



Understanding the Parsha according to the teachings of the Rebbe

QUESTION: *What is the symbolism of the law regarding the fats of the korbanos that optimally are placed on the Altar to burn during the daytime, yet can be placed on the Altar at night?*

ANSWER: Fat is an analogy to the concept of satisfaction. During the time of spiritual awareness (daytime) one knows G-d in spiritual & material activities and should act with alacrity; in the time of spiritual struggle (nighttime) one must break one's nature and not come to forbidden matters and avoid indulging in physical matters. (לקוטי שיחות כרך ג, עמ' 948)

QUESTION: *During the seven inaugural days of the Mishkan, Moshe offered all the sacrifices, yet Chazal said the Shechinah did not come until the eighth day. What happened?*

ANSWER: Actually, two levels of the revelation of the Shechinah exist in this world. One level is achieved as a response to the avodah of humans, but this is limited and is, as if, in a state of not being revealed. This level existed in the first seven days (גבורה or per the Zohar, a savage lion). The second level is where HaShem reveals the Shechinah without limitations, like the fire that arrived from heaven on the eighth day (חסד or per the Zohar, a crouching lion). (לקוטי שיחות כרך כב, עמ' 18)

QUESTION: *After the Cohen performed the service of piling the ashes into a pile next to the Altar, he changed his clothes and then takes the ashes out of the holy area. Why did the Cohen change his clothes when he was just going to shovel the ashes into the pile? If the removal of the pile of ashes was not a worthy act as the other avodos, then let another Cohen (even a baal mum) do this act?*

ANSWER: Shoveling the ashes into a pile is done in the Holy area (in front of the Master). Taking the ashes occurs outside (the presence of the Master) and it would not be dignified to wear the same clothes. Nevertheless, the same Cohen who performs the lofty service of piling the ashes, also performs the menial task of its removal outside the holy area. This teaches that we serve HaShem not just in holy pursuits, but also should serve HaShem with dedication in those physical chores that are needed as preparation for the observance of Mitzvos. (לקוטי שיחות כרך לז, עמ' 1)

QUESTION: *Why does Rashi list the four events requiring Thanksgiving in a different order than other sources?*

ANSWER: Rashi lists the four events following the sequence that occurred to the Jews of the generation of the Exodus from Egypt. One better understands the need for thanksgiving when one actually experienced the event(s). (לקוטי שיחות כרך יב, עמ' 20)

QUESTION: *The word תמיד is said by both the Mizbeach and by the Menorah. Chaza"l derive that the fire from the Menorah is brought from the constant fire upon the Mizbeach. What is the lesson?*

ANSWER: The Menorah is one's inner service of Torah and spirituality. The outer Altar is reaching out to others to bring them close to Judaism. The full realization of the "complete" spirituality for oneself (constant fire of the Menorah) after the making a constant fire to those outside. (לקוטי שיחות כרך יז, עמ' 50)



פ' צו OVERVIEW לקוטי שיחות

- הענינים מלקו"ש השבועי -

נשמת אפרים לע"נ ר' אפרים ב"ר אברהם ע"ה האפמאן

- Resource to encourage the study of the Rebbe's sichos ▪

CONTENT HIGHLIGHT	פסוק	חלק
Don't remain without fire (passion)	אש תמיד	א
Give satisfaction to G-d		ג
Mitzvah which addresses the soul's inner core	צו	זא
Two types of Korbanos; two ways to deal with darkness	זה קרבן אהרן ובניו	זב
Explanation of Rashi's order of events requiring a Thanksgiving offering	על תודה יקריבנו	יב
Quantity leads to quality	*זאת תורת החטאת	יזא
The Path of the Flame; the inner is lit from the outer	*אש תמיד	יזב
Appearance of a lion on the altar – A savage lion or a crouching lion (<i>gevurah or chesed</i>)	זהר	כבא
The High Priest's offering combines communal & personal	כליל תקטר	כבב
Nosar is a function of the sacrifice being unfit for consumption at that point (and not of time)	*וכלי הרש	כזא
Concept of "to distance people from sin" in regards to Nosar	*עד בקר	כזב
Moshe was like the Cohen Gadol	*ויקטר המזבחה	לב
All service is important	*ופשט את בגדיו	לז



לקוטי שיחות פ' צו ABSTRACT

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הוראה	ענין	פסוק	חלק
The outer Altar signifies the outer heart of a person; an external, constant ecstasy in longing for HaShem	(י) Continuous fire on the outer altar includes Shabbos; and even when a person is in a state of impurity, his "fire" (connection with HaShem) shall not be extinguished	אש תמיד ו, ו	א
Time of spiritual awareness (daytime) one knows G-d in the spiritual & material; during spiritual struggle (nighttime) one must break one's nature and not indulge in physical matters	Fats should be burnt on the altar as soon as possible during the daytime (positive fulfillment), but if necessary, can be burnt even at night, as long as one avoids Nosar (prevention of sin) Fat is an analogy for satisfaction, even when occurs in holy matters		ג
Tzedakah, a difficult Mitzvah that involves the most material items, yet is rooted in the highest level of the soul	The term Tzav "command" (in contrast to "say" or to "speak") addresses the soul's inner core (<i>tzavsa v'chibur</i> , "cleaving and attachment"), that always chooses good, which is simply commanded to obey G-d's Will with alacrity	צו ו, א	זא
Purim reflects same concept of light flowing from darkness ("on that night")	Two types of Korbanos brought by the Cohanim: A special one the Cohanim brought at the initiation of their service, because they didn't sin; the light breaks through the darkness A Chatos during the 7 inaugural days of the Mishkan cleansing the Jew's sin of the Eigel transforming darkness into light (Teshuvah)	זה קרבן אהרן ובניו ו, יב	זב
A person in Galus, even seemingly having all one's needs, feels imprisoned by the "darkness" and, need to cry out for Moshiach	Rashi lists four events requiring a Thanksgiving offering; Rashi's order follows the events that occurred to that generation (one understands the need for thanks more when one actually experienced the event) see table below	*על תודה יקריבנו ז, יב	יב

Who is obligated in a Korban Todah? One saved from the following:

Order according to Rashi

<i>Imprisonment</i>	3 rd -closed within the desert	תבוש	ח
<i>Crossing the Sea</i>	1 st -Yam Suf	יורדי הים	י
<i>Suffering and Sickness</i>	Only occurred to the Jews later	יסורים	י
<i>Crossing the desert</i>	2 nd -Midbar	מזבב	ב



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הוראה	ענין	פסוק	חלק
A person's service must increase in quantity (physical) as well as in quality (spiritual)	This Parsha provides supplemental quality to the previous one in certain laws (עולה מנחה וחטאת) and in other laws provides totally new quantity concepts (אשם ותודה)	*זאת תורת החטאת ו, יח	יזא
Two types of service: Inner (for one's self) Outer (reaching out to others)	by the menorah means consistently and 24/7 This verse implies the menorah (inner) is lit from the outer altar (where the fire always burns)	*אש תמיד ו, י	יזב
Appearance of a lion on the altar – 2 types A savage lion – incremental influence of below; subject to limitations – גבורה A crouching lion – Divine influence, not incremental – חסד Similar difference to that of the 7 days of מלואים and of the eighth day		זהר	כבא
Every day is the day of anointing, a person's service refreshes each day	The High Priest's offering combines elements both of <i>Tzibur</i> and of individuals Three-finger fistful (communal) The remainder is burnt (personal, like the other individual priests)	כליל תקטר ו, טו	כבב
	Nosar occurs at the point that the sacrifice becomes unfit for consumption even if the time period for eating hasn't lapsed; example, the ceramic vessel that absorbs and that portion of the food is no longer eligible to be eaten	*וכלי הרש ו, כא	כזא
Nosar limitation to midnight is different from other enactments of the Sages, since this decree can be seen from the verse as well. They are called חכמים since they have wisdom to discern people's nature		*עד בקר ז, טו	כזב
Every Jew, through the Moshe aspect in each of us, should serve G-d through immersion in Torah	The Priesthood of Moshe was a portion of his mission to receive and transmit Torah, and not a separate function of priesthood	*ויקטר המזבחה ח, כח	לב
One must be dedicated to serve HaShem in simple, physical chores, as well as the holy tasks	After shoveling the ashes into a pile next to the Altar, the Cohen (preferably) changes his clothes to take the ashes out; the shoveling (a preparatory, unclean task) which is in the Master's presence, still requires formal attire	*ופשט את בגדיו ו, ד	לז

לקוטי שיהות ABSTRACT חג פורים

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חלק	ענין	הוראה
א	The decree of Haman and his defeat were not in the natural way	The fate of the Jews is not subject to the laws of nature; it depends on their observance of Torah
ב	(א) Mordechai learned Torah with the children and only afterwards advised Esther to approach the King (ט) Mitzvah to increase in gifts to the poor, since this assists physically and spiritually (יא) The custom is to give מגבית after Simchas Torah, on Yud-Tes Kislev and on Purim	Eternal message of Purim is not to trust in natural means but rely on the merit of Torah learning To strengthen the mitzvah of gifts to the poor, appropriate to provide money to the children
ג	The uniqueness of the Jews remaining distinguished from non-Jews is in the manner of the use of their physical bodies אורה – תורה שבעל פה שמחה – יום טוב ששון – מילה ויקר – תפילין	Perceive holiness in their use of intellect An entire day permeated with holiness High level of rejoicing; weakening a person's desires for material things, taking "spoils" from one's enemy (Yetzer HaRa) Wearing a symbol solely to show that one belongs to G-d
ד	Thus, Haman opposed these mitzvos forcibly; he was not bothered by the Jew's claims to spirituality; Haman protested the Jew's claim to a physical uniqueness	We do a physical meal which expresses the uniqueness of the Jew that has an internal "knowledge" beyond intellect of the difference between "blessed be Mordechai" and "cursed be Haman"
ה	א) The matter of "till one doesn't know" is the similar to immersion in the mikveh; nullify one's (intellectual) desires ב) Yom HaKippur is "like" Purim (each has a lottery); however, the bitul of Yom HaKippur is to lessen in (or separate from) physicality; the focus of Purim is the involvement in physical matters in order to purify the physical ג) Esther made decisions on her own Women need to 1) be involved in education of the children 2) support spouse to have time to learn Torah	Learning Chassidus (always connected to the source) allows one to connect one's activities to G-dly matters Mesiras Nefesh on Purim is higher than intellect, and one receives its influences throughout the year HaShem rewards the woman that assists others in protection and growth of their family members
ו	Mordechai and Esther turned to prayer and fasting prior to taking action; they understood that the appeal to Achashveirosh was only the vessel for salvation from above	While G-d's blessing must be clothed in the natural vessel of human action ("all that you do"), the main emphasis must not be on the garment, but on stimulating G-d's abundant blessings through the study of Torah and the performance of mitzvos

טזא	<p>Mordechai saw the challenge and salvation of Purim in spiritual terms; thus, the Jews needed to do Teshuvah and the laws afterwards required (spiritual) celebration</p> <p>Esther saw a physical challenge and physical salvation; thus, in a manner of physical means, she approached the King for assistance and she advocated the physical laws of reading the Megillah and sending gifts</p>	<p>From the level of הסתר each Jew reveals, through the power of mesiras nefesh (השך), the inner most part of one's soul (גילוי אור)</p>
טזב	<p>"קיימו וקבלו היהודים" – קיימו מה שקיבלו כבר</p> <p>Express in the Mitzvos of Purim the acceptance of Torah by the nullification of oneself (receiving Torah which is beyond one's understanding) and the happiness of others beyond limitations</p>	<p>Simchah of Purim to the point of עד דלא ידע (beyond limits) enables us to the renewal of receiving the Torah</p>
טזג	<p>Mordechai left his learning to be involved in saving lives and his learning was blessed (תורתו מתברכת) and the majority of the Sanhedrin agreed</p> <p>Some of the Sanhedrin did not conduct themselves in this manner (תורתו משתמרת) who did not go out and disagreed with Mordechai; their learning was maintained but did not increase</p> <p>To a certain extent Mordechai was affected by their decision: Mordechai went from 4th on the list in Ezra 2,2 which was prior to Purim, to 5th on the list in Nechemyah 7,7, which was after Purim.</p>	<p>The main concept for most people is what is good for others takes precedence over additions in Torah study</p>
כא	<p>Mordechai's avenue to nullify the decree was to awaken the Jews' essential point of contact with G-d, that would bring to thought, deed and action of mesiras nefesh in actuality</p> <p>The three verses by the children returning from school represent the three spiritual levels of faith in G-d, confirmed to Mordechai that the Jews still had the faith. see below</p> <p>The guarantee of the children by Matan Torah leads to the revelation of mesiras nefesh at the time of Purim, when all Jews completely accepted the entire Torah unconditionally</p>	<p>The Jewish children of today can again lead and awaken the adults by involvement in the Written and Oral Torah, including Chassidus</p>

MORDECHAI SOUGHT DIRECTION FROM THE CHILDREN

Verse From the Child	The Potential Fear	The Counter of Faith
אל תירא מפחד פתאם	Fear from a revealed danger	An innate faith that all that occurs G-d does for good
עוצו עצה ותפר	Intellectual concern about the danger	An intellectual faith that the danger is not real
ועד זקנה אני הוא	Natural danger that appears from the order of the world	A faith the G-d can overcome the natural order

<p>כו</p>	<p>Our service (daily or throughout the year) begins with יראה and concludes with שמחה Beginning of Orach Chaim שויתי ה' לנגדי תמיד Ending of Orach Chaim (Purim) וטוב לב משתה תמיד In the time of Galus, this simchah is Purim; and the highest level of Simchah is Purim Katan (only hinted in Shulchan Oruch) see below</p>	
<h2>General Levels of Obligation in Simchah</h2>		
<h3>Yomim Tovim</h3>		<h3>Torah Obligation</h3>
<h3>Nisuch haMayim (Bais HaSho'evah)</h3>		<h3>Halacha to Moshe from Sinai</h3>
<h3>Hakafos on Simchas Torah</h3>		<h3>Jewish Custom</h3>
<h3>Purim Katan</h3>		<h3>Manner of Allusion (remez)</h3>
<p>לאא</p>	<p>Since the Jewish people themselves gave credence to one of the "70 wolves" and took pleasure in being invited by "that evil person," they annulled their supernatural guardianship This evil decree came about because the Jewish people chose to rely totally on the forces of nature</p>	<p>The Purim miracle therefore revealed, within nature, that G-d's conduct with the Jews - even as they exist in the natural realm - is truly above and beyond the natural</p>
<p>לאב</p>	<p>Story of Rabbah and Rav Zeira actually occurred on Purim; both physically drank wine (in excess) in order to reveal the secrets of the Torah; Rabbah "schechted" (he drew up and elevated Rabbi Zeira) to the highest level כלות הנפש (like Nadav and Avihu), a leaving of the soul from the body עין ישחט אלא ימשך</p>	<p>On Purim every Jew has the ability to obtain a strong connection with G-d in the "secrets of the Torah" that lead to a greater connection throughout the year</p>
<p>לוא</p>	<p>At the meal in Shushan the emphasis was on the needs of each individual; each person's portion of food and drink were according to that person's own needs; thus, each person (including the Jews) were not coerced but willing participants (this is the reason Vashti was not culpable for refusing the King's request)</p>	<p>"The King" (HaShem) invited all the Jews to the "meal" (learning Torah and doing Mitzvos) in a manner of freedom of choice and not by force (like holding a mountain over their heads); thus, simchas Purim is higher than natural limitations, and in the future, never ceases</p>
<p>לוב</p>	<p>Three reasons for not saying Hallel on Purim Miracle of Purim occurred outside of Eretz Yisrael so that was not enough revelation (הפצא) Reading of the Megillah takes the place of saying Hallel Miracle of Purim did not accomplish enough since the Jews remained the "servants of Achashveirosh" (גברא) At the core of each reason, the miracle of Purim was a miracle encloded in nature</p>	<p>Even in our natural settings, we should feel the supernatural; thus, Purim is connected to Pesach</p>

This Purim
get **DRUNK** off
שיחות



Why אין are not dependant on the rules of Nature.



Why Tefillin are made out of black boxes and straps.



Why Hashem's name is not mentioned in the Megila.



"I wake up the morning" (not "the morning wakes me up").



'Get drunk on Purim till you fall asleep' - what's up with it?



Why the Rogetchover Gaon didn't join a meeting in the best interests of Russian Jewry.



Why the 3 Pesukim told to Mordechai were out of order.



Annihilation for joining Achashveriosh's feast—why?



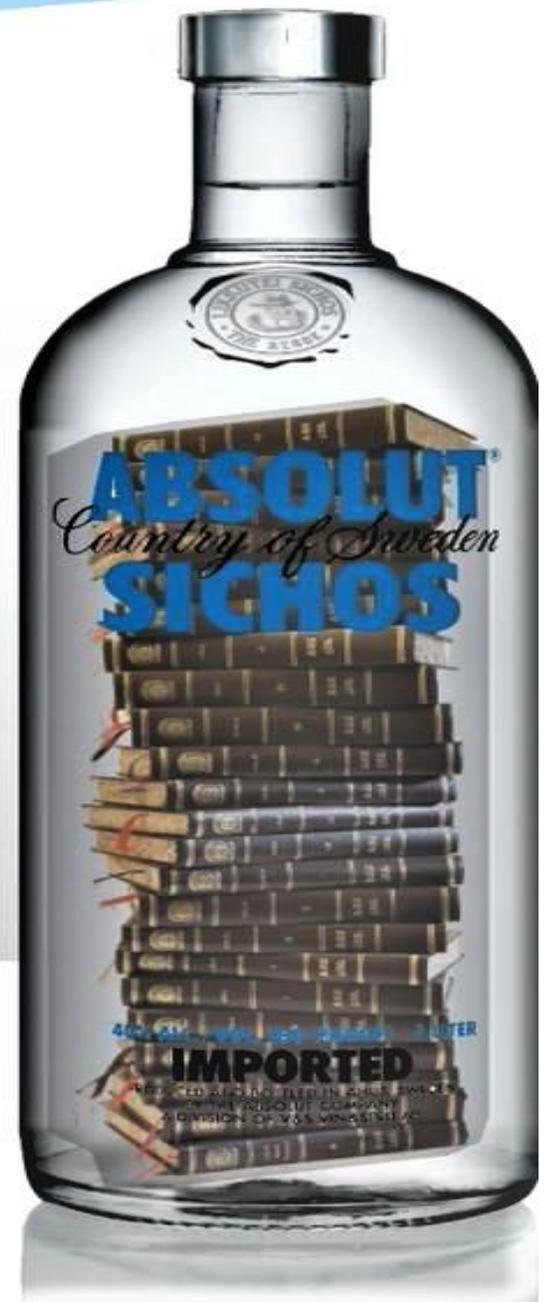
Rabba Sheched R' Zeira—and then invited him over the next year. How?



Vashti went against Achashveirosh. So why was he doubtful about killing her?



We don't say Hallel on Purim. Three reasons.



Signs of Distinction

Lekutei Sichos - Purim

The *Megillah* describes the outcome of the Purim story with one brief phrase:¹ “And the Jews experienced light and joy, gladness and honor.” Our Sages² associate each of these terms with a *mitzvah*: ‘Light’ refers to Torah study, ‘joy’ to celebration of the festivals, ‘gladness’ to circumcision, and ‘honor’ to *tefillin*.

What is the connection of these *mitzvos* to the Purim miracle? All four serve as signs of the Jews’ ties to G-d.³ Haman had decreed that these *mitzvos* not be observed because he could not bear the Jews’ proud display of their connection with G-d. And so, with the Purim miracle and the effacement of Haman and his decrees, “the Jews experienced light and joy, gladness and honor,” i.e., they were again able to observe these *mitzvos* without obstruction.

Obviously, when a sign is used to distinguish one entity from another, it must be unique to the chosen entity. Similarly, the signs which distinguish Jews from other nations should be associated exclusively with the Jews. Yet we find that the four *mitzvos* which serve to identify the Jewish people have parallels (albeit in a different mode of expression) among the nations.

With regard to the study of Torah, non-Jews also recognize the awesomeness of its wisdom, as reflected in the verse:⁴ “It is your wisdom and your understanding before the eyes of all the nations.”

Festivals also exist among non-Jews. And non-Jews often practice circumcision for health reasons. Even *tefillin* is not totally unique to the Jews. Our Sages relate⁵ that by wearing *tefillin*, the Jews let “all the nations of the world see that G-d’s Name is called upon [them].”⁶ Nevertheless, just as the Jews wear *tefillin* as a sign that they are G-d’s people, so too other peoples wear emblems or symbols to distinguish themselves.

Thus, it is difficult to understand: Since G-d wanted signs to mark the Jews as unique, why didn’t He choose things with which non-Jews have no connection? Why did He choose identifying marks for which parallels exist among the gentiles?

When Distinctions are Necessary

These questions can be resolved as follows: It is necessary to make a distinction between two entities only when they resemble each other in some manner. If there is no point of congruence, there is no need for a sign.

Thus the signs that “separate between Israel and the nations”⁷ are not intended to separate the souls of the Jewish people from the souls of the gentiles. With regard to this, there is no need for a sign; the distinction is apparent, as explained in *Tanya*.⁸

When are these signs necessary? To distinguish a Jew’s body from that of a non-Jew. There are no apparent differences between them. For this reason, it is necessary to have signs indicating that a Jewish body is entirely different from that of a non-Jew. A Jewish body is holy.⁹

Since these signs are intended to draw attention to the holiness of a Jewish body, they must have parallels among the gentile nations, yet be practiced by Jews in an entirely unique manner. This demonstrates that even with regard to the physical activities in which a resemblance exists both a Jew and a non-Jew eat, sleep, and do business, for example the Jew acts in a unique way. Even his material activities are conducted in a holy manner, reflecting the directive:¹⁰ “Know Him in all your ways.”

For a Jew, holiness is not an acquired trait, or something which augments his nature; it is his *essence*. Accordingly, every aspect of a Jew’s conduct even those physical activities in which he appears similar to a non-Jew must be carried out in a holy fashion.

One Torah, and Not Two

When our Sages identify Torah study with light, they use the feminine term *orah*. This invites a question: Generally, the Torah is associated with the masculine term for light, *or*. Why is the feminine form used here?

The Alter Rebbe explains¹¹ that the word *orah* refers to the Oral Law, *Torah Shebaal Peh*. The Oral Law “receives” from the Written Law, and accordingly the feminine form is appropriate.

The difference between the Oral Law and the Written Law can be explained as follows: The Written Law is above our comprehension.¹² As such, we accept it with faith rather than via an intellectual approach. Everyone accepts that the Written Law was given to Moshe on Mount Sinai.

The Oral Law, by contrast, employs mortal reasoning to explain concepts that the Written Law states in seminal form. Moreover, through comparisons and analysis of the sources, the Oral Law discloses commandments which are not explicitly mentioned in the Written Law. Through the various principles of exegesis, many laws can be derived from a single point in the Written Law.

Thus the Oral Law is given over to our understanding. And yet a Jew also approaches the Oral Law with faith; he does not decide a law merely on the basis of his own intellect. Even when he has firm support for his conclusion, if there is the slightest contradiction in the works of the *Rishonim* or *Achronim*, whose decisions were universally accepted among the Jewish people, he follows the approach presented by the Sages.¹³ “If this is the *halachah*, we will accept it, (although) with regard to its rationale, there is [the possibility of] refutation.”

One could debate the validity of this approach. When it comes to the Written Law a domain not subject to man’s intellect no one would object to such an attitude. But when it comes to the Oral Law, which involves an intellectual approach, one might object. Seemingly the *Halachic* authorities which delivered a ruling in previous generations based their decisions on their intellectual conception of the matter. If a person has a different conception of the matter, and it appears to him that he can refute the earlier arguments, why should he follow the old rulings?

The answer is that even with regard to the Oral Law, a Jew’s fundamental approach is one of faith and fear of heaven, as our Sages comment:¹⁴ “Whenever a person’s fear of sin comes before his wisdom, his wisdom will endure.” With regard to the Oral Law, a person must use his wisdom, for that is the key to this realm of Torah. But for his wisdom to be “maintained,” his fear of sin must be given precedence; it should serve as the basis for his wisdom.

This was the difference between the *Tzaddukim* and the *Perushim*¹⁵ in the era of the Second *Beis HaMikdash*. With regard to the Written Law, everyone agreed that it had to be accepted whether one understood it or not, for it was given to Moshe on Mount Sinai. The differences arose over the Oral Law. The *Tzaddukim* argued that since the Oral Law is given over to mortal intellect, they could interpret it as they saw fit, without considering the Oral Tradition received by the Sages.

The *Perushim*, by contrast, maintained that just as G-d gave Moshe the Written Law, He gave him the Oral Law.¹⁶ The only difference is that one was given verbally, and the other was written down. The Written Law is not encloded in mortal reason, while the Oral Law has been so encloded. But the rational structure of the Oral Law is merely a garment. It is the same Torah, given by the same G-d, who transcends all rational limits. Therefore it too should be approached with faith.

For this reason, it is *orah*, the Oral Law, which distinguishes Jews from non-Jews.¹⁷ For the Jews are able to perceive holiness even within the Oral Law, which is encloded in mortal intellect, and their approach is governed by faith and not reason.

Happiness With Depth

Similar concepts apply with regard to the second sign, festivals. Although non-Jews also have festivals, a Jewish festival is a totally different matter; it is permeated by holiness.

A festival is a time to gather together and celebrate, to eat choice foods, drink wine, and engage in other forms of material pleasure. But while involved in these activities, a Jew’s approach is spiritual. Among non-Jews, such activities lead to frivolity, while among Jews the approach is totally different.¹⁸ The Jews also celebrate and drink, but this does not lead to frivolity; it leads to increased fear of G-d. Even on Purim, when there is a *mitzvah* to drink until “one can no longer distinguish between ‘Cursed be Haman’ and ‘Blessed be Mordechai,’ ”¹⁹ the intent is that the drinking should add to one’s fear of G-d and the holiness of one’s conduct. Even when a Jew has

transcended the limits of knowledge, he appreciates albeit not intellectually that “‘Cursed be Haman’ and ‘Blessed be Mordechai.’”

Sources of Satisfaction

Similar concepts apply to “gladness,” which is identified with circumcision. Although there are other nations who perform circumcision, the Jewish approach is different. Our Sages associate circumcision with the verse:²⁰ “I rejoice (שש) at Your word, like one who finds great spoil” a phrase uttered by King David, who was referring to the *mitzvah* of circumcision.

This indicates that:

a) Circumcision brings about a very high level of rejoicing, for the rejoicing associated with the word שש (“gladness”) is higher than that associated with the word שמחה (“happiness”);²¹

b) The *mitzvah* of circumcision bears a resemblance to taking spoil from an enemy.

These concepts can be explained within the context of the *Rambam*’s explanation²² that circumcision weakens a person’s desire for material things.

Our material world with its pleasures and cravings is referred to²³ as “the world of *kelipah*.” This is a Jew’s greatest enemy. When a Jew weakens his desire for material things and, more significantly, when he takes the satisfaction derived from such things and expresses it in a holy fashion, it is as if he is taking spoil from an enemy.

This is reflected in the interpretation of the verse:²⁴ “All the fat [should be offered] to G-d.” Fat is an analogy for “the choice parts,” and more particularly, for our ability to feel satisfaction and pleasure. Rather than being stimulated by worldly things, this potential should put at the service of G-dliness. This involves “plundering” the domain of worldly matters, as it were. Therefore, it brings tremendous joy.

On this basis, we can understand the difference between the Jewish approach to circumcision and the approach prevalent in the world at large. In the world at large, circumcision is looked upon as a source of discomfort and pain. Moreover, the fact that it reduces one’s physical desires, is not considered desirable. For people at large consider physical pleasures to be their source of satisfaction, and any reduction of these pleasures is painful. Why then do they perform circumcision? For health reasons; they want to prevent even greater pain and discomfort.

For a Jew, by contrast, circumcision is a source of pleasure; he “rejoices.” Minimizing his attraction of material things brings him happiness. For a Jew’s fundamental nature does not derive pleasure from material things; his pleasure comes from the spiritual. Material entities are “his enemy,”²⁵ and taking spoil from this enemy brings him great happiness.

A Jewish Symbol

This motif also applies with regard to *tefillin*. As mentioned, *tefillin* serve as a sign indicating that the person wearing them belongs to G-d, as it were, as reflected by the verse: “And all the nations of the world will see that G-d’s Name is called upon [them].” Although other nations and tribes also use symbols to distinguish themselves, the Jewish approach is unique.

To explain: *Tefillin* are made up of three elements: the passages from the Torah written on parchment, the actual boxes, and the straps. All these are made from animal hides. Also, *tefillin* are placed on the left arm and on the head with the intent that we subjugate our hearts and minds, making them a vessel for the *tefillin*.

On the surface, what sense does it make for a man to tie leather boxes containing parchment to his arm and head? Is it just because they contain passages from the Torah? Wouldn’t it be more effective for him to “write” these passages within his heart and mind as indeed, one is obligated to concentrate on the *tefillin* while wearing them? What does the fact that they are written on parchment contribute?

Were the *mitzvah* of *tefillin* given to young children, it would be possible to understand the matter, for a child is not intellectually mature, and a physical sign is more significant for him. But children are not obligated to wear *tefillin*. When does one become obligated? At *Bar Mitzvah*,²⁶ when one becomes intellectually mature. Then

one must take the hide the most superficial and coarse aspect of an animal and make black (a color considered the opposite of “attractive”²⁷) boxes and straps to tie on one’s head and arms.

The resolution of the matter is as follows. *Tefillin* is G-d’s command. He ordered that we take parchment on which is written,²⁸ “Hear Israel, G-d is our G-d, G-d is One,” and subjugate our minds and hearts to it.

This represents the difference between a Jewish and a non-Jewish symbol. Non-Jews wear symbols proudly because they appreciate the refinement, beauty, or other “positive” qualities associated with the symbol itself.

Jews wear *tefillin* proudly. They are happy to distinguish themselves with these black leather boxes, because they were written and are worn with self-sacrifice, proclaiming “Hear Israel, G-d is our G-d, G-d is one.”

Stepping Beyond Knowledge

As mentioned above, these four elements: the Torah, festivals, circumcision, and *tefillin*, distinguish Jewish bodies from those of other peoples. This is why Haman opposed these *mitzvos* so forcefully. He was not bothered to the same degree by the Jews’ involvement in spiritual matters. But when it came to matters involving material concerns (as these four *mitzvos* do), Haman protested the Jews’ claim to uniqueness.²⁹

The underlying reason for this is that intellect is one of man’s powers, but it is not a person’s essence. Therefore when a person’s approach to holiness is based on intellect, it will not encompass all of the dimensions of his personality and will not affect his physical tendencies, for they are far below intellect.

Divine service following the directive of “Know Him in all your ways,” by contrast, is based on the fact that a Jew’s holiness is an expression of the essence of his being. This is who he is. For this reason, it is reflected in every aspect of his conduct.

On this basis, we can also understand why Haman made his determination by casting lots. Casting lots refers to an approach above intellect, and ultimately, above all the limits of the spiritual cosmos (*Seder HaHishtalshelus*). Haman thought that the advantage the Jews possessed over the gentiles involved only the limits of the natural order and the Jews’ revealed powers. With regard to matters which transcended the limits of the natural order, however, they did not possess any advantage.

The miracle of Purim showed that even with regard to matters which transcend the natural order, the Jews possess an advantage. This concept is so central to the holiday’s theme that the holiday is named Purim, pointing to this dimension of transcendence.

This quality is also expressed in the Jews’ distinction from the gentiles with regard to material things. For this reason, the Purim miracle involved a process that encompassed the natural order of the world, the workings of the Persian royal court, reflecting how the matters which concern the lowest levels reflect the level which transcends all limitation. See note 9, which states that it is within the body that G-d’s essential choice of the Jews is revealed.

Haman’s decree to forbid the four signs of holiness which distinguish Jews from non-Jews on a physical level led to his decree aimed at destroying the spiritual elements of Judaism, and ultimately to his decree to destroy the Jewish people itself. The chain of causality can be explained as follows: The fundamental nature of a Jew is holiness. Therefore, when an attempt is made to separate him from holiness at a basic level even though expressions of holiness remain permitted at certain times and places the very nature of a Jew is destroyed.

Therefore, when the Jews were finally free of Haman and his decrees, they established the festival of Purim,³⁰ the uniqueness of which is expressed with a physical meal at which “a person is obligated to become intoxicated... until he does not know the difference between ‘Cursed be Haman’ and ‘Blessed be Mordechai.’ ”³¹

This implies that in the state of consciousness *above* knowledge, Haman i.e., all evil remains cursed, and Mordechai all good remains blessed. A Jew’s connection with G-d is not an acquired factor, but rather the essence of his being. It is not a result of knowledge, but is rather an integral element of his character. Accordingly, even when he is in a state of “not knowing,” it is evident that “‘Cursed be Haman’ and ‘Blessed be Mordechai.’”

(Adapted from *Sichos Purim*, 5719)

FOOTNOTES

- [1.](#) *Esther* 8:16.
- [2.](#) *Megillah* 16b.
- [3.](#) See the *Chiddushei Aggados* of the *Maharsha*.
- [4.](#) *Devarim* 4:6.
- [5.](#) *Berachos* 6a.
- [6.](#) *Devarim* 28:10.
- [7.](#) Cf. the *Havdalah* prayer, *Siddur Tehillat HaShem*, p. 234.
- [8.](#) See the conclusion of ch. 1 and the beginning of chapter 2.
- [9.](#) *Tanya*, ch. 49. On the contrary, a Jewish body has an advantage over a Jewish soul, for it is in the body that G-d's choice of the Jewish people is expressed. See *Sichos Simchas Torah*, 5669 (*Toras Sholom*, p. 120ff).
- [10.](#) *Mishlei* 3:6. See the *sichah* of *Parshas Terumah* in this series, where this concept is explained.
- [11.](#) See the *maamar* entitled *L'Yehudim Hoisa Orah* (in the notes of the *Tzemach Tzedek to Esther Or HaTorah*, *Megillas Esther*, p. 149ff.). See also the *maamar* of this name from the years 5563-5564 (*Maamarei Admur HaZaken* 5564, p. 62ff) and the *maamar* entitled *ViKibeil* in *Shaarei Orah*, ch. 34, where a different explanation is given.
- [12.](#) See *Likkutei Torah, Vayikra*, p. 5b.
- [13.](#) *Yevamos* 76b.
- [14.](#) *Avos* 3:9.
- [15.](#) The literal meaning of these terms are "the disciples of Tzadok," and the "distinct ones," the latter term referring to the Sages who kept their distance from influences which could render them ritually impure. Commonly, they are known as Sadducees and Pharisees.
- [16.](#) As the *Rambam* states in his Introduction to the *Mishneh Torah*: "All the *mitzvos* given to Moshe on Mount Sinai were given together with their explanations."
- [17.](#) See *Shmos Rabbah* 47:1, which states that "the *Mishnah* and the *Talmud* separate between the Jews and the idolators."
- [18.](#) See *Shibolei HaLeket, Arugah Shniyah*, sec. 126, in the name of *Rashi*; *Sefer HaManhig, Hilchos Shabbos*, sec. 60, in the name of *Midrash Tehillim*. See also *Shulchan Aruch HaRav* 292:3.
- [19.](#) *Megillah* 7b; *Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayim* 695:2.
- [20.](#) *Tehillim* 119:162.
- [21.](#) This is reflected by the fact that the celebrations of *Simchas Beis HaShoevah* rejoicing of overwhelming proportions is associated with the verse (*Yeshayahu* 12:3): "You shall draw water with gladness (בששון)." See *Sukkah* 48b.
- [22.](#) *The Guide for the Perplexed*, Vol. III, chs. 35 and 49.
- [23.](#) *Tanya*, ch. 6, based on the *Eitz Chayim, Shaar* 42, ch. 4.
- [24.](#) *Vayikra* 3:16; see the interpretation of this verse in the *Rambam's Mishneh Torah*, the conclusion of *Hilchos Issurei HaMizbeach*; see also the *sichah* to *Parshas Mishpatim* in this series, where this concept is explained.
- [25.](#) Note the Baal Shem Tov's interpretation (*HaYom Yom*, entry 28 Shvat) of the verse (*Shmos* 23:5): "When you see your enemy's donkey...." חמור, the Hebrew for "donkey," relates to חומריות, "material things." A person, the Baal Shem Tov said, must regard material desires as "his enemy."
- [26.](#) At this point, the obligation becomes the child's. The child's *father* is obligated to train the child to wear *tefillin* from the time he is old enough to wear them in a dignified manner, as stated in *Shulchan Aruch HaRav*, the conclusion of sec. 37.
- [27.](#) See *Shir HaShirim* 1:5.
- [28.](#) *Devarim* 6:4.
- [29.](#) Haman was the one who protested this connection as a reflection of his ancestral heritage. Haman is referred to as "the Agagite," i.e., a descendant of Agag, King of Amalek. In a spiritual sense, Amalek represents the force countering a commitment of *kabbalas ol* which transcends intellect (see the *sichah* to *Shabbos Zachor* in this series). Intellect recognizes that there are matters beyond its ken. Therefore, it accepts the existence of holiness that transcends understanding. Nevertheless, it sees holiness as being applicable only to the soul, involving the spiritual, and not the physical.
- [30.](#) Purim (and Chanukah) are referred to as festivals despite the fact that the Jews did not accept a prohibition against work on those days (*Megillah* 5b). See also *Likkutei Torah, Devarim* 58a. Indeed, even the 15th of Av is called a festival (the conclusion of *Taanis*). Note also the uniqueness of Purim as reflected in our Sages' statement (*Midrash Mishlei*, ch. 9) that "All the festivals will be nullified, with the exception of Purim."
- [31.](#) Since this *mitzvah* expresses the fundamental theme of Purim, it is possible to say that the obligation to fulfill it encompasses the entire day. See the *sichah* to *Parshas Zachor* in this series, note 26, where this concept is explained.