

A Taste of Torah Lighting Up

Rabbi Mordechai Fleisher

Q: How many Jews does it take to change the bulb on the Menorah in the Temple?

A: None –because they used real fire, not bulbs!

Okay, okay, I'm sure you've heard better light bulb jokes, but I couldn't think of a better introduction for the next point I want to bring up. And that is, that when the kohen lights the menorah, it's insufficient to just ignite a spark that will subsequently grow into a flame; he needs to hold the fire to the wick until the flame of the lamp ascends on its own (see Rashi 27:20). The simple understanding of this requirement would seem to be that "lighting" is defined as creating a full-fledged flame, not just a spark.

The Sfas Emes (Rabbi Yehudah Aryeh Leib Alter [1847-1905]) sees a deeper reason behind this requirement. The verse states, "For the ner (lamp with flame) is a mitzvah" (Proverbs 6:23). The flames of the Menorah represent mitzvos.

Many people tend to think that a mitzvah is something that is supposed to make us feel spiritual but is inherently a mere physical act, a ritual. Nothing could be farther from the truth. Whenever someone

performs a mitzvah, there is a tremendous effect, as the physical action connects to the spiritual realms, where it transforms and builds worlds, eventually affecting our world, as well. Thus, the "ritual" actually lives eternally, as it connects with G-d Himself and is immortalized.

However, in order for the mitzvah to live eternally, one must perform the mitzvah with the proper intent and concentration; the less one puts into the mitzvah, the less it connects to Hashem, and its power is diminished.

Lighting the lamps of the Menorah is no different, explains the Sfas Emes. Just as one must endeavour to perform a mitzvah in a manner that ensures it can ascend to G-d, and thus continue burning on its own, similarly the fire must be applied to the wick long enough to allow the flame to ascend on its own.

A mitzvah has tremendous spiritual power. We can regard it as a mere act of ritual, hoping to just get it over and done with. We may fulfill our basic obligation in such a fashion, but why settle for such mediocrity? Our physical actions can live forever if we take the time and invest the effort to do it properly.

Ask the Rabbi Letter Perfect

From: Michael Willen, MD in Slingerlands, NY

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?

Stories For The Soul

The Purim 'Joke'

My name is Chaim. I am eleven. At the beginning of the school year my father met my teacher on the street. He didn't want to hear the usual teacher complaints about me, but the teacher said, "I must tell you what a wonderful boy you have. You can be really proud."

My shocked father came home and told me, "I never had such nachas."

I was confused. I knew it wasn't true. The next day the teacher acted as if he hadn't praised me to my father.

This went on several more times. I was becoming increasingly uncomfortable, but I thought I should behave better and participate in class.

The mystery was solved on Purim. I went to my teacher's house with my father to bring shalach manos. I was wearing a mask. The teacher called his family. "Come meet my best pupil. He sits in the back of the class but participates as if he were next to me." A warning bell went off. I sit in the front row. Then the teacher cried, "Come, Yosef, take off your mask."

Yosef!!! My teacher had mixed up the hardest-working kid with the laziest. I recalled how much Yosef's father and mine looked alike. My father was laughing, thinking that the teacher "mixed up" my name as a Purim joke. My teacher lifted my mask and I saw his expression change to one of confusion.

"You're Yosef's father, aren't you?"

"Chaim, not Yosef," my father corrected him with a laugh. The teacher looked at my pleading face

Kollel Happenings

SHLOMO FRIED, JAY KAMLET, HARVEY AND STEPHANIE MILZER, RICH AND ROCHELLE SOKOL TO CHAIR BENEFIT EVENT ON MARCH 20

Shlomo Fried, Jay Kamlet, Harvey and Stephanie Milzer, and Rich and Rochelle Sokol will chair the Kollel's 14th Anniversary Benefit Event. The theme of the event is "Torah - Heartbeat of Our Nation" and will include an original musical experience composed and presented by the Kollel. Special guest speaker: Rabbi Yechiel Spero, author of the 'Touched by a Story' series.



'CLOSER LOOK AT PARSHA' NOW SUNDAYS AT EDOS

'A Closer Look at the Parsha,' Rabbi Mordechai Fleisher's popular Parsha class, will now also be offered on Sundays at 8 a.m. at EDOS, following Shacharis. Each week Rabbi Fleisher discusses a topic in the Parsha and its relevancy today.



NEFESH HACHAIM, MONDAYS @AISH W/RABBI SHACHNE SOMMERS

Join Kollel Dean Rabbi Shachne Sommers in studying the timeless work of Rav Chaim Volozhiner, Nefesh Hacham. Tuesday mornings 9:15-9:50 at Aish. For information, please contact Rabbi Moshe Heyman at rmh@denverkollel.org or 303-820-2855.

Interpersonal Issues

Returning Lost Objects

If the lost object was found after the owner has despaired of recovering the item, there is no obligation to return it, and it may be kept or left behind. Despair occurs when the owner is heard saying that he has given up hope of recovering the item.

Similarly, if the item appears to have

been lost for a long time, we presume the owner has already despaired of recovering it, and it may be kept or left behind.

Adapted with permission from "The Halachos of Other People's Money" by Rabbi Pinchas Bodner (Feldheim Publishers)

Ask the Rabbi

Continued from front

Dear Dr. Michael Willen,

In Megillas 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 and

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:

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Stories for the Soul

Continued from front

and said, "Oh, of course, Chaim. I must have drunk too much wine."

The scene ended somehow. My teacher shook my hand warmly and said to my father, "You know something? Lately your son has really been making

excellent progress."

I couldn't wait to get back to class and to work hard so that next time my father meets my teacher, the praises will really be meant for me.

Adapted with permission from ShulWeek by Rabbi Boruch Lederman.