Parshas Tetzaveh

Presented By Rabbi Yosef Kalatsky Shlita, Dean

1. Humility – the Basis for Clarity

The Gemara in Tractate Megillah tells us that when Haman cast lots to choose the month in which to bring about the destruction of the Jewish people, the month of Adar was drawn. He was pleased that Adar was the month selected because he believed that it was the most ominous month of the year for the Jewish people. This is because it was during Adar that Moshe, the teacher of the Jewish people, passed away. However, the Gemara tells us that Haman was mistaken because he did not realize that Moshe was also born during the month of Adar. This caused the month to be the most auspicious and beneficial month for the Jewish people. The Gemara in Tractate Taanis tells us that when the month of Adar enters "One should increase his joy…" The Gemara explains, "During the month of Adar the *mazel* of the Jew is the healthiest."

Rosh z'tl, in his commentary on the Torah cites Dan Ashkenazi z'tl, "Every Portion of the Torah, from the time of the birth of Moshe until his passing, mentions his name, with the exception of the Portion of Tetzaveh. This is a wonder. Why is this the case? It is because Moshe had said something inappropriate before Hashem. Moshe had said to G'd at the time of the sin of the Golden Calf, 'If You destroy the Jewish people (as a result of their sin), You should erase me from Your Book.' The Gemara in Tractate Makkos tells us that if a Chacham (Torah Sage) pronounces a curse, even if it is said on a conditional basis, the curse nevertheless takes effect. Thus, since Moshe had said 'if You choose to destroy the Jewish people, erase me from Your Book,' his name does not appear in the Portion of Tetzaveh, which is the Portion preceding Ki Sisa which mentions the sin of the Golden Calf…"

The Portion of Tetzaveh begins, **"Now you shall command the Children of Israel that they shall take for you pure, pressed olive oil for illumination, to kindle the lamp continuously…"** The pure pressed olive oil was used in the Mishkan to kindle the Menorah that symbolizes the Oral Law, which elucidates the Written Law. It is interesting to note that the Portion that alludes to the Oral Law does not mention the name of Moshe. Moshe Rabbeinu was the conduit through whom G'd transmitted the Torah to the Jewish people.

Moshe Rabbeinu was the only individual who was qualified to receive the Torah because he was the most humble person to ever live. Moshe had said, "*Nachnu Mah* – what are we (meaning we are nothing.)" He was totally negated in the presence of Hashem. His existence and value was only to do the Will of G'd. The deletion of his name could be attributed to his one of a kind humility – a level of non-existence/total negation.

It is evident from the works of Chofetz Chaim z'tl that he was one of the leading Torah Sages of his time. Nevertheless, he is not obviously recognized as such. Chofetz Chaim z'tl is renowned for his piety and devoutness. Rav Aaron Kotler z'tl (Lakewood Rosh HaYeshivah) once asked the Brisker Rav z'tl, "Why is the Chofetz Chaim only known as the *chassid ha'dor* - the most pious of the generation, and not as the *gaon ha'dor* – the Torah Sage of the generation?" The Brisker Rav answered, "The Chofetz Chaim understood his own proficiency and erudition of Torah knowledge; however, because of his level of humility he prayed to Hashem that he should not be recognized and

acknowledged for this trait. When a tzaddik requests that something should come about, Hashem fulfills that decree. Thus, Chofetz Chaim is not acknowledged as a Torah Sage. However, regarding his classification as "*chassid* (devoutly pious), he did not fully appreciate and recognize his own status because the person who is truly devout always feels that he is not sufficiently dedicated. Thus, he did not pray to be not recognized as such (since he did not feel he was a "Chassid")."

Haman made the mistake of believing that Adar was the most ominous month for the Jewish people because he was unaware that Moshe was born in that month. It is interesting to note that because Moshe was one who did not value himself as an individual to any degree, his birth was unnoticed by Haman. Because of Moshe's humility, his birth and life were concealed. It was only the day of Moshe's passing that was recognized by Haman.

In order to reveal the unique humility of Moshe, the Torah does not mention his name in the Portion that discusses the oil that was needed for the kindling of the Menorah (Oral Law). This is a different understanding than that of the Rosh.

Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh explains the Portion on an allusionary level. He states, "The Jewish people will only merit redemption from the four exiles because of the merit of the Patriarchs and Moshe Rabbeinu. The Jewish people were redeemed from the first exile, Babylon, in the merit of Avraham. In the merit of Yitzchak, the Jewish people were redeemed from the exile of the Medes and Persians. The merit of Yaakov was the basis for the redemption of the Jewish people from the Greek exile. The Jewish people will ultimately be redeemed from the fourth exile, which is the Roman/Edomite exile, only through the merit of Moshe. Because the Jewish people are removed from Torah and are not sufficiently engaged in it, Moshe will not allow his merit to bring about their redemption."

Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh continues, "As it is alluded to in the verse, '**Now you shall command the Children of Israel that they shall take for you pure, pressed olive oil for illumination, to kindle the lamp continuously…'** Moshe will redeem the Jewish people only if they are sufficiently engaged in Torah and mitzvos. Chazal explain that just as the oil used to kindle the Menorah needed to be pure, so too does the Torah study of the Jew need to be with pure intent – *l'shmah* (for the sake of G'd). If one engages in Torah study for the sake of advancement and aggrandizement, then it is not considered "pure." "*Kasis* – pressed" alludes to the fact that the Jew needs to sacrifice and toil in the pursuit of Torah. Since the Jewish people are not at that level of self-sacrifice and toiling in Torah study, they have not merited Moshe's redemption from the Roman exile."

Baal HaTurim explains that the numerical value of "Kasis- pressed" alludes to the destruction of the First and Second Temple. The reason the Bais HaMikdash (Temple) was destroyed was because the Jewish people did not study Torah sufficiently and with the proper intent. They were not willing to sacrifice for its acquisition.

It is only one who is humble that can come to the needed level of toil and sacrifice for the sake of Torah. Only the humble individual does not consider himself a priority before G'd and the Torah. Thus, it is only when the Jew emulates Moshe – in his humility, that he will be able to engage sufficiently in Torah to merit redemption.

2. The Prerequisite to Appreciating and Understanding Spiritual Value

In the Portion of Terumah, the Torah states all of the intricacies of the elements of

the building of the Mishkan. The construction of the dwelling location of the Divine Presence was precise and deliberate, requiring a unique level of skill and artisanship. In the Portion of Tetzaveh, which follows Terumah, the Torah states regarding the making of the Priestly Vestments *(Bigdei Kehunah)*, **"You shall make vestments of sanctity for Aaron your brother, for glory and splendor. And you shall speak to all the wise-hearted people *(chachmei lev)* whom I (Hashem) have invested with a spirit of wisdom *(chachmah)*, and they shall make the vestments of Aaron…"**

The Jewish people were slaves in Egypt and were involved in primitive and menial tasks for many years. When they left Egypt, they were not qualified to be involved in any level of craftsmanship or artisanship. They did not have relevance to the skills that were necessary for the building of the Mishkan. When the Torah communicates all of the elements that were needed for the construction of the Mishkan (the woodworking, goldsmithing, weaving, and precision assembly) it does not state that Hashem invested the Jewish people with a "spirit of wisdom" to be able to build the Mishkan. It is clear that regarding all aspects of building the Mishkan, they were endowed with the understanding and the adeptness needed to bring it about, otherwise it would have been impossible. However, regarding the fabrication of the Priestly Vestments, the Torah states explicitly, "**You shall make vestments of sanctity for Aaron your brother, for glory and splendor. And you shall speak to all the wise-hearted people *(chachmei lev)* whom I (Hashem) have invested with a spirit of wisdom (chachmah), and they shall make the vestments of Aaron…"** Why does the Torah only address the need for a special level of wisdom when it speaks about the fabrication of the Priestly Vestments?

The Gemara in Tractate Berachos tells us that Hashem gives *chachmah* (wisdom) to those who are wise and understanding to those with understanding. As it states in the verse, "…**And you shall speak to all the wise-hearted people *(chachmei lev)* whom I (Hashem) have invested with a spirit of wisdom (chachmah)…"** Reb Chaim of Volozhin z'tl explains that "wisdom of the heart" mentioned in the verse, refers to those who possess the fear of G'd *(yiras shemayim).* As King David states in Tehillim (Psalms), "The beginning of wisdom is the fear of G'd…"

Baal HaTurm explains that the numerical value of "*Chachmei lev asher* – the wise-hearted whom…" is equivalent to the numerical value of "*yiras* – fear." The individual who is permeated with fear of G'd is the qualified receptacle for the wisdom of Hashem. Rabbeinu Bachya offers two interpretations of the words of King David, "The beginning of wisdom is the fear of G'd…" The first interpretation is that fear of heaven is a prerequisite for being able to acquire wisdom. The other interpretation is that fear of G'd is the beginning of wisdom itself. Understanding this, one would think that the Torah would have associated the "wisdom of the heart" with the entire building of the Mishkan and not only the Priestly Vestments. Nevertheless the Torah only mentions "wisdom of the heart" regarding the vestments to be worn by Aaron and his sons.

The Gemara in Tractate *Airchin* tells us that every one of the vestments worn by Aaron (the High Priest) atoned for and addressed a specific shortcoming/sin in the spirituality of the Jewish people. Thus, it is understandable that the individual who would be fabricating the Priestly Vestments needed to possess the fear of G'd to be able to infuse them with what was needed to bring about atonement. *Yiras shemayim (fear of G'd)* is essential in order to fully appreciate what is needed for the atonement process. Thus G'd gave the wisdom that was necessary to fashion those Priestly Vestments.

The Gemara in Tractate Yomah, "The storage location for Torah is one's *yiras shemayim* (fear of G'd)." As it is stated in the verse, "The fear of G'd is its (Torah)

storage location." Reb Chaim of Volozhin z'tl explains the Gemara with an allegory. If one wished to give a large amount of wheat as a gift, the recipient would need to have a sufficient storage. If he does not have the capacity to store and preserve the wheat, the benefactor will not gift the wheat because it will ultimately be scattered and trampled in a public setting. Similarly, it is the one who has the fear of G'd who will have the capacity to appreciate the value of Torah and engage with it properly. The prerequisite for Torah is *yiras shemayim*.

Rabbeinu Yonah in *Shaarei Teshuvah* (Gates of Repentance) explains that the performance of mitzvos and the study of Torah are only an expression of *yiras shemayim*. Thus, the one who merits the gift of Torah is the one who possesses *yiras shemayim.* It is interesting to note that the numerical value of "yiras- fear" is 611, which is the numerical equivalent of *Chachmei lev asher* – the wise-hearted whom…". The Gemara in Tractate Makkos tells us that the numerical value of "Torah" is 611 and with the first two Commandments (of the Ten Commandments) that were heard at Sinai it adds up to 613. Thus, we can see that the words of the verse clearly communicate that Torah only comes to one who possesses a wise heart/ fears G'd.

3. The Spiritualization of the Jew

The Torah relates to us the initiation process for Aaron and his sons to be installed as Kohanim (Priests). One of the aspects of this process was the bringing of the inauguration ram as an offering. This ram was to be prepared in a specific manner – as the Torah states, **"You shall take the inauguration ram and cook its flesh in a holy place. (Only) Aaron and his sons shall eat the flesh of the ram …Their eating of it shall bring about atonement."**

Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh explains that this particular offering, which was a *Korban Shlamim* (peace offering), brought about atonement for Aaron and his sons when they partook of it. The Gemara in Tractate *Pesachim* tells us that when an individual brings a Peace Offering *(Shlamim)* to the Kohen, and the Kohen eats his portion of the offering, it atones for the sins of its owner. As the Gemara states, "Kohanim eat and the owners (of the offering) are atoned…"Although the inauguration offering was both owned and eaten by Aaron and his children (Kohanim), their eating brought about atonement for them just as it does when the Kohen eats the Peace Offering of the non-Kohen. Furthermore, we are told that despite the fact that the Gemara tells us that the sprinkling of the blood of the offering was the primary aspect which brought about atonement, the eating of its flesh by the Kohen brought about a more perfect level of atonement.

It is understandable that the sprinkling of the blood on the Altar, which was only performed by a qualified Kohen, brought about atonement. However, eating in itself is a mundane act, so why does it bring the atonement to a more perfect level? The answer is that the Kohanim had a special spiritual status because they did not participate in the sin of the Golden Calf, and this qualified them to be the officiants of G'd. Since the Kohanim maintained an inherent level of holiness, even their physical acts/eating assumed a spiritual consequence/atonement.

Rambam writes, regarding the mitzvah of *Neseas Kapayim* (the mitzvah of the Kohen Blessing the congregation), that when a Kohen comes upon a community of Jews, he has an obligation to bless them. This is a Positive Commandment. The Chofetz Chaim in his commentary (Mishna Berurah) cites Rambam who states that even if the Kohen's classification is *rasha* (evil), his blessing to the community still has value. This is because the Kohen himself is only the conduit through which the blessing of G'd is conveyed. The

essence of the Kohen is the receptacle for blessing.

The Gemara in Tractate Berachos tells us that if one gives a gift of wine to a Talmud Chacham (Torah Sage) it is the equivalent of bringing a libation offering on the Altar. It is important to note that this applies to a person who meets the criteria of what a true Torah Sage is – "*Tocho k'baro* – his inner purity reflects his outer behavior/conduct." How could the giving of the wine to the Torah Sage be comparable to pouring libations in the Temple? One act is performed before Hashem in a consecrated and holy location (on the Temple Mount) while the other is a physical act of drinking wine.

A true Torah Sage is an embodiment of Torah because his essence is rooted in the Wisdom of Hashem (Chachmas Hashem). Although the Torah Sage is a mere moral (physical being) being, because of the integration of Torah into his essence, he assumes a sanctified status that is the equivalent of the Holy Altar. As the Gemara tells us when one gives fruits to a Torah Sage it is the equivalent of bringing *Bekurim* (first fruits) to the Temple. We see that when a Jew (even a non-Kohen) dedicates himself to Torah and adheres to the Will of G'd, he assumes a sanctified status, although he is mere a physical being.

There is a Positive Commandment of "*Bo Tidbok*- to Him you shall attach yourself." The Gemara in Tractate Pesachim asks, "How could a Jew attach himself to G'd, since He is a consuming fire?" The Gemara answers that the way a Jew becomes attached to Hashem is by providing financial opportunities to a Torah Sage, eating and drinking with him, and offering one's daughter in marriage to him. Through this level of association, it is considered as if the individual is attaching himself to the Divine Presence. How do we understand this? The Torah Sage is not the Divine Presence – he is a mere physical being.

Before the construction of the Mishkan and subsequently the Bais HaMikdash (Holy Temple), the location of the *Shechina* (Divine Presence) was where the Holy Patriarchs were located. Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov were the equivalent of the Holy of Holies in the Temple because their essence was of that special dimension of sanctity.

There is a Positive Commandment, "Es Hashem Elokecha Tirah –you shall fear G'd." This is the Positive Commandment to revere G'd. The Gemara tells us that the word *"es"* is coming to include *Talmidei Chachamim* (Torah Sages). The Torah requires one to revere the Torah Sage no less than one must revere G'd Himself. Maharal of Prague z'tl asks, "Why would the Torah want the Torah Sage to be revered to such a degree?" He answers that since the Talmud Chacham is the disseminator of G'd's Torah, one must revere him on this exceptional level in order to value the Torah he is communicating. However with our understanding that a Jew can become spiritualized through his involvement in and dedication to Torah, we can appreciate the inclusion of Talmidei Chachamim at a more profound level.

Since the Torah Sage, through his involvement in Torah study and its internalization of mitzvos, becomes sanctified and spiritualized, he becomes an embodiment of G'd's Torah. He is more than just a repository of Torah knowledge and this is why one must also revere him.

A Jew, as a unique being (although his context is physical), has the potential to become spiritualized through his mitzvah endeavors. The essence of the Jew is spiritual. The Torah states that the remains of a Jew contaminates all that is contained in a location that is topped with a covering/ roof- even though one did not come in contact with the

remains. Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh explains this unusual law with an analogy. When one empties a vessel that had contained honey, there remains a residue of the contents on the walls of that vessel. This immediately attracts insects and rodents. Similarly, when the Jewish soul departs from the body, because it has been the receptacle for the Jewish soul, there remains a spiritual residue associated with the body. This intense, spiritual residue attracts various nether forces, which feed upon it as their life source. It is this phenomenon that causes the strong spiritual impurity associated with the departure of the Jewish soul. It is only because the Jew is a vessel for spirituality that this occurs, further demonstrating the fact that although he is a physical being, his spirituality impacts upon his physicality. This will prove even more so if one invests his life in the performance of mitzvos and Torah study.

4. The Posture of Amalek

The Gemara in Tractate Megillah states, **"Rava says, "There was no one who was able to speak *lashon hara* (evil speech) like Haman the evil one."** He approached Achashverosh (the king of Persia) with a suggestion to annihilate the Jewish people. Achashverosh however had several reservations. He was afraid that the G'd of the Jews would do to him what He had done to the others who had previously attempted to destroy the Jews. Additionally, he was concerned that if he eliminated the Jewish people, who were his subjects, it would diminish his kingdom and leave wide-open gaps or "bald spots." Haman reassured him by saying that the Jews were dispersed throughout the empire and thus their annihilation would not be noticed.

Haman's final convincing argument to seal the fate of the Jew was: "If a fly were to fall into the wine of a Jew, he would simply remove the fly and drink the wine. However if the king (Achashverosh) were to touch the wine of a Jew he would pour it out on the ground. Therefore they deserve to be destroyed because they do not revere the king." Haman was the expert in *lashon hara* because he was able to communicate the negative aspects of another on a lethal level because he was able to focus exclusively on the negative without appreciating the positive aspects of the individual. When he slandered the Jewish people, he ignored their true value and thus negated them to such a degree that Achashverosh saw them as a people who had not value at all. *Lashon hara* thus renders the subject worthless.

Haman was a descendent of the Amalekite King Agag (as he is referred to in the Megillah **"Haman Ha'Agagie"**). His personification of the Amalekites manifested itself in his expression of Lashon Hara (negative speech/ deprecation). What is the connection between the Amalekites and Lashon Harah?

King Solomon writes in *Mishlei* (Proverbs), "The deprecator shall you smite. The fool will be wisened." The Midrash tells us that "the deprecator you shall smite" is Amalek. "The fool will be wisened" refers to Yisro (the father in law of Moshe). The Amalekites, rather than understanding and internalizing the awesome supernatural events of the splitting of the Sea and thus appreciating the Omnipotence of G'd, attacked the Jewish people and tried to destroy them. The Midrash depicts the Amalekites as "the fool who jumped into a scalding bath. Although he is scalded by the hot water, he nevertheless cools off the bath for others." After the Splitting of the Sea and the destruction of the Egyptian armies, the world stood in awe and fear of the Jewish people. No nation would dare engage with G'd's people after witnessing the consequences. Nevertheless, the Amalekites (a wandering band of nomads) attacked the Jewish people without any concern for the consequences of their actions.

The Amalekites are classified as "deprecators" because they had no capacity to appreciate the profound spiritual aura that surrounded the Jewish people. Despite the fact that G'd had traumatized the world for the sake of the Jew, the Amalekites were not moved. The deprecator only focuses on what he chooses to see. King Solomon tells us that the only way one could deal with a deprecator is to smite him/destroy. One cannot reason with a deprecator.

Lashon hara is a behavior pattern that mimics the deprecating characteristic of Amalek. When one speaks *lashon hara,* he eliminates the total value of the individual regardless of his positive qualities and accomplishments and only focuses on the negative. However if one acknowledges the totality of an individual, he would not speak negatively of him. Haman was only able to depict the Jewish people in a negative context because he did not focus on the totality of the value of the Jewish people. Thus, when the Jew speaks *lashon hara* he assumes the posture and characteristic of Amalek, which brings about grave consequences.

The Gemara in Tractate *Taanis* tells us that Torah itself can be either a "Potion of Life" or a "Potion of Death." If one studies the Torah for its own sake *(l'shmah)* it is a life potion. On the other hand if one studies the Torah not for its own sake (as *Tosafos* explains with an evil or sinister intent to undermine another), then it is a death potion. Torah studied with a sinister intent assumes the context of Amalek. If one studies Torah with the intent to undermine or discredit another, he is taking G'd's most precious gift which was given to the Jewish people as a life source, and using it as a sinister weapon. Thus, the Torah will be a potion of death to the one who engages with it in this manner.

The deprecator cannot be reasoned with or taught to understand life differently. However, "the fool" is one who could be reasoned with and wisened. Yisro is characterized as the fool because he had pursued the falseness of idolatry. However, when he heard of the great miracles, which G'd had performed on behalf of the Jewish people (Splitting of the Sea and the battle with the Amalekites), he left all of his glory as the Sheik of Midian and joined the Jewish people in the desert. The deprecator on the other hand has no hope of changing his ways because of his limitation and thus deserves to be destroyed.

Therefore, when the Jew speaks *lashon hara* and assumes the posture of Amalek, who are deprecators, it brings about catastrophic results.

5. Understanding the Cause of the Decree

The Gemara in Tractate Megillah tells us that there was a discussion between Rebbe Shimon Bar Yochai and his talmidim (students) regarding why the Jewish people were deserving of annihilation during the period of Purim. The students of Rebbe Shimon Bar Yochai were of the opinion that the Jewish people deserved annihilation because they had partaken in the feast of the *rasha* (evil one) – Achashverosh (the Emperor of Persia). Rebbe Shimon Bar Yochai disagreed with his students because if that were the case, then only the Jews in Shushan who participated in the feast should have been liable for punishment and not the entire Jewish people. The reason he offered for the Jews deserving annihilation was that they had bowed to the image of Nebuchadnezzar (Babylonian Emperor, who had destroyed the First Temple). Nebuchadnezzar had ordered all of his subjects to bow to his image or be subject to death. The only Jews who did not bow were Chananyia, Meshael, and Azarya. Because they refused to bow they were cast into a kiln and emerged miraculously unharmed. Thus, since the Jewish people bowed to the image of Nebuchadnezzar, they deserved annihilation.

The students of Reb Shimon Bar Yochai asked him, "If in fact the Jewish people deserved to be destroyed then why were they not?" He answered them, "Because their bowing was only an external action with no substance because they did not believe that Nebuchadnezzar was a deity. Thus the decree against the Jewish people manifested itself in a similar vein –it presented itself as reality although it was not meant to be. Thus, they were not destroyed – measure for measure."

Chazal tell us that the feast in which the Jewish people had participated adhered strictly to Kosher criteria. If so, why did the students of Rebbe Shimon Bar Yochai, believe that the Jewish people deserved annihilation? One may say that perhaps it was because the setting of the feast was inappropriate. However, that would have not warranted the destruction of the Jewish people.

The Gemara in Tractate Megillah explains why Achashverosh had made his inaugural feast in the third year of his reign. Under normal circumstances a king would celebrate his coronation at the beginning of his reign. Why did Achashverosh postpone it until the third year? The Gemara explains that the Prophet had said in the Name of G'd that after 70 years of exile, the Jewish people would return to the Land of Israel. According to Achashverosh's calculation the 70-year period was not complete until the third year of his reign. His position as emperor was secure only after he was assured that the Jews were not returning to the Land of Israel. When the anniversary of the 70th year had come, and the Jews were still in exile, Achashverosh believed that G'd had abandoned and forsaken His people. Thus, G'd had reneged on His promise

The essence of the feast given by Achashverosh was the celebration of the abandonment of the Jewish people by G'd. Thus, this banquette was the celebration of a Chilul Hashem (Desecration of G'd's Name). Although the feast was Kosher, the event itself was a desecration of G'd's Name. This is why Mordachai was vehemently opposed to the Jews participating in the banquette. However, Rebbe Shimon Bar Yochai questioned: why should all of the Jewish people be held accountable for the actions of the Jews in Shushan?

There is a principle in the Torah that every Jew is responsible for his fellow – *"kol Yisroel areivim zeh l'zeh."* Since Jews have a communal responsibility even those who did not participate in the feast in Shushan were held accountable for the actions of their fellow. Reb Shimon Bar Yochai rejected the position of his students. He believed that it was because of idolatry that the Jewish people were punished. However, Tosfos in Tractate Sanhedrin explains that the image that was made by Nebuchadnezzar was not an idol. It was only to honor the king. If this is so, then why would bowing to the image have such grave consequences? Why did Chananyia, Meshael, and Azarya be willing to give their lives not to bow?

Tosafos in Tractate Sanhedrin explains that Nebuchadnezzar intended to deify himself. He thus made the image to impose himself upon the people. He had believed that through their bowing it would initiate the process of his deification.

Although bowing to the image is not considered as idolatry, since the perception of this action is that it could be idolatry – it is thus a Chilul Hashem. Since the Emperor intended that the bowing establish his deification, any participation in that process would be a Chilul Hashem. Chananyia, Meshael, and Azarya were willing to give their lives rather than commit a Chilul Hashem. Their being thrown into the kiln was a Kiddush Hashem (Sanctification of G'd's Name).

The Jewish people were not annihilated because their actions were not what they appeared to be. However they did deserve punishment because their behavior was perceived as the wrong thing – thus causing it to be a Chilul Hashem. The Jewish people needed to repent and be atoned. The Gemara in Tractate Megillah tells us that when Achashverosh removed his signet ring to be given to Haman in order to seal the fate of the Jewish people, its effect was the equivalent of all the rebuke of our 48 Prophets. It motivated the Jewish people to repent because they understood that their predicament was bleak.

The consequences of Chilul Hashem are grave. Although the reality of the situation may not be contradictory to the Torah; however, because the perception of the action is seen as inappropriate and forbidden, it is thus a Chilul Hashem. If the Jew is perceived to be doing something that is wrong, despite the fact that he is not, it is a Chilul Hashem.

The Gemara tells us that a Torah Sage must be careful with his words because their consequences are great. Tzaduk and Baitus rejected the Oral Law and established sects which assumed their position. This came about as a result of misunderstanding a principle that was taught to them by their teacher. Chazal tell us that because of that incident, rabbis must be exceptionally careful when they communicate. They must be articulate and clear, so that what they are saying should be properly understood. The misunderstanding of Tzaduk and Baitus, although the teacher never intended to communicate that understanding, brought about Chilul Hashem that spanned many generations. Therefore the Jew must be cognizant of his own behavior so that it should be in a manner that will be perceived only in the best possible light as a Kiddush Hashem rather than a Chilul Hashem.

6. The Jew's Capacity for Spirituality *(from Parshas Terumah)*

The first blessing in the Amidah (Silent Prayer), which is recited three times a day, states **"Blessed are You, Hashem…Who bestows beneficial kindness…Who recalls the kindnesses of the Patriarchs (*chasdei avos)*, and brings the Redeemer to their children's children, for His Name's sake, with love."** It is because Hashem "remembers" the *chasdei avos* that He bestows kindness on the Jewish people. The Patriarchs were the location of the Divine Presence before the building of the Temple. They were the equivalent to the Holy of Holies. Therefore one would have thought that the text of the blessing should have read, "Hashem recalls the **merits** of the Patriarchs…," nevertheless the term that was chosen by the Men of the High Assembly (who authored the Amidah) was "*chasdei avos (kindness of the Patriarchs).*" Why is this the case?

G'd considers the spiritual accomplishments of the Patriarchs as a "kindness" because without their contribution to existence, the world would have not been able to continue. It is when the *chasdei avos* will be depleted that G'd will bring the Redeemer/Moshiach. Until that time the world continues to exist because of the kindnesses of the Patriarchs/ their merits. What is the meaning and significance of *chasdei avos?*

The Gemara in Tractate Yevamos tells us that there are characteristics that are unique to the Jewish people because they descend from the Holy Patriarchs. The Jew possesses the characteristics of "Compassion/mercy, shame/conscience, and the propensity to do acts of kindness/*gemilas chasodim*."

The Jew, because of his spiritual make up, has an unlimited spiritual potential. Despite the condition of the world, the Jew possesses a capacity to advance himself spiritually and although he has failed many times in this regard, G'd gives him the ability to appreciate the value of spirituality because of the *chasdei avos,*

The Torah states**, "See, Hashem has proclaimed by name, Betzalel son of Uri son of Chur, of the tribe of Yehudah. He filled him with G'dly spirit (*Ruach HaKodesh*) with wisdom (*chochmah*), insight (*binah*), and knowledge (*daas*) and with every craft…"** to oversee the building of the Mishkan. Chazal tell us that at the age of thirteen, Betzalel (whose name means *B'tzeil Kail -in the shadow of G'd)* understood the inner workings of existence. The Gemara at the end of *Tractate Berachos* tells us that Betzalel had the special understanding as to how to conjugate letters of the Hebrew alphabet to unleash a spiritual energy that would infuse the Mishkan with the same intent that brought about creation. Why did Betzalel, more than anyone else, deserve to be endowed with such a special ability?

The Midrash explains why Betzalel was chosen to be the one to oversee the building of the Mishkan. It is explained with an allegory. There was a general who fought and won many battles for his king. The general lived only to increase his king's honor and glory. The king, appreciating the selfless dedication of his subject decided to reward him handsomely for his effort. However, before he was able to bring his wishes to fruition, his loyal general was killed in battle. The king was unable to express and demonstrate his appreciation to his general. Therefore, he sought out the general's closest descendent, his grandson, and bestowed upon him the wealth and honor that was due to his grandfather.

The Torah in the Portion of Ki Sisa traces Betzalel's lineage to Chur, his grandfather, as the verse states, **"Betzalel son of Uri son of Chur."** Chur was the son of Miriam. The last mention of Chur is found regarding the battle with Amalek. When Moshe raised his hands (to pray to G'd), the Jewish people were victorious. However when he lowered his hands, Amalek gained advantage. The Torah tells us that when Moshe tired from raising his arms (in prayer), Chur and Aaron assisted him by supporting his arms. The Midrash tells us that at the time of the making of the Golden Calf, Chur vehemently opposed its creation and was thus killed. Chur's death was a kiddush Hashem (Sanctification of G'd's Name). Since G'd was not able to reward Chur for his sacrifice in this world, He bestowed upon his grandchild, Betzalel, the understanding and wisdom to be qualified to oversee the building of the Mishkan. Similarly the Jew, who descends from the Holy Patriarchs, is endowed with a potential to have the ability to discern what is spiritually appropriate and not. This is the meaning of, **"Hashem recalls the kindnesses of the Patriarchs (*chasdei avos)*."**

Rosh z'tl, the father of the Tur, writes in his commentary on the Torah, "Hashem said to Moshe Rabbeinu, 'I will meet you from between the Cherubs.'" The first letter of the words *'me'bein shnei ha'kruvim- from between the two Cherubs'* spells the name "Moshe." The numerical value of the words '*Shnei ha'kruvim- the two Cherubs*" is the equivalent to the numerical value of "*Avraham, Yitzchak, v'Yaakov.*" The Torah is teaching us that the reason the Jewish people merited to experience this exceptional level of communication with G'd (which emanated from between the Cherubs) was because they were privileged to have Moshe and were the descendents of the holy Patriarchs. Rosh continues to explain, "The Jewish people merited – *eis kol asher atzav veh oschah* - all that I command you. These words have the numerical value of "*taryag mitzvos*- 613 Commandments." Once again, the Torah was communicated to the Jewish people only because of the holy Patriarchs and Moshe. Thus, our relevance to Torah and G'd is

because of the ***chasdei avos.***

Tana d'vei Eliyahu states that every Jew must say to himself, "When will my actions reach the level of my forefathers Avraham, Yitzhak, and Yaakov?" This must be the aspiration of every Jew. A Jew must aspire to spiritual greatness using our Patriarchs as our model of achievement. Because it is in their merit we have the potential to bring that about.