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Parashat Terumah

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A THIRST TO QUENCH

by Rabbi Steven Finkelstein

In Parashat Eikev, Moshe Rabbeinu prepares Bnei Yisrael to enter Eretz Yisrael by informing them that they will cross the Yardein and invade strong, fortified cities to conquer the Bnei Anakim, who are considered unbeatable. This isn't exactly the way to motivate an army before going to war.

Moshe then comforts Bnei Yisra'el, telling them to have no fear because Hashem will lead them in, destroying the nations standing between them and their inheritance of the land.

The Midrash (Devarim Rabbah 3:8, citing Mishnah Berachot 6:8) uses a seemingly random idea while discussing this section of Parashat Eikev. The Midrash quotes a Halacha that a Jew must recite the Beracha of "Baruch ... SheHakol Nih'yeh BiD'varo when drinking to quench his thirst. Another opinion, that of Rabi Tarfon, holds that one should recite "Borei Nefashot Rabot VeChesronan."

The Chatam Sofer elaborates on the connection between Bnei Yisrael's overwhelming challenges in their conquering of Eretz Yisrael and the debate between the Tanna Kamma and Rabi Tarfon. He explains that the Midrash was bothered by the following question. If Hashem was the one who led the obliteration of the various nations for Bnei Yisrael, why did He put them there in the first place? Why did He allow them to grow so strong? Would it not have been easier for Bnei Yisrael had Hashem placed weaker nations in Eretz Yisrael?

The Midrash connects this question to the case of drinking water to quench thirst. Why does Hashem go to such great lengths to provide us with water? Why not just create human beings as creatures that are always satiated? By creating human beings that require water then providing them with the water that they desperately need, we become aware of Hashem's kindness and concern for us. This compels us to acknowledge our dependence on Hashem and to appreciate all that He does for us. Had we not been created with needs, we wouldn't have the same appreciation toward Hashem. Therefore, the Beracha made after drinking is "Borei Nefashot Rabot VeChesronan," "Creator of innumerable lacking souls." The Chatam Sofer explains we express our gratitude that we were created with necessities in order to appreciate when Hashem fulfills our needs, bringing us closer to Him.

In this week's Parasha, Parashat Terumah, numerous Mefarshim note that the Pasuk is worded "VeYikchu Li Terumah," instead of VeYitnu. We aren't 'giving' Terumah to Hashem, as he is the source of our belongings. Hashem is the One who gives, not us. Rather, we 'take' from Hashem and only then are we able to give. By providing us with the opportunity to give Terumah, Hashem creates a system whereby we are constantly reminding ourselves and acknowledging that Hashem is truly the source of everything we own.

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THE MENORAH: THE ORIGINAL "OLYMPIC FLAME"

by Ned Krasnopolsky ('19)

First introduced in the 1928 Summer Olympics in Amsterdam, the Olympic flame has been kindled and extinguished a countless number of times. However, since the creation of the Mishkan, a much older flame has been present, the Menorah. It's structure and interconnected procedures, first introduced in Parashat Terumah, are mentioned four times throughout the Torah: in Parashiyot Terumah, Tetzaveh, Emor, and Beha'alotecha. Every account differs from the next, and each is absolutely integral to a full understanding of the Menorah's purpose.

"E Pluribus Unum" - Out of Many, One

Parashat Terumah mainly provides a structural description of the Menorah. The first Pasuk of the Parashah states, "VeAsitah Menorat Zahav Tahor, Miksheh Ta'aseh HaMenorah", "and you shall make a Menorah of pure gold, hammered shall you make the Menorah" (Shemot 25:31). Rashi (Ibid. s.v. Miksheh), citing the Bereita Milechet HaMishkan, explains that Miksheh (lit. hammered) means that the Menorah must be constructed from a solid piece of gold. It cannot be composed of many different pieces soldered together. (Rashi reaffirms his position in Parashat Beha'alotecha.)

The Ramban (BeMidbar 8:4 s.v. VeTa'am) theorizes that the "Miksheh" component of the Menorah was the most significant element of the entire structure. He notes that while the gold aspect of the Menorah was significant, the "Miksheh" component is clearly emphasized and elevated by the Torah's repetition of the word. If the Menorah is not "Miksheh", it is simply not a Menorah. The reason for this is quite insightful: although Bnei Yisrael come from many branches, the Torah we all share comes from a single piece of solid gold.

The Ner Tamid - A Lesson in Consistency or Constancy?

The idea of the continuous Mesorah is highlighted by the descriptions of the Menorah provided within Parashiyot Tetzaveh and Emor. Fascinatingly, the Torah does not even use the language of "Menorah" throughout Parashat Tetzaveh. Instead, the Torah chooses to use the term "Ner Tamid", as demonstrated in the first Pasuk of the Parashah: "VeAtah Tetzaveh Et B'nei Yisrael, VaYikchu Ailecha Shemen Zayit Zach Katit LaMaor LeHa'alot Ner Tamid", "And you shall command the children of Israel, and they shall take to you pure olive oil, crushed for lighting, to kindle the Ner Tamid" (Shemot 27:20).

There is a debate as to what "Tamid" really means. Rashi (Ibid. s.v. Tamid) understands that "Tamid" means that the Menorah was lit in a consistent manner. The Menorah would be lit consistently from morning until the onset of the night; it was not lit 24 hours a day. The Rambam (Hilchot Temidim U'Mussafim 3:10) disagrees; he claims that all seven lamps must be lit every minute of the day. He draws a parallel between Korbanot and the Menorah: both have a set performance time, a Z'man Kavuah. Interestingly, the Ramban (Shemot 27:20 s.v. Tzav Et Bnei Yisrael) understands that only six of the lamps were lit consistently from day to night, while one remained lit 24 hours a day. He draws support from the language of "Ner Tamid" -- it's singular. He cites both the Pesukim in Parashiyot Tetzaveh and Emor to prove his point. The Ramban's approach is certainly a hybridization of the Rashi and Rambam approaches.

The Rambam's approach is without doubt, the most demanding. While Rashi is more realistic, the Rambam's approach is the most favorable. Ironically, if one is to interpret the Ner Tamid as a representation of the Torah, then the Rambam's approach fits very well with the Rambam's thesis on the Mitzvah of Talmud Torah. Throughout the entire first Perek of his Hilchot Talmud Torah, the Rambam emphasizes the requirement to learn Torah in a consistent manner. However, the Rambam also realized that people had to make a living, so he provided them with a proportionate schedule -- dividing their day to accommodate for both their Talmud Torah and careers. Granted, the Rambam certainly places a greater emphasis on Talmud Torah; however, he clearly stresses that there is a necessary balance. Essentially, a person should "light" one candle constantly, thus maintaining his Torah learning.

A Lesson in Interior Design - The Aron and the Shulchan

There is a debate involving the directional alignment of the Menorah in relation to the other structures found within the Mishkan. While the original Machloket appears in the Gemara Menachot on 78b, the Rishonim provide a good overview of the discussion. The Rashbam (BeMidbar 8:2 s.v. El Mul) and the Raavad (Rambam Hilchot Bayit HaBechirah 3:12) both align the Menorah along the east/west axis. This arrangement places the Menorah parallel to the Shulchan. The Rambam (Hilchot Bayit HaBechirah 3:12) aligns the Menorah along the north/south axis. This arrangement places the Menorah parallel to the Aron Kodesh. Essentially, the Rambam views the Menorah as an extension of the Aron. Thus, the Menorah acts as a medium for the set of values held within the Aron -- the values of the Torah.

Aharon's Consolation - A Lesson for the Future

Rashi and the Rambam are both troubled by the Semichat HaParashiyot, the juxtaposition of texts, between the end of Parashat Nasso and the beginning of Parashat Beha'alotecha. The end of Parashat Nasso dealt with the gifts the Nesi'im brought to the Mishkan. The Menorah, at first glance, has absolutely nothing to do with the previous section. Rashi (BeMidbar 8:2 s.v. BeHa'alotecha) explains that when Aharon saw that he was not involved in the inauguration of the Mishkan, he experienced a Chalishat HaDa'at (he became distressed). At that point, Hashem told him that his portion was actually greater than theirs; he would get to light the Menorah. But why would that help? The remedy does not match the ailment! The Rambam (Ibid. s.v. BeHa'alotecha) explains that Aharon's consolation laid in the fact that the Mitzvah of Ner Chanukah would live past the Mishkan and Beit HaMikdash. It is a Mitzvah for eternity. This fits well with the Rambam's approach to the relative layout of the Mishkan. The Menorah is tied to the Torah -- both are eternal. In every Beit Knesset, there is a Ner Tamid by the Aron. Even where there is no Menorah, the Torah is still represented.

A POSITIVE IMPACT

By Natan Lehman ('19)

This week's Parashah, Parashat Terumah, shares a beautiful message about unification between Am Yisrael and Hashem. It begins with the compelling Pasuk, "*V'Asu Li Mikdash VeShachanti Betochem*", "*and they shall make Me a sanctuary and I will dwell in their midst*" (Shemot 25:8). A deeper understanding of this Pasuk is that the only way to feel the Shechinah (presence) of Hashem in our lives is to set aside time in our daily schedule to serve Him. Essentially, the time we set aside for Him becomes His sanctuary. The more we "allow" Hashem to enter into our world by learning, appreciating, and performing His Mitzvot, the greater impact He will have on our personal and religious growth.

This positive impact also extends to our physical needs. The Torah states: "*Im BeChukotai Teileichu V'Et Mitzvotai Tishmiru VaAsitem Otam, VeNatati Gishmeichehem Be'Itam, VeNatnah HaAretz Yevulah VeEitz HaSadeh Yiten Piryo*", "*If you follow My laws and faithfully observe My commandments, I will grant your rains in their season, so that the earth shall yield its produce and the trees of the field their fruit*" (VaYikra 26:3-4). This Pasuk is one of the many examples of the positive outcomes of having a close relationship with HaKadosh Baruch Hu. It teaches us that keeping Hashem's Mitzvot will not only grant us a closer connection with Him, but also ensure us economic success. Thus, the Pesukim found in Parashiyot Terumah and BeChukotai relate the great spiritual and physical results of forming a close bond with Hashem.

Following the command to build Hashem a sanctuary, the Torah describes all of the Mikdash's components, including the Keruvim (cherubs) and the Menorah. The Keruvim, mentioned in Shemot 25:18, were placed atop the Aron, and were hammered from a single piece of gold. The Keruvim were two statuettes, with faces of birds and faces of children (see Rashi, s.v. Keruvim, and Chizkuni, s.v. Shenayim Keruvim). The Gemara (Masechet Yoma 54a) relates that the Keruvim would turn their backs to each other in times of rebellion and sorrow, but the two Keruvim would face each other as a symbol of love and peace when there was unity and compassion for one another among Am Yisrael. The Menorah (ibid. 31)-, like the Keruvim, was hammered from a single block of gold, and it was decorated with knobs, flowers, and cups. The Rambam (BeMidbar 8:4 s.v. VeZeh Ma'aseh HaMenorah) states that just like the Menorah was made with a single block of gold connecting the base to all of the branches, so too in Judaism there are various types of branches and practitioners, but we are all connected by the words of the Torah. The Rambam continues to write that even though Aharon was not obligated to light the Menorah every day, he did so to exemplify that the Menorah represented the eternal light of the Torah and the everlasting connection between Hashem and Klal Yisrael, which could not be hindered for a moment.

Following Yetziat Mitzraim, the Torah shares the amount of Hakarat Hatov Bnei Yisrael had for Hashem. When Moshe asked Bnei Yisrael to donate for the building of the Mishkan, he did not place a tax on Bnei Yisrael or demand money; rather, he asked Bnei Yisrael to give from their heart. Indeed, as shown in Parashat VaYakheil, Moshe actually had to tell the people to stop donating towards the Mishkan, due to an over-abundance of contributions. These actions show the love and desire Bnei Yisrael had in their service to Hashem. The very fact that Bnei Yisrael came together as a single nation -- as if from a single block of gold -- to donate voluntarily and beyond what was necessary, should inspire us all.

TURNING THE ORDINARY INTO EXTRAORDINARY – THE STATUS OF YOM PURIM IN RAMBAM'S MISHNEH TORAH: PART I

by Rabbi David Nachbar

The relationship between the individual mitzvot of Purim and the general quality of the day constitutes one of the overarching questions regarding the nature of Purim and our celebration of it. To what degree are the Mitzvot of the day isolated actions performed against an otherwise profane backdrop; alternatively, might the mitzvot of Purim stem from the day's character as a Yom Mishteh VeSimcha or, maybe even, a Yom Tov. This essay will analyze Rambam's development of this central issue by investigating his novel presentation of Purim's various facets. In some cases, identifying a prior source for Rambam's positions and formulations proves elusive while, in other cases, Rambam overtly modifies or seemingly contradicts his Talmudic foundation. A common trend, though, unifies all of these instances and depicts Rambam's distinctive approach toward our central question.

Rambam presents the potential existence of an Issur Melachah on Purim in a nuanced fashion, melakha is permitted, yet unqualifiedly inappropriate and ultimately unproductive (Hilchot Megillah 2:14) –

“U’Muttar B’Asiat Melachah, VeAf Al Pi Kein Ein Ra’ui LaAsot Bo Melachah. Amru Chachamim Kol HaOseh Melachah BaYom Purim Aino Ro’eh Siman Beracha LeOlam¹”, “It is permitted to work on these days. It is not, however, proper to do so. Our Sages declared²: Whoever works on Purim will never see a sign of blessing³.”

Rambam’s position seems problematic when assessed against the Talmud’s background discussion.

The Talmud (Megillah 5b) struggles with the question of whether Melachah ought to be prohibited on Purim. Historical precedent offers contradictory signals as R. Yehudah HaNassi himself planted trees on Purim; on the other hand, Rav cursed an individual whom he observed planting flax, permanently terminating the flax’s growth. Adding to the complexity of the matter, the Talmud cites Rav Yosef’s halachic derivation of an Issur Melachah from the phrase ‘Yom Tov’ in the Pasuk’s description of Purim’s original celebration – “Simchah, U’Misteh, VeYom Tov, U’Mishloach Manot ish Li’rei’eihu” (Esther 9:18).

Three resolutions seek to resolve the tension. According to the first suggestion, an Issur Melachah applies on the observed day of Purim, either the 14th for city-dwellers or the 15th for residents of walled cities; however, it doesn’t apply on the alternate day. R. Yehudah HaNassi observed Shushan Purim and was, therefore, permitted to plant on the 14th of Adar. Alternatively, Melachah is permitted on both days of Purim since the later Pasuk, which describes the establishment of Purim as a holiday, describes the days as “Yemei Misteh VeSimchah, U’Mishloach Manot Ish Li’rei’eihu, U’Matanot Li’Evyonim” (Esther 9:22). The term ‘Yom Tov’ is replaced by the phrase ‘U’Matanot Li’Evyonim,’ indicating that the ‘Yom Tov’ quality failed to gain traction and acceptance within the nation; nonetheless, certain communities adopted an Issur Melachah as their communal norm, and Rav’s curse reflected local communal practice. R. Yehudah HaNassi planted trees on Purim due to his community’s preservation of the baseline standard. Finally, it is possible that R. Yehudah HaNassi’s community adopted the more ambitious standard of Issur Melachah, but R. Yehudah HaNassi’s planting for the construction of a

wedding canopy for Simchat Chatan VeKallah was consistent in spirit with Simchat Purim.⁴

Rambam’s qualified position that Melachah is permitted, but universally inappropriate and unproductive, seems to contradict all three approaches in the Gemara. According to the first approach, Melachah is absolutely prohibited while according to the second and third approaches it is purely the function of communal practice. Rambam’s view that Melachah is permitted, but deemed unconditionally inappropriate, seems baseless.⁵ ⁶ Furthermore, the inner logic of Rambam’s view is difficult irrespective of his source. If the ‘Yom Tov’ quality of Purim was rejected, the roots of Melachah’s inappropriate character are obscured.

Seudah

Rambam introduces several novel features in his presentation of Seudat Purim (Hilchot Megillah 2:15) –

“Keitzad Chovat Seudah Zu? SheYochal Bassar VeYitakein Seudah Na’eh K’Fi Asher Timtzah Yado, VeShoteh Yayin Ad SheYishtacher VeYeiradeim BeShichrut”, “What is the nature of our obligation for this feast? A person should eat meat and prepare an attractive feast in accordance with his financial means. He should drink wine until he becomes intoxicated and falls asleep in a drunken stupor”

Rambam incorporates the consumption of meat within his definition of the mitzvah, but simultaneously omits any requirement to eat bread. Moreover, Rambam surprisingly includes drinking wine within the Seudah’s framework. Rambam’s basis for requiring wine consumption is, undoubtedly, Rava’s statement (Megillah 7b) – “Michayeiv Inish Li’vsumei Bi’puraya Ad Delo Yada Bein Arur Haman Li’Varuch Mordechai”, “a person is obligated to become intoxicated with wine on Purim until he can no longer distinguish between how cursed is Haman and blessed is Mordechai.” – which Rambam treated as a Halachic norm. The inclusion of this norm as part of the Seudah’s framework, though, is not apparent in Rava’s words. What is additionally striking about Rambam’s core definition of the Seudah, is the subjective standard that he sets for its fulfillment. Typically, obligations to eat and drink have quantifiable measures which determine whether one has properly fulfilled the Mitzvah. With respect to Seudat Purim, though, Rambam introduces an ascending scale depending on the individual. A ‘nice meal’ should be prepared ‘in accordance with one’s financial means.’ Likewise, the quantity of wine necessary to cause one to fall asleep in a drunken stupor would seemingly vary between people. Rambam’s innovative features of Seudat Purim – the inclusion of meat and

¹ The Frankel edition records a version of Rambam’s text that omits the word ‘LeOlam’.

² Later Acharonim debate Rambam’s source that one will never see a “Siman Beracha” from work done on Purim. R. Joseph Caro (Beit Yosef O.C. 696:1) speculates that it is based on Rav’s curse that was issued in response to the planting of flax on Purim. Looking at that precedent, Rav’s curse was narrowly focused on the flax’s growth, the direct product of the Melachah performed, and was not a more sweeping curse as the word ‘LeOlam’ might indicate. R. Caro’s qualification (Shulchan Aruch O.C. 696:1) is consistent with this conclusion – “one who does Melachah will never see a sign of blessing from that work.” Gr”a notes that Rambam’s precise phraseology appears in the Talmud (Pesachim 50b) – “one who does Melachah on Erev Shabbat and Erev Yom Tov from Mincha and onward, Motzei Shabbat, Motzei Yom Tov, or Motzei Yom HaKippurim and any time there is a Nidnud Aveirah (Rashi – a hint of sin) which includes a Ta’anit Tzibbur, one will never see a sign of Berachah.” Gr”a identifies the sweeping phrase, “any time there is a Nidnud Aveirah,” as Rambam’s source, feeling that it must encompass additional examples like Purim and not be limited to Ta’anit Tzibbur alone. The Sefat Emet (Megillah 5b s.v. m”t latyei), though, raises a counterpoint to the Gr”a, noting that the Gemara specifically includes Ta’anit Tzibbur, implying Purim’s omission from the “Eino Ro’eh Siman Beracha LeOlam.”

³ Magen Avraham (O.C. 696:3) wonders whether one will simply not profit from the work, as R. Eliyahu Mizrahi believed, or whether one will actually suffer financial loss as was his personal view.

⁴ The allowance of Melachot which foster feelings of Simcha independent from Simchat Purim simultaneously tests the nature and parameters of Purim’s Issur Melachah and its comparison to Yom Tov’s parallel prohibition as well as the nature of Simchat Purim and how generic or tailored the Simchat HaYom must be to the specific themes of the day.

⁵ Lechem Mishneh (Hilchot Megillah 2:14) wonders why Rambam did not reserve his remarks specifically for communities that adopted the Issur Melachah as their communal practice. Similarly, the Magen Avraham (O.C. 696:2) and Sefat Emet (Megillah 5b, s.v. m”t latyei) both observe that according to the Beit Yosef’s explanation that Rav’s curse serves as Rambam’s basis, the “Eino Ro’eh Siman Berachah LeOlam” should depend on communal practice as the Gemara explains. Magen Avraham notes, though, that R. Eliyahu Mizrahi understood Rambam’s pronouncement as applying universally, irrespective of communal standards.

⁶ Several Provencal Rishonim argue that a widespread, national acceptance of the Issur Melachah, rendered it no longer subject to individual review and adoption on a local, communal level. See Orchof Chaim (Hilchot Purim no. 27), Kol Bo (cited in Darkhei Moshe O.C. 696:1), and Meiri (Megillah 5b s.v. Shnei Yamim). This, too, might serve as a basis for an unconditional reading of Rambam.

wine⁷, the omission of bread⁸, and a subjective, ascending-scale⁹⁻¹⁰ – are without an immediately apparent source.

Mishloach Manot and Matanot Li'Evyonim

The Talmud (Megillah 7a) establishes objective measures for the necessary number of gifts and recipients for the fulfillment of Mishloach Manot and Matanot Li'Evyonim – “*Tani Rav Yosef: U'Mishloach Manot Ish Le'rei'eihu Shteit Manot Le'ish Echad. U'Matanot Li'Evyonim Shteit Matanot LeShnei B'nei Adam*”, “*Rav Yosef taught that the verse states: 'And of sending portions one to another' (Esther 9:22), indicating two portions to one person. The verse continues: 'And gifts to the poor' (Esther 9:22), indicating two gifts to two people.*”

Two portions must be delivered to one individual for Mishloach Manot, and two gifts must be given to two poor individuals for Matanot Li'Evyonim. Rambam's presentation of both Halachot modifies the Talmud's definition. He writes (Hilchot Megillah 2:15-16) – “*VeChain Chayav Adam LeShloach Shteit Manot... VeChol HaMarbeh LeShloach LeRei'im Meshubach... VeChayav LeChalek LeAniyim BaYom HaPurim Ein Pachot MiShnei Aniyim*”, “*and similarly a person is obligated to send two portions... and anyone who increases his sending to friends is praiseworthy... and one is obligated to distribute to the poor on the day of Purim, not less than two poor individuals,*”

In both instances, Rambam converts the Talmud's quantifiable measures into minimum standards. With respect to Mishloach Manot, the praiseworthiness of the gesture is commensurate with the number of gifts and people one delivers to – “*Ve'Chol HaMarbeh...Meshubach.*” The escalating quality of the mitzvah is

⁷ Orchos Chaim (Hilchot Purim no. 39 and cited in Shulchan Arukh O.C. 696:7), permits an Onen to consume meat and wine on Purim, arguing that an Asei Di'Yachid, the laws of private mourning, cannot supersede an Asei Di'Rabbin Deoraita, the Biblically mandated national celebration of Purim. In his opinion, the requirement to consume meat and wine on Purim obtains Biblical standing since Divrei Kabbalah KiDivrei Torah, laws from Scripture share similar halachic standing as Torah laws.

⁸ Whether Seudat Purim requires the framework of bread is subject to debate. Sha'arei Teshuva (O.C. 695:1) cites a view presented in Birkei Yosef that one can fulfill the Mitzvah of Seudat Purim without bread. Similarly, Magen Avraham (O.C. 695:9) explains that one should not repeat Birkat HaMazon if Al HaNissim was omitted, and certainly not if they have already eaten a meal earlier that day, since it is nowhere stated that bread is a required component of the Seudah; rather, one can fulfill the obligation of Seudah with “*Sha'ar Minei Matamim*,” other delicacies. Aruch HaShulchan (O.C. 695:7) argues that Mishneh's composition requires bread. Relatedly, Maharam Schick (Teshuvot O.C. no. 340) believes that the expression of Simcha demands bread; at the same time, he attempts to justify Magen Avraham's perspective.

⁹ Tur's formulation (O.C. 695:1) also gives voice to the ascending scale measure of Seudat Purim – “*Mitzvah LeHarbot BeSeudat Purim.*” Bach explains that Tur inferred this embellishment of the Seudah from the Talmudic account (Megillah 7b) in which Rav Ashi questioned the Rabbanan's absence from the Beit Midrash on Purim day. Rav Kahane's response “*Dilma Tridi BeSeudat Purim*” implies that the overwhelming, all-encompassing investment of time and energy toward preparing the Seudah must qualify as a Mitzvah; otherwise, the Rabbanan's absence would still be inexcusable. Gr"a points to Abaye's description of how he was full when he left Rabbah's Seudah, yet when he arrived at the home of Mari bar Mar, he was served and consumed “*sixty dishes with sixty different types of cooked foods and I ate sixty pieces from it*” (Megillah 7b).

¹⁰ Mor u'Ketziyah's surprising comment (cited in Sha'arei Teshuvah O.C. 695:1) crystallizes the ascendant scale of Seudat Purim. The Talmud (Bava Batra 60b) provides a culinary example of a Jew's ever-present consciousness of our ongoing national mourning for Jerusalem and the Beit HaMikdash. One is obligated to leave out a small item while preparing a festive meal to symbolize the incompleteness of our simcha. The Mor u'Ketziyah argues that this requirement does not apply to Seudat Purim. Meiri (Megillah 7b s.v. Chayav) similarly states that excessive feasting on Purim should not be lacking in any way – “*She'lo Yechar Shum Davar.*”

even more pronounced with respect to Matanot Li'Evyonim where Rambam includes an aspirational quality in his initial basic definition – “*not less than two poor individuals.*”¹¹

The expansive scope of Matanot Li'Evyonim's distribution relates to which individuals qualify as deserving recipients in addition to the number of individuals who are given to. Rambam adopts an exceedingly accommodating standard (Hilchot Megillah 2:16) – “*Ein Medakdekem BeMa'ot Purim, Ela Kol HaPoshet Yado Li'tol Notnim Lo*”, “*we should not be discriminating regarding money collected for Purim. Instead, one should give to whomever stretches out his hand.*”

The Talmud (Bava Metzia 78b) provides the basis for Rambam's ruling when it states “*Ein Midakdekem BeDavar,*” we don't adopt a calculated approach with respect to money collected for Matanot Li'Evyonim. Rambam, based on the Talmud Yerushalmi (Megillah 1:4), interprets that funds should be distributed to anyone who stretches out their hand without inquiring further about the individual's financial standing and deservedness.¹² Although Rambam's approach seems well rooted in earlier sources, the risky attitude that is adopted appears surprising. If funds were collected for distribution to the poor, it seems reckless for Gabbaim to carelessly misappropriate the money.¹³

Conclusion

See next week's issue of Kol Torah on Parashat Tetzaveh for a continuation of the discussion.

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¹¹ Tur (O.C. 695:4) incorporates the aspirational quality of “*not less than*” even into his basic definition of Mishloach Manot – “*one must send portions to his friend, at least, two portions to a single individual.*” Coupled with his comment to embellish one's Seudah, Tur adopts an ascending scale measure for all three Mitzvot of the day.

¹² Rashi (Bava Metzia 78b s.v. *Ve'Ein, Aval, Vi'ha'motar*), based on the Tosefta (Megillah 1:5), explains the Gemara differently that we don't calculate how much food is required by poor individuals and slaughter just enough to precisely meet their needs; rather, we slaughter animals in abundance and sell any leftovers that might remain afterward. Rashi's approach, too, demonstrates the expansive approach that is employed toward quantifying Matanot Li'Evyonim gifts rather than the adoption of a narrow, calculating attitude.

¹³ The challenge is compounded according to the Minhag Kol Yisrael (recorded in Raman Bava Metzia 68b, s.v. *Ve'Ein*) that funds are distributed to *Aniyei Aku'm*, as well (the non-Jewish poor). It seems inexcusable to nonchalantly release communal funds collected for a specific Mitzvah. Regarding this particular practice, see Magen Avraham (O.C. 694:6) and Taz (O.C. 694:2).