



# ישיבת הר עציון

## Yeshivat Har Etzion – Israel Koschitzky VBM Parsha Digest, Year VII, #24 Parashat Tetzaveh – Shabbat Zakhor: Purim issue 5785

Selected and Adapted by Rabbi Dov Karoll

### Quote from the Rosh Yeshiva

Why did Mordechai refuse to bow down to Haman? Bowing down to a man in high office is not forbidden, as we see that Yosef's brothers bowed down to him (Bereishit 42:6), and the prophet Natan bowed down to David (I Melakhim 1:23). If bowing down to Haman was not forbidden, why did Mordechai endanger his own life and, as it became clear after the fact, also the lives of all of Israel?...

The sin in the book of Esther does not lie in the prohibition of idol worship and in repentance for this prohibition, but rather in national consciousness. The book begins with the elaborate coronation of Achashverosh, and the beginning of the atonement for the pleasure experienced at that feast was when Mordechai refused to prostrate himself before the seed of Amalek – when he retained his Jewish self-esteem. In Haman's decree, we hear that the Jews are "a people scattered abroad and dispersed among the people" in all the provinces of King Achashverosh (3:8), but at the end of the book, "the Jews gathered themselves together in their cities in all the provinces of the king Achashverosh" (9:2), and a Jewish defense legion was established in every community. When Mordechai refused to bow down to Haman, he was criticized by the sages of that generation, but in the end, a Jewish holiday to commemorate the miracle was established in every community for all generations. With his action Mordechai paved the way for Nechemya in the next generation, who rebuilt the walls of Jerusalem and established there an army and Jewish sovereignty. -Harav Yaakov Medan, selected from:

<https://etzion.org.il/en/holidays/purim/mordekhai-did-not-bow-0>

### Meaning of Purim: Sichat Ta'anit Esther The Dispute Between Mordechai and the Sanhedrin

Based on a Sichat by Harav Aharon Lichtenstein zt"l

Based on: <https://etzion.org.il/en/holidays/purim/dispute-between-mordekhai-and-sanhedrin>



For Mordechai the Jew was second-in-command to king Achashverosh, and great among the Jews and accepted by most of his brethren; seeking good for his people and speaking peace to all his descendants. (Esther 10:3)

Commenting on this verse, the Gemara (Megilla 16b) elaborates:

"Accepted by most of his brethren" – but not by all of his brethren; this teaches us that some members of the Sanhedrin parted ways with him.

The Gemara does not elaborate as to why some Sages of the Sanhedrin parted ways with Mordechai. Rashi explains as follows:

"Parted ways with him" – because Mordechai abandoned Torah [study] and took up the reigns of power.

According to Rashi, some members of the Sanhedrin severed ties with Mordechai because he became the second-in-command to King Achashverosh, instead of being engaged in Torah. Rashi may have deduced this from the context of the Gemara, which quotes several sayings in praise of Torah study relative to other values. In any event, Rashi does not explain the argument. However, we can point to several possible issues.

a. In the Gemara (Kiddushin 40b) there is a debate among the Tannaim as to the relationship between study and action:

Rabbi Tarfon and the elders were gathered in the upper chamber of the house of Nitza in Lod, and this question was posed to them: Which is greater, study or action (ma'aseh)? Rabbi Tarfon answered: "Action is greater." Rabbi Akiva answered and said, "Study is greater." All the others present answered and said, "Study is greater, for study leads to action."

It is possible that Mordechai and the Sanhedrin debated a similar question. The members of the Sanhedrin believed that, in terms of



values, it was better to engage in Torah study than in action, while Mordekhai felt that action should be given preference. (The Rishonim also dispute this question, since the Gemara's conclusion is not clear. The Gemara establishes that "study is great" – but only because it leads to action.)

However, if we look further in the Gemara, we see that when the Gemara speaks of "ma'aseh" it is not talking about political power or day-to-day activities outside of the beit midrash; rather, it addresses fulfillment of practical mitzvot, such as challa and tithes. We may therefore say that Mordekhai and the Sanhedrin agree that "ma'aseh is greater," but disagree as to what "ma'aseh" means, in this context. The Sages of the Sanhedrin maintained that this term referred to actions with purely halakhic value, such as fulfilling practical mitzvot, and that only these preempt Torah study. Mordekhai, on the other hand, interpreted the term "ma'aseh" in its broader sense, so as to include all actions with worthy value, even if they lack halakhic weight.

b. In some contexts, the term "reshut" (optional or voluntary) represents the opposite of "mitzva" (commanded). Thus, for example, we encounter the concept of a "voluntary war" (milchemet reshut), as opposed to "an obligatory war" (milchemet mitzva). From the Gemara (Bava Kama 91b) it appears that, according to those who rule that a person is permitted to injure himself, this action is termed "voluntary harm." Does the term reshut imply that these actions are morally neutral? Obviously not. Clearly, the decision of whether to go out to war is different from the question of whether to wear a blue or red tie. The former question surely belongs to a category that carries considerable moral weight; nevertheless, such decisions are called reshut since there is no clear halakhic imperative or prohibition involved.

Mordekhai, then, maintained that the concept of "ma'aseh" applies not only to activities permitted or forbidden by Torah law, but also to those defined as reshut – such as engaging in politics, economics, and social action, etc. These activities admittedly are not strictly "halakhic" in nature, but there can surely have great significance, and can bring about "repairing the world in the Kingship of God."

We see in Rambam's Hilkhot Matenot Aniyim (10:7) that the highest level of the mitzva of charity is where one finds someone employment so that he may support himself and not be dependent on others. This charitable person has not lost a penny in the process, but he has fulfilled the commandment of tzedaka in the finest possible way. How much more so, then, a person who accepts a public position, and within that framework succeeds, for example, in managing the country's finances wisely such that thousands of people can attain sources of income; such a person fulfills a great mitzva. Even if the Shulchan Arukh does not deal with the assumption of political power, it should nevertheless be regarded as realizing an important, lofty goal, and in some circumstances should even be given preference over Torah study.

Hence, it is possible that Mordekhai and the Sanhedrin were not divided over the question of the relationship between study of the Divine will (i.e., Torah) and its realization, but rather over the question of the scope of the sphere of "ma'aseh" that pertains to realizing God's will.

c. There is a third possible source of disagreement. Even if we "ma'aseh" is interpreted in its broadest possible sense, it is still not desirable that a leading Torah scholar should abandon his study for the sake of the world of action. Would it be better if Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach zt"l had been the Prime Minister of Israel, or if Rav Chaim Soloveitchik zt"l had been the Prime Minister of Poland? Such a scenario would certainly not have been beneficial for the Torah world, and there is considerable doubt as to whether it would have been beneficial for the regimes and citizens involved. The distinction between the world of Torah and the world of ma'aseh must be preserved; they should not be confused with each other.

The Sages of the Sanhedrin believed that, despite the importance of political influence, it would be better for Mordekhai to remain within the world of the beit midrash, rather than mixing 2 dimensions that did not belong together. Mordekhai, on the other hand, insisted that the integration of these spheres that could bring about mutual fructification and advancement.

d. Another possible source of the dispute arises from the Gemara in Berakhot (63a):

We learn, Hillel the Elder said: At a time when others gather in, [you should] scatter; at a time when others scatter – [you should] gather in. And if you see a generation that holds Torah dear – scatter, as it is written, "There is one who scatters yet increases" (Mishlei 11:24). If you see a generation that does not hold Torah dear – gather in, as it is written, "A time to act for God; they have violated Your Torah" (Tehillim 119:126).

Rashi explains:

"At a time when others gather in" – i.e., the Sages of the generation are not spreading Torah among their students; "scatter" –



you shall spread it and teach the students.

“At a time when others scatter” – when the great Sages of the generation are teaching Torah,

“gather in” – you [shall keep your Torah to yourself]. And do not exercise power over them, for it is for the glory of heaven for a person to maintain humility, and it is written, “A time to act for God; they have violated Your Torah.”

“And if you see a generation that does not hold Torah dear, gather in” – do not [teach and thereby] allow words of Torah to be held in derision.

From this Gemara, we learn that when one must choose a sphere of occupation, it is not sufficient that he act in accordance with his own personal hierarchy of values, he must also consider the social circumstances prevailing around him. Sometimes a person sees great value to work in a given sphere, but at that time there is no shortage of people working in that area. On the other hand, there are times when a person may lean against a certain occupation, but there is a need for more people to work in that field.

Every person is “planted” by God in a particular generation and in a specific environment. A person who wants to live wisely must evaluate carefully what is required of him in the reality in which he lives. There are, admittedly, aims and values that exist beyond time and place, but nevertheless there are priorities that arise from every situation. This may be what Ramchal refers to when he introduces his *Mesillat Yesharim* with the subject of “man’s obligation IN HIS WORLD.”

Mordekhai and the Sanhedrin may then have disputed what was required right after the conclusion of the story of the Megilla. This period was characterized, on the one hand, by a great spiritual revival. Am Yisrael, which at the beginning of the Megilla had “enjoyed the banquet of that wicked one,” symbolizing identification with the decadent culture of Shushan – had, by the end of the Megilla, reached a situation of “kiyemu ve-kibelu”: a renewed acceptance of the Torah (“they reaccepted it in the days of Achashverosh” – Shabbat 88a). Perhaps Am Yisrael even reached a higher level than the one they maintained prior to this deterioration: “The place where ba’alei teshuva (penitents) stand is unattainable even by the completely righteous” (Berakhot 34b).

However, a spiritual danger still hung over their heads. So long as they remained under the powerful impression of the salvation from Haman’s decree, with an immediate sense of God’s Providence, there was little danger of another spiritual deterioration. But with time, the memory of their miraculous salvation would fade, the spiritual enthusiasm would wear off, and Am Yisrael would sink back into the routine of life. For this reason, Esther saw it as crucial to demand, “Inscribe me [i.e., my story] for all generations” (Megilla 7a). She wanted to set aside a day on the Jewish calendar that would bring the story of their salvation into the national consciousness, preventing it from turning into an isolated event that would be forgotten.

The Sages of the Sanhedrin therefore argued that the leadership of the time was faced with an critical task: to ensure that the experience and spiritual fervor would be preserved for future generations, rather than dissipating and disappearing. Was this an appropriate time for Mordekhai to assume a position of political power?

Mordekhai, for his part, argued that political power was exactly what was needed. Chazal are divided as to whether Achashverosh was a cunning or foolish king (Megilla 12a), but he was clearly given to changing moods. At 1 point, he followed his advisor unquestioningly and approved the execution of the queen (Vashti); at another point, he followed the queen’s advice and approved the execution of his advisor (Haman). At first, he expresses agreement to the Haman’s plan to slaughter the Jews; later he commands Haman to lead Mordekhai the Jew through the streets of the city with great honor. The phenomenon of the king committing the kingdom to whatever occurs to him at a given time, depending on his mood, is 1 of the most prominent themes of the Megilla.

Mordekhai therefore argued: Who can guarantee that Achashverosh will not suddenly change his mind once again, and be drawn after some new Haman who may decide to attack the Jews? Would it be responsible to ignore such a fragile political situation? Would this be the right time to go off to the beit midrash? Despite the enormous weight that he accorded Torah study, Mordekhai could not allow himself to choose the beit midrash over political influence, while Am Yisrael was vulnerable and in such great danger. Therefore, he chose to become second-in-command to the king.

We proposed 4 possible foci of the dispute between Mordekhai and the Sanhedrin, all based on the notion that the debate was based on considerations of values and principles. This conveys an important message for us. A person faced with the need to choose a profession must ensure that his decision is guided by meaningful considerations. He must ask himself where he is needed right now, in which sphere he is able to contribute and meet the needs of the generation most effectively.

What is important is not only the result – whether one works in a field that contributes to society and influences it – but also the manner in which one chooses. What considerations guided one’s choice? Indeed, 2 people may choose the same profession, but 1



makes a Torah-directed, value-based decision, while the other decides out of selfish considerations. While both respond equally to the needs of the generation, on the personal, spiritual level, a person motivated by a sense of giving differs sharply from one motivated by personal ambition. In such matters, the motivation is critical, even if the decision is ultimately the same. A society that cares about its own self-advancement differs from one that asks itself continually where it can contribute.

One phenomenon that characterized the State of Israel in its early years was idealism, rising above one's personal needs for the sake of contributing to society. This reminds us of the Rambam's teaching (Hilkhot Klei ha-Mikdash 3:1) concerning the Leviim – that they must be available and ready for service in the Temple, “whether they want to or not.” But just a few decades later everything collapsed, and what guides the average individual now [in 5763/2003] is often the question of which occupation most interests him or would be the most lucrative.

When a ben Torah faces such a fateful decision – what he is going to do every day for the next 40 or 50 years – he must ask himself, first and foremost, whether he has in mind the public good or his own benefit and personal desires? Are the “needs of Your people numerous,” or it is perhaps that “my desires are numerous”?

Clearly, the ideal situation is where there is no conflict between the needs of the generation and a person's personal preferences. This overlap is made possible in 2 different ways. One possibility is that a person chooses a sphere which, on the one hand, addresses the needs of the generation, and on the other hand gives him a sense of satisfaction and enjoyment, independent of the sense of giving that accompanies it. Thus, for example, some people are drawn to Torah study with all their heart and soul, and find it interesting and enjoyable, unrelated to its inherent value and importance. A person who has such a great, natural love for Torah is fortunate; he is easily delivered from the schism that sometimes divides one's personal desires and the needs of the generation.

But there is another situation, in which a person is not naturally drawn to the sphere that he chooses out of commitment to the needs of society, but ultimately he discovers that there is some overlap between his will and the public good. The Mishna in Avot (2:4) teaches, “Nullify your will before His will.” We may understand the mishna as meaning that, practically, a person ultimately should not do what he desires, but rather what God wants. But there is another way to understand it: when one internalizes that what he does is God's will, it can become his will. A person generally has no desire to defy God's will; even if he has such a desire, it can be channeled into positive ways of serving God (“With all your heart” [means] with both of your inclinations, the positive and negative inclinations,” Berakhot 54a). A person wants with all his might to advance God's plans in the world, and even if it seems that his personal will is otherwise, he internalizes that the realization of God's will is more important than actualizing his own desires.

Thus, the debate over choice of profession is not limited to Mordekhai and the Sanhedrin. It has occupied, and continues to occupy, many people. There is no single correct answer. Not everyone is suited to the world of Torah study. Every person has his own talents and skills, by means of which he may enrich the world. But a sense of mission, a will to contribute to society, can and should be part of each of us. A person must do some honest soul-searching, to examine carefully what his considerations are in choosing a profession, and then – with God's help – arrive at the proper conclusion.

May it be God's will that we be granted the wisdom to determine the correct priorities, and that we merit help from heaven in choosing a worthy sphere of occupation.

[Delivered on Ta'anit Esther 5763 (2003). Summarized by Zev Frimer. Translated by Kaeren Fish]

## **Parashat Tetzaveh**

### **The Kindling of the Menora**

By Rav Dr. Zvi Shimon

Based on: <https://etzion.org.il/en/tanakh/torah/sefer-shemot/parashat-tetzaveh/tetzaveh-kindling-menora>



Last week's parasha, Parashat Teruma, dealt with the commandments to build the Mishkan – the Tabernacle, and its vessels. This week's parasha, Parashat Tetzaveh, focuses on the making of the special attire worn by the kohanim in the during the Temple service. However, interestingly, the parasha begins with the commandment of kindling of the menora in the Mishkan (27:20-21):

And you shall command the children of Israel to bring you clear oil of beaten olives for the light, to cause the lamp to burn always. Aaron and his sons shall set them up in the Tent of Meeting, outside the curtain which is before the Testimony, [to burn] from evening to morning before the Lord. It shall be a due from the Israelites for all time, throughout the ages.



The Abrabanel and many of the other commentators query as to the placement of this commandment of the kindling of the menorah: Why does the commandment to kindle the menorah appear here? This commandment should have come only after the completion of the construction of the Mishkan and the consecration of the kohanim?

The Mishkan has not yet been built, the kohanim responsible for kindling the menorah have not yet been consecrated and the menorah has yet to be constructed. What is the logic in commanding if it is impossible to perform the commandment? Furthermore, why doesn't the command to kindle the menorah appear at the beginning of the book of Leviticus which deals with the different functions of the kohanim including the offering of the sacrifices?

The Ibn Ezra, in his long commentary to the book of Exodus (the Ibn Ezra wrote 2 commentaries on the book of Exodus, 1 longer and 1 shorter), relates to the order of the latter half of the book of Exodus. He explains that the Torah first introduces the commandments relating to the Mishkan and its components, and then it continues with the commandments relating to the kohanim and their tasks in the Mishkan. The first priestly responsibility mentioned is the kindling of the menorah. Following this, the Torah details the attire of the kohanim. According to the Ibn Ezra, the kindling of the menorah belongs to the second section, relating to the kohanim and their attire, and not to the preceding commandments relating to the construction of the Mishkan.

This explanation, however, is problematic. Even if we accept that the commandment to kindle the menorah belongs to the sections dealing with the kohanim and their attire, the Ibn Ezra does not explain why the commandment to kindle the lamp appears before those relating to the making of the special clothing of the kohanim. The clothing of the kohanim is surely a prerequisite to the performance of their tasks in the Mishkan!

The Chizkuni has a different understanding of the commandment of kindling the menorah:

After [the Torah] completes its description of the commandments relating to the Mishkan, it specifies the method by which light will be supplied for the Mishkan.

Implicit in the Chizkuni's explanation is the notion that the kindling of the menorah belongs to the previous parasha, to the commandments relating to the Mishkan and not, like the Ibn Ezra, to the section relating to the kohanim. However, the Chizkuni does not elaborate on this point. Why does kindling the menorah belong to the section dealing with the construction of the Mishkan? It seems to be a form of "avoda," a function, and not part of the construction of the Mishkan. How does the kindling of the menorah differ from the offering of sacrifices which appears in the book of Leviticus, following the construction of the Mishkan?

To answer this question, we must analyze the nature and purpose of the kindling of the menorah in the Mishkan. Our Sages offer the following explanation (Midrash Hagadol):

"Bring YOU" (27:20) – Rabbi Samuel son of Nachmani said, to you and not to Me, for I am not in need of light... but for you [Moses] and for your brother [Aaron] for when you enter [the Mishkan],... likewise the table was on the north side [of the Mishkan] and the menorah in the south, Rabbi Zerika said in the name of Rabbi Elazar, I am not in need of food nor light, but Aaron and his sons will eat from the table.

This interpretation focuses on the clause "instruct the Israelites to bring YOU clear oil" (27:20). The light of the menorah, like the table in the Mishkan, is not for God's usage. God has no need for our light, nor for our food. God is the source of the light, the source of all that exists. The purpose of the kindling of the menorah is to provide light for Moses and the kohanim when they enter the Mishkan. The menorah basically functions as a light bulb which illuminates a room. This is also the position adopted by the Ibn Ezra (see long commentary 27:20) and the Chizkuni: "FOR YOU [Moses], so that you can see where you enter and where you exit" (27:20).

The Rambam (see Guide to the Perplexed, 3:45), and the Sefer Ha-chinukh offer a different explanation for the commandment to kindle the menorah in the Mishkan:

At the root of the precept lies the fact that the Eternal Lord commanded us that a lamp should burn in the Sanctuary, to magnify the glory and splendor of the Temple in the eyes of those who behold it. For such is the way of people, to attain distinction in their houses with burning lights. And the entire reason for the magnification [of splendor] in it is that a man's heart should become infused, when he sees it, with reverent awe and humility. (Sefer Ha-chinukh commandment 98).

The light of the menorah is, simply speaking, a special effect to impress onlookers and to arouse their awe and appreciation of the sanctity of the Mishkan.

By contrast, our Sages invest the light of the Mishkan with far greater significance than a simple light illuminating the Mishkan, whether for the kohanim working within or for the onlookers from without. The light of the menorah is not ordinary physical light; it has



metaphysical import. The light of the Mishkan symbolizes the 'shekhina,' the Divine presence (Menachot 86b):

"which is before the Testimony" (27:21) – "It [the light of the menorah] is a testimony to mankind that the 'shekhina' rests in Israel." This midrash focuses on the clause which designates the location of the menorah, "in the Tent of Meeting, outside the curtain which is before the Testimony." The 'Testimony' refers to the 2 Tablets brought down by Moses from Mt. Sinai on which the ten commandments were etched (see 31:18). However, the midrash interprets the word 'testimony' as referring to the light of the menorah. The light is proof that God "dwells" in the Mishkan.

A different midrash, cited in the Midrash Rabba (Shemot Rabba 36:3), suggests that the light of the menorah symbolizes the wisdom of the Torah. Compare the following 2 midrashim. What is the difference in their understanding of the Torah?

Just see how the words of the Torah give forth light to a man when he studies them; but he who does not occupy himself with the Torah and does not know it, stumbles. It can be compared to one who stands in a dark place; as soon as he starts walking, he stumbles against a stone; he then strikes a gutter, falls into it, and knocks his face on the ground – and all because he has no lamp in his hand. It is the same with the ordinary individual who has no Torah in him; he strikes against sin, stumbles, and dies, while the Divine Spirit exclaims: "He shall die for lack of instruction" (Proverbs 5:23); and 'instruction' means the Torah. He dies, because he knows not the Torah & goes and sins, as it says, "The Way of the wicked is as darkness; they know not at what they stumble" (ibid. 19). But those who study the Torah give forth light wherever they may be. It is like one standing in the dark with a lamp in his hand; when he sees a stone, he does not stumble, neither does he fall over a gutter because he has a lamp in his hand, as it says, "Your word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path" (Psalms 119:105), and also, "And if you run, you shall not stumble" (Proverbs 4:12).

"The spirit of man is the lamp of the Lord" (ibid. 20:27). God said: 'Let My lamp be in your hand and your lamp in My hand.' What is the lamp of God? The Torah, as it says, "For the commandment is a lamp, and the teaching is light" (ibid. 6:23). Why is the commandment 'a lamp'? Because if one performs a commandment it is as if he had kindled a light before God and as if he had revived his own soul – also called a light, for it says, "The spirit of man is the lamp of the Lord" (ibid. 20:27).

The heart of the Mishkan is the ark which holds the 2 tablets of stone given to Moses on Mt. Sinai (see 25:16). The Mishkan is thus not only the house of God, it also houses the Torah. The light of the menorah symbolizes the light of the Torah. According to the first midrash cited, the purpose of the Torah is to serve as a light to the people, instructing them in the ways they should behave, and helping them evade the many pitfalls which reality presents. Those without knowledge of Torah are likened to one walking in the dark with no light, unaware of, and unequipped to deal with the obstacles he meets. Those who do not know Torah are unequipped to deal with the moral challenges they will meet, and thus likely to falter and sin. The Torah is depicted as a tool which guides man and helps him escape from sin and moral disintegration.

The second midrash, by contrast, doesn't see the Torah in pragmatic terms, as a signpost guiding man through the moral hazards of existence. Rather, it views the Torah existentially. The Torah and the commandments help man discover his true self and fulfill his latent potential. It is by keeping the commandments that man reaches his most elevated stature. Through Torah, man bonds with God and with his fellow man, and thus reaches a greater fulfillment of his human potential.

To summarize, the explanation that the purpose of the light of the menorah was to illuminate the Mishkan for Moses and the Kohanim accords with the approach of the Ibn Ezra, who asserts that the commandment to light the menorah belongs to the section dealing with the Kohanim, namely Parashat Tetzaveh. The menorah's function is to allow Moses and the kohanim to perform their tasks in the Mishkan. The 3 other explanations of the function of the light of the menorah, either to impress onlookers from outside (Rambam and Sefer Ha-chinukh) or a symbol of the Divine presence, or of the wisdom of the Torah (Midrash Rabba) accord with the approach of the Chizkuni, that the commandment of the kindling of the menorah pertains to the section of the Mishkan, namely Parashat Teruma. The lighting of the menorah is not categorized as a task of the kohanim, but is rather an integral part of the Mishkan itself.

Let us return to our original question as to the peculiar location of the commandment of the kindling of the menorah. According to the first 2 reasons given for the lighting of the menorah, the light takes on secondary importance. It serves certain functions but is not a central component of the Mishkan. However, the last 2 explanations view the light of the menorah as the heart and essence of the Mishkan. If the light represents the Divine presence or the wisdom of the Torah, then it is not only part of the Mishkan, but is its ultimate goal. The purpose of the Mishkan is to serve as the spiritual center of the people. It is the house of God which people visit to encounter the Divine. If the light represents the Divine presence, then its absence leaves the Mishkan devoid of substance. Likewise,



the Mishkan is the center of Torah, the hub from which the teachings of God spread forth. Without the light of Torah, the Mishkan fails to fulfill its aim of spreading the knowledge of the will of God. As such, the kindling of the Menora must be viewed as the ultimate completion of the construction of the Mishkan. It is not a task, a function of the Mishkan; it is its essence. With this understanding it is clear why “the service of the lights” appears where it does. It closes the section dealing with the laws of building the Mishkan, highlighting the Mishkan’s ultimate function as the house of God and the center of Torah.

## II. The Permanent Light

The Rashbam, citing our sages, points to the unusual language of the commandment of kindling the menorah:

“And you shall COMMAND” – above (25:2) the Torah uses the phraseology: “SPEAK to the children of Israel that they bring me an offering” since it is a momentary commandment for the purpose of the [construction of the] Mishkan, but here [the kindling of the menorah] where the commandment to provide oil for the menorah is everlasting [for all generations] the Torah uses a different phraseology, “And you shall COMMAND,” the word ‘command’ implying an eternal obligation.

There are 2 emphases in the commandment to kindle the menorah:

1) the permanence of the commandment; 2) the role of the people of Israel in its performance.

Scripture states that “It shall be a due from the Israelites for all time, throughout the ages” (27:21). It is an eternal obligation upon the people of Israel to provide oil for kindling the menorah. The Torah repeats the role of the people of Israel in this commandment, in verses 20 and 21, to stress that the responsibility for providing the raw material for the lighting of the menorah rests with the people of Israel.

If the lighting of the menorah is an eternal obligation, how is it to be performed now, that sadly, the Temple no longer exists? Is the destiny of the commandment to light the menorah similar to all other commandments related to the Temple? Is it to be put in abeyance until the Temple will be rebuilt? A fabulous midrash brought in the Midrash Ha-gadol relates to this question:

“for all time” (27:21) – Even though as a result of our sins we no longer have a Temple, we nevertheless have synagogues and ‘batei midrash’ (places of Torah study).

The mitzva of kindling the menorah endures in our prayers in the synagogue and our study of Torah in the Beit Midrash. In our prayers we acknowledge the presence of the Divine, and through our study of Torah we continue spreading the light and wisdom of the Torah. Our obligation to illuminate the world with the awareness of the God and the teaching of His will continues in the 2 key, pivotal institutions of the Jewish community. The functions of the Mishkan as a house of God, of the Divine presence, where man meets God, and as a center of Torah, are continued by the synagogue and the Beit Midrash. By our devotion to these institutions and their functions as centers of prayer and study we fulfill our eternal obligation of kindling the menorah.

## Purim: Halakha

### The Purim Meal (Se’udat Purim)

By Rav David Brofsky

Based on: <https://etzion.org.il/en/holidays/purim/purim-meal>



We read toward the end of the Megilla (9:20-22) that Mordekhai sent letters to the Jews of the provinces of Achashverosh, announcing the establishment of the Purim festival. In his letters, Mordekhai wrote:

... that they should keep yearly the 14th day of the month Adar, and the 15th day of the same, the days wherein the Jews had rest from their enemies, and the month which was turned unto them from sorrow to gladness, and from mourning into a good day; that they should make them days of feasting and gladness, and of sending portions one to another, and gifts to the poor.

Mordekhai enacted 3 components to the Purim celebration: “feasting and gladness,” “sending portions one to another” (mishlo’ach manot), and “gifts to the poor” (matanot la-evyonim).

This shiur will discuss the details and parameters of the festive meal of Purim, known as the se’udat purim. This is a central component of the Purim holiday, both experientially and halakhically, as the Megilla itself characterizes the days of Purim as “days of feasting and gladness.”

When should one conduct this festive meal? The Gemara records (Megilla 7b):

Rava said: one who eats the festive Purim meal at night has not fulfilled his obligation. What is the reason? It says: “days of



feasting and gladness.”

Rav Ashi was sitting in front of Rav Kahana; it became dark, and the Rabbis didn't come. He said to him: Why didn't the Rabbis come? Maybe they were busy with the festive Purim meal.

He (Rav Kahana) said: Was it not possible for them to eat [their Purim meal] the previous night? He (Rav Ashi) responded: Didn't [you] hear that which Mar said in the name of Rava: one who eats the festive Purim meal at night has not fulfilled his obligation?...

Rava clearly rules that the festive meal must be eaten during the day of Purim, and not the previous night. The Rambam (Hilkhos Megilla 2:14), the Rashba and Ritva (Megilla 4a) rule in accordance with this Gemara, as does the Shulchan Arukh (695:1).

The Mordekhai (Megilla 787), however, cites the Ra'avya (R. Eliezer ben Yoel Ha-levi) as arguing that just as the Megilla is read both at night and again during the day, similarly, one should hold a festive meal both at night and during the day. Apparently, he recognized an additional, albeit lower, level of the mitzva that requires holding a meal at night, as well. The Rema (ibid.) also writes that one should “rejoice at night as well, and slightly increase in one's meal.”

The Rema records that it is customary to begin the Purim meal after praying the mincha service, in the afternoon. The Mishna Berura (8) explains that people are generally busy delivering mishlo'ach manot during the morning hours, and therefore the festive meal is commonly held in the afternoon.

In many communities, especially where people must work on Purim, it is customary to begin the festive meal late in the afternoon. The Rema rules that the majority of the meal should be eaten during the day, and speaks very critically of those who begin late and eat most of their meal after dark.

Often, the Purim meal is concluded only after nightfall, giving rise to the question of whether one should insert al ha-nissim in birkat ha-mazon. The Orchot Chayim (Hilkhos Purim, 35), cited by the Hagahos Maimoniyot (Hilkhos Megilla 2:14), rules that one inserts al ha-nissim even if the meal extended into the nighttime hours. The Tur (695), however, cites his father, the Rosh (see Teshuvot 22:6), as ruling that one should not insert al ha-nissim after dark. The Maharil (56) records that the custom in Ashkenaz followed the first opinion. The Shulchan Arukh (695:2) cites both views, and the Rema adds that it is customary to insert “al ha-nissim.”

Interestingly, the Peri Megadim (Eishel Avraham 5) lauds the practice of those who eat the se'udat Purim in the morning. The Rema, citing the Sefer Ha-minhagim, rules that this should be done when Purim falls on Friday [like this year in unwallied cities -ed.].

What should one eat at the festive Purim meal? The Magen Avraham (695:9) writes, “We haven't found [a source indicating] that one is obligated to eat bread on Purim.” Accordingly, the Birkei Yosef (695) and Eliya Rabba (695:7) rule that one need not eat bread at the se'udat purim. Others, however, maintain that one must eat bread at the Purim meal, just as Halakha requires eating bread at Yom Tov meals (see Shulchan Arukh O.C. 529:1). This is the view accepted by the Arukh Ha-shulchan (695:7) and the Netziv (Ha'amek She'ela 67:1, attributing this view to R. Achai Gaon.

This question may impact upon another issue, namely, whether one who forgets to insert al ha-nissim must repeat birkat ha-mazon. The Mishna Berura (15) cites a debate on this issue. The Magen Avraham (9) and Peri Megadim (ibid.) link this question to the issue of whether one is obligated to eat bread at the Purim meal. Those who require one to eat bread should also require one to repeat birkat ha-mazon if he forgot al ha-nissim, as the recitation of al ha-nissim was mandatory due to the obligation to eat bread. Conversely, those who do not require eating bread should not demand that one repeat birkat ha-mazon in this case. The Aruch Ha-Shulchan (12), however, contends that even those who require the consumption of bread would not demand that one who omits al ha-nissim repeat birkat ha-mazon, as birkat ha-mazon should not be treated more stringently than the amida prayer. One who forgets to add al ha-nissim in the amida does not repeat the amida, despite the fact that the inclusion of al ha-nissim is obligatory, and hence we would not require one to repeat birkat ha-mazon, either.

As for the final halakha, the Mishna Berura applies to this case the principle of “safek berkhos le-hakel,” meaning, one never recites a berakha if there is uncertainty as to whether it is warranted. Hence, in light of the different views surrounding this issue, one who forgets to add al ha-nissim in birkat ha-mazon should not repeat birkat ha-mazon.

Must one eat meat at the Purim meal? The Rambam (Hilkhos Megilla 2:15) and Shulchan Arukh (696:6) strongly imply that one must eat meat at the Purim se'uda. Some even express uncertainty as to whether one fulfills the obligation by eating poultry (Yechaveh Da'at 6:33)! The Magen Avraham (696:15), however, questions whether one must actually eat meat. The Acharonim relate this issue to the question of whether one must eat meat on Yom Tov to fulfill the commandment of simchat yom tov.



# Meaning of Purim

## “Shout for Joy, All You That are Upright in Heart”

By Rav Uzi Friedlich



Based on: <https://etzion.org.il/en/holidays/purim/shout-joy-all-you-are-upright-heart>

### The Service of Joy

The Rambam concludes his remarks about Simchat Beit ha-Sho'eva with a general statement concerning joy in the service of God: The happiness with which a person should rejoice in the fulfillment of the mitzvot and the love of God who commanded them is a great service. (Hilkhos Sukka ve-Lulav 8:15)

Why is joy a great mode of Divine service? Is there anything that man loves more than to be happy? What, then, is the special difficulty of joy?

At first glance, a person thinks that he loves happiness. Were he just able to allow himself to rejoice all the time, he would do that. The person thinks to himself that it is only external constraints that prevent him from being happy at all times: his frustrations, his fears, his quarrels, his disappointments, his anger, and the things that disturb his peace and bother him. Were all these things to disappear, so he imagines, he would truly be happy all the time.

But if this is really true, how then is it possible that 2 people can undergo the same experience, with 1 coming out happy, and the other sad, worried, or restrained? Apparently then it is not only external constraints that get in the way of happiness; rather, something in the first person pushes him to rejoice, whereas something in the second person causes him – perhaps unconsciously – to be subdued or even unhappy.

It seems that joy is the true and innermost characteristic of the depths of a person's soul: a flowing appearance of the inner energy stored up in him. One's soul contains many kinds of energy, and when they gush and stream in a natural manner, he lives with a sense of joy and action. There are, however, inner mechanisms that stop the joy, impair it, and do not allow it to appear, and thus they prevent our spiritual selves from reaching full expression.

### Envy, Lust and Honor

What prevents and confounds joy? Whether or not he is aware of it, a person's daily life is accompanied by many kinds of tension: fears, anxieties, concerns, and worries. A person worries about his honor, his economic and social status, his health, his stumbles and failures. His fear about his success in comparison to others, and the constant competition – perhaps he will succeed, but others will succeed more – fill him with a sense of failure that accompanies him at all times. Envy, lust, and honor, which according to the Rabbis, remove a person from the world (Avot 3:21), also disturb his peace, and raise within him feelings that prevent him from bursting out with joy.

In routine times, a person finds it difficult to act at the height of his power. Even when he pushes himself to the fullest, he does not always succeed. Sometimes he slips and stumbles. The less a person succeeds in realizing his inner strength, the less he actualizes himself, and thus he is left unsatisfied, and he worries more.

During his life, a person is tempted to act immorally and unwisely. He is seduced by his passions, he eats harmful foods, he behaves in an unhealthy manner, he hurts others, he lies, he twists and distorts, he causes others to stumble, and he struggles and fights. Any behavior that has even a trace of immorality fills him with unrest, dissatisfaction, agitation, and a sense of having failed to fulfill himself. The more that a person demands of himself, the more his worrying about the fact that he is imperfect disturbs his rest and gives him the feeling that he is worthless.

All of these things disturb the flow of energy in a person's soul. And when the soul is disturbed, this finds expression in sadness, depression, frustration and pain.

In order to be happy, a person need not create happiness ex nihilo; joy is implanted within him, and it is the nature of his soul. In order that he be able to express this natural feeling, a person must break free from the endless cycle described above, which stops the soul from freeing itself and prevents joy from appearing.

Indeed, “the happiness with which a person should rejoice... is a great service.” It is not only religious happiness, “in the fulfillment of the mitzvot and the love of God,” as the Rambam puts it, that is an important mission. Happiness itself is a difficult task, and all the more



so, the service of rejoicing in God and in the fulfillment of the mitzvot.

### To Be Happy Always

What is the solution to the problem described above? How can a person be happy?

Psychologists and therapists try to teach their clients to break free from worries, anxieties and other feelings that impair their joy of life. If they are good, they succeed in making people happy.

It seems to me that 1 thing connects personal happiness to joy in God and in the fulfillment of mitzvot. All anxieties, worries, and frustrations are rooted in some defect in one's service of God, in a disconnection between man and God, and therefore the full release from worries and frustrations can only be achieved through joy in God. God bestows life upon man, and man's soul is hewn, as it were, from him. Man's soul is God's creation, and the less the soul is connected to its source, the more it remains stifled within.

All the anxieties and worries that disturb a person stem from a blocking of the Divine revelation in him. The more that a person believes in God, the less he worries about petty matters, as it is stated: "Cast your burden upon the Lord, and He will sustain you" (Tehillim 55:23). When a person understands that all the weight of the world does not fall upon him, and he relies upon God and trusts in Him, he becomes more relaxed. The more a person lives his life based on a sense of mission, the better he understands that his job is not to worry about every failure, but to repair it.

Occupying oneself in repairing failures brings a person joy. Worrying about one's honor and status – i.e., jealousy, lust, and running after honor – are behaviors that stand in contradiction to service of God. The more a person tries to serve God and to be a faithful agent carrying out His will, the more he will break free from the tensions around him.

When a person is a slave to his passions, he is filled with anger and disappointment, for: "He that loves money shall not be satisfied with money" (Kohelet 5:9). On the other hand, when a person lives the life that God gave him – a life of sacrifice, of devotion, and of thirst to do the will of His Creator – his joy grows. Acceptance of the yoke of heaven frees him from his earthly burdens and from all the worries and frustrations that impede him. When a person lives a full life, he worries less and rejoices more.

Therefore a person's rejoicing in his performance of the mitzvot and in his love of God is a great service, and it is also the general service of happiness. When a person finds happiness in God and in the mitzvot, he is filled with the true and blessed human joy of life, which brings him to live a good and pleasant life and be a source of blessing to his friends and surroundings.

### The Joy of Purim

Chazal instituted 1 day of the year as a special day of breaking free from the constraints that shackle us all year long. On the day of Purim one is meant to drink to the point that he is unable to distinguish between "cursed be Haman" and "blessed be Mordechai" (Megilla 7b). According to some opinions, one is permitted to get truly drunk, and it is certainly permitted to rejoice, and to break free from the worries that strangle us throughout the year.

It is important to set limits, but a person must take care not to allow them to choke him, shut him in, and make him depressed and miserable. All year long a person must feel free and be filled with the joy of life, and on Purim he is offered the opportunity to practice this state with full force, to free himself of all his mental barriers, and to rejoice in the life that God gave him.

The book of Esther reveals the role of God in the most twisted aspects of life – in intrigues inside the palace, in Achashverosh's banquets, and in Haman's decrees. The hand of God runs through all these natural events and His will reveals itself through them.

The Divine dimension inundates all components of life and accompanies everything. The more we succeed in feeling it, so will we break free from the chains that limit us, shut us in, and depress us. With God's help, we will succeed in trusting in Him and thereby freeing ourselves from the chains of our passions, fears, concerns, and anxiety. And then we are promised the gift of happiness, as it is stated: "Many are the sorrows of the wicked; but he that trusts in the Lord, mercy surrounds him. Be glad in the Lord, and rejoice, you that are righteous; and shout for joy, all you that are upright in heart" (Tehillim 32:10-11).

Translated by David Strauss

Harav Amital zt"l  
at a Mesibat Purim  
at Yeshivat Har Etzion



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