



THE OHR SOMAYACH TORAH MAGAZINE ON THE INTERNET

# BOO the Villain & CHEER THE HERO

By Rabbi Mendel Weinbach

The arch villain of the Purim story, says the Sage Rava, was a master of incitement through slander. What is recorded in Megillas Esther (3:9) is only the tip of the iceberg of this vicious Jew-hater's tirade intended to cool relations between the king and the Jewish exiles and to incite to commit genocide.

**“Y**eshno am echad – there is one nation” is how Haman begins his pitch. This, explains Rava, was a response to the king's initial reluctance to embrace Haman's proposal for a final solution to his Jewish problem. “I am afraid,” said Achashverosh, “that their G-d will punish me, just as He punished those before me who tried to destroy this people.”

“Yeshno” was Haman's reassuring answer. The letters making up the word “yeshno” can be read and pronounced in more than one way. The simple meaning is “there is.” But on an interpretive *drush* level, this word can be read as “yoshanu;” Haman reassured the king that he need not fear Divine retribution because the Jews were “yoshanu” in regard to fulfillment of G-d's commandments.

The commentaries offer two different approaches as to what “yoshanu” means. “Yoshanu” can mean “they changed,” implying that the Jews deviated from the *mitzvot* which G-d commanded them. It can also mean “they slumbered,” which communicates an image of Jews lacking any interest in these *mitzvot*.

Either way, Haman intended to con-

vince the king that the Jews were vulnerable because of their laxity in practicing the religion that had protected them against earlier oppressors.

“But they have rabbis among them who will pray for them,” objected a worried Achashverosh.

“Am echad — they are one nation,” replied Haman, “and their religious leaders are no more observant than the rest of the people.”

Almost everything Haman said in his ensuing diatribe sounds like a forerunner of all the lies concocted by Jew-haters throughout history. However, his point regarding what makes Jews vulnerable to attack from these enemies serves as a warning for every Jewish generation, especially our own.

Judaism today suffers from both kinds of “yoshanu.” There are those who wish to “change” the ancient faith – to reform or reconstruct it. Then there are those who, despite their determination to cling to tradition, are “slumbering” in their observance – going through the motions of fulfilling the commandments but lacking understanding and enthusiasm. The real crisis comes, as Haman so acutely pointed out, when those who are supposed to be the spiritual leaders join the flock rather than lead it.

Where Haman made his fatal error in assessing Jewish strength and weakness was in ignoring the impact of a true Jewish leader, Mordechai, who was capable of inspiring his people to prayer and repentance – to teach them to abandon their efforts to “change” and to rouse themselves from their “slumber.” This hero of the Purim story is the prototype of Torah leaders throughout history, who have saved their people from both physical and spiritual annihilation.

Perhaps this is all summarized in the classic Purim song “Shoshanas Yaakov” in which we sing “cursed be Haman who wished to destroy me; blessed be Mordechai the Jew.” Haman was certain he could destroy the Jews, because they were no longer loyal to the Torah way of life which had always protected them against their foes. Furthermore, Haman saw no one among them who could steer them back to the path of the true Jew. We curse him both for his evil intentions, and for his denigration of our capacity to bounce back when led by a “Mordechai the Jew.” We bless Mordechai to this very day for providing the type of leadership which enables Jews to abandon dangerous change, wake up from their spiritual slumber – and be saved from every enemy.

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PINCHAS WOLFSON

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# The Eyes of Doves

*The silent rush of air passing over feathered wings at a thousand feet. A dove flies high over the fields, its eyes probing the distance. Looming out of the morning mist a haystack about a quarter mile ahead. A lone dove in an unfriendly sky. No other birds in sight. It scrutinizes the sky with its piercing gaze. Will it be safe to land? The dove has no talons. Its wings will not carry it fast enough to escape its many predators. The eyes of a dove are its only protection.*

**T**he Torah is the blueprint of reality. Through this blueprint, the great Rabbis of every generation have illuminated and elucidated the world we live in. They know this blueprint to a depth and subtlety which is almost beyond comprehension. They can see into the depths of the world's construction just like a builder visualizes a building by looking at its blueprint. Nothing is new to them because everything is in the Torah. G-d gives these Torah sages a power — a distant hint of prophecy

— to guide the Jewish People. It is they who can read His “guidebook” better than anyone else. Everything is contained in the Torah, either explicitly or covertly, but it takes a Rabbi Akiva, a Maharal or a Vilna Gaon to be able to accurately extract its meaning and apply it to a contemporary context. The great *talmidei chachamim* (Torah Scholars) of every generation are given a unique insight into the ways of the world. This qualifies them to lead the Jewish People as no one else can.

for all who were present in Shushan the capital. Mordechai issued a ban on attending the feast even though the food was kosher. Mordechai knew that there was something very non-kosher about this meal.

The prophet Yirmiyahu had prophesied that the Babylonian exile would end after seventy years. Achashverosh was aware of this prophecy, and according to his calculations seventy years had already passed. Emboldened by this, he took out the holy vessels of the Temple at his feast and caroused with them. Despite Mordechai's ban on the feast, the Jewish People ignored him. They surmised that it would be considered an unforgivable sleight to the king's honor were they not to attend. Conventional wisdom would have agreed with them. Wasn't this a case of a life-threatening situation, which made it not just permissible, but a mitzvah to attend the feast?

But Mordechai's decree was not based on gut feeling nor conventional wisdom. It was based on Torah wisdom, reality seen through Torah knowledge.

## Gut Feeling

**R**abbi Shimon bar Yochai's students asked, “why did the Jews of Persia deserve Haman's decree of annihilation?” They answered “because they benefited from the meal of that evil Achashverosh.” To flaunt his power and wealth, Achashverosh decided to throw a party of mind-boggling dimensions that lasted for six months. At the end of this party, Achashverosh threw another party



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In Loving Memory of  
**GENIA EHRENBERG** ע"ה  
on her fourth *yahrzeit*  
**גניה (גולדה) בת ר' צבי הכהן ע"ה**  
נפ' י"א אדר א' תשנ"ה  
and **CHAIM EHRENBERG** ז"ל  
on his fourth *yahrzeit*  
**ר' חיים ב"ר משה פנחס ז"ל**  
נפ' י"ד אדר ב' תשנ"ה

Conventional wisdom and gut feeling would have put all the blame on Mordechai. Surely, what provoked Haman to issue his genocidal decree against the Jewish People was his fury when Mordechai refused to bow to him. Wasn't it Mordechai himself who placed the Jewish People in jeopardy by his stiff-necked refusal to bow? Wasn't this another case of a life-threatening situation calling for the temporary abrogation of Torah law?

Conventional wisdom would also have dictated that Esther reveal her Jewish background to Achashverosh so that he would favor the Jews. And yet Esther's hiding of her identity, on Mordechai's instructions, was a key factor in the redemption.

ability to advise and direct the nation. However, when the Jewish People refuse to listen to these spiritual giants, following instead after politicians and those with no more insight than the rest of us, then our spiritual leaders become powerless to influence or to help.

When G-d told Moshe to go and speak to Pharaoh, he said: "Behold, the Children of Israel have not listened to me, so how should Pharaoh listen to me? And I have sealed lips." (Shemos 6:12) If the Jewish People had listened to Moshe, his mouth and lips would have been opened and his words would have affected even Pharaoh, but since the Children of Israel did not listen, Moshe's "lips were sealed."

*What is truly unconventional is the wisdom of our great Rabbis. It is bounded neither by the mores or the exigencies of the moment.*

## The Eyes Of Doves

In the Song of Songs the verse states, "Your eyes are doves." The Midrash tells us that "your eyes" refers to the Sanhedrin, the supreme legislative body of the Jewish People. The Sanhedrin are the "eyes of the congregation." They can see behind the mask of reality, beyond the grasp of mere conventional wisdom.

The power of leadership flows from the people. In every generation G-d promises us there will be spiritual leaders, great Torah sages, who are given by G-d the

A Torah Scholar is not just someone you go and ask whether or not your chicken is kosher. A Torah Scholar is someone who knows the nature of every action, thought and word. Is it kosher? Is it "fit?" The modern world lionizes non-conventionality. What is truly unconventional is the wisdom of our great Rabbis. It is bounded neither by the mores or the exigencies of the moment. Implicit in the command of "Hear O Israel!" is the understanding that G-d speaks to us through his appointed emissaries at all times and in all places.

Sources:  
Tractate Megillah 12a,  
Meam Loez, Shir HaShirim Raba 1,  
Sfas Emes, Rabbi Reuven Subar

# PURIM PANDEMONIUM!

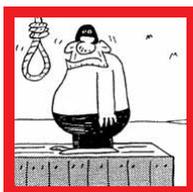
Unscramble the following Purim words and write them in the blanks:

HILLGAME ■■■●■■■●■■ ■ HEREST ■●■■■■■

MANAH ●■■■● RUMPI ●●■■■

Did you get them all? Good. Now, take the circled letters above and unscramble them into the blanks below to get the answer to the following question:

What did Achashverosh's executioner have lots of? \_\_\_\_\_ !



Answers:  
Megillah, Haman, Esther, Purim  
"What did Achashverosh's executioner have lots of?" Hang ups!

## SILENT BROADCAST

*“Upon it shall Aharon bring the spice incense...” (30:7)*

Advertising is the touchstone of contemporary society. The art of advertising is not to sell a product, it is to sell to people a perception of themselves which will result from buying the product. Maybe the little blue stripes will keep your teeth looking brighter. Maybe they won't. What sells the product however, is not the promise of brighter teeth, it is the lifestyle of people who have brighter teeth. As we all know, people with brighter teeth are never unhappy. They never feel tired. They flit effortlessly from one party to another. They jetset across the world without a bank manager or a mortgage in sight. And all for the price of a tube of toothpaste. Now that's what I call value for money!

In an age where illusion has become reality, where people send wreaths to TV stations when soap-operas stars “die” and are written out of the script, selling the Brooklyn Bridge has never been easier. All you need is a lot of money. And airtime.

The truth, however, sells itself. It doesn't need to be trumpeted to the skies. Nothing is more infectious than the truth.

There is a Jew who sits in a most frugal apartment in Yerushalyim. He has never made any television appearances. He has never been interviewed on any chat show. No-one has ever advertised him. And yet

the Jewish world beats a path to his door when it needs a halachic decision. His status and fame come entirely from his piety, plus the fact that, in most areas of Judaism, he knows the law better than anyone else. And everyone else knows it.

In the Beis Hamikdash, the *ketores* — the service of burning the incense — was performed away from public eyes, in private. Yet its scent could be detected as far away as Jericho, over twenty miles away.

When a person puts all his effort into living correctly, in accordance with the truth of the Torah, then, even though he may not broadcast his virtues, the nation will seek him out. His life may be a quiet understatement, but all his actions will radiate inner purity and holiness like a beacon.

## OLIVES AND OIL

*“And you shall take pure pressed olive oil for illumination” (27:20)*

The Jewish People are like the olive: Just as the olive only yields its oil after it has been crushed and squeezed, so the Jewish People reveal their true stature only after suffering oppression.

And just as oil cannot mix with any other liquid, but rather floats above it, so too the Jewish People never vanish into the melting pot. And most remarkably, despite being persecuted and subjected to the most severe ordeals, the Jewish People always rise above their oppressors and remain distinct from them.

## WHERE'S MOSHE?

*“And now, you shall command the Children of Israel...” (27:20)*

From the description of his birth in the beginning of *Sefer Shemos* (Exodus) until *Sefer Devarim* (Deuteronomy), Moshe's name appears in every parsha. Every *Parsha* — except one. This week's *Parsha*. The Vilna Gaon explains that Moshe died on the seventh of Adar and this date usually falls in the week of *Parshas Tetzave*. Just as Moshe was removed from the world during this week, so his name was “removed” from the parsha of this week.

## WHERE'S MOSHE? PART 2

The words of a *tzaddik* reverberate. They are like the ripples of a pond which travel outward and are felt even on a distant shore.

After the Jewish People had been unfaithful to G-d in the incident of the golden calf, Moshe pleaded with Hashem. He said, “Erase me from Your Book that You have written.” Moshe asked that he, rather than the Jewish people, should be eradicated. Even though Moshe spoke out of total self-sacrifice, nevertheless, his words made an impression, and it is for this reason that his name was “erased” from the *Parsha*.

### Sources:

*Silent Broadcast* - Rabbi Moshe Feinstein  
*Of Olives And Oil* - Tzror Hamor  
*Where's Moshe* - Vilna Gaon, Baal HaTurim,  
 Nachal Kadmonim in *Iturei Torah*

# PARSHA OVERVIEW

Hashem tells Moshe to command the Jewish People to supply pure olive oil for the *menorah* in the *Mishkan* (Tent of Meeting). He also tells Moshe to organize the making of the *bigdei kehuna* (priestly garments): A breastplate, an *ephod*, a robe, a checkered tunic, a turban, a sash, a forehead-plate, and linen trousers. Upon their completion, Moshe is to perform a ceremony for seven days to consecrate Aharon and his sons. This includes offering sacrifices, dressing

Aharon and his sons in their respective garments, and anointing Aharon with oil. Hashem commands that every morning and afternoon a sheep be offered on the altar in the *Mishkan*. This offering should be accompanied by a meal-offering, and libations of wine and oil. Hashem commands that an altar for incense be built from acacia wood and covered with gold. Aharon and his descendants should burn incense on this altar every day.

## PARSHA INSIGHTS

MAFTIR FOR PARSHAS ZACHOR  
DEVARIM 25:17-19

### CHOLENT VERSUS AMALEK

*"Remember what Amalek did to you, on the way when you were leaving Egypt, that he happened upon you on the way..." (Devarim 25:17-18)*

The Torah mitzvah to remember what Amalek did to us when we came out of Egypt is fulfilled by reading the *maftir* on this Shabbos. Why is it that we specifically perform this mitzvah on Shabbos? What is the connection between the eradication of Amalek and Shabbos?

The Torah teaches us that Amalek attacked us *asher karcha baderech*. The word *karcha* has three connotations: It can mean "chance." It can mean "spiritual impurity." And it can mean "cold."

Shabbos stands in eternal opposition to these three things.

The poison that Amalek tries to put into the mind of man is that the world is *mikreh*, nothing more than mere coincidence. Shabbos is our testimony that Hashem created the world and everything in it in six days; that nothing is by chance.

Amalek represents a kind of spiritual

impurity — *keri*. Shabbos is like a *mikveh* for the Jewish soul. On Shabbos we pray: "Purify our hearts to serve You in truth."

The third connotation of the word *karcha* is "cold." The natural desire of the Jewish People is to serve G-d with a burning passion. Amalek wants to cool us off. Throughout the working week, we can become enmeshed in a worldview that owes more to Amalek than to Judaism. On Shabbos we return to those feelings of closeness to G-d. Shabbos represents the warmth of the Jewish soul's desire to unite with the Creator.

HAFTORAH ZACHOR SHMUEL I 15:1-34

### THE LAST OF THE AMALEKI

Parshas Zachor is always read the week before Purim, because on Purim we celebrate our deliverance from Amalek's most notorious descendent — Haman.

The Haftorah of Parshas Zachor depicts another encounter with the descendants of Amalek: King Shaul was commanded to annihilate Amalek, but he failed to kill their king Agag. While in captivity, the last of the Amaleki, Agag, managed to sire a child, and it was from this child that Haman was descended.

MEGILLAH "I DIDN'T KNOW THAT

*"After these things, King Achashverosh promoted Haman..." (Esther 3:1)*

Haman reigned for seventy days. That is, when you count from Nissan 13, when Haman delivered his first executive decree — i.e., the letters he sent out against the Jews (*Esther 3:12*) — until he was hanged on the 23rd of Sivan (*Esther 8:9*), you find that exactly 70 days elapsed.

Alluding to this, there are exactly 70 verses from the above verse describing Haman's promotion until the verse "they hanged Haman" (*Esther 7:10*).

• Me'am Lo'ez

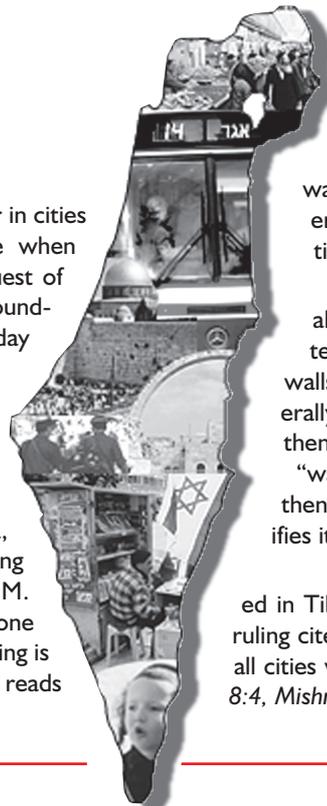
## LOVE OF THE LAND

*Selections from classical Torah sources which express the special relationship between the People of Israel and Eretz Yisrael*

### THE WALLED CITIES OF ERETZ ISRAEL

The Megillah is read on the 14th of Adar in cities which were *not* walled at the time when Joshua led the Jewish nation in conquest of *Eretz Yisrael*. In cities which were surrounded by walls at that time, the Megillah is read a day later, on the 15th of Adar.

In a city about which there is uncertainty as to whether it was walled at that time or not, its inhabitants must read the Megillah on both the 14th and 15th. This includes the ancient cities of Jaffa, Lod, Akko, Tsefas, Haifa, Beersheva, Hebron, Shechem and Gaza, according to the "*Luach Eretz Yisrael*" of Rabbi M. Tuchichinski. Feasting and gift giving are also done on both days. The blessing on the Megillah reading is said only on the 14th when most of the world reads the Megillah.



In Tiberias, too, the Megillah must be read on both days. But this is not because there is any doubt that the city had walls in the time of Joshua. A passage in Joshua 19 describes Rekes as a walled city, and we know that Rekes is another name for Tiberias. What then is the question that arises in regard to Tiberias?

Tiberias is located on the Sea of Galilee, also called the Kinneret. Thus, it was protected from invaders by a combination of walls and the sea. If we define a "walled city" literally, as one completely surrounded by walls, then Tiberias does not qualify. But if we view "walled city" as one protected from invasion, then Tiberias' combination of walls and sea qualifies it as such.

This is why the Sage Chezkiyahu instituted in Tiberias the Megillah reading on both days, a ruling cited in the Shulchan Aruch as a precedent for all cities whose status is uncertain. (*Orach Chaim 68 8:4, Mishneh Berurah 9*)

## WEEKLY DAF

YOMA 51 - 57

### A DIRECT LINE

In order to make his once a year entry into the *kodesh kodashim* (Holy of Holies) on Yom Kippur, the *kohen gadol* had to pass through the *heichal* area. Both Rabbi Meir and Rabbi Yossi agree that in the second *Beis Hamikdash* a single *paroches* (curtain) separated the *heichal* from the *kodshei kodashim* and that it was folded back a bit at its northern end to enable the *kohen gadol* to enter. Their point of disagreement is the route he took to reach this entrance.

Rabbi Meir contends that he walked between the golden altar and the table, which meant that his route traversed almost the center of the *heichal*. He did not set eyes on the *heichal* until he actually reached the *paroches*, turned right until the northern end and entered. Rabbi Yossi's opinion is that he walked between the table and the northern wall, so that he was in a direct line with the entrance to the *kodshei kodashim*.

Rabbi Meir explains his position by pointing out that it would be disrespectful to the *kodshei kodashim* to walk along a route that affords a view of its sacred interior all along the way. Rabbi Yossi's rejoinder is that Jews are so beloved by Hashem that this was not considered a problem.

Rabbeinu Chananel's explanation of Rabbi Yossi's statement is based on the difference between how the *kohen gadol* entered the sacred precincts of the *Beis Hamikdash* all year long and on Yom Kippur. All year long he was required to wear a special garment called a *meil* which had bells attached to its bottom hem "and its sound would be heard when he entered the sanctuary" (*Shmos* 28:35). This was like an envoy of the people announcing his arrival to the king and requesting permission to enter. On Yom Kippur, the *kohen gadol* entered the holiest of all areas without the *meil*, signifying that on this day he had a greater degree of privilege because of Hashem's love for the people he represented. There was therefore no need for him to hesitate walking along a route that offered a view of that holy area.

Rashi's approach is that Jews are so beloved by Hashem that they require no agent to bring their prayers before Him. Every Jew can pray directly to Hashem, as King Solomon put it in his prayer to Hashem at the dedication of the first *Beis Hamikdash* (*Melachim I* 8:38). Their emissary on Yom Kippur may therefore enter in such bold fashion.

The prayer of a Jew has a direct route to the *kodshei kodashim* from which it rises upwards to Heaven. Physical access to this sacred area is limited, however, to the emissary of all Jews — the *kohen gadol* on Yom Kippur. It therefore follows that he should,

on that day, have the same free access and not hesitate to follow the most direct route to the *kodshei kodashim*.

• Yoma 52a

### THE MISSING ARK

The high point of the Yom Kippur service in the *Beis Hamikdash* was when the *kohen gadol* entered the *kodesh kodashim* and placed the incense in front of the holy ark. Since there was no holy ark in the second *Beis Hamikdash*, the incense was placed on a stone which marked its place, and was called *even shesiah* — the foundation stone, from which, say our Sages, the creation of the world began.

What happened to the holy ark? One opinion in the *gemara* is that it was taken into Babylonian captivity along with the other sacred vessels. Another is that when King Yoshiyahu anticipated the imminent exile prophesied in the Torah (*Devarim* 28:36), he ordered the holy ark concealed in some secret subterranean passage to prevent its being taken into captivity.

But why did those who built the second *Beis Hamikdash* at the end of the Babylonian Exile not make a new holy ark? If they lacked the original one, either because it was in foreign hands or because its hiding place was unknown, why didn't they make a new one?

This question is raised by Rabbi Shmuel Strashan (*Rashash*). His approach in answering it is based on the Torah command "You shall place in the ark the testimony (the *luchos* upon which the Ten Commandments were etched)" (*Shmos* 25:16). This would seem to indicate that the purpose of the ark is to contain those sacred Tablets, and once they were gone there was no longer any need for an ark.

He notes, though, that some commentaries write that even though the *urim ve'tumim* were missing in the second *Beis Hamikdash*, the *choshen* breastplate which contained them (*Shmos* 28:30) was nevertheless worn by the *kohen gadol* to complete his full array of eight garments. If so, perhaps the ark, too, should have been made in order to complete the array of sacred vessels, even if it could not fulfill its primary purpose of housing the Tablets?

The same instruction of placing the Tablets in the ark, he explains, is repeated five passages later, and Rashi grapples with the need for this reiteration. It may be, *Rashash* suggests, that the reiteration is to stress that with no Tablets there is no need for the ark.

• Yoma 53b

### Sidelox

In honor of Purim, this week's edition features Sherlock Holmes' Smarter Brother....

### Sidelox Holmes

Sidelox Holmes and Dr. Watstein went on a camping trip. As they lay down for the night, Sidelox says to Watstein: "Watstein, look up into the sky and tell me what you see."

"I see millions and millions of stars," Watstein replies.

"And what does that tell you?" asks Sidelox.

"Astronomically, it tells me there are millions of galaxies and potentially billions of planets. Theologically, it tells me that G-d is great and that we are small, and meteorologically it tells me that we will have a beautiful day tomorrow. What does it tell you?"

"That someone's stolen our tent," replied Sidelox.

• Sidelox is inspired by... Okay, so it's NOT inspired.

## PARSHA Q&A ?

1. What two precautions were taken to assure the purity of oil for the *menorah*?
2. How was Aharon commanded to kindle the *menorah*?
3. What does *tamid* mean in reference to the *menorah*?
4. What does *kehuna* mean?
5. Name the eight garments worn by the *kohen gadol*.
6. To what does Rashi compare the *ephod*?
7. In which order were the names of the Tribes inscribed on the *ephod*?
8. The stones of the *ephod* bore the inscription of the names of the sons of Yaakov. Why?
9. For what sins did the *choshen mishpat* atone?
10. What are three meanings of the word *mishpat*?
11. What was lacking in the *bigdei kehuna* in the second *Beis Hamikdash*?
12. Which garment's fabric was woven of only one material?
13. When the *kohen gadol* wore all his priestly garments, where on his head was the *tefillin* situated?
14. What does the word *tamid* mean in reference to the *tzitz*? (two answers)
15. Which garments were worn by a *kohen hediot*?
16. During the inauguration of the *kohanim*, a bullock was brought as a sin offering. For what sin did this offering atone?
17. Moshe was commanded to wash Aharon and his sons to prepare them to serve as *kohanim* (29:4). How were they washed?
18. What was unique about the bull sin-offering brought during the inauguration of the *kohanim*?
19. How did the oil used for the meal-offering differ from the oil used for the *menorah*?
20. What does the crown on the *mizbach haketores* symbolize?

## I DIDN'T KNOW THAT!

**“And its sound will be heard (v'nishma) when he enters the sanctuary...” (28:35)** The word “v'nishma” occurs only three times throughout *Tanach*:

- Here, regarding the Temple service
- In the verse “*naaseh v'nishma — we will do and we will hear*” regarding Torah study (*Shemos* 7:7)
- In the verse from *Megillas Esther* “*v'nishma pisgam hamelech...ki raba — and the word of the king will be heard...for it is great.*”

(*Esther* 1:20)

This alludes to the Talmudic statement that the *Megillah* reading supersedes both Talmud Torah and the Temple service. That is, the *Megillah* reading, alluded to by the above verse “*and the word of the king will be heard...*” supersedes the other two, “for it is great — *ki raba*,” greater than even Temple service and Torah study.

• Ba'al Haturim

## YIDDLE RIDDLE

### Last week we asked:

“What verse in the Torah contains the same *shoresh* (root) four times in a row?”

### Answer:

*Bamidbar* 4:47. In describing the Levites' Sanctuary service, the verse says “*la'avod avodat avodah v'avodat masa — to serve the service of Service and the service of carrying....*” This verse contains the Hebrew root for service, “*ayin, bet, daled*” four times in a row.

Riddle and answer submitted by  
C. Blum, Toronto <catriel@stellapharm.com>

## PARSHA Q&A!

### Answers to this Week's Questions

All references are to the verses and Rashi's commentary unless otherwise stated.

1. 27:20 - The olives were pressed and not ground; and only the first drop was used.
2. 27:20 - He was commanded to kindle it until the flame ascended by itself.
3. 27:20 - It means that it should be kindled every night.
4. 28:3 - Service.
5. 28:4,36,42 - *Choshen, ephod, me'il, kesones, mitznefes, avnet, tzitz, and michnasayim*.
6. 28:6 - A woman's riding garment.
7. 28:10 - In order of birth.
8. 28:12 - So that Hashem would see their names and recall their righteousness.
9. 28:15 - For judicial errors.
10. 28:15 - 1) The claims of the litigants; 2) The court's ruling; 3) The court's punishment.
11. 28:30 - The *Urim V'Tumim* — the “*Shem Ha'meforash*” placed in the folds of the *choshen*.
12. 28:31 - The fabric of the *me'il* was made only of *techeles*.
13. 28:37 - Between the *tzitz* and the *mitznefes*.
14. 28:38 - 1) It always atones, even when not being worn; 2) The *kohen gadol* must always be aware that he is wearing it.
15. 28:40,42 - *Kesones, avnet, migba'as, and michnasayim*.
16. 29:1 - The sin of the golden calf.
17. 29:4 - They immersed in a *mikveh*.
18. 29:14 - It is the only external sin-offering that was completely burned.
19. 29:40 - Oil for the *menorah* comes only from beaten olives. Oil for meal-offerings may come from either beaten olives or from ground-up olives.
20. 30:3 - The crown of *kehuna*.

## STIFF PRICE?

**Chanan Dahl from Voyenenga, Norway <torgerd@online.no> wrote:**

Dear Rabbi,  
Why can Purim be one of the happiest holidays in the Jewish calendar when the Jews in King Ahasuerus' kingdom took revenge by killing more than 75,000 of their enemies (Book of Esther's 9:6, 9:16)? Of course it's a reason for joy that all the Jews were saved by Esther's and Mordechai's plot, but was not the price the people of the kingdom paid a bit stiff?

Dear Chanan Dahl,

First of all, I think it should be said that the Jews didn't take revenge. They defended themselves. By Persian law, "an order written in the name of the king and signed with the king's ring can not be rescinded" (Esther 8:8). Therefore, Haman's decree to kill the Jews was never actually rescinded. Instead, Achashverosh issued a second decree in which "the king gave permission to the Jews in every city to gather and defend themselves...against any who wage war against them" (Esther 8:11).

And Purim doesn't celebrate the death of our enemies. In fact, we celebrate Purim the day *after* the battle ended. The Jewish way is not to revel in the death of our enemies — we celebrate the fact that G-d saved us from Haman's genocidal plan.

Also, the death toll may not seem so large when you consider that it accounted for Achashverosh's entire kingdom, which stretched throughout the known world.

## STAMP IT OUT

**Yaacov Simon from Larchmont, NY <yaacovs@cloud9.net> wrote:**

Dear Rabbi,  
It occurred to me during the Megillah reading that we only make noise and "stamp out" Haman's name when he is referred to as "Haman." Why don't we "stamp out" the name of Memuchan, who the Sages tell us was actually Haman? For that mat-

ter, why don't we do the same during other Torah reading when any bad guy, Amalek for instance, is mentioned?

Dear Yaakov Simon,

Good question! The answer may be that although Memuchan refers to Haman, it is not his actual name. Part of the original custom to "stamp out Haman's name" was to say "shem reshaim yirkav — may the name of evil people be erased."

Now for your second question, why don't we "stamp out" the name of Amalek and other "bad guys?" The truth is, it's not really appropriate to make noise during the Torah reading in the first place, but it's permitted during the Megillah reading because of the special joy of the day. There are in fact authorities who discourage it even during the Megillah reading, and they only allow it because it is already an established custom.

Also, it is only appropriate to make noise when referring to a story in which we emerged as the clear winner, and with Amalek, that has not yet happened.

Sources:  
• Rema Orach Chaim 690, 17

## MEGILLAH MARRIAGE

**Name@Withheld wrote:**

Dear Rabbi,  
How does one explain the fact that Queen Esther married a non-Jew when it is written that no daughter of Israel shall marry a non-Jew? Furthermore, how does one explain that the Jewish People actually benefited from this "intermarriage?" Many thanks, again. Shalom.

Dear Name@Withheld,

Let me make your question even stronger: The Talmud says that Esther was already married ... to Mordechai! With that in mind, Esther's "marriage" to Achashverosh seems to be an even worse sin than intermarriage.

The answer is that Esther did not marry Achashverosh willingly, she was forced into it. So she is blameless in that regard. Even when she went willingly, since the salvation of the entire Jewish People depended on this, it was permit-

ted.

But your second question is, why did the Jewish People benefit from this mismatch? Why did G-d allow the redemption of the Jews to sprout from Esther's ignominious "marriage" to a drunken, idol-worshipping king?

I think the answer is as follows: The main theme of Purim is that even when we Jews are in exile, G-d directs every aspect of history for our ultimate benefit. Even seemingly bad events further G-d's hidden plan to bring the final redemption.

Sources:  
• Esther 2:8  
• Targum Ibid.  
• Even Haezer 178, Beit Shmuel, Chochmat Shlomo

## NO PRAISE ON PURIM?

**Name@Withheld from Calgary, Canada**

Dear Rabbi,  
Why do we not say Hallel on Purim?

Dear Name@Withheld,

We recite "Hallel" on the festivals which celebrate our freedom from Egypt. Hallel begins with the words, "Give praise, servants of G-d." Thus, we recite "Hallel" to celebrate the fact that we are no longer "servants of Pharaoh," but rather we are "servants of G-d."

The Megillah, on the other hand, begins with the Jews in exile, subservient to Achashverosh, and ends with the Jews in exile, subservient to Achashverosh. In this sense Hallel is inappropriate.

Sources:  
• Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim 693, Mishna Berurah 7

## LETTER PERFECT

**Michael Willen, MD from Slingerlands, NY <willem@rpi.edu> wrote:**

Dear Rabbi,  
In the Book of Esther, why are certain letters in the names of Haman's sons written so much smaller than the others and why are some letters in the text (such as a tav towards the end of the book) larger than the others?

Dear Dr. Michael Willen,

In Megillat Esther, and elsewhere in the Torah, you find several places where a letter is written slightly larger or slightly smaller than the other letters. This is an ancient tradition, and the reason for each instance isn't always explained.

The particular ones you mentioned (*Esther 9:7,9*) aren't explained in any classical sources. Recently, however, it has been discovered that these letters, which occur in the section describing the hanging deaths of Haman's ten sons, may contain an uncanny hint to the Nuremberg trials in which ten Nazis were tried and hung for their anti-Semitic crimes, as follows:

As you may know, the Jewish calendar year is represented by Hebrew letters. The small letters in the names of Haman's ten sons are: "tav" "shin" "zain." The large letter is "vav." These letters represent the year 707 ("tav shin zain" equal 707) of the sixth millennium (represented by the large "vav" which equals 6). Thus you have the Jewish date 5707, or 1946 by the civil calendar. On the first of October, 1946 — 6 Tishrei 5707 on the Jewish calendar —

the Nuremberg Military Tribunal tried ten Nazis and sentenced them to death by hanging for their modern "Hamanism." One of them, the notorious Julius Streiker, even cried "Purim-Fest 1946" as his cryptic last words.

Sources:

- "The Jewish Observer," March 1986, pp. 56-57

## TAKE A BOW

**Ari Trachtenberg, University of Illinois at Urbana/Champaign**  
<trachten@uiuc.edu> wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

*I am thinking about taking a class in Tae Kwan Do this semester to get some exercise. After sitting in on the first class, it seems that there is a lot of bowing involved, in addition to various "spiritual" lessons: Students are supposed to bow to the training room, to each other, to the instructor. The instructor told me that this bowing is a typical gesture of respect, that it is bi-directional (instructors bow to students too), and is not a supplication. Given the Purim story, however, I am hesitant*

*to participate in this class. Do you know of any conflicts between this type of martial art and Judaism? I appreciate your time, and thanks for the great "Ask the Rabbi" column!*

Dear Ari Trachtenberg,

Bowing to people as a gesture of respect is perfectly okay. Abraham bowed to his guests (*Genesis 18:2*), the brothers bowed to Joseph (*Genesis 42:6*) and Moses bowed to his father-in-law (*Exodus 18:6*). So if *Tae Kwan Do* bowing is nothing more than a gesture of respect toward others, I see no problem with it. If however, they are bowing to an object or the room that would be forbidden.

Why then in the Purim episode did Mordechai refuse to bow to Haman? The Midrash answers that Haman claimed divine powers for himself. He even went so far as to attach an idolatrous icon to his clothing. Under these circumstances, bowing to him was tantamount to bowing to an idol.

Sources:

- Rashi on Megillat Esther 3:2
- Ibn Ezra, *ibid*.

## Megillah A&Q

### WE GIVE YOU THE ANSWERS! YOU GIVE US THE QUESTIONS!

**READ THIS!** You have to ask questions from the *Megillas Esther* that aptly fit the following answers. For example, if we tell you the answer is "127," you must tell us that the question is "How many countries did Achashverosh rule over?" Got it? Good.

- |  |                 |
|--|-----------------|
| 1. Snake Mouth Head                          | 6. A High Chair |
| 2. 180 degrees                               | 7. Lots of Luck |
| 3. Remove both of his shins                  | 8. 'Cept 'er    |
| 4. All four surround <i>karpas</i>           | 9. My Hair!     |
| 5. Does anybody really know what time it is? | 10. Phooey!     |

1. What three words, when translated into English, rhyme with Achasheverosh? (*Nachash Peh Rosh*) (1:1)
2. What would you get if every single day of Achashverosh's feast you graduated college? (1:4)
3. How could you make Achashverosh be called Achavayro?
4. What do "*chur* and *techeles*" (1:6) have in common with "*urchatz* and "*yachatztz*?" (Beginning of Passover

- Haggada)
5. What question might Achashverosh have asked the "Wise men who know the times?" (1:13)
6. What did Haman sit in? (3:1)
7. What objects did Haman use to determine a date for his plan? (3:7)
8. Fill in the blanks in the following sentence with two words that together rhyme with another word in the sentence: "The king extend-

- ed his golden scepter to Esther, because everyone who entered his presence uninvited was put to death \_\_\_\_\_" (4:11)
9. What did Achashverosh say to Haman in verse 6:10 which indicates that Haman was a bad barber?
10. What exclamation, which is the second half of a word describing Haman's head, might Haman have uttered when his head was thus described? (6:12)

by Rabbi Chaim Salenger

# “Grab a Megillah”

Sung to the tune of “Hava Negilla”

Grab a Megillah  
and some Tequila  
We'll go and swill a  
Bottle of Bordeaux

Purim is here so  
break out the beer, though  
don't get too bleary  
eyed 'cause we must go

off to the synagogue

we'll dream of cold eggnog  
gunpowder in the air  
cap-guns everywhere

Here is the story now  
Listen and you'll learn how  
all of this happened then  
and it could again.

Mor-De-Chai was li-vid  
'cause the Jews, they just

ignored him,  
they went to the feast and  
poured 'em  
Vashti lost her royal head  
and

Esther she was picked  
instead

to be the queen  
what a scene!  
she was sent to save the  
day.

King Achashverosh  
he was so garish  
he didn't cherish  
any Jewish Soul

Haman and he  
decided to be-  
come partners, you see  
to kill us was their goal

but when those two ingrates  
planned to assassinate  
King Achashverosh their  
plot was quickly nixed

Esther said “Mordechai  
Why do you sit and cry?”  
He said “I'll tell ya why,  
You've got what to fix!”

And-then-Mor-de-chai said  
“People we are in a pickle  
we're not worth a wooden  
nickel

We had better think again  
and cry a little to Hashem.  
'Cause it's no joke  
we will croak  
if that *rasha* has his way!”

Esther arranged a  
party to change the  
mind of her deranged  
husband, what a cur.

Haman the blighted  
he was invited.  
He was delighted  
but it was a lure

Leave it to Mordechai,

he was a feisty guy.  
He wouldn't ever bow  
Haman had a cow.

He built a gallows high  
special for Mordechai  
he never thought that he'd  
be up on that tree.

Ach-ash-verosh could-not  
sleep. They read a bedtime

story  
all about his days of glory.  
Mordechai was not  
rewarded

“Who is here?”  
the king retorted  
Haman came  
he was shamed  
“Just look out for chamber  
pots.”

We know the rest  
the Jews they were blessed  
and Haman the pest  
was swingin' in the air.

We fought and won  
and ev-er-y son  
was taken and strung up  
with their dad up there.

Then all the Jews said “Hey,

let's make a holiday.  
We'll call it Purim 'cause  
we've been through a  
“lots”!

Presents we'll give and take  
Hamen-tashen we'll bake  
from work we'll take a  
break  
drink until we *plotz*.”

So-now-Pur-im-is-a

time to think about Hashem  
who saves us from each  
mess we're in  
and let it never come again  
and maybe if we'll all be  
friends  
we'll pass the test  
and be blessed.  
Now let's drink some  
Purim wine!

Every once in a while, there comes a question which...

# Cracks the Rabbi

The following are actual questions we received at "Ask the Rabbi" that, well, we just didn't quite know how to answer...

**Name@Withheld from Argentina wrote:**

Dear Rabbi,  
Shalom. In order to complete a text I need some missing words in Hebrew. My dictionary doesn't have them. Could you spell the following words in Hebrew (using Latin letters, as my e-mail program does have Hebrew)? The words I need spelled are: Globalization, New Age, International Monetary Fund, New World Order, Neo-liberalism, Internet, Wide World Web, computer, Rome, World Bank, Bar Code, William Henry Gates III, Bill Gates, Brussels. Sorry for the inconvenience but I have no one else to help me on this matter. Ciao!

**Name@Withheld from Belgium wrote:**

Dear Rabbi,  
I have a few questions: When it's the New Year, Jewish people eat apple in honey; do you have a recipe? Do men help cleaning the house when it's Easter? Who is Haman? How does his head look like?

**Name@Withheld wrote:**

Dear Rabbi,  
Can a vegetarian eat animal crackers?

**AND HERE ARE SOME WE DIDN'T KNOW HOW TO ANSWER, BUT WE DID ANYWAY...**

**Name@Withheld wrote:**

Dear Rabbi,  
Does television have any educational value?

Dear Name@Withheld,

I must say that I personally find television very educational. The minute somebody turns on the television, I go to the library and read a book.

**Name@Withheld wrote:**

Dear Rabbi,  
What is "Cole's Law"?

Dear Name@Withheld,

Thinly sliced cabbage with mayonnaise.

**Name@Withheld wrote:**

Dear Rabbi,  
I would like to thank you for using the letters "Shabbat" to spell Shabbat. I enjoy reading many Jewish books in English but the one thing that always bothers me is Shabbat spelled "Shabbos."

While that may be the pronunciation of many English-speaking Jewish people, they don't write tzedaka as "tzdukuh." Thank you.

Dear Name@Withheld,  
Yer welkum! Yasher Koiach!

## SHLEMAZEL PUZZLE

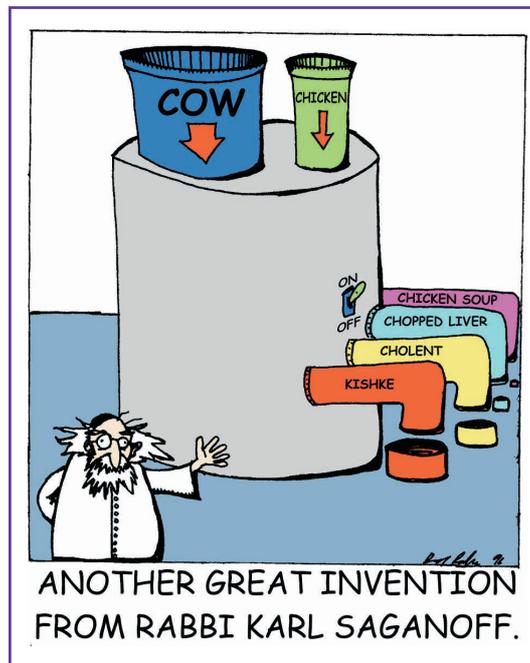
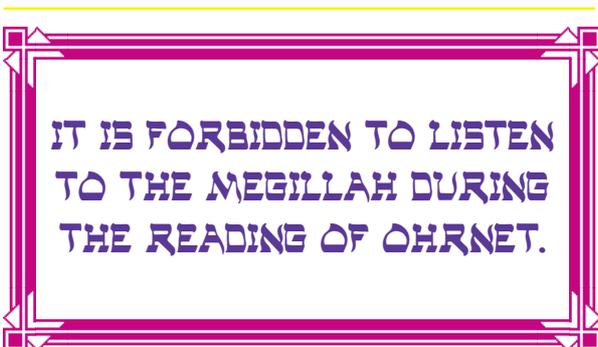
What was King Solomon's mother-in-law's name. (Give seven hundred answers)

## SPECIAL PURIM PRIZE!!

First correct answer\* to the Shlemazel Puzzle wins 1,000 dollars\*\*!

\*Entries must be written with an Australian emu feather on Tibetan yak parchment and sent by Libyan camel to Faad Zingbaum, Qatar, no later than the day before yesterday. A Money Order issued by the Central Bank of Sarajevo for \$350 must accompany all entries as an entrance fee.

\*\*Canadian dollars, paid out in installments: One dollar a year for a thousand years!



**ChoppedLiver®**  
Created by Rabbi Mordechai Becher

## The FAR SIDE of the Story

A mistaken identity can sometimes cause us to misjudge others. Take the case of...

### THE MONKEY SUIT

I was at a large department store the other day trying on a suit when from between the suit racks I see a man, whom I thought was the salesman, shoot a suspicious glance in my direction. Well, did he think I was trying to steal or something? I was just trying the suit on for size! So I scowled at him and he did likewise. Now I couldn't resist; I did something I haven't done since I was probably in second

grade: I scrunched up my nose, stuck out my tongue and (I'm not proud to admit it) I said "naaaahh-hh!"

Well, what do you think he did? He scrunched up his nose, stuck out his tongue and mimicked me to the tee.

Suddenly it dawned on me: I was looking in the mirror!

*Other people's feelings towards you sometimes just reflect your feelings towards them. So judge others favorably, because you might really be them, they might really be you, and the next person you judge favorably might be yourself!*

## I Didn't Want to Know That!

Do you know why the highlighted dot on your computer screen is called a "cursor?" It is based on a verse in Lech Lecha: "Umkallelcha a'or" (Bereishis 12:3) which can be (mis)-translated: "Your cursors I will light!"

• Zvi Freund <miltonf@villagenet.com>

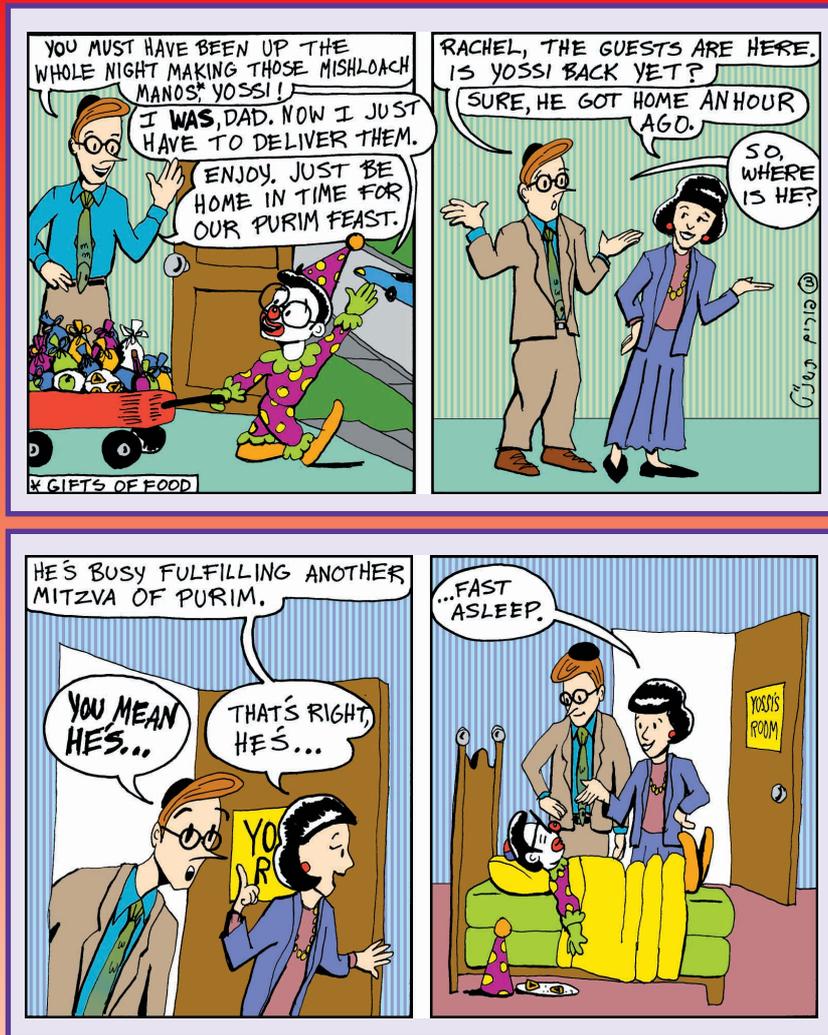
## I Really Didn't Want to Know That!

The mystic Bob Bar Kode was very spiritual. He fasted most of the time and was therefore very thin and fragile. He walked barefoot everywhere, to the point that his feet became thick and calloused.

The only time he ever wore any type of shoe was when playing the piano, in order to enable him to push the pedals. He was so poor however, that he had no money for shoes, so he made for himself makeshift foot coverings using flour and water.

When he eventually had to sell his piano, his legendary footgear became known as the super-calloused fragile mystic's ex-piano dough shoes.

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Yossi & Co.



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O. Werner

"A person is obligated to become so intoxicated that he can't tell the difference between 'cursed is Haman' and 'blessed is Mordechai'... by sleeping he also won't know the difference..." (Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim 695:2)