

Beit Hamidrash Hameir Laarets | Issue 201

**Tetzaveh** | Prayer Sweetens the Judgements



# MESILOT

## *Pathways to the Soul*

Illuminating teachings and insights on the weekly Parsha  
of **Rabbi Yoram Michael Abargel Zt"l**

From the weekly lessons of his son  
**Rabbi Yisrael Abargel Shlita**

# ...PATHWAYS TO THE SOUL...

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

The Lowly Traits of The Mice .....	1
The Trait of Insatiability .....	3
The Root of Evil – Judgments .....	6
Accompanying the Wise and Righteous.....	7
The Clothes of Queen Esther .....	9
The Sweetening of Judgments in the Temple Times ...	13
The Significance of the Priestly Garments .....	14
The Prayer of Queen Esther.....	15
A Redoubled Darkness .....	18
The ‘Weapon of Moshiach’ .....	21
Fire, Water, and Wind. ....	23
Summary and Practical Conclusions .....	25



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## Parshat Tetzaveh

### The Lowly Traits of The Mice

It had been a Shabbat morning, Parshat Mishpatim, two weeks earlier.

Michael sat in the synagogue listening with intention to the Torah reading. The 118 verses of the parsha contained a lot of meaningful ideas to unpack, and Michael's inquisitive mind delved into the Torah verses that he had heard. "It's quite interesting," he thought, "for several years now, I have studied Parshat Mishpatim, yet I have never noticed the very large number of animals that are mentioned in the parsha." He decided to take particular notice of the details of the animals that are mentioned: the ox, donkey, sheep, cattle, domesticated animals, and wild beasts. Included were even the hornet, bulls, the dog, and a kid goat. He contemplated the nature of the various animals and

creatures. "The ox is mentioned in the parsha in a negative tense: 'When an ox gores a man or a woman and causes death,' 'But if it was a goring ox from yesterday and the day before, and its owner was warned, and he did not guard it, and it kills a man or a woman' (Shemot 21:28-29)." Michael continued, "It seems as though the ox is a wild beast that tramples and kills, and that defines its nature. Yet, our holy sages do not label it derogatorily. On the contrary, they declare (Chagigah 13b) that there are four 'kings' among the creatures: "King among the wild animals is the lion; The king among the domesticated animals is the ox; The king among the birds is the eagle; Man is exalted over them, and the Holy One, Blessed be He, is exalted over all." "It's fascinating," Michael continued to spin his thoughts,

"that despite these animals being predatory, or at least harmful at times, they are nonetheless given a royal title." He paused to reflect upon the creation of all of the animals on the fifth and sixth days of Creation:

'G-d created the great sea creatures and all of the living creatures that move, which the waters brought forth to their kinds, and every winged bird to its kind, and G-d saw that it was good.'

'And G-d said: Let the earth bring forth living creatures to their kind: domesticated animals, creeping creatures, and the wild beasts of the earth to their kind. And G-d made the wild beasts of the earth to their kind, and the domesticated animals to their kind, and every creeping creature of the ground to its kind, and G-d saw that it was good' (Bereshit 1:21, 24-25). The myriads of animals that G-d created in His world are innumerable; their varied kinds and great numbers are vast and many.

It is surprising that of all of these kinds, the creatures who received the title of 'wicked' are the mice, as recorded in the Jerusalem Talmud:<sup>1</sup> "The mice are wicked! When they see a lot of produce, they call upon their friends to join them in the feast." Michael couldn't understand, of all the selfish creatures in the world, why did only the mice receive this undesirable title?

He glanced at his watch and realized that it was already noon. "Oh dear, my family must all be waiting for me at home for the Shabbat meal."

He rose quickly and began walking home. On his way, as he crossed through the public park, he noticed on a bench a young man with a sad face and mellow eyes. Michael was unable, at that moment, to help him, but it did give him some food for the thought. "It is Shabbat today, when "sorrow and sighing shall flee," but nonetheless, people must be going through terrible difficulties.

Parshat Tetzaveh - The Trait of Insatiability

If they would only be able to learn to spread their wings and soar above the mire of materialism and its setbacks and the worries in which they are stuck." Suddenly, Michael had an insightful moment:

"What if the Hebrew word for mice, 'עכברים', is actually an acronym of the undesirable traits in Man: 'עצבות' (sadness), 'כעס' (anger), 'בדידות' (loneliness), 'רעב' (hunger — being dissatisfied with one's lot), 'יאוש' (despair), and 'מריבה' (strife).<sup>2</sup>

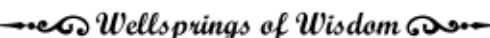
Therefore, it is called a 'wicked' creature, being that these undesirable traits are the root of evil in mankind. Furthermore, when these states of mind are untreated and incorrectly dealt with, these emotional states may eventually deteriorate into a constant state of sin and wrongdoing. Michael felt pity for the tragic and improper decisions of mankind. "Poor people. Instead of moving forward, and instead of flourishing, and bringing forth and spreading life and vitality, they are sadly busy chasing after the lowly traits of 'mice...'"

## The Trait of Insatiability

In 'Ma'ayan Hashavua' (Vayikra - page 67) by Rabbi Wallach, the common negative trait of insatiability is discussed: "Everyone is human and limited yet desires to accumulate more and more.

This is how the Creator formed man, that he never be fully satisfied: "And also, the soul is not filled" (Kohelet 6:7). "No man leaves the world with even half his desires

fulfilled. If he has a hundred, he wants two hundred. If he has two hundred, he wants four hundred." This is a characteristic instilled in us so that we will strive for more and more, and as goes the known saying: "For improvement, there is no measure." Fortunate is one who merits to harness this trait for spiritual matters, and seeks and longs and yearns



2. This idea was mentioned by Rabbi Michi Yosafi, and we base our talk upon his words as well.

## Parshat Tetzaveh - The Trait of Insatiability

to acquire Torah and acts of kindness without limit. However, most people do not utilize this trait for self-improvement. Many individuals experience genuine

distress in various areas of life due to their perceived lack and desire for better and more,<sup>3</sup> whether it be their poor livelihood or struggles in family and social life.

### ❧ Wellsprings of Wisdom ❧

**3.** In fact, most people's distresses are ironically produced by themselves.

In this connection we bring a tale about the wisdom of the Rambam that has been passed from generation to generation ('Ma'ayan HaShavua', Vayikra, page 510):

As is well known, the Rambam served as the physician of the King of Egypt.

The king's ministers were jealous of his wisdom and the great honor that he received from the king, and they incited the king to remove the Rambam from his medical position and to appoint in his place a Muslim physician named Kamon. They promised the king that his expertise was no less than the Rambam's, and that his professionalism even exceeded his.

The king agreed to their request, and summoned the two physicians and presented to them a challenge.

Each one would try to poison the other, and whoever would survive the gruesome ordeal would become the chief royal physician.

Both were to appear before the king, and each would swallow the poison dial that his rival would give to him, and would

be permitted afterward to swallow an antidote drug that would annul and neutralize the poison.

Both physicians, the Rambam and Kamon, were renowned and expert physicians. Both were proficient in all of the medicines and poisons and knew how to deal with them and neutralize their effects.

The challenge was all the more fierce and diabolical. Kamon the physician went home and spent an entire week concocting a powerful poison that had a rapid effect — a terrible poisonous death.

Meanwhile, the Rambam however, placed his trust in G-d and decided to remain faithful to his calling: to heal human beings of their ailments, and he decided that he would not use his knowledge for murder and death.

The appointed day arrived. The two physicians stood before the king, each holding their potions.

Kamon, the gentile physician, handed the Rambam the dreadful poison that he had prepared.

The Rambam swallowed it and immediately took the antidote he had prepared and canceled the poison's

**Parshat Tetzaveh - The Trait of Insatiability**

effect. Although he needed to regain his full strength, he remained alive and well.

Now it was the Rambam's turn to offer his own concoction. He handed Kamon some food which he swallowed, and immediately afterward Kamon took an anti-poison drug that he had prepared.

Wonder of wonders. Kamon did not feel any momentary chills or weakness that the poison should have caused.

In fact, he did not feel anything at all; it was as if he had not swallowed any poison — which, indeed, was the case.

A deathly suspicion arose within his heart, and it soon turned into a terrible and palpable fear:

Perhaps the Rambam, in his great medical wisdom, had given him a poison whose effect was slow acting, and would take hold after the neutralizing agents wore off? Perhaps the Rambam had given him a poison that would begin to take effect only when he ate some other kind of food that would cause a toxic reaction, for example, meat?

He stopped eating meat, and then beans as well, and soon he was only drinking cow's milk that had been milked before his very own eyes.

A week later, the two encountered each other, the Rambam and Kamon. The gentile physician appeared pale and emaciated, and the Rambam asked him: "Tell me, when you drink cow's milk, how do you feel?"

Hearing this, Kamon turned white as a sheet and suffered a severe heart attack, and he soon died of a stroke induced by deathly fright and terror.

The king remarked with deep respect: "Now I know that you, the Rambam, are the greatest of all physicians. You have succeeded in finding a poison that takes effect only after an entire week."

The Rambam answered humbly: "My dear king, I have never taken a man's life, and would never do so. He did not die by my hand or my concoction; he died by his own doing, by the power of his frightened imagination."

In effect, this is one of the dreadful curses of rebuke in Parshat Bechukotai: "You will flee, yet no one is chasing you", "The sound of a driven leaf will pursue them, and they will flee as one flees the sword. And they will fall even when no one is pursuing" (Vayikra 21:17, 36).

If the Jewish people in the verse nothing but "the sound of a driven leaf," an empty fear, and fled from it as though it were a sword, from what did they fall and stumble?

From the all consuming fear itself.

When we contemplate our modern way of life, we may notice a similar pattern. People run and hurry, and find no time for themselves, for their family, for a moment of calm, of ease and to rest.

Is this trait a part of one's nature that G-d created? Certainly.

But is there a way to perfect and sweeten this trait? Indeed,

there is. In order to know how to remove undesirable traits and harsh decrees, we must first understand their source and cause.

### The Root of Evil – Judgments

All negative emotions arise from 'judgments that have not been sweetened': The Midrash says:<sup>4</sup> "When it arose in G-d's will to create the world, G-d said: If I create the world with the attribute of mercy alone, there will be too many sinners. But if I do so with the attribute of justice and severity alone, how could the world endure? Therefore, I will create it with both the attribute of justice and the attribute of mercy, and hopefully, it will stand." Rabbi Chaim Kremer explains ('Ne'imot Netzach,' vol. 7, page 268):

The Creation of the world came about through the blending and unification of the two forces: chesed (kindness) and gevurah (severity).

Chesed — are feelings of closeness that are expressed through giving and expansion (mercy and love), while Gevurah — is expressed through restraint and limitation (awe and fear). The merging of these two opposing forces — chesed on one hand and gevurah on the other — is the root and foundation of free choice. And it is through free choice that a person earns the right to all of

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### Wellsprings of Wisdom

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People often have no time to eat calmly or to pray with a settled mind.

To listen to a Torah lesson or to study a book, often is beyond the abilities of many people.

Everything is done hurriedly, but what is going on? What has happened, who is chasing you?

We must free ourselves from this accursed mindset, and set boundaries and limits for it.

Let us carve out for ourselves slices of pure life in our busy schedules: an hour for Torah study, an hour dedicated to family, an hour of necessary relaxation.

**4.** Bereshit Rabbah (12:15).



**Parshat Tetzaveh - Accompanying the Wise and Righteous**

the goodness that the Holy One, Blessed be He, wishes to bestow upon him. To elaborate further: The Holy One, Blessed be He, created His world with the goal of bestowing goodness upon His creations.

This ultimate goodness requires that a person choose to do good on his own free will and volition and refrain from choosing the bad.

For every given moment, there must be two possibilities before a person: good and evil, so that he may choose the good. For a person to have the option to choose evil, it was necessary to create a reality of evil, and this was accomplished by G-d's contraction (tzimtzum) of His infinite light. Kabbalah explains that the Infinite Light of G-d (Or Ein Sof) is the essence and life-force of all creations.

But to create a finite and limited

world, G-d had to, so to speak, contract His wondrous light and hide it, and each successive stage of creation included a further contraction of the lofty light. Eventually, at the end of this process, the reality of evil was created. This reality of evil included the process from which the evil inclination that exists in a person's heart was formed, and it is through this that people have free choice between good and evil. When a person succumbs to the evil inclination, he is under the influence and power of "constriction and gevurot" — which is the root of the evil inclination.

One may then become filled with anger and rage toward others and the entire world, which is the root of all negative emotions.

We will elaborate upon this point a bit further.

**Accompanying the Wise and Righteous**

A human being is composed of both body and soul and just as the body can sometimes fall ill and needs healing, so too is with the

soul. When negative emotions and undesirable traits appear in a person's inner self, their soul is then ill and must find a "soul doctor" to

heal them. One of the greatest soul healers of all generations was the righteous Rambam (Maimonides), whose knowledge was preserved and transmitted throughout the generations. He writes the following regarding the unholy traits and desires that arise in a person's heart (De'ot 6:1): "It is the nature of man to be influenced in his views and deeds by his friends and companions and to behave according to the customs of the people of his country.

Therefore, a person must associate with the righteous and constantly live near the wise, learn from their actions, and distance himself from the wicked who walk in darkness so as not to learn from their ways.

As Solomon said: 'He who walks with the wise will grow wise, but one who befriends fools will be broken' (Mishlei 13:20)."

The Rambam reveals that the best advice for dealing with blemished character traits and dark urges is to

dwell among G-d-fearing people and those who distance themselves from sin and transgressions. It is most advisable to join a religious community led by a Torah leader who regularly teaches and instructs his community, and this atmosphere will naturally uplift a person from his spiritual depths.

Moreover, while every Jew is obligated to distance himself from acts of sin that cause damage to one's soul, nevertheless, the struggle in the realm of one's emotional state is no less critical. A person must not only refrain from undesirable actions and sins but must also break free and remove himself from the "constrictions" that the evil inclination places him into, which cause a person to constantly be angry, frustrated, despair, and depressed. Rabbi Yitzchak Isaac Yehuda Yechiel of Komarno, of blessed memory, writes:<sup>5</sup> "You might think, my brother, that the great battle a person has in this world is to avoid becoming an adulterer or a thief.

**Parshat Tetzaveh - The Clothes of Queen Esther**

But in fact, that is an easy task for even a small child.

The main battle is to sweeten the darkness and overcome the spiritual barriers, to accept suffering with love, to refine one's character traits to the good, to

have humility, and to escape pride — which is truly idolatrous — and to strive and seek to illuminate one's soul with closeness to G-d, love, and divine light."

Let us introduce yet another idea.

**The Clothes of Queen Esther**

We bring an excerpt about the tale of Purim and Esther's ascension to the throne from 'Yemei HaPurim Behalacha Ube'agadah' by Rabbi David Naki (page 37):

After the great feast that King Achashverosh made for all his officials and servants in all the provinces of his kingdom for 180 days, he planned another feast, which would be reserved for the residents of the capital city of Shushan. It would last for seven days, and all of the Jews of Shushan were invited to the festivities with special honor. Expressions of excitement and feverish preparation were evident among the Jews of Shushan upon the royal invitation. After all, this was no small matter —

this invitation signified that the new king, Achashverosh, desired to maintain friendly relations with the Jewish people. On the seventh day of the merriment, the king commanded: "Bring Queen Vashti before the king with the royal crown, to show the peoples and officials her beauty, for she was good-looking" (Esther 1:11). Queen Vashti did not obey Achashverosh, and Achashverosh seethed with anger. He turned to the Jewish Sages and asked their advice: what should be done with the insolent Queen Vashti? The Jewish Sages, who indeed were wise, knew to remain silent and not offer any course of action. Achashverosh saw

that the Jewish Sages would not advise him and decided to turn to consult with his seven ministers and advisors: "Karshena, Shetar, Admata, Tarshish, Meres, Marsena, Memuchan, the seven officials of Persia and Media" (ibid. verse 14). "Memuchan" is Haman, who was always "prepared" ('Muchan') for misdeeds and trouble.

He was the least and smallest among them, but he was full of delusions of grandeur.

With his sharp and twisted political instincts, he sensed a golden opportunity for personal advancement. He thought to himself: If Vashti is executed, I can offer my daughter as a wife to Achashverosh. Besides the great honor it would be for me, it is always good to be "close to the throne," and sometime in the future, I may possibly eventually be able to inherit the throne. Following Haman's advice, Queen Vashti was killed, and King Achashverosh — who became a widower by choice — searched for a wife and proclaimed throughout

his kingdom: I am seeking the perfect candidate to be my wife. When the king's proclamations went out, Esther evaded the search and hid herself due to her modesty and righteousness. Mordechai assisted her, and indeed, for three years, she succeeded in evading the king's officials.

However, after three years of hiding, she was found and taken against her will to the women's royal harem. Mordechai, who until now had tried with all his might to prevent her being taken, now understood with his divine intuition that this happened by a grand Divine plan.

Certainly, it was not in vain that this righteous Jewish woman was taken to a gentile king.

It must be that G-d desired to bring salvation to the Jewish people through her.

Mordechai knew how desperately the Jews would soon need salvation because of the divine accusation hanging over them for wickedly participating in Achashverosh's feast.

**Parshat Tetzaveh - The Clothes of Queen Esther**

He kept these matters close to his heart and waited to see how things would soon unfold. Before Esther was forcibly taken, Mordechai had commanded her to be careful not to tell anyone of her Jewish lineage or anything about her family background. As soon as Achashverosh set his eyes upon her, he decided that this was it. He found what he was looking for — he was certain she was the best and loveliest woman in the universe. He took the royal crown and placed it on her head — immediately crowning her as queen, without hesitation.

He promptly removed Vashti's portrait from the wall and ordered a new portrait be drawn — of Esther. On the joyous occasion of crowning his new queen, he held a great banquet, and this celebration brought him much more joy and satisfaction than the previous banquet held four years earlier.

However, this time, he decided not to make a boastful feast that would be over the top; he still had a bitter taste left from the previous feast. This time, he

made a smaller feast for his officials and servants, but he did not neglect the citizens either, sending them royal gifts and granting them large tax breaks for that entire year. One thing still deeply bothered Achashverosh: he did not know Esther's origins.

No matter how he tried to persuade or coax her, she evaded his questions.

Sometimes, she would claim charmingly, "What does it matter who my ancestors were? Look at me, how proper and pleasant I am."

At other times, she would claim that she was orphaned from a very young age and did not know who her father or mother were at all. Achashverosh no longer knew what to think — should he believe her or not?

Perhaps she did not know her origins. But maybe she was ashamed of her family and came from a lowly background, and therefore tried to hide it? Achashverosh did not accept this situation, and in his heart, he yearned to discover the identity of his noble wife.

He took many actions to uncover her background:

To assure her that he would not be replaced with some other maiden due to low family status, he sent away all the other maidens from the women's harem, demonstrating that he desired her regardless of her background.

Additionally, the great banquet he made in her honor had a hidden motive:

In the midst of all of the honor, she would surely find it uncomfortable to remain an anonymous foundling; she would at least reveal from which nation she came.

Moreover, since representatives and delegations from all of the 127 provinces attended, she surely would come across emissaries from her nation's people, and she would likely honor them and ask that they be treated kindly, thereby disclosing her identity. He also opened his treasuries in her honor, distributing valuable gifts to his citizens.

Surely, when she would see him bestowing such precious presents, she would drop a hint — suggesting which lands and nations deserved these gifts so that her family would receive some benefit. But nothing helped. Honor, wealth, temptations — nothing moved her. She remained modest, humble, attentive, and loyal to Mordechai's instructions, maintaining her silence. Years passed, and the wicked Haman soon rose to power. In collaboration with Achashverosh, they both decreed that they were intent: "To destroy, kill, and exterminate all of the Jews, from youth to old age, children and women, in one day" (Esther 3:13). Mordechai heard of the horrible decree and commanded Esther to go before King Achashverosh and make every effort to cancel the decree. Esther heard this command and was terrified.

She sent back a message to Mordechai: "Haman has seized control over the king — no one can approach the king without Haman's permission.

**Parshat Tetzaveh - The Sweetening of Judgments in the Temple Times**

Haman convinced the king that this was a necessary security measure; after all, even Bigtan and Teresh, his most loyal guards, attempted to assassinate the king. Who could be trusted?

Now, anyone who wants to meet the king must coordinate the visit with Haman first, and anyone who enters the inner royal courtyard without invitation is immediately put to death unless the king extends his golden scepter in acceptance. And, of course, Haman's real intention was to ensure no one, especially Mordechai, could meet the king and nullify the decree. This law is well known, and even I, the king's wife, will not be spared.

After all, there's a precedent: Achashverosh killed his first wife, Vashti, when she disobeyed him, and I fear a similar fate if I dare to break the royal law. Mordechai responded: No excuse will be accepted at this dire time

— you must go to the king. Esther requested: If so, let it be decreed a fast of 72 hours — three full days — upon all of the Jewish people. "And it happened on the third day, Esther donned her royal garments and stood in the inner courtyard of the king's palace, opposite the king's hall" (ibid. 5:1).

"Rabbi Levi said (Megillah 15b): When she reached the hall of idolatrous statues, the Shechinah (Divine Presence) departed from her. She then prayed and pleaded to G-d: "They divide my garments among themselves, and upon my clothing they cast lots" (Tehillim 22:19). We must understand what garments are referred to here? Which garments were divided?

What is unique to the clothing of Esther that caused "for my clothing they cast lots"?

Before we answer this question, we must preface with another subject.

**The Sweetening of Judgments in the Temple Times**

We earlier mentioned the judgments that arise within a

person's heart and cause a man to act improperly.

## **Parshat Tetzaveh - The Significance of the Priestly Garments**

In fact, the holy books explain that the deeds of the Jewish people here in this world guide the entirety of the cosmos: When their deeds align with the Creator's will, they bring down abundance, blessing, vitality, and joy to all of existence. This then naturally manifests upon Earth with plenty, peace, and prosperity. But, G-d forbid, when the deeds of the Jewish people do not align with the Creator's will, the

flow of abundance in the upper worlds diminishes, and divine judgments arise G-d forbid. During the period of time when the Holy Temple stood, sins were atoned for and judgments were sweetened in two general ways: sacrificial offerings and the wearing of the priestly garments. We will now focus on the sweetening of judgments accomplished through the wearing of the priestly garments.

### **The Significance of the Priestly Garments**

In our Torah portion, Parshat Tetzaveh, there are 101 verses, and of them, 43 verses (the entirety of chapter 28) deal with the priestly garments that were fabricated for the Mishkan. In these verses, we are commanded to make special garments for Aharon, the high priest, and for his descendants, garments that they would wear when serving in the Tabernacle and later in the Holy Temple. The verses specify a total of eight priestly garments. Four garments of the regular Kohen: trousers, a tunic, a turban, and a sash. The High Priest wore eight garments, four of the regular Kohen and an

additional four garments: the forehead plate, the breastplate, the Ephod vest, and the robe.

The Gemara states (Zevachim 88b): "Rabbi Anani bar Sasson said: Why is the Torah section that deals with sacrifices adjacent to the section dealing with the priestly garments?"

To teach that just as sacrifices atone, so do the priestly garments atone." In other words, just as the sacrifices that were brought by the Jewish people had the great and powerful ability to atone for sins, the priestly garments worn by the Kohanim, too, had great spiritual



**Parshat Tetzaveh - The Prayer of Queen Esther**

power to atone for the Jewish people's particular sins: The tunic for bloodshed, the Trousers for immorality, the Turban for arrogance, the Sash for improper thoughts of the heart, the Breastplate for harsh judgments against others, the Ephod vest for idolatry; the Robe for evil speech, and finally, the Tzitz (forehead plate) for brazen and wanton misdeeds. In addition, these garments served to sweeten the divine judgments from upon the Jewish people.

To quote Rabbi Yitzchak Bernfeld ('Meisharim Maggid' - Tetzaveh): "The four garments of the regular Kohen — the sash (אבנט), tunic (כיתונת), trousers (מכנסים), and the turban (מצנפת) — are an acronym in Hebrew for the numerical value of 101 (א, כ, מ, מ) This number overpowers and reveals the divine presence (that is represented by the number one) in the

the number of 100, which is the numerical value and represents the negative forces of evil (סמ), and they are spiritually overcome by the wearing of these garments. Moreover, the Kohen Gadol, was given four additional garments — the Ephod vest (אפוד), Choshen (חושן), Tzitz (ציץ), Me'il (מעיל) — which (together with the four garments of the regular Kohen) holds the numerical value of 240 (מ, צ, ח, א), and this spiritual power overpowers and subdues the impurities and vitality of 'Amalek' (עמלק - 240). Thus, when the Holy Temple stood, the sins of the Jewish people were atoned for, and the judgments were sweetened by the sacrificial offerings and priestly garments. But in the year 3338 from Creation, the First Temple was destroyed, and the service of our holy Temple and Home to G-d tragically ceased.

**The Prayer of Queen Esther**

In the Book of Psalms, it is stated: "Great is G-d and exceedingly praised in the city of our G-d, His holy mountain." (Psalms 48:2).

In 'Nitzotzei Shimshon' (page 137), it is explained that when the Nation of Israel dwelled in their land, then the Holy One,

## Parshat Tetzaveh - The Prayer of Queen Esther

Blessed be He — so to speak — was 'clothed' in eight divine garments, that correspond to the clothing of the High Priest.

Thus, "Great is G-d" — G-d is called a Great and High Priest when the Nation of Israel is "in the city of our G-d, His holy mountain."

However, when the Nation of Israel went out in exile, then — so to speak — the Holy One, Blessed

be He, is clothed in only the four garments of the ordinary priest.<sup>6</sup>

It is thus clear that the state of "Greatness of G-d" demonstrates the exalted stature of the Jewish people, and now, after the destruction of the Temple, not only was the level of the Jewish people diminished from eight garments to four, but even from these remaining garments and

### Wellsprings of Wisdom

6. The Gemara states (Sanhedrin 39a):

A heretic once said to Rabbi Abahu: "Your G-d is a Kohen, as it is written: 'And let them take for Me a contribution' (Shemot 25:2) which was intended for the work of the priests.

If so, when G-d buried Moshe, how did he immerse and purify Himself afterward?"

Rabbi Abahu answered him: "He immersed Himself in a fire of purity."

Tosafot ask: Seemingly, the heretic should have asked a different question. If after all, your G-d is a Kohen, He is forbidden to become impure through contact with the dead. How then did G-d deal with Moshe's burial?

The Tosafot answer: the Jewish people have the status of children to G-d, and a Kohen is permitted to defile and

make himself impure for the burial of his child.

The Maharsha challenges this answer: A regular Kohen is indeed allowed to become impure for the 'seven close relatives', but not so a Kohen Gadol who is forbidden to become impure even for the seven closest relatives. Certainly, G-d is considered a Kohen Gadol; if so, how could G-d become impure for the sake of Moshe?

The Maharsha answers that Moshe Rabbeinu had the status of a "met mitzvah" (an unattended corpse for which even a Kohen Gadol may care for).

However, 'Nitzotzei Shimshon' (ibid.) explains: According to our approach the difficulty is easily resolved, when Moshe Rabbeinu passed away, the Jewish people were outside the Land of Israel. And thus, G-d was considered there to have the 'status' of a 'regular Kohen'.

Parshat Tetzaveh - The Prayer of Queen Esther

spiritual abundance, the forces of impurity managed to take hold.

To quote Rabbi Yechiel Heller of blessed memory:<sup>7</sup> "The holy Rabbi Shimshon of Ostropoli explains at length (Dan Yadin – Likutim) that upon the destruction of the Temple, the Divine Presence that hovers over us 'ministers' in the four garments of an ordinary priest, whereas during the time of the Temple, it was with the eight garments of the High Priest.

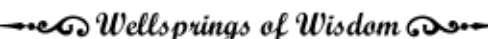
Due to our sins, the Al-mighty Divine Presence has descended, and the powers of impurity have ascended — and the divine roots of these sacred garments were diminished and taken hold of by foreigners.

Each of the four exiles drew its strength from one such garment of the 'regular kohen': The Babylonian exile drew its strength from the turban. The Persian and Median exile drew their strength from the tunic. The

Greek exile — from the sash. And the Edomite exile — from the trousers.

As such, each exile was greatly 'intensified and emboldened' in the particular wicked trait that corresponds to the specific garment. The turban atoned for arrogance, which, regarding this evil trait, our sages have said (Sanhedrin 24a): 'Arrogance descended to Babylon.' The tunic atoned for bloodshed, and in opposition to this, the Persians decreed by "letters sent by couriers to all the king's provinces to destroy, to kill, and to annihilate all the Jews, from youth to elderly, children and women, on one day, on the thirteenth of the twelfth month, which is the month of Adar, and their spoils to be plundered" (Esther 3:13).

The Sash atoned for improper thoughts of the heart, including thoughts of heresy, which greatly proliferated with the Greek wisdom that began to spread throughout the world.



7. 'Amudei Or' Responsa (122:13).

**Parshat Tetzaveh - A Redoubled Darkness**

The trousers atoned for immorality, and corresponding to this, we have been in a most dreadful exile for nearly two thousand years to rectify and correct this all too prevalent impurity and wickedness.

Now, in the terminology of our Sages, garments, and clothing are referred to by one of two names: 'levush' (לבוש) and 'began' (בגד). The difference between them is that a 'levush' is a garment that covers the entire body, while a 'began' is one that only covers a certain part of the body.

As such, the only garment that deserves the title 'levush' is the tunic, which covers most of the body.

Therefore, when Esther stood in the house of idolatry, and the Divine Inspiration departed from her, she stood and pleaded before G-d: "They divide my garments among themselves, and

for my clothing they cast lots"  
(Psalms 22:19):

The time of the exile in which Queen Esther reigned, the exile of Persia and Media, was an exile whose primary impurity and evil were expressed in matters of bloodshed.

She, therefore, compared her difficulties to a tunic, which is a piece of — "clothing upon which they cast their lots."

This, in essence, was Esther's plea: These four exiles and their forces of impurity have divided the four garments of the priest — "They divide my garments among them."

However, ultimately, as is known, Mordechai and Esther succeeded in sweetening the judgments and subduing the evil powers of their time, as it is stated: "And the king's anger (hinting also to the divine King's wrath upon the evil powers) subsided" (Esther 7:10).

**A Redoubled Darkness**

We quote an excerpt from a talk delivered by Rabbi Shimshon

Dovid Pincus of blessed memory  
(Sichot – Purim, page 94):

**Parshat Tetzaveh - A Redoubled Darkness**

“At the time of King Achashverosh, the entire Jewish People deteriorated to a very low

spiritual level, and during that period, spiritual darkness greatly intensified.<sup>8</sup>

*~ Wellsprings of Wisdom ~*

**8.** In a discourse delivered by the Rebbe Rayatz of Lubavitch on Purim 5701 (1941), he shared the following (‘Likkutei Dibburim,’ Part 3, page 527):

In the year of 3319 to Creation — in the time of the Babylonian exile — the Jewish people were scattered among many lands, including the provinces of King Achashverosh.

This was fifty years after the destruction of the Holy Temple, and the Jewish people were disconnected from their holy house of G-d, where they had witnessed the miracles of the Temple and heard the words of the Prophets.

The Jewish people were dispersed and scattered in various lands — some of which treated them unfavorably, and others that recognized their virtues and abilities to benefit those lands, and therefore treated them quite well.

Achashverosh’s nature was fickle. He was also coarse, self-satisfied in his own wisdom, and quick to anger.

He embodied a mixture of good and evil, wisdom and foolishness, altogether, as our Sages say (Megillah 12.): He was a wise king, and he was also a foolish king.

In the days of his father Darius, and at the beginning of Achashverosh’s reign as well,

the Jewish people had business dealings and good livelihood in the Persian lands.

From time to time — due to various reasons, and ties of business and other forms — some of the Jewish people detached themselves from the life of Torah and mitzvot and were entirely involved in pursuit of a worldly life.

They sought luxuries; Shabbat became like a weekday; they took the laws of Kashrut lightly, and family purity was unobserved and had declined into coarse behavior.

The Jewish people in those days forgot that they were the chosen people, and they began to take lightly the fact that G-d “chose us from among all the nations and uplifted us above all tongues,” living a life of secular revelry like the other nations.

Mordechai the Jew and Malachi the Prophet spoke to the hearts of the Jewish people many times and warned them that G-d, may He be blessed, does not tolerate such lives and will punish them severely for it. G-d, Heaven forbid, might pour out His wrath upon them and their families, and neither their friendships with their non-Jewish acquaintances nor their great wealth would save them.

Yet, sadly, the perverse hearts of the Jewish people in those times did not allow them to pay heed to these pure and

The accusers in Heaven reared their ugly heads, and G-d accepted the damning accusations and decreed to destroy the Jewish people altogether.

As related in the Midrash (Abba Gurion – Parshah 4): "When Moshe Rabbeinu heard about the evil decree, he called upon the prophet Eliyahu and asked him: 'Is there an upright person in this generation?' He answered: 'Yes. There is one man whose name is Mordechai.' Moshe said to him: 'Go and inform him, and he will stand and plead on their behalf from there and I will do the same from here.'

Eliyahu said to Moshe: 'Faithful shepherd, nothing will help now. The annihilation of

your flock has already been decreed and sealed.'

Moshe asked: 'With what is it sealed? With clay or with blood? If with clay, then our merciful prayers will be heard. If, however, it is with blood, then what has been decreed is irreversible.'

Eliyahu went to Mordechai and informed him, as it is stated: "Mordechai knew all that had been done" (Esther 4:1). Did he only know of the decree now? Surely, Mordechai was already long aware of King Achashverosh's evil decree, but he was not truly afraid or fearful of it coming to fruition.

But when Eliyahu, the prophet, came and revealed to him that

### ~Wellsprings of Wisdom~

upright words. Despite Mordechai's high stature and position in the king's court, his words about keeping the Torah and mitzvot were of no avail.

Achashverosh held grand banquets for all of his subjects, including his Jewish subjects.

These banquets of non-kosher foods, accompanied by wild revelry, further corrupted the Jewish people. Despite the

approaching time of redemption — as per the prophecies of the Jewish prophets — the Jewish people did not want to hear of it, and mocked it with brazen ridicule.

They shamefully scorned the words of moral guidance, and the wealthy felt secure in their wealth, and not only failed to properly hold in high esteem the rabbis and Torah leaders, but they even pursued and punished them in every way possible.

**Parshat Tetzaveh - The 'Weapon of Moshiach'**

their fate was sealed in Heaven, he immediately became fearful. "Mordechai tore his garments, put on sackcloth and ashes, and went out into the midst of the city, and cried out with a great and bitter cry" (ibid.).

Eliyahu the Prophet informed Mordechai quite clearly that there was no solution; in the realm of Eliyahu the Prophet — the world of angels — there was no way to be saved.

At that time, the Jewish People were in a state of total and utter darkness. Haman had arranged for letters to be sent in the king's name announcing the terrible decree to destroy, kill, and annihilate all the Jews; he prepared the gallows to

hang Mordechai and had set the date for the carrying out of the horrible decree to take place in the month when Moshe Rabbeinu died. There seemed to be no light in the tunnel of darkness.

Mordechai turned to Queen Esther, who was 'held captive' in the house of Achashverosh, and she proceeded to meet with Achashverosh and beg for mercy for her people.

But even then, as she neared the royal chambers, the Divine Inspiration departed from her.

In such terrible darkness and dreadful gloom, Mordechai took the 'weapon of Moshiach' out and went to war.

**The 'Weapon of Moshiach'**

The course of this spiritual battle that was waged by Mordechai is described in the Book of Esther in the span of 55 verses.

It begins with the verse: "Mordechai knew all that had been done; Mordechai tore his garments, put on sackcloth and ashes, went out into the city, and

cried out a great and bitter cry" (Esther 4:1). And it concludes with the verse: "They hanged Haman on the tree that he had prepared for Mordechai, and the king's anger subsided" (Esther 7:10).

Rabbi Eliezer Shlomo Shick, of blessed memory, explained (Ginzei HaMelech 4:1):

When a Jew sins repeatedly, he causes himself to become distanced from faith in G-d.

Over time, with the accumulation of sins (so long that he does not repent), he becomes filled with foreign ideas and mistaken notions, which cloud his vision and darken his intellect — until he no longer perceives the true reality of G-d. His heart becomes full of doubts and insecurities, and his connection to G-d is uprooted, so to speak.

This was the state of the Jewish People at the time of the decree of Achashverosh.

Achashverosh succeeded in causing the Jewish people to stumble with the sinful feast that he arranged in their honor, and this caused them to forget G-d.

Mordechai, who knew that this was the cause of the exile, sought a way to reconnect the Jewish people to G-d and girded himself with the weapon of Moshiach.

In Likutei Moharan (Part I, Torah 2), it is explained that the main weapon of Moshiach is prayer,

and this is the source of his vitality. All the wars that he wages and the conquests that he achieves are a consequence of it.

Therefore, Mordechai awakened the Jewish people to pray to G-d, and he furthermore revealed to them that there was no other counsel to save them from the sufferings, afflictions, and harsh punishments that awaited them, except through prayer and supplication.

Even though the gates of prayer in Heaven were locked at that time, Mordechai, the righteous leader, with his fervent prayer and burning faith, broke through all of the doors of the heavenly gates and placed his prayer directly before G-d, and successfully canceled the decree.

As the Gemara states (Megillah 12b): "Mordechai is called 'Ben Ya'ir' — since he was 'a son who enlightened' the eyes of the Jewish people with his prayer; he was also called 'Ben Shimi' — a 'son whose prayer was heard'; 'Ben Kish' — because he 'knocked' on the gates of mercy, and they were opened before him."



**Parshat Tetzaveh - Fire, Water, and Wind.**

Thus, the sweetening of the severest of judgments was

effected through the power of prayer.

**Fire, Water, and Wind.**

In the Book of Psalms, the process of the spiritual deterioration of the Jewish People is described thus: "They mingled with the nations and learned their deeds. They served their idols, and these became a snare to them. They sacrificed their sons and their daughters to demons. They shed innocent blood, the blood of their sons and daughters whom they sacrificed to the idols of Canaan, and the land was defiled with blood. They became impure by their deeds and strayed through their actions." (Psalms 106:35-39)

Through their disgraceful actions, they aroused divine judgments and severities, which led to horrendous consequences: "G-d's anger blazed against His people, and He despised His inheritance. He gave them into the hands of nations, and their enemies ruled over them. Their enemies oppressed them, and they were subdued under their hand.

Many times He saved them, yet they rebelled with their evil counsel, and they were debased by their iniquity." (ibid. 40-43)

King David then describes and teaches how their cycle of wrongdoing and tragic consequences came to an end. How the Jewish people sweetened the judgments, how they purified their soul from the defilement of impurity that had clung to it, and how they nullified the influence of the unholy and wicked spiritual forces from upon them:

"He saw their distress; He heard their song." (ibid. 44)

Rabbi Nachman of Breslov, of blessed memory, explains (Likutei Moharan I, Torah 42):

"'He saw their distress; He heard their song' — indeed, through melody, the divine judgments are sweetened."

The Moharash explained ('Sefat HaNachal,' Part III, page 169):

**Parshat Tetzaveh - Fire, Water, and Wind.**

‘When a person sings before G-d in his prayer, he sweetens the judgments. The main source and cause of the judgments that fall upon a person is their being in a state of sadness and depression; when a person believes that he has no more hope in life and that no one is listening to him. But as soon as a person sings and chants his prayer, he channels the holy Divine Presence and thereby sweetens all of the judgments.

Rabbi Nachman continues:

Rashi explains: "He heard their song' — in the merit of the Patriarchs." The three Patriarchs are represented by the three illuminating colors of the rainbow that invoke remembrance of the eternal covenant, about which G-d said, "I will see it and remember the eternal covenant" (Genesis 9:16), as written in the Zohar (Pinchas 215a).

The words of prayer represent the Shechinah, as it is written:

"My L-rd, open my lips" (Psalms 51:17); speech corresponds to the Name 'My L-rd,' and is referred to as a bow, as Rashi comments: "With my sword and my bow" (Genesis 48:22) refers metaphorically to prayer.

The voice of the melody of prayer contains the three illuminating colors of the rainbow: fire, water, and wind, and whoever sings the words of prayer with purity, intention, and clarity, they enclothe the Shechinah — these letters — in luminous garments.

This is analogous to a king who became angry at his son, but when the king sees the mother of the prince, the queen, in luminous garments, he has mercy on his son.

Then G-d, Blessed be He, sees the Shechinah, and "the king's anger subsided," G-d then decrees upon the Jewish people good decrees and blessings and salvation.



## Summary and Practical Conclusions

1. The deeds of the Jewish people, who live and dwell in this physical world, govern the entirety of existence.

When the deeds of the Jewish people align with the will of the Creator, they draw forth abundance, blessing, vitality, and joy to all of existence, and naturally, this is also reflected here on Earth.

But if G-d forbid, the deeds of the Jewish People do not align with G-d's will, the victory and strength of the upper worlds is diminished, and divine judgments are aroused, G-d forbid.

2. The holy Torah teaches us how to sweeten and lighten these harsh judgments:

When the Holy Temple stood in Jerusalem, the Jewish people would atone for their sins and sweeten the judgments through the sacrificial service and the wearing of the priestly garments.

The priestly garments also sweetened judgments and atoned

for sins. Each garment atoned for a particular sin:

Tunic: for bloodshed

Trousers: for immorality

Turban: for arrogance

Sash: for improper thoughts of the heart

Breastplate: for harsh judgments against another

Ephod vest: for idolatry

Robe: for evil speech

Tzitz (forehead plate): for brazen deeds

3. Today as well, although we find ourselves in exile, and due to our many sins, the Temple has not yet been rebuilt, and we cannot offer sacrifices, we nonetheless have a way to sweeten and alleviate these judgments from upon us as if we were offered sacrifices:

It is through conducting ourselves with humility before every single Jew.

**Parshat Tetzaveh - Summary and Practical Conclusions**

4. An additional way to sweeten judgments is through prayer.

Prayer has the power to release a person from all their troubles and suffering.

Through heartfelt prayer, one can obtain whatever one needs and sweeten all judgments.

However, such prayer requires much concentration and deep intention and should be ideally recited in a pleasing voice.

May we all merit a joyful and meaningful Purim filled with much light, both spiritually and materially.

**Shabbat Shalom!**



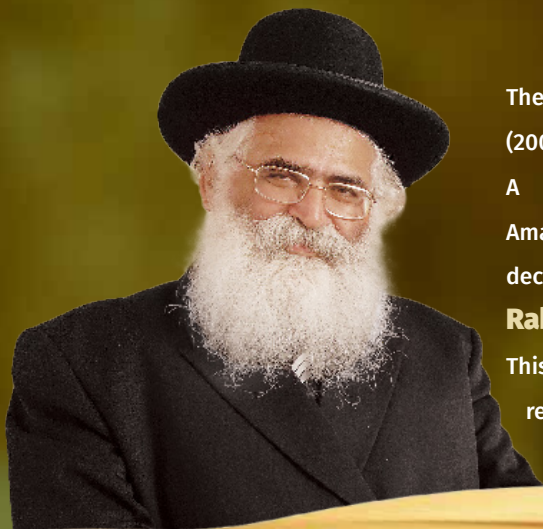
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Los Angeles	5:37 pm	6:33 pm	7:08 pm
Montreal	5:32 pm	6:35 pm	7:03 pm
Toronto	5:56 pm	6:58 pm	7:27 pm
London	5:33 pm	6:43 pm	7:05 pm
Jerusalem	5:26 pm	6:17 pm	6:58 pm
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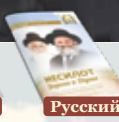
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