

The Royal Turban
Behaalotechah, 5781
Shmuel Herzfeld

The haftorah this week comes from the prophet Zechariah, chapter 3, in which Zechariah tells us of his prophetic vision. Gd showed him a vision of Yehoshua, the High Priest, standing in judgment before two heavenly beings of Hashem. The good angel (*malach Hashem*) and the prosecuting angel, Satan. Satan, says the prophet, is standing on his right side to thwart him. But Hashem ignores the pleas of Satan and instead of rebuking Yehoshua, Hashem rebuked the Satan. Said Hashem, "Gd will rebuke you, Satan...this person, [Yehoshua], is an ember saved from the fire" (3:2).

Yehoshua had been standing there in dirty garments as he had considered himself an unworthy person because he thought he had not educated his children properly (Ezra, 10:18), and therefore he thought he was unfit to wear clean garments. When Hashem issued a favorable judgment for Yehoshua, the angel of Hashem said to Yehoshua, "Remove your dirty garments." Afterwards, the angel of Hashem dressed him in clean garments (3:4).

"Then I, Zechariah pleaded for [Yehoshua] and said, 'But he is missing the turban from the priestly garments. Let them put a ritually pure turban (*tznif*) on his head! So they put the *tznif* on his head" (3:5).

The *tznif* is one of the special garments—a turban--worn by a kohen when he serves in the Beit Hamikdash. In this vision of Zechariah, it symbolizes that indeed Yehoshua had been forgiven by Hashem. The turban marks him as pure and righteous.

This week I read another story about a turban that marked someone as righteous and a spiritual giant. This is not a story of the turban of a kohen, but the turban of a Sikh.

This is the story of the turban of NBA Superfan, Nav Bhatia.

In 1984, Nav was living in India but he felt unsafe because of political turmoil so he moved to Toronto. Back in India, he had attained an advanced degree in engineering, but no one wanted to hire him as an engineer because of his long beard and turban. Instead, he found a job selling used cars. This too was not easy. After he succeeded in selling used cars, he was promoted by the dealership to General Manager at a different location. When he showed up for work on the first day, all the employees quit. No one wanted to work for a man in a turban. He did not quit. He worked hard and was very successful. Before long, he was running a very profitable business. After a decade of running the business he became a self-made millionaire.

In 1995, the NBA opened a new franchise in Toronto, called the Raptors. Nav purchased season tickets. He and his turban soon became a fixture at every game. He arrived on time and never left the arena early. He always cheered enthusiastically for his team. In more than 25 years he

never missed attending a single game. He even started donating hundreds of thousands of dollars of tickets to children in need. He made sure to sit each child next to another child of a different faith so that the game would be a positive learning experience and help break down stereotypes.

The team took notice. He was given an official jersey and bestowed the name, “Superfan.” In 2018, the team won its first title. In appreciation of his support, the team gave him a championship ring. He became the first fan ever to receive a championship ring. Last week, Superfan Nav became the first fan ever inducted into the NBA Hall of Fame. The Hall of Fame requested his turban (story is based on tweets from @joePompliano).

On the eve of his induction into the Hall of Fame, Nav tweeted out: “I made a promise to my mom I would never remove my turban. Today it is in the Hall of Fame. Embrace what makes you different. It is your superpower. This is the crown I wear each day” (@superfan_nav).

In Zecharia’s vision there is also a description of the special, magical seven-branched Menorah.

The angel of Hashem said to Zechariah, “What do you see?” Zechariah said: “I saw, and behold there was a candelabrum made entirely of gold, and there was a large oil-bowl on top of it. There were seven lamps on the candelabrum, and seven sets of seven tubes coming out of the oil-bowl, one set feeding each of the lamps that were on top of it. There were two olive trees near it; one to the right and one to the left. Next to each tree was a golden vat, into which the olives fell, beat themselves, were heated, pressed themselves, and the oil thus produced flowed into the bowl at the top of the candelabrum” (4:2-3).

Zechariah said to the angel, “Why is it that the oil flows into the Menorah by itself?”

The angel said the reason that the oil flows by itself is to teach the fundamental lesson that we will rebuild the Temple, “*lo bechayil ve lo bekoach, ki im beruchi*, not by strength and not by might, but by My spirit” (4:6).

What is the meaning of this beautiful imagery of the Menorah that miraculously is filled with oil directly from an olive tree without anyone having to press the oil?

The Lubavitcher Rebbe explains that the Menorah represents that there are different types of souls in the world (Likutei Torah, 3:29c). We need to understand that each of these souls are nourished by the same source—the Source that keeps supplying us with fuel. While in the present world we often need the support of physical strength, the ultimate redemption will be accomplished by our spiritual efforts more than from our military might.

This miraculous menorah is replenished through love without having to apply pressure.

This story of bringing about redemption through our spiritual efforts is also the story of Aaron in our parasha this week.

The verse states that Hashem told Moshe "Behaalotecha et hanerot, when you light the lamps let the seven lamps give light at the front of the menorah" (Bamidbar, 8:2).

Rashi comments:

Why is the section treating of the candelabrum put in juxtaposition with the section dealing with the offerings of the princes? Because when Aaron saw the dedication offerings of the princes, he felt distressed because neither he nor his tribe was with them in the dedication, whereupon the Holy One, blessed be He, said to him, "By your life! Your part is of greater importance than theirs, for you will kindle and set in order the lamps."

The princes of each tribe had been given a task in the dedication of the mishkan as they each offered a sacrifice. Aaron had been sad that neither he nor his tribe had a sacrifice like the other tribes and their princes. Therefore, Hashem told Aaron that his role was greater—he would be needed to light the menorah.

The Midrash Rabbah states why lighting the menorah was considered a greater task than bringing the sacrificial offerings: "For the sacrifices were only offered when the Temple was standing, but the lighting of the candles is an eternal task."

How can the lighting of the menorah be an eternal task if the Temple is now destroyed and there is no daily lighting of the menorah?

Here, too, we refer to the words of the Lubavitcher Rebbe:

The Rebbe writes that the candles that are being lit here symbolically refer to the soul of a human being. Aaron is being commanded to light the soul of another person.

As King Solomon says: 'The Lamp of Gd is the soul of man.' The flame of a candle constantly flickers upwards. The soul is constantly striving to reconnect with its spiritual source.

In order to kindle the lamps, Aaron had to climb up three steps. This teaches us that when we kindle the spark of Judaism in ourselves or in another person, we benefit spiritually; we ascend a level.

Although the priests are the ones who usually light the Candelabrum, the laymen are allowed to light it, as well. This teaches us that it is not only the 'Aarons'—the religious professionals—who must light the human "lamps". Every person has the responsibility to seek out the person whose souls are not yet aflame with the light of holiness and to ignite them. Nevertheless, the Torah instructs Aaron to light the Candelabrum. This means that in order to ignite another person or

enlighten some aspects of reality, we must emulate the high priest—whose entire focus and reality was God and the Torah—and that we are given the power to do so (Chumash, with Commentary of the Lubavitcher Rebbe, 872).

Our job in life is to light the candles—the many souls of the world that are seeking spiritual nourishment. Each of us can do this in our own lives—whether with our family members, our friends, our neighbors, or people we just pass on the street. Each encounter is an opportunity to light the candle of another person. That is what the special menorah of Zechariah represents.

You can now watch a Youtube recording of Rabbi Herzfeld's D'var Torah:

<https://youtu.be/Brb9dEZcQfY>