

Rabbi Elchanan Shoff

PARSHAS TETZAVEH

Why is Moshe's name absent from Parshas Titzaveh?

The *Baal HaTurim* explains that Moshe Rabbeinu's name does not appear in the entire Parshas Titzaveh because he said when praying for forgiveness for the Golden Calf, "...and if not, erase me now from Your book" (Ex. 32:32). Even though he only uttered those words conditionally, meaning they should only apply if Hashem does *not* forgive the Jews, still the curse of a Talmid Chacham takes effect even if it was with a stipulation. However, there are two important questions we must address related to this explanation: Firstly, if this is the reason for Moshe Rabbeinu's name's absence, then why did it have to be Parshas Titzaveh, and not any other Parshah? Moreover, if Moshe said that his name should be erased, and this request should come into effect even without the fulfillment of the stipulation, then why isn't Moshe Rabbeinu's name erased from the entire Torah, why is redacting his name from just Parshas Titzaveh enough? Rabbi Tzaddok HaKohen of Lublin in *Pri Tzaddik* explains that the underlying message of Parshas Titzaveh is that directly affecting a small portion of the Jewish People has reverberative effects that ultimately touch the entirety of the Nation. For example, Parshas Titzaveh begins by discussing the commandment for the Kohen Gadol to light the *menorah*. When he begins to just kindle the flame a bit, the entire flame can take on a life of its own, as though he lit the collective souls of the entire Jewish People. Similarly, the only of the vessels of the Tabernacle which is described in Parshas Titzaveh is the Golden Altar (see Ex. 30:1–10). The *ketores* (incense) is brought specifically on that altar, and the *ketores* too alludes to this idea of affecting the entire Jewish nation collectively. This is because one of the essential ingredients that make up the *ketores* is something called *chelbenah*—a foul-smelling substance. Yet, when the *chelbenah* is joined together with the other ten ingredients that make up the *ketores* the final scent of the incense is quite pleasant. The Gemara (*Krisos* 6b) explains that the *chelbenah* alludes to sinful Jews, who are also part of the Jewish-People-at-large and are essential to the make-up of the entire community. The Golden Altar and the commandment of the lighting the *menorah* teach us that ever small segment of the Jewish People is considered equal to the sum of the Jewish People themselves. Each segment has its own importance.¹ When Moshe Rabbeinu prayed for Hashem to forgive the sin of the Golden Calf, he said that he wants to use his powers to "sweeten" the odor of the Jewish People who had become malodorous due to their grave sin. And Moshe Rabbenu stipulated, that if Hashem does not agree to forgive the Jewish People, then He should take away his (Moshe's) powers to protect the Jews on a collective level. Accordingly, even though Hashem did ultimately grants the Jews a reprieve

¹ I heard from Rabbi Shmuel Brazil that this idea is alluded to in the very word *chelbenah* (חלבנה) which can be understood as an acronym for what the Mishnah (Avos xx:Xx) says that every person "must say 'the world was created because of me' (חייב לומר בשבילי נברא העולם)."

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of sorts, He still took away from Moshe Rabbenu the ability to protect the entire Nation collectively. Instead, Hashem gave that power to his brother Aharon who was commanded with the responsibility of lighting the *menorah* and burning the incense on the Golden Altar—both of which allude to the ability for an individual to effect the entirety of the Jewish People. The converse is also true. Even though Moshe Rabbeinu's request really called for his name to be redact from the entire Torah, it is only taken out of Parshas Titzaveh to teach us that a portion of something is equal to the entire thing itself, for Parshas Titzaveh is only a *portion* of the Torah, yet Moshe's absence in that one parshah is tantamount to omitting his name from the *entire* Torah.

The Ostrovitzer Gaon (cited in *Omer HaMan* vol. 1 *Divrei Kodesh* 1 and *Beis Meir* vol. 1, p. 156) takes a different approach. When Hashem originally spoke to Moshe Rabbeinu about the ramifications of the Golden Calf, He told him that He will destroy the entire Jewish Nation, and “and I will make you (Moshe) into a great nation” (Ex. 32:10). The problem with this option is that if Hashem would actually wipe out the entire Jewish People and start anew from Moshe, then He would essentially be abrogating His promise to the Patriarchs that their descendants would become a great nation. Nonetheless, there is a way around this issue. The Ostrovitzer Gaon explains that there were two aspects to Moshe Rabbeinu's greatness. One aspect was the fact that Moshe Rabbeinu as an individual who was included in the Jewish People (a unit who is a subset of the Jewish People), and the other aspect is that Moshe Rabbeinu himself includes all of the Jewish People (a unit who *equals* the entire Jewish People), as expressed in Tikkunei Zohar 70. Accordingly, if Hashem were to destroy the entire Jewish People and build the nation from Moshe, then this would not abrogate His promise to the Patriarchs, because the second aspect of Moshe Rabbeinu (that he *includes* the entire nation) would kick in and ensure that anything that comes from Moshe Rabbeinu would actually include the entirety of the Jewish People. The Ostrovitzer Gaon further sharpens the differences between these two aspects of Moshe Rabbeinu's greatness. When Moshe is viewed as an individual within the Jewish People, then he is called Moshe—the name given to him as an individual by the Pharaoh's daughter. However, when he is viewed as *equal* to the entire Jewish Nation, he is called Tov (“good”)—the name given to him during the Six Days of Creation (see *Shemos Rabbah* 1:20). He is called Tov because when he is *equal* the nation, this is because the entire nation is sustained through his merit, as though he is the one showering them with an influx of good. Accordingly, when Hashem suggested destroying the nation, he was actually going to only keep the "Moshe" part of him, but not the "Tov" part of him. For the Tov aspect of Moshe, that part that was representative and inclusive of all the Jews, would no longer be relevant. It is thus that in our parsha, the individual name Moshe was not mentioned. For this parsha is a parsha about donating to the Mishkan, about all the Jews coming together to create one thing that would be the center of

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divine service. It would be the ultimate connection between Moshe and the Jews, and at such a demonstration of connection, his individual identity was entirely absent.

Rabbi Mordechai HaKohen of Tzfas in *Sifsei Kohen* offers another way of explaining the absence of Moshe's name from the Parshah. He cites the *Zohar* (*Raya Mehemna* 273b) that says that in every generation, Moshe (or some sort of reincarnation of his soul) serves as the leader of the Jewish People. In order to stress that that leadership is not tied to the name Moshe, *per se*, but to whatever individual will assume his responsibilities, the Torah downplays the significance of his name.

Rabbi Yonason Shteif (*Amaros* 1) offers a similar explanation. The Book of Yehoshua with a prophecy given to Yehoshua "after the death of Moshe the servant of Hashem" (Josh. 1:1). In this passage, Moshe is described as a servant of Hashem even after his death. The Malbim explains that this is because even after Moshe Rabbeinu died, he continued to serve Hashem because when the righteous die, they are still considered alive. Moreover, Moshe Rabbeinu as an abstract concept continues to exist, because in every generation, we continue to have leaders who tell us how to act and how not to act. This is why we find in several places in the Gemara (e.g. *Shabbos* 101b) that when one *Talmid Chacham* offers a sound piece of logic or instruction, the other tell him, "Moshe, you are saying good". Why are all these different *Talmidei Chachamim* who have their own independent names always called Moshe? This is because they all share common characteristics with Moshe Rabbeinu who revealed to the Jewish People the truth of the Torah. According to this, the absence of Moshe's name from our Parshah teaches that even when Moshe Rabbeinu person is already dead, the spirit or essence of Moshe Rabbeinu's mission lives on. For this reason, the Parshah opens with a pronoun "And you shall command the Children of Israel", the antecedent of the word "you" is clearly Moshe, but his proper name is not used in order to denote that the responsibility of revealing Hashem's commandments to the Jewish People is not limited to the individual person known as Moshe, but continues to be borne by other leaders throughout the generations.

Rabbi Yonason Shteif (*Amaros* 1) cites in the name of Rav Yissachar Dov of Belz a different explanation to the absence of Moshe's name: When praying for forgiveness for the Golden Calf, Moshe Rabbeinu said "...and if not, erase me now from Your book" (Ex. 32:32). What is this book to which he refers? The Gemara (Rosh HaShanah 16b) says that Hashem has three books in which one could be inscribed, one of the wholly righteous, one of the wholly wicked, and one of people in between. After the sin of the Golden Calf, Hashem inscribed the names of the Jewish People in the Book of the Wholly Wicked, but He still had Moshe Rabbeinu's name in the Book of the Wholly Righteous. In response, Moshe Rabbeinu requested that his name not be in a separate book than that of the rest of the Jewish People,

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he wanted to be in the same book as them. In Moshe words, he wanted Hashem to erase his name from the Book of the Wholly Righteous and rewrite it in the Book of the Wholly Wicked alongside the rest of the Jewish People. In response, Hashem said: “Whoever sinned against Me, I will erase him from My book” (Ex. 32:33). This means, that instead of erasing Moshe’s name from the Book of the Wholly Righteous, Hashem opted to erase the Jewish People from the Book of the Wholly Wicked, and rewrite them in the same book as Moshe.

Moshe in Second person

And you shall command... (Ex. 27:20). The Ostrovitzer Gaon (cited by *Likutei Yehudah, Titzaveh* pg. 347) offers an intricate explanation as to why Hashem refers to Moshe Rabbeinu as “you” instead of by his name. The Rashba (responsa *Rashba* vol. 5 §52) was once asked why *brachos* were formulated in a way that the first half of the *bracha* speaks to Hashem in second-person (“Blessed are You Hashem, our God...”), while the second half speaks to Him in third-person (“...who created everything with His word”). Why do we inconsistently refer to Him as “You” and “His”? The Rashba explains that this dichotomy serves a pedagogic purpose in stressing two important points about Hashem: First we refer to Him as “You” as though His existence is undisputed and well-known, but then we to Him as “His” in order to stress that as mere mortals we cannot truly comprehend the implications of His existence, and must relate to Him as something abstract and beyond our grasp.² The Ostrovitzer Gaon offers another answer, arguing that these two pronouns used to refer to Hashem denote two different types of relationships which man has with Him: The Talmud Yerushalmi (*Brachos* 9:5) says that one should worship Hashem out of love, and out of fear. He should worship Hashem out of love, so that he will never end up hating Him, and he should worship Hashem out of fear, so that he will never end up rebelling against Him. These two types of relationships are also reflected in more practical representations, as they are comparable to the relationship between father and son (love) and the relationship a master and slave (fear). The Jewish People are called both the sons of Hashem (Deut. 14) and the slaves of Hashem (Lev. 25:55). With this in mind, the Ostrovitzer Gaon explains that the beginning of *brachos* are in second-person, because we assume the role of children appealing to their father—the relationship of love—so we refer to Hashem as “You” as an expression of closeness. The second half of *brachos* are in third-person, because then we assume the role of slaves appealing to their master—the relationship of fear—so we refer to

² Rabbi Yosef Shalom Elyashiv (in his lectures to *Brachos* 35a) noted that these two, almost-contradictory, ideas are already found alongside each other in the *Mussaf Kedusha* services, in which we declare “His glory fills the world” and in the same breathe we mention that “His attendants [i.e. angels] ask each other, ‘Where is the place of His glory?’”. The first statement affirms our conviction in His all-encompassing existence, while the second statement demonstrates the angels’—and certainly our— inability to truly understand Him.

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Hashem as “His”, which is an expression of distance. Based on all of this, the Ostrovitzer Gaon explains that after Moshe was willing to give up his position for the sake of saving the Jewish People (as he told Hashem to erase his name from His book), one might have that this dialectic may have put some distance between himself and Hashem. In order to quell such an argument, Hashem began speaking to Moshe with the word “You”—a term of endearment and closeness—instead of using Moshe’s personal name which can be viewed as less personal.

Lighting the Menorah: everyday or once a year

And you shall take to yourself pure olive oil, pressed for the purposes of light, to light up a constant candle (Ex. 27:20). The Midrash Tanchuma (*Titzaveh* 3) cites the testimony of Rabbi Chanina Segan HaKohanim that there was a miracle in the Temple that the *menorah* would be lit once in the beginning of the year, and the fire would be not be extinguished until the next year. Rabbi Meir Arik (in *Imrei Yosher* vol. 2 195) cites this Midrash and asks how this could be if, in effect, this miracle causes them to do away with the Torah’s commandment to light the *menorah* everyday? When Rabbi Chaim Soloveitchik of Brisk was in Warsaw, he asked this same question to the Gerrer Rebbe, the *Imrei Emes*. The Gerrer Rebbe answered (as cited in *Likutei Yehudah, Titzaveh* pg. 349) that the Tosefta (*Shabbos* 14, brought in *Beitzah* 22a) rules that if one added oil on Shabbos to a candle that was already lit, one is still liable for desecrating the Shabbos, even though he did not light the fire, because by adding oil, he causes the fire to be able to burn for longer. Accordingly, the same is true of the *menorah* in the Temple. Even though the *menorah* was only lit once a year and the fire would last until the end of the year, still every day the Kohanim would fulfill the commandment of lighting the *menorah* by adding a bit of oil to the candle, which is tantamount to lighting the candle anew.

On the rocks

A work of an artisan—an engraved, stamped stone, you shall engrave the two stones on the names of the Sons of Israel... (Ex. 28:11). *Tosafos HaShlaeim* (here 3) notes that the first letters of the words in the phrase “the two stones” (את שתי האבנים) spell out the word “woman” (אשה) which allude to the two women from whom all the Jewish People descend—Leah and Rachel (Yaakov’s main wives). When this passage further says “on the name of the Sons of Israel...”, this alludes to the fact that Bilhah and Zilpah (Yaakov’s other two wives) are included in the category of Rachel (because Leah had six sons, and Rachel together with Bilhah and Zilpah had six sons).

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The Heart and the Mouth

And the choshen shall not move from upon the ephod (Ex. 28:28). The Gerrer Rebbe, the *Imrei Emes* (cited in *Likutei Yehudah, Titzaveh* p. 360 in the 2010 edition) points out something amazing. The word *ephod* (תֹּפֵא = 85) in *gematria* equals “mouth” (פֶּה = 85), yet the *choshen* is best associated with the heart, as it rests upon the Kohen Gadol’s chest. The convergence of these ideas serves to teach us that when one speaks, his heart and his mouth should be equal. One should not have in mind one thing, while with his mouth be saying something else. This trait of honest and transparency is something we find with Yaakov Aveinu, and is also alluded to concerning Yosef who said, “For my mouth speaks to you”, which can be read as “Like my mouth speaks to you [such is in my heart]”. The importance of speech is also alluded to in the Kohen Gadol’s *meil* (“tunic”), about which the Torah says, “its mouth [i.e. edge] should have a lip [i.e. hem]”. This passage teaches us that one should mouth should have a guard (his lips) which are to protect him from using his mouth for frivolous endeavors.

Wedding Rings

And you shall put the two rings... (Ex. 29:23). Rabbeinu Shimshon (cited in the *Gematrios* section of Rabbi Mordechai HaKohen of Tzfas’ work *Sifsei Kohan*) notes that the first letters of the words in the phrase “the two rings” (אֵת שְׁתֵי הַטְּבָעוֹת) spells out the word “woman” (אִשָּׁה). From this connection, he derives that it is quite fitting to specifically use “rings” when betrothing a woman (even though, technically, anything of monetary value suffices, see *Kiddushin* 2a).

12 Months Old Lambs and King Saul

One-year old lambs... (Ex. 29:38). *Tanna D’Vei Eliyahu Rabbah* (ch. 17) offers a parable to illustrate the significance of the lambs’ age: This is comparable to a king who became angry at his wife, but he had a twelve-month old son from her. Every day, he would enter the baby’s chambers and hug him and kiss him, and put him in his lap and say, ‘If it wasn’t for my great mercy that I have on you, I would have already divorced your mother and chased her out of my house’. *Zekukin de-Nura* (105) explains that this is why the face of the Cherubim resembled young children, because young children have the ability to arouse mercy. Similarly, Rabbi Chaim Palagi in *Luach Erez* (there) uses this idea to explain the Bible’s description of King Saul. He was described as becoming king as the age of one year old (I Sam. 13:1), yet the Talmud (*Yoma* 22b) clarifies that this cannot be taken literally, but must refer to his innocence from sin, which resembled that of a one-year old. Based on the above, Rabbi Palagi explains that the comparison to a twelve-month old is not just drawn in terms of innocence from sin, but also illustrates the endearment which Hashem had for King Saul, who was dear to Him like a twelve-month baby is dear to his father.

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The Sacrifice of Nadav and Aviyahu's Soul

And I will rendezvous there with Children of Israel, and they will be sanctified through My honor (Ex. 29:43). The first sacrifices which were offered at the Heavenly Tabernacle were the souls of Nadav and Aviyahu. Indeed, we find that *Tosafos* (*Menachos* 110b) write that the angel Michael, in his role as the Kohen Gadol of the Heavenly Temple, is charged with offering the souls of the righteous as a sacrifices for Hashem. Moreover, Rabbi Menachem Azaria of Fano notes that the souls of Nadav and Aviyahu were around at the time of *Akedas Yitzchak*, as Hashem's command to Avraham was "take now" (קח נא), with the word "now" serving as an acronym for Nadav and Aviyahu (נא = נדב אביהו). Moreover, he explains that sacrificing the souls of Nadav and Aviyahu at *Akedas Yitzchak* served to proactively atone for the future sin of the Golden Calf, as the earthly action Avraham undertook by slaughtering the ram he found caught in the "thicket", alludes to the future Golden Calf. This is because each of the letters in the word "thicket" (סברך) immediately precede each letter from the word "calf" (עגל) in the order of the Hebrew Alphabet. More specifically, explains Rabbi Menachem Azaria, the deaths of Nadav and Aviyahu served to atone for the role that their father Aharon played in helping prepare the Golden Calf.³

³ See *Pninei HaRema mi-Fano* to Gen. 22:13 and *Asara Maamaros, Maamar Chikur HaDin* 4:19, and in the glosses *Yoel Moshe* (there, p. 308) who discusses the idea that Yitzchak's soul left him and entered the ram which Avraham Aveinu sacrificed. See also the Radomsker Rebbe's work *Tiferes Shlomo* (beginning of *Parshas Acharei Mos*).

ONEG!

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Teztaveh
Oils, Incense and Satan

Aaron should offer the Ketores incense in the morning; when he arranges the candles should be offer it. When Aaron lights the candles in the evening, he should offer the Ketores continually before Hashem.

Shemos 30:7–8

“Oil and incense bring the heart joy,”⁴ wrote Shlomo. The Vilna Gaon⁵ explains that the allusion here is to the oil of the Menorah in the Temple, and the incense of the *Ketores*, also discussed in our Parsha. What is the connection between these two items, and what it is about them that brings such joy to the heart?

Our Sages teach,⁶ “One who sees olive oil in his dream can expect the *meor* [light] of the Torah, as the verse tells us, ‘Command the Jewish people to take for You pure olive oil.’”⁷ In order to make sense of this gemara, we first need to define the *meor* of Torah. While not a direct definition, we do discover much from the words of R. Chiya.⁸ “R. Chiya bar Abba said, ‘The verse says, ‘If only they would abandon Me, and still keep My Torah,’ for by busying themselves with the Torah, the *meor* that it has will bring them back to their good state.’”⁹ The *meor* of Torah emerges as the part of the Torah that brings us back to being good.¹⁰ It does not change us into something good, but rather turns us back into the good beings that we were when we started out.

Moshe saw that the Jewish people were being threatened, so he insisted that Hashem save them. He even told Hashem that if He doesn’t save the Jewish people, then “erase me from

4 Mishlei 27:9

5 Commentary to Mishlei there

6 Brachos 57a

7 Shemos 27:20

8 Introduction to Eicha Rabassi

9 See *Even Shisiya* of R. Yochanan Bechofer (p. 24, n. 25), where he quotes the late R. Yaakov Weinberg as explaining that although the mitzvos of a person who does not believe in a Creator are inherently meaningless in the sense of religious connection, and thus to convince a Jewish atheist to do “just one mitzvah” would be a complete waste of time, this is not the case, for, in fact, the mitzvahs of such a person nevertheless have some value in that the *meor* of that mitzvah can reach them on a soul level.

10 See *Pnei Menachem* to Vayakhel-Pikudei / Shekalim 5755, s.v. *vihanisiim*, p. 247.

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your book.”¹¹ Now, despite the fact that this act of Moshe’s was one of the most noble ever done by a man, Moshe suffered a bit from it. For, “The curse of the righteous man, even if it was conditional [and the condition was not fulfilled], it nevertheless comes true.”¹² Thus, Moshe’s name was erased from this week’s Parsha, and was never mentioned in it.¹³ This is not just a game. Moshe showed his connection to the possibility of being erased from the “book,” which we will attempt to explain in a moment. Once that was a possibility in the world of potential, and Moshe connected to that, it had to play out in the world of the actual. And thus, Moshe lost something. But what did he lose? Moshe, by offering a “what-if scenario,” it seems, was suggesting that there was a chance that the Jewish people would not have it in them to change back to their pure state. They had worshiped the Golden Calf, and Moshe wanted them to be cleansed, so he asked this of Hashem. But when he told Hashem what he would like to happen to him should things not go the way of the Jews, this indicated that he saw that as a possibility. His faith in his people was not as complete as it could have been.

The Parsha of Tetzaveh is one that speaks of the Menorah. R. Tzadok of Lublin¹⁴ explains that Aaron, as he lit the Menorah, ignited along with it the souls of the Jewish people. The lighting of the Menorah, which Aaron did in place of Moshe, was the symbol of the inspiration that we receive from our leaders. To inspire others means to know that deep down inside, they have what it takes. It is about connecting others to the *meor* (light) that *returns* us to the good, rather than *changes* us. There is no option for failure because we know that deep down inside, the human being is pristine and untouched. It’s just about connecting with that part of oneself. Moshe said, “If You do not save them, then what am I worth in the scheme of things? I will influence no one, and will be erased.” And this came true in a minor way. Moshe was removed from the Parsha that talks about the lighting of the Menorah, for that was a power that he lost.¹⁵

11 Shemos 32:32. Rosh Hashanah 16b tells that this book that he would have been erased from was “the book of life.” See also Targum Yonason, Sforno, and *Chizkuni*, who say this as well. However, Rashi there says that it means “the whole Torah.” See Gur Aryeh who explains Rashi further.

12 Makkos 11a

13 *Zohar Chadash* 60b, and *Zohar* vol., 146a. R. Bechaye to Shemos 32:32; *Baal Haturim* to Shemos 27:20; *Daas Zekenim* to Shemos 32:34; *Pirush Harash al Hatorah* to Shemos 27:20.

14 *Pri Tzaddik*, Tetzaveh

15 For other reasons that Moshe was left out of this Parsha specifically, see *Koheles Yitzchak* to Tetzaveh, who quotes the Vilna Gaon saying that on the majority of years, the seventh of Adar, which is the anniversary of Moshe’s death, falls on the week of Tetzaveh. The same is asserted by *Meor Einayim* at the end of Teztaveh, as well as by R. Yisrael of Kozhnitz in his *Avodas Yisrael* to Vayechi, s.v. *liyishuascha*. See also *Paneach Raza* and *Shach al Hatorah*. See also *Megaleh Amukos* (*ofen* 55), who notes that the *gematria* of the *nistar* of Moshe (wherein each letter would

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The person who doubts whether others can be influenced, the one who doubts whether his children can really be good people, will, unfortunately, often see his worst prophecies fulfill themselves. Faith in others and the ability to lead them comes from the absolute certainty that they are completely good at the core. If a person who is essentially good seeks forgiveness, he or she must be forgiven. There is no qualifying phrase, "...and if not, erase me."

And thus, the building of the *Ketores* (incense) Altar, though one of the pieces of "furniture" that ought to have been dealt with in last week's Parsha – along with all the rest of those sort of items – is left for our Parsha. The *Ketores* is really a fascinating service. The Gemara¹⁶ tells us that all fast days, days when Jewish people are repenting, require wicked, sinful Jews to join the rest of us in our prayers. At the beginning of Yom Kippur, just before Kol Nidrei, we invite the sinners in a public announcement, for they are absolutely integral to our atonement. The Gemara learns this from the *chelbna*, which in English translates as "galbanum." The *chelbna* smelled horrible. It was pungent and potent, but it was, nevertheless, integral to the *Ketores*, which was not kosher without it. This smelly thing actually had the property that it made everything else smell stronger, and sweeter. From the *chelbna*, we learn to include the wicked.¹⁷ But why? Why should the atonement of essentially good people be held up because there are no really bad ones in the room?

Atonement, as we explained earlier, is the awareness that our natures are good. We need to know that we are never really ruined by sin, only distanced from our natures. People who are righteous, and have only made a couple of slip-ups, are likely to think that they are good people as a result of most of their actions. Thus atonement, to them, would seem like identifying with their actions. But that is not the case. While one's actions *are* one's accomplishments, one also needs to know that deep down, we are all connected to our Creator, regardless of our behavior. We all started out good, and remain that way deep down inside. This is the secret of atonement. Therefore, the repentance of a person who is nearly perfect needs to also look like that of the sinner – he needs to have a bad guy nearby to

be itself spelled out; i.e., *mem* is spelled out as "*mem, mem,*" *shin* would be "*shin, nun,*" etc.) is 101, which is the exact number of verses in this Parsha. This Parsha is the very essence of the hiding of Moshe.

16 Kreisos 6b

17 See also R. Shmuel Brazil's amazing *Bishvili Nivra Haolam*, p. 63, where he points out that the Talmudic expression (Sanhedrin 37a), "Each man is required to say, 'The world was created just for me,'" starts with the very letters *chelbna*. Each person is "*chayav lomar, 'Bishvili nivra haolam'*" – the first letters of each word are *chelbna* to show us that even the person who feels as though he is the smelly one, the *chelbna* is, nevertheless, required to know that he is worth creating the entire world for.

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remind him that “just as that guy could only be here if deep down inside he was really good, so too, I am repenting to get in touch with that deep part of me, not just to rid myself of a couple of deeds.”

The recipe for the *Ketores*, fascinatingly, was a secret that was given over to Moshe by the Angel of Death, say our Sages.¹⁸ When Moshe went up to Heaven to bring the Torah down to us, the angels were so swayed by his convincing pitch that man should get the Torah that they not only withdrew their claims *against* the idea of our receiving the Torah, but they, in fact, were proactive, and presented gifts to Moshe!¹⁹ But what gift can an angel really give, wonders R. Moshe Shapiro.²⁰ In fact, he explains, the angel, who *is* his mission, can give only himself, for he has no possessions, or information, or power that is not his very essence. The very essence of the evil inclination, who is the Angel of Death, and the Satan,²¹ is that everything can be made sweet. His essence is the secret of the *Ketores*.²²

The wicked Haman of the Purim story has a name with a numerical value of ninety-five. This is the same value as *chelbna*.²³ We are to know that even the wicked Haman had some good in there.²⁴ This is why we have to be drunk enough to be able to say “blessed is Haman,”²⁵ for there is some spark way down in there that is holy.²⁶ That is the message of the *chelbna*. That even the distant is also rooted in the divine.

The other main issue that Tetzaveh deals with is the clothing of the Kohen Gadol. After the sin of Adam, Hashem gave him and Chava clothing. That clothing was the same as the

18 Shabbos 89a

19 See Tehillim 68:19

20 *Afikei Mayim*, Shavuos, 42. See also my *Vaani Bahashem Atzapeh* to Tehillim 68:19

21 Bava Basra 16a

22 See also Yalkut Reuveni to Bereishis 32:27, quoting the Rema MiFano, who explains that the angel of Esav asked to be sent away to sing to God at the very moment that Yaakov conquered him, because that is his whole praise. The angel of Esav, the wicked one who challenges us and is identified with the Satan, the Angel of Death and the evil inclination, is only here so that we should beat it, and make it sweet. Then, it is his time to sing to Hashem. A similar approach is recorded in R. Yisrael of Kozhnitz’s *Avodas Yisrael* in the name of the *Sefer Olas Hachodesh*. See also R. Avraham Schorr’s *Halekach Vihalibuv* 5763 to Vayakhel, p. 140.

23 *Megaleh Amukos*, Veeschanan, 191

24 *Shaar Hakavanos*, *drushei Purim* (104:4); *Etz Chaim*, *shaar hapurim* (6, p. 110, column 3, s.v. *haga tzemach*); *Reyach Dudaim* of Bnei Yissaschar to Megillah 13a, s.v. *ushmuel amar*.

25 Megillah 7b

26 See also R. Yaakov Hillel’s *Amudei Horaah* to the Chida’s *Moreh Bietzba*, 9, 307.

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clothing of the Kohen Gadol.²⁷ (This does not mean that they both necessarily looked exactly identical, but rather, that they represented the same thing.) Just as these garments were the first things that Hashem gave Adam and Chava to help them overcome their sin, so, too, does the clothing of Aaron atone for sins.²⁸ This is what is worn by the Kohen Gadol. In fact, we are told that Avraham was, himself, a Kohen Gadol. The *Chiddushei Harim*²⁹ explains that when we say each day in our prayers that Hashem is the “protector of Avraham,”³⁰ what we mean is that He protects that part of Avraham that is still inside of each Jew. That part is never touched. Aaron lit the Menorah, and the Menorah was the centerpiece of the Chanukah miracle. The Chanukah miracle was the highest level that Menorah lighting could reach, and was the essence of its mission. The gift of lighting the Menorah was expressed by the Chanukah story.³¹ The oil that was never touched bore the “signature of the Kohen Gadol.”³² *Chiddushei Harim* explains that this hints to the “signature of Avraham,” which is that part of the soul that is connected to Avraham and can never be made impure. Just as the oil could not be ruined, and the Menorah could not be extinguished, neither can the holiness of the Jewish soul. The clothes of Adam were worn by Avraham the Kohen Gadol, and then by Aaron. They all reminded us that even sin cannot really touch the deepest part of us, and that we are never disconnected.

Aaron wore the special clothing, and performed the service of the Menorah as well as that of the *Ketores*. He was a man whose defining traits were “loving peace, pursuing peace, loving mankind and bringing them close to Torah.”³³ He was the one who lit the Menorah, bringing us close to the *meor* of the Torah, which reminds us that we are really pure at our cores, and he was the one who lit the *Ketores* at that same time.

“Just as a person must have faith in God, so too, is he obligated to have faith in himself,” wrote the saintly R. Tzadok of Lublin.³⁴ When we discover the joy of the oil and the *Ketores*, the joy that is deep inside of us, that knows how connected we are to the Divine, to Eternity

27 *Baal Haturim* to Bereishis 3:21. See also *Zohar Chadash* quoted in Yalkut Reuveni to Tetzaveh.

28 Arachin 16a explains in detail what each of the items atones for. See also the medieval commentary of R. Elyakim of Magentza (Jerusalem, 1965) to Yoma 72b, where he explains that the clothing of the Kohen Gadol is now in Rome, and since they are unharmed, they therefore still atone for the Jewish people. See, however, Chasam Sofer’s commentary to Gittin 8a.

29 *Sfas Emes*, Chanukah, 646

30 Shmoneh Esrei

31 See Ramban to Behaaloscha

32 Shabbos 21b

33 Avos 1:12

34 *Tzidkas Hatzaddik* 154

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and to the Torah, then we can have the faith in ourselves that we are expected to. Only when we learn that if we put in the effort, there is not any option at all to fail – there is no option of “and if not, then erase me” – only then will we truly feel that joy.