Haman, i.e., the king. Now Esther was ready to devise a plan.

Esther enters to see the king, uncalled, risking her death. Rabbi Yochanan said three ministering



(continued on next page)

(Purim continued from previous page)



**Esther pleading before the king
after 3 days of fasting**

angels were prepared for her at that moment: 1) her neck was lifted; 2) a thread of kindness was upon her, and 3) the king's scepter extended to her. Esther was in day three of her fast and praying, and was drained physically and emotionally. Either Esther transmitted these events, which transpired in the king's chambers, then they traveled down through the generations, or, the Rabbis concluded these events must have occurred. In either case, what do we learn?

By the mention of "ministering angels", we learn two things; 1) that God intervened, and 2) if He had not done so, disaster would strike. We learn that it was essential that Esther possess the physical strength to approach the king. Thus, her neck or head was lifted to address him. We may also add that it was essential that her composure was not

lacking, as a king may not pay heed to one who is disheveled. One's head in a drooped state is not becoming, so the angels lifted her head high. Number two: It was essential that Esther find favor in the king's eyes, even though already his wife. It appears that marriage rights do not reserve the king's attention. His attention to his desires overshadowed his attention to Esther. Therefore, a renewed attraction was necessary at this point. Number three, when the king extended his scepter to be touched by those entering his chamber, Esther could not reach it, perhaps again out of weakness. So the angels assisted her here as well. God intervened in all three areas of need; Esther's composure, the king's feelings towards her, and politics, i.e., touching the scepter. Esther placed her life on the line, and God stepped in, sustaining

Esther with a polished presentation before the king. We learn that the greatest plans still require God's assistance, and also, that God assists those who work in line with the Torah's philosophy, i.e., risking life to save the nation.

Esther's Plan

How did Esther orchestrate her plan? Esther invited the king and Haman to a private party. Once there, the king asked what her request was, and up to half the kingdom would be awarded her. She responded by requesting that both the king and Haman attend yet another party. What was Esther doing? Why didn't she speak up now, informing the king that Haman planned to annihilate her people? A Rabbi taught that Esther used her honed psychological knowledge to devise her plan. She felt, that had she directly accused Haman, the king's appointed officer, she would not necessarily meet with success, or salvation for the Jews. She planned to create suspicion in the king's mind, as the Talmud states. The king thought, "perhaps Haman is invited to this private party of three, as Esther and Haman are plotting against me. Is there no one who loves me who would not be silent in this matter?" That night the king could not sleep, and for good reason - Esther successfully aroused the king's suspicion. The king called for the Book of Remembrance to be read, "Perhaps I have not properly rewarded those who love me, and they do not wish to inform me." It was found that Mordechai's previous favor of saving his life went without reward.

Divine Intervention

It was precisely at this moment, in the middle of the night, that Haman was in the king's courtyard. His approach in the middle of the night exposed his haste and desperation to hang Mordechai. The king just finished reading of Mordechai's kindness to him, and Haman wants to kill this loyal officer! Esther's plan is seen to be taking effect. She successfully drove the king to ponder Haman's business. While in this state of suspecting Haman, God orchestrates Haman's arrival. Be mindful too, that Mordechai only made it into the Book of Remembrance, as he was "fortunate" enough to be passing by, just when the two assassins were discussing their plot. We begin to appreciate that these events are not coincidences but God's hand at work. Since the king was still concerned if he never rewarded someone, and now learned that Mordechai went unpaid for saving his life, he ordered Haman to parade Mordechai around town on the king's horse in royal garb.

The underlying message here is that the king is no longer thrilled with Haman. He questioned Haman on how one deserving of the king's honor should be

(continued on next page)

(Purim continued from previous page)

Purim

treated. Haman, thinking the king referred to him, exposed his desire for the crown – literally – by suggesting such an individual be paraded around on the king's horse in royal garb, wearing the king's crown. Hearing this, the king observed Haman as simply out for himself, and not truly loyal. However, "loyalty" was the very issue the king was bothered by, meaning, who did he not recognize, and could possibly be withholding helpful information. This commanding of Haman to parade Mordechai through the streets is clearly the king's way of degrading Haman. Perhaps this is significance enough to make it into the Megilla, as it precipitates Haman's downfall. Here, the king first develops ill feelings towards Haman.

The Second Party

Now the king was bent on suspecting Haman – now was the time to accuse Haman. The Talmud states one reason Esther invited Haman to the second party was she knew the king to be fickle. She wished to have the king kill Haman while he was in that mindset. She therefore invited Haman to be on hand if she was successful at exposing Haman.

At the second party, the king again questioned Esther of her request. She finally accuses Haman. The king is angry, and storms out of the party. According to the Talmud, he gazes at trees being plucked out of the kingdom by ministering angels. The king demanded, "What are you doing?" The angels responded, "Haman ordered us to do this." This metaphor means that the king interpreted his kingdom – the trees – to be falling into Haman's hands. The king returns to the party, only to see Haman fallen onto Esther's bed. (Haman had been pleading for his life; he got up, and then fell down on her bed.) To the king, Haman's close proximity to Esther, on her bed, was a display of Haman seeking the throne. The king responded, "Will you conquer the queen while I am yet in the house?" The Talmud again says that ministering angels were at work, this time, forcing Haman onto the queen's bed. How do we understand this metaphor of these angels?

It would appear that once Esther accused Haman, all the king had on his mind was the fear that all leaders have: a close supporter is really seeking the throne. Looking at "trees being plucked" means the king was now viewing his kingdom (trees) as being destroyed. The king began interpreting all events as Haman's usurping of his throne. Once the king was this suspicious of Haman, and then that suspicion was confirmed by Haman's desire to kill the loyal Mordechai, the king needed nothing else but his own paranoia to interpret matters against Haman. What would be conclusive? A clear demonstration. This was also

afforded to the king in the form of Haman's position, falling onto the queen's bed! This too was generated by God's intervention, i.e., the angels. In both cases, "angels" refer to some force, physical or psychological, which influenced the king.

At this point, Charvona, a Haman supporter, saw Haman's impending doom and switched sides from Haman to Mordechai. He was an opportunist, also out to save his neck. Charvona suggested hanging Haman on the very gallows built by Haman for Mordechai. Haman was hung, and Mordechai was elevated in status. The Jews were then victorious over their enemies, and Purim was instituted as a holiday for generations.

Reaccepting the Torah

The Jews arose and reaccepted the Torah out of a love, whereas Sinai was acceptance with some coercion. Seeing an undeniable revelation of God at Sinai, Torah acceptance carried with it some fear and coercion. However, when these Jews saw the brilliance demonstrated by Esther and Mordechai, and how God worked within their plan to save the Jews, the Jews now appreciated the Torah with no coercion. They saw a prime example of how using wisdom is the one path to the proper life, and that God does in fact intervene when one operates in this manner.

It is interesting to note that the initial cause for the tragedy of Purim was Mordechai's refusal to bow to Haman's idol. (Rashi and Ibn Ezra state Haman carried an idol.) This was the precise sin the Jews committed overtly that deserved this punishment. (Inwardly they did not commit idolatry) The very same institution – idolatry – acted as both the obligation for punishment (the Jews' prostration to idols) and the delivery of that punishment (Mordechai's refusal to bow enraged Haman to annihilate the Jews). Perhaps the identical nature of these two events displays God's hand in this matter.

In reviewing the personalities of the Megila, Haman taught us that self-aggrandizement is fatal. His initial intolerance that one, single person would not recognize him drove him to seek permission from the king to murder Mordechai, leading to his downfall. Mordechai taught us that certain principles are worth sacrificing for, and he therefore did not bow to idols or Haman. And Esther taught us that with wisdom, a well-devised plan has the greatest hope of success, and God may intervene.

Omission of God's Name

One final question: What is the significance of God's name being omitted from the Megilla? We all know that this era was where God intervened,

but behind the scenes. What demanded such a covert method of Divine intervention? In all other events, God's miracles are quite apparent; from the Ten Plagues and the parting of the Red Sea, to the sun and moon standing still, to the oil burning eight days on Channukah...miracles are purposefully and definitively apparent. Why not during the Purim story?

We already mentioned that the Jews arose and reaccepted the Torah again. This is based on Esther 9:27. This acceptance was bereft of any Sinaitic coercion. They truly appreciated the Torah system. Since Sinai was apparently lacking this unbiased devotion, perhaps God's purposeful covert methods during Purim were designed to allow such an appreciation to surface. The very words included in the Megilla that the Jews reaccepted the Torah are significant – they teach that this was essential. Therefore, we can suggest that to enable the Jews this opportunity, God minimized His presence, which allowed the Jews to focus instead on Esther and Mordechai, admiring how their lives, guided by Torah wisdom, yielded remarkable results.

A Rabbi once taught: Drinking brings a man to a happy, uninhibited state of mind. Just as when in love, man is completely happy and exclusively bound up in that happiness, so too when he is drinking. In order to mimic the state of the Jews who were saved, who were euphoric in their love of the Torah system and wisdom as exemplified by Mordechai and Esther, we drink more than our usual quantity to reach this blissful state of mind. Our drinking today enables that feeling when God rendered this great good upon us. We often hear the term "drunk with love". This shows that man does equate these two emotional states.

So drink, not to engage in drinking, but to experience a gladness, which commemorates the Jews' gladness of old, marveling at the benefit of a true Torah existence.

May our continued attachment to Torah and mitzvot bring us all to this state where we too arise and reaccept the Torah, not reminiscent of the coerced feelings we still carry from day school, but an acceptance based on understanding and appreciation. And the only way to obtain such appreciation is through study. Let Purim this year instill in us all a renewed commitment to minimizing our attention to distractions, entertainments, and wealth, redirecting our time to the one involvement God desires we focus on, over all else; Torah study and teaching. Unlike the false arguments presented to us by society in their 9-to-5 work ethic praising wealth and success over all else...Torah study will truly avail you to the most enjoyable life, the life outlined by God and the Rabbis. If the wisest of men followed this philosophy, they must know better. A happy Purim to all. ■

TEACHERS & FRIENDS

RABBI ISRAEL CHAIT

Written by student

Chapter 1, Mishna 6: “Yehoshua the son of Perachia and Nitai the Arbeili accepted from them. Yehoshua the son of Perachia said: Make for yourself a Teacher, Acquire for yourself a Friend, and Judge everyone to the side of Innocent”

We last mentioned the two opinions mentioned by Rashi with regards to the meaning of ‘acquire a friend’. According to one opinion it means to learn with a book, whereas according to the other opinion it means that one should have an actual person to learn with. We wanted to understand the underlying issue in this disagreement: on what are these opinions arguing?

We mentioned last week that one should not learn alone because on his own, he may tend to say foolish ideas without realizing it. The question then becomes: what does a person need in order to keep his own theories “in check”? One possibility is that he merely needs other views to think about; this alone will challenge his mind to think and consider why another possibility is wrong, whereas his is correct. According to this possibility, it would be sufficient to learn with a book. Another possibility is that man needs more than that: he requires interactive thought to challenge him and sharpen his thinking. According to this, a person demands another person to interact with in the learning process.

The Rambam and Rabbeinu Yonah make an interesting comment regarding the language of the Mishna: one should “acquire” a friend. They explain that to “acquire” a friend means to be willing to give up of one’s self in order to have the friend, even if it entails being embarrassed by him. At first glance, this statement is perplexing. What do they mean that one should give up of oneself for the friend? What kind of friendship is this?

To understand this comment, let us begin with how individuals generally relate to other people. An individual likes to maintain a positive self-image, feeling that he lives in a

good and proper manner. However, this leads him to judge other people in order to maintain a sense of superiority that goes along with this positive self-image. He creates subjective criteria, based on his own personal life, through which he judges and reduces people, showing himself that he doesn’t partake of these ‘defects’. In this way, a person can live with a sense of comfort about his own lifestyle.

In truth, though, there is really not that much difference between the two people. His emotions find a method to elevate his self-image. Also, a process of exaggeration goes on: when “he” performs an injustice, it is not such a big deal, though, when “others” errs similarly, he emphasizes the gravity of their error.

The idea behind the comment of Rambam and Rabbeinu Yonah is that one should not only recognize this framework within himself, but that other people have it as well. One must recognize that others have their subjective criteria as well. As the Rambam quotes from our Sages: “Don’t befriend another based on your own ways; but rather, based on the ways of the friend.” This means that a person has to recognize the framework within which another person functions, and generously operate accordingly.

In doing this, the individual demonstrates that these criteria are really not the essence of man. Friendships should not be based merely on shared likes and dislikes, and as such, one should do things that another likes even if he himself doesn’t. The Rambam even mentions that one should pay money for it. Here too, the idea is that if another person gains a psychological enjoyment through something you don’t, you should still help him obtain it and not feel that you are in any way superior just because you don’t have that emotion. If the friendship can benefit a person, then he should be willing to forego the petty emotions of likes and dislikes.

Such a notion of separating between personality traits and other traits is difficult for us today because of the Christian influence. Christianity maintains that the essence of a person is his psychological makeup, his instincts. Judaism says on the contrary, a person should use his instincts to perfect himself. This is seen in the statement of our Sages that a person with aggressive tendencies should become a slaughterer. As long as you can gain from the individual, then that is one who you should befriend. ■



the Book of Job

RABBI ISRAEL CHAIT

Transcribed by students

PART IV BILDAD'S ARGUMENT

Chapter 8

"If thou were pure and upright; surely now He would awake for thee, and make the habitation of thy righteousness prosperous. Though thy beginning was small, yet thy latter end should greatly increase." (8:6,7)

Bildad maintained that for all the punishments Job endured in this world, he would receive reward in the next world. Bildad maintained that Job did not sin, and therefore, he felt that just people receive punishments.

JOB'S RESPONSE TO BILDAD

Bildad maintained that the innocent would be paid back in the end for their troubles. But Job replies (9:23):

"If the scourge slay suddenly, He will laugh at the trial of the innocent."

Job uses this case of the plague to show Bildad that there really is no difference between the righteous and the evildoers, for everyone is plagued alike. This first argument is the practical one. Job says yet another point (9:24) "If not He

then who?" This means that if it is not God who caused my pain, then something else did. And while that "something else" caused the pain, God was lax. (We know this is impossible.) Job accuses God in either case.

Job responded in this manner, for Bildad said that although you may experience pain, God would eventually step in and correct your situation. Therefore, Job refuted Bildad, as it imputes injustice to God. For if it were just, why would God eventually "step in"? "Eventual" justice means that until that point, there was injustice. Job maintained that justice from God could not be limited to justice in the end result alone: it must be just "throughout." God could not be inactive while someone undeserving was troubled. This argument is the primary breakdown of Bildad. The first refutation was the practical argument, "a scourge really does affect the just people with the wicked", and the second argument addressed God's justice.

Bildad first states,

"Does God pervert judgment, and does the almighty pervert justice?"

Job answered both. But before we review Job's answer, let us sum up Bildad: he maintains of the "pain and compensation" theory, revealing that Bildad felt that if God is so powerful and great, He could not do unjust things. He had a premise and a conclusion. Premise: God is powerful and great. Conclusion: He cannot do injustice. But Job answered, "It is true, God can and did all these great things. But that does not mean that He does justice." Here, Job stated, "although I cannot step into the ring with God because He is powerful and

can turn my words around, and I have no power before Him, nonetheless, power and justice are two separate things. And you (Bildad) cannot prove that because God is powerful, this makes Him just." Job refutes Bildad's first argument that "power is synonymous with justice" and the second argument that the righteous individual survives the scourge.

In 10:10 Job says,

"Has though poured me out like milk, and curdled me like cheese?"

Job is now questioning God's Specific Providence (Hashgacha Pratyos). "Poured me as milk" means God created me, and "curdled me as cheese" means God did not pay attention to me after my creation. In other words, "there is no Divine Providence. And if one says there is, then there seems to be many contradictions."

Job made the next logical step. He saw that certain things were happening, that if attributed to God, would mean that God was unjust. Therefore, keeping to reason, he had only one choice, which was to say that God was not involved; in other words, no Specific Providence. The reason why Job also stated that there was no World to Come (10:22) is because it would not make sense that God should torture someone and then give them payment. The reason why he denied the Reincarnation of the Dead was because this falls under the category of God's Specific Providence. In chapter ten, Job answers both of Bildad's arguments and then makes some headway into his own belief as to what was transpiring. ■





QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

RABBI DANIEL MYERS

Question: [Shmuel Myers]: Are women obligated to hear Parshat Amalaik on Shabbat Zachor?

Answer: The Saifer Hachinuch (Mitzvah 603) writes that the Mitzvah to hear Parshat Amalaik does not apply to women since they are not obligated in the Mitzvah to destroy Amalaik. The Minchat Chinuch (ibid. note 3) argues with the Chinuch and maintains that they are in fact obligated in the Mitzvah

for the following reasons:

1) This Mitzvah is a Mizvat Asai which is not time-bound; (see below Q.126) therefore, no exemption applies, especially since this Asai is coupled with a Lo Taasai which prohibits one from forgetting that which Amalaik did to us...

2) The Gemara in Sota (44b) states that during Milchemet Mitzvah no one, even a Kalah from her Chupah, is exempt from the Mitzvah of Milchama. Therefore, a woman should not be exempt from Parshat Amalaik. (See below Q.127)

3) The obligation to hear Parshat Zachor is not necessarily dependent on the Mitzvah to wipe out Amalaik. Therefore, even if women were in fact exempt from the Mitzvah of destroying Amalaik, they would still be obligated in the Mitzvah of Zecirat Amalaik. During the Messianic era, when there will be no remnant of Amalaik left, it is quite reasonable to maintain that we will still be Chayav in Zechirat Amalaik! In conclusion, men and women are both Chayav in this Mitzvat Asai. (For a defense of the Saifer Hachinuch, see Halichot Bat Yisrael 22:1 note 2)

This Machloket Haposkim has continued over the generations: Rav Natan Adler, the Rebbe of the Chatam Sofair, and the Minchat Elazar both maintained that women are in fact obligated in Zecirat Amalaik. (Binyan

Tzion 8, Minchat Elazar 1:5) The Avnai Naizer and the Gaon Milublin held that women are exempt.

(Avnai Naizer O" C 509, Torat Chesed 37) Harav Ovadya Yosaif concludes that although many Poskim exempt women from this Mitzvah, it is still proper for them to go in order to fulfill the Chiyuv according to those who are stringent. (Yechaveh Daat 1:84) Halichot Bat Yisrael writes that women are accustomed to go to Shul to hear Parshat Zachor. (22:1)

Question: Why does the Minchat Chinuch (Mitzvah 603, see Q.125) maintain that Zechirat Amalaik is not a Zman Grama (time-bound) Mitzvah when in fact the Chiyuv is at a specific time, namely, the Shabbat before Purim?

Answer: Harav Ovadya Yosaif (Yechaveh Daat 1:84) writes that Midoraita there is no set time for this Mitzvah, it can be performed at anytime throughout the year. However, Chazal, obligated us to read the Parsha on the Shabbat before Purim in order to juxtapose the Mitzvah of Michayat Amalaik (wiping

out Amalaik) with Michiyat Haman. (See Rashi Megila 29a "Umafsikin") Therefore, Midoraita, the Mitzva is considered a Mizvat Asai Shelo Hazman Grama and women are Chayavot, according to the Minchat Chinuch.

Question: Does the Mitzvah of Michiyat Amalaik apply today?

Answer: At first glance, one may assume that the Mitzvah is no longer applicable since we can not identify the biological descendants of Amalaik. However, the Rav ZT" L disagreed with this approach and stated the following: Rambam (Hilchot Milachim 5:4) writes that we can no longer fight against the seven nations since their memory has long since perished. Regarding Amalaik, he simply writes that there is a Mitzvah to destroy them;

however, he does not write that they have perished! It would appear that Amalaik is still in existence, while the seven nations have descended into the abyss of oblivion. But where is Amalaik? I once heard the following answer from my father and master of blessed memory, namely that any nation that conspires to destroy Knesset Israel becomes, according to Halacha, Amalik. Thus, if any people seek to destroy us, we are commanded to do battle against it when it rises up against us, and this battle of ours is a

Milchemet Mitzvah based on the Passuk in Shmot "The Lord will have war with Amalaik from generation to generation."

Question: [Mr. Philip Brody]: Can one count the profit that the Shul receives from the Mishloach manot project as Maasair?

Answer: Rav Moshe (Choshen Mishpat 2:58) writes that one can count the money that he spends on a Yeshiva dinner for Maasair, except for the value of a meal. The value is not the cost of the caterer's meal, but a meal that he would have at home. Rabbi Kamenetsky maintains that one deducts the amount that he determines such a meal is worth to him. (Hilchot Tzedaka by Rabbi Shimon Taub, p.169) This Machloket would have no practical ramifications in our case, since both Poskim would agree that all the money that goes to the Shul would be considered Maasair except for that money which was spent on the actual Mishloach Manot. There is no subjective value that needs to be taken into consideration. L'maseh, one can count the Shul's profit as Maasair.

Question: [Mr. Phillip Brody]: Can one fulfil his obligation of Mishloach Manot with the Mishloach Manot (M.M.) that is sent through the Shul's M.M. fundraiser?

Answer: If the sender's share in the M.M. would have the proper Shiur for M.M., it would appear that he would be Yotzai. (See Q. 131 regarding the Shiur for M.M.) Actually, according to some Shitot, there would even be an advantage to such M.M., since it is done through a Shliach, which is necessary according to the Binyan Zion. (M" B 695:19).

Question: What is the Shiur for M.M.?

Answer: According to the Biur Halacha (695:4 "Chayav"), the Gemara Yerushalmi maintains that the M.M. must be a Chashuv gift according to the standard of the receiver. Therefore, if one gives a wealthy person a piece of bread and a can of tuna, for example, he may not be Yotzai. Although other Seforim do not mention such a Chumra, Lechatchila it is proper to follow the Yerushalmi. The Aruch Hashulchan (695 :15) also writes that one should not give M.M. which is simply a Czayit. ■

Letters



Letters

from our

READERS



Letters

Mesora invites your questions, letters in response to articles, your own thoughts, or your suggestions for the JewishTimes.

"The only poor question is the one not asked."

Email us:

letters@mesora.org

Objects Replacing God

As in week's past, Mesora publishes our JewishTimes to many Jewish email groups. This week, we received a reply from one of the emails groups' moderators. I feel the thinking of this moderator is indicative of a broader problem, one that we have addressed over the years, but worth reiterating.

Moderator: We are no longer going to be posting messages from your organization due to serious hashkafic (philosophical) problems with the points of view you espouse. Please refrain from attempting to post your announcements here.

Thank you, Moderator

Rabbi Moshe Ben-Chaim: This statement concerns me, as you have not qualified your position, stating the specific 'problems'. Kindly specify these "hashkafic problems", offering your basis in Torah sources. We take such remarks seriously; as such statements if publicized would be "motsi shame ra" or "lashan hara" (ruining one's reputation). Thank you for your prompt response.

Moderator: I sent my communication not to your "website", but to an email address - the one that posts weekly to my group, and I emailed that address because my communication was a request to stop posting to my group. I did not qualify my position since I don't wish to enter into a debate about it. However, if you would like specification, the example that occurs to me off the top of my head is the article on mezuzah, which appeared several issues ago, which derided those who check mezuzos after undesirable things happen to them. In fact, this practice is recommended by many gedolei Yisroel (Jewish leaders), in litvish/yeshivish as well as chassidic circles - gedolim of world stature, and of unquestioned credentials - not carpet bagging Kabbalistic practitioners. To ridicule this point of view; to dismiss it out of hand is no less than "megaleh ponim b'torah shelo k'halacha" (claiming they violate halacha). Or "am'hoartzus" (ignorance). Pardon my bluntness, but I'm answering your question.

Rabbi Moshe Ben-Chaim: Thank you for responding. However, you did not answer what I asked: a textual "Torah" source.

I am quite familiar with Jewish leaders who violate Torah, such as ads in the Jewish Press publicizing silver Chassidische rings which literally "guarantee making a barren woman fertile." This is Avoda Zara, yet, "Rabbis" endorse it. (See Rambam, Hilchos Avoda Zara)

Checking mezuzot also has no source in Torah, equally ridiculed by Rambam, from whom Rav Yosef Karo modeled his Shulchan Aruch. You may find it alarming that so many Gedolim endorse this practice. That is why I asked for a Torah source: i.e., Shulchan Aruch, a Gemara, or a Rishon. That at least would sanction the action...but you have not produced this.

Unless you do produce a recognized authoritative Torah source, merely citing Rabbis or Gedolim who endorse a practice, in no way condones it as permissible, or true...for there are other, far greater Gedolim as Rambam who argue on these endorsing Rabbis today that you quote. Now how does one decide who is correct: today's Rabbis...or Rambam, Otsar Tefilos and the Rishonim? With no source for today's Rabbis, you have no grounds to suggest Rambam's position is against Torah.

The only voices of authority are the aforementioned sources. Ask these Rabbis you mention for "their" sources. They have none.

As Rabbi Bachya ibn Paquda states in his Chovas HaLevavos (Duties of the Heart), "it is a crime to follow the Rabbis without understanding the matter yourself." He cites the verse, "know it today and return it to your heart". (Deut. 4:39) First, "know it (a matter) today" via the Rabbis, then, "return it to your heart" via your own reasoning.

Our case proves why Rabbi Bachya was so severe about each Jew understanding a truth on his own, and not simply repeating what another Jew said, even a Rabbi. It is so unfortunate that what is Jewishly popular, is in fact what is against Torah.

We must separate our veneration for cherished leaders, from what the Torah says, and when in conflict, follow the Torah and the Baalei HaMesora, and great minds such as Rambam. Certainly, when someone teases a sorrowful, barren woman, presenting false hopes for a child in silver rings or mezuzas, things which cannot protect themselves...we must refute such foolishness with reason, and help those ignorant Jews from being further misled.

You will not locate any true Torah sources for the views you defend; however, I appreciate your prompt attention to this important matter. For I truly wish that others were no longer misled. I trust you share my concern and that you will not formulate a final opinion until you see the truth clearly, regardless of reputations. In the end, you will have to defend one view, and refute another. I hope that with your position and responsibility to teach others, that you teach what is true and what is based on reason, not what is popular or stated by famous authors and leaders.

(continued on next page)

(continued from previous page)

Letters

Moderator: My source is the verse, “Do not veer from the matter which they tell you, left or right”, which means that after making every attempt to understand a custom yourself, the bottom line is that you follow the Rabbis. That’s been Jewish tradition - and law - since Mt. Sinai.

There have, of course, been exceptions throughout our history. They are known as Karaites, Tzdukim, etc. and have fallen by the wayside as the dismal failures they were. You are free (as in the sense of having bechira while remaining responsible for your actions) to follow that tradition if you wish. I am exercising my common sense and following a different path. The entire Torah-observant world knows who Rabbi XXXX is, for example, but who are you? Rabbi XXXX developed his reputation by virtue not of marketing and fancy websites, but rather by virtue of his outstanding scholarship and righteousness. Any man of common sense defers to an renowned expert in a particular field and not to the lone guy in the corner who is yelling that he knows better.

We have a more than 2000 year history of Torah she’baal’peh along with a mesorah for resolving differences of opinion in halacha. A non-expert can find a shittah to prove virtually anything, but that’s a very slippery and dangerous slope to play on. Our gedolim have the expertise, the mastery of mesorah and siyata dishmaya (see the Ramban on “elokim nitzav baadas keil”) and can discern halacha l’maiseh out of the complex thicket of divergent shittos. Others can’t, and shouldn’t try. That’s why the Torah tells us “lo sosur”.

Rabbi Moshe Ben-Chaim: Ironically, the beginning of the very verse you quoted reads, “In accordance with the Torah that they (the Rabbis) teach you, so you shall do...do not veer, etc.” This means that Rabbis have no jurisdiction outside areas of Torah and Jewish Law. “Torah” is the operative word in this verse (Deut. 17:11). Do not be misled to think, that since this topic concerns mezuzah, this renders the topic a “Torah issue”. For there is no Jewish law concerning checking mezuzas in connection with life’s problems. That is simply an idolatrous crutch, similar to carrying a Rabbit’s foot. The only difference is the charm used by the person. Incorporating a mezuzah into an action does not condone the act. Checking mezuzas is merely to determine if the letters weathered over time, and nullified the mezuzah...not as the ignorant masses assume, that it is checked to be intact, so it continues to “protect”. God never said objects possess abilities to protect, nor do we witness this to be true. In the end, what you promote is your imagination, not Torah.

Firstly, I don’t believe any intelligent Rabbi said to check a mezuzah when problems arise. Not Moshe Rabbeinu, or any leader, Rabbi or Sage in

our Torah ever suggested such idolatrous activities, but the wise of our nation like Maimonides denounced such acts. When problems arose, reflection is called for. Torah teaches to do Teshuva (repentance), not check mezuzas. If one does not repent, then he remains evil, and checking or replacing a mezuzah in no way corrects the poor traits of this sinner. And if one does repent, then he deserves God’s kindness, regardless if he checked a mezuzah, tallis, tefillin, or anything else. It should disturb your mind, that repentance is what the Torah demands, while you feel otherwise: accepting mezuzah as essential to removing your problems.

I also wonder at your favoring of today’s Rabbis with inexplicable magical cures, while you ignore Maimonides who lived in accord with rationality, and who denounced these forms of idolatry.

I’ll end with this: if a Rabbi told you to give away all your money, would you follow him as well, just like following his advice to check a mezuzah? I know you will not. And there is your contradiction. But just as the Rabbi was not given authority in matters outside Torah, and his demand that you part with your wealth is not part of Torah, and is foolish, you too would be foolish to listen to him.

This concluded our exchange. Torah is no longer respected. Today’s leaders are revered more than those who far surpass them, like Maimonides, to whom no one today in their right mind would suggest they compare. Why then are today’s misled teachers followed? It is because no one concerns themselves to think, but they seek magical cures, so they follow those who verbally accept and promote this idolatry. Even though the greatest minds and God’s Torah verses refute such notions, people opt for what feels good, not for reality and Torah. This type of thinking magically replaces God and His torah system of reward and punishment, with inanimate objects. ■

Man Replacing God

A friend emailed me what he says is now popularly accepted in the Yeshivish world. I will share it with you, omitting the purported Rabbi responsible, as I do not accept the story as truth, for reasons I will explain at the end.

“A man came to Rabbi XXXX last week, so he can give an “upsheren” to his son. Since the child looked rather young, Rabbi XXXX asked the father how old his son is. The man replied that he is 2 years and 1 month old. Rabbi XXXX told him to come back next year, when he’s 3, the time when the minhag is to cut the hair. The man replied that his son was just diagnosed with a brain tumor (rachmona litzlon), and the doctor said he has less than a year to live - could the Rebbi please give him a brocha to live out this year without much yisurin.

Rabbi XXXX took the boy to one of the rooms in his apartment, and a few minutes later came back and told the man to return next year for the upsheren.

The man didn’t understand what transpired, and took his son home. The next day, at the scheduled doctor’s visit to re-scan the brain, the doctor couldn’t find anything on the X-Ray, and told the man to come back tomorrow, as the X-Ray machine must be broken. The next day nothing came up on the machine again, to the surprise of the staff, since earlier that morning it worked fine. They consulted with the other doctors, and concluded that the tumor is completely gone.

The father returned to Rabbi XXXX, asking him what happened. Rabbi XXXX answered that - as is well known - he makes a Siyum Hatorah every year. At this siyum, his family celebrates, and lets him bentch (mezuman) on a koys. When he took the boy to the room, he gave him to drink from some of that wine - which was drunk over Kol HaTorah Kulah - this was the brocha that cured to young boy.”

Rabbi Moshe Ben-Chaim: I thank my friend for bringing this email to my attentions, and now share my thoughts with you.

Why was this miracle not on the news? Certainly, the examining doctor should have found this to be extraordinary, as much as those proliferating this email. Why is the “man” nameless? And as another Rabbi asked, “Why does this Rabbi not help others?”

The truth is that someone close to the nameless Rabbi concocted this story, desirous of elevating his fame, and they exaggerated or fabricated this account. This was done in the past in connection with Jesus and others, and will unfortunately be continued by many insecure people overly attached to their leaders. It is worthy to note that this story suspiciously mimics an account from our prophets, namely Elisha, where a boy was very sick, taken to Elisha’s chambers, and revived.

(Kings II, 4:32) ■

Thinking of Others

The Megila embodies a letter that saved the Jewish population...the entire population, not just the popular, the wealthy or the entertaining ones among us. There's a grand idea: treat the poor and humble with the same concern as anyone else. No wonder, a central Mitzvah of Purim is extending our hand to the poor, and recognizing our friends. But why not do this weekly? There are so many fellow Jews and Gentiles whose hopes are dashed, being thrust by circumstance into unfortunate situations. It must be our problem too. Look among your community, understand that God seeks all humankind to exist, and extend yourself. And not only the poor, but many others can greatly benefit from our words of concern, a night out to dinner, or any other simple gesture. Purim's philosophy is to unite all of us in a happy existence, embodied by our Mitzvah to drink. Bring happiness to a fellow human, commencing his path back to self esteem and independence. —Rabbi Moshe Ben-Chaim

JewishTimes Classifieds

Business Services**Camp 4-T's - Jr. High Day Camp**

Monsey, NY 10952
Email: office@camp4ts.com
Ph: 845-362-0684

Camp 4-T's, NJ/NY's Orthodox Traveling Summer Day Camp for Jr. High students, is back for it's 4th year. Call or write for a free brochure. 4-T's: Tefillah, Torah, Trips 4 Teens, our name says it all.

NESHAMA

Cleveland, Ohio
Email: Fred Taub
Ph: 216-319-0688

Visit www.Neshama.org and see how you too can help save a life.

BRAEMAR TRADING

Edgware, London
Email: ALAN GINSBERG
Ph: 00447950780791

COLLECTOR WISHES TO BUY AND SELL NEW BANKNOTES OF SOUTH AFRICA, SOUTH WEST AFRICA, RHODESIA & PALESTINE MANDATE PREFERABLY DATED BEFORE 1950. CONTACT ALAN

CUSTOM LIGHTING FIXTURES

Spring Valley
New York
Ph: 888-523-1999

Designers of custom lighting fixtures. Visit us online for great savings and free gifts: www.customlightingfixtures.com

Moti Sagron - Judaic Art

Israel
Email: ronitsolo@yahoo.com
Ph: 097286654954

Original Portraits of Rabbis - Oil on Canvas - by Israeli Artist Moti Sagron.

House for Sale

Israel
Email: efraties@yahoo.com
Ph: 972-0504445125

Single family home For Sale in Bnei Betcha, Zayit, Efrat Israel 2 floors, 6 BR, 4 1/2 bathrooms, LR, DR, family room laundry, storage, huge basement, HUGE YARD!! Great Location! Asking \$650,000 USD

MatzaFun Tours

Cherry Hill, NJ
Email: info@matzafun.com
Ph: 1-800-944-2283

This Passover 2006 Celebrate and enjoy everything you and your family need for the best Passover holiday ever- gourmet glatt kosher cuisine, elegant Seders and services, world-class entertainment, non-stop activities for all ages, spas, and four-star resorts at the Renaissance Orlando Resort at Sea World minutes from Sea World, Disney and Universal Theme Parks and other Orlando attractions and be pampered at the Ocean Place Resort & Spa just 55 minutes from NYC, www.matzafun.com 21 Years of Perfect Passover Programs by Jerry Abramson's MatzaFun Tours.

YOUR AD HERE FREE

See us online:

www.Mesora.org/Classifieds
Your ad remains online for one month, at which time, you can repeat it as often as you wish.
Another free service from Mesora.org

Restaurants:

Low Cost Ads:

The JewishTimes will soon be featuring a new Dining Guide. Place your full color graphic advertisement each week for just \$50. Your ad can also be hyperlinked to an email or website to generate immediate contact and reservations. Contact us at ads@Mesora.org or call (516)569-8888

Your ad can be here by next week, and every week. Reach a whole new clientele.

Kidney Donors Urgently Needed

65 year old Connecticut resident is now able to accept and is in need of a kidney donor with blood type B+. His current treatments include Peritoneal home dialyses four times daily. The transplant procedure is minimally invasive and done laparoscopically with a short recovery time at Westchester Medical Center. The Transplant Center offers innovative, state-of-the art evaluation and treatment for patients of all ages who require kidney, liver, pancreas, corneal and bone marrow transplants and is home to the largest Kidney Transplant Program: www.wcmc.com Recipient guarantees to cover all expenses away from work and travel. Please reply if you would like to be part of this very generous gift of life to: info@Mesora.org

expectancy is extremely limited without a kidney donor. None of us are a match. Help us give to a man who has always given to us, help us give him a tomorrow. We are pleading with everyone to please help save our father. If you or anyone you know can find it in your hearts to give the gift of life, a most selfless and humane act, please contact us toll free at 1-877-489-6567. Only 0 blood type please. There is no expense to the donor. www.kidneyfordad.com

Assisiting the Disabled

Middle age partially disabled woman needs financial assistance with her health insurance to assist with her disability. If you would like to contribute to help cover her monthly expense, please donate with the cents amount as ".01", viz, \$25.01, 35.01". Donate here: <https://www.Mesora.org/Donate>

The depth of our love for our father can only be matched by the depth of the pain that we feel for his suffering. How do you watch the man, who has given his life for his family, lay night after night hooked up to the dialysis machine and fighting sleep because he fears that the morning will not come for him. This is our father living with kidney failure. Our Dad was diagnosed with kidney failure and placed on dialysis, which for many is a lifeline. But, our father is in the small percentage for which dialysis has not helped. His life

Need Assistance?

Mesora will place your ad free of charge in this section. Write us at: info@Mesora.org

Congregation Rinat Israel presents

A NIGHT OF MUSIC

~ FOR WOMEN ONLY ~

With Internationally Renowned Israeli Singer

RICKY PEN

Lose those winter blues...

Join us for a night of singing, dancing, and scrumptious desserts
Enter to Win A Grand Prize Round-Trip to Israel or \$1000 cash!



SUNDAY, MARCH 19th -2006
7:30 p.m.

Torah Academy of Long Island
310 South Oyster Bay Road, Syosset

Tickets: \$15 in advance or \$20 at the door

For tickets, call Linda Mann at 516.822.6636 or Tirtza Gil at 516.932.5186

Make checks to Rinat Israel and send to:
Irine Neymotin, 32 Sylvia Lane, Plainview, NY 11803