

Read Ayarvach!

It is indeed a very good book, a most important one for it is about us, it is our story, the story of the dear chavraya. It is just about Purim folks, well about other things too, and I hope you have your costume ready. Yes, almost Purim, when backward is forward and forward is backward, inside out and outside in, right side down and wrong side up, so be careful not to drop that toast and jam because, well, you know what side it will land on. Be sure not to eat too much over Shabbos in order to have appetite for hamentaschen. That is the custome when Purim begins right after Shabbos, like coming to the seder with an appetite for matzah. At least matzah doesn't come with prune or mun/poppy seed fillings, though forgive me if those happen to be your favorite hamentasch flavors.

Okay, I want to get serious now and offer some insight into the connection between this week's Torah portion, *Parashat T'tzaveh*, and Purim. When you teach Torah about Purim, it is, of course, Purim Torah. *Parashat T'tzaveh* is filled with Purim Torah, spanning from *p'shat*, the plain meaning of the text, to *sod*, the most secret deeply hidden meaning, to be uncovered and revealed through mystical speculation. Eschewing this method, most scholars have failed to grasp the connection between our portion and Purim. We do have to acknowledge that, but for a small coterie of Kabbalists, this is indeed very secret knowledge, intimations of which have fortunately been revealed to us by some of the greatest rebbes, even if little known and secret themselves.

The Miruper Rov, one of the first to note the connection between *Parashat T'tzaveh* and Purim points to something that should be obvious, but in that, as is often the case, we fail to see it. The Miruper shows us that every single letter of every single name in the Megillah can be found in *Parashat T'tzaveh*! Looking at the Torah text, even a child just learning the aleph-bet can see very quickly that he is correct, that this is not just some esoteric Chassidic speculation to wow his Chassidim. We can indeed find a "vav," a "shin," a "tav," and a "yud" for Vashti, first wife of Achashverosh. And for his name, too many letters to prove individually that each one is in the text, but go ahead and look for yourself, an "aleph," a "chet," a "shin" and so on, all there. And so on and on and on for all of the characters, from our most beloved Esther and Mordechai to even that wicked one and his sons, every single letter of every single name in this very portion.

The Prunediker Rebbe, known for his ability to discern the hidden in every wrinkle of Torah, highlights the fact that the major part of *T'tzaveh* concerns the priestly clothing of the *kohanim*. He points out that the word *kohanim* written in reverse spells "minhak." With primary importance and attention given to the vestments of the high priest, the *kohen gadol*, the Prunediker understands that the letter "gimmel," as in *gadol*, is meant to be there. If so, since backwards the "gimmel" would come before the "kaf" of *kohen*, we would have the word *minhag*, meaning custom. Deriving the word "custom" from the Torah's description of the clothing of the *kohanim*, it becomes clear that this is the source of the custom to wear costumes on Purim. The clear connection in English between the words "custom" and "costume" underscores the sharpness of the Prunediker's insight.

Building on his revered teacher's understanding of the connection between the clothing of the *kohanim* and Purim, the Munichker Rebbe, known by his disciples as "Pops" for his grandfatherly demeanor, looks to the most mysterious element in the costume of the *Kohen Gadol*, the oracular *Urim v'Tummim*. The Munichker guides us to look at the first letter of the first word of this holy doublet, which is "aleph," and the last letter of the second word, which is "mem." Need I say more? The first letter of Esther is "aleph," and the first letter of Mordechai is "mem...!" And Urim rhymes with Purim, but for the first letter the same spelling in both Hebrew and English.

And from our own time, we consult the Slonimer Rebbe. Reflecting on *Parashat T'tzaveh*, the Slonimer weaves his signature teaching that runs through all of his work, his emphasis on the unique importance and purpose of every individual. Following earlier rebbes in making the connection between *Parashat T'tzaveh* and Purim, the Slonimer also draws on the clothing of the *kohanim*, saying: *every person has come into this world to wear their own unique costume, one that no one else can wear, especially at the same time....*

With that, my friends, let us turn from serious Torah and from the challenging elements of this strange holiday and enjoy the light-hearted spirit of Purim.

Shabbat shalom and Chag Purim same'ach,
Rabbi Victor