



Parashat Ki Tisa 5772 - #225

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On Purim...

Making Noise at the Mention of Haman's Name

[Shut She'eilat Shlomo]

Question: Since making excessive noise at the mention of Haman disturbs many people, is it Halachically permissible to abolish it?

Answer:

1. The Rama wrote: "...The custom that we strike [something at the mention of] Haman when we read the Megilah in Shul has spread, and one should not abolish any custom or mock it since it was not established for naught" (Orach Chaim 690:17). It is therefore forbidden to abolish a custom of Israel.
2. The Mishnah Berurah wrote, however, that a custom which has a prohibited aspect to it may be abolished (Biur Halachah ibid.).
3. The basic nature of this custom does not contain any prohibited aspect to it, and great Rabbis of Israel customarily performed it: "And Ha-Gaon Yavetz (Rav Yaakov Emden) wrote regarding his father, the Chacham Tzvi, that he would hit, stamp his foot and strike his sandal when he arrived at the mention of Haman (Mishnah Berurah #59).
4. Throughout the generations, however, many mishaps were caused on account of this custom:
 - a. People did not hear the reading of the Megilah. This means that the actual Mitzvah (and the reason we are in Shul) was not fulfilled on account of a custom that is not even observed in all places (Mishnah Berurah ibid.).
 - b. People have behaved contrary to the Mitzvah of revering the Sanctuary. One should behave with seriousness and reverence in a Shul, and not with joking and levity, since the One who rests His Divine Presence is located within in it.
 - c. Damage has been caused to objects in the Shul.
 - d. Distress has been caused to fellow Jews.

e. Children have been taught the opposite of what is required: children must learn that the focus of being in Shul on Purim is listening to the Megilah and not striking something at the mention of Haman.

5. There were therefore some communities that decided to abolish making noise at the mention of Haman, and they publicly informed the entire city not to strike objects at the mention of Haman (Yafeh Lalev #690). And there was a time when the Sefardic Beit Din in Yerushalayim also held in this way, as did the Rabbis of Kushta (Kol Sinai, Halichot Olam pg. 41).

6. There are those who say that if our Rabbi, the Rama, knew where matters would lead, he would not have stated that one should not abolish this custom. The authorities wrote however that if a custom has changed from what it had been at the time of the Rishonim, it is permissible to abolish it (Be'er Heteiv ibid. #15). And the Mishnah Berurah also wrote of those who perform this custom: "their reward is canceled by their loss" (690:59).

7. Nevertheless, if the proceedings are proper and correct – meaning that people hit objects only in a manner that is appropriate for the holiness of a Shul, and do not disturb the hearing of the Megilah while doing so, etc. - we should not abolish this custom.

Rav Aviner on...

Our Great Master

Ha-Rav Tzvi Yehudah Kook

[Be-Ahavah U-Be-Emunah – Tetzaveh 5772 – translated by R. Blumberg]

What was special about our great master, Ha-Rav Tzvi Yehudah Kook, who ascended on High thirty years ago? He ascended on High, but from there he continues to illuminate our path down here on earth.

First of all, Ha-Rav Tzvi Yehudah was the continuation – indeed, the consummate continuation -- of our Master, Ha-Rav Avraham Yitzchak HaCohain Kook. For Ha-Rav Kook had, has and will have many disciples, but each one inherits a different aspect from him. Thus, they are his disciples to various degrees, some more and some less. One adds and another subtracts.

There are great disciples and simple students. But Ha-Rav Tzvi Yehudah was the ultimate disciple, neither adding nor subtracting.

Now, one might say, "Obviously he didn't leave anything out. But why couldn't he add? Was he nothing more than an imitation? True, he was a "cemented cistern which loses not a drop" (Avot 2:10), but did he not add a drop himself?! Was he not a "spring that ever gathers force" (ibid.)?"

Certainly he was. But how can that be? The answer is that nothing that flows out of a spring is external. Its water all derives from the spring itself. Likewise, everything Ha-Rav Tzvi Yehudah said was already stored away in the words of Rav Kook, and it makes no difference whether or not Rav Kook actually said it or not. This is the principle derived from the double wording of Devarim 11:13: "If you obey" [*Im Shamo'a Tishme'u*]: "If you hearken [*Tishma*] to the old, you will hearken [*Tishma*] to the new" (Rashi). When one hears a lot of ancient wisdom, with all one's heart, soul and might, with all one's intellect, emotion, imagination

and will, with all one's mind, spirit and soul, then the new wisdom, which seems so new, is really old.

What then was the approach of Rav Kook? What was his unique, Divine mission? As stated, Rav Kook's path has been defined in many ways, because everyone took hold of a different approach. Our master, the consummate disciple, was the one who transmitted to us the definition: "The Redemptive Torah", clarified at length in the work "Ohr LiNetivoti" (p. 280). This definition includes three parts, which are in fact one: 1. Torah 2. Redemption. 3. Redemptive Torah.

1. Torah. One might ask: Obviously Torah! Surely Rav Kook was a Torah scholar and his mission was Torah. Yet Rav Kook taught "the whole Torah". The Torah in its entirety, all of its spheres included. The Torah is G-d's will. It is G-d's wisdom, the soul of the universe. It is what gives the world meaning. It is the world's cure.

2. Redemption. Rav Kook, the Cohain Gadol among his brothers, saw that G-d had decided to bring Redemption to His Nation, that He had inaugurated the third return to Zion, the rebirth of the Nation in its Land. He rose up and proclaimed: "Dear brethren, the time of your Redemption has arrived." In his day, the Land was already being rebuilt, the ingathering of the exiles was taking place, and a Jewish State was in the making. And indeed, later on we witnessed the State of Israel itself coming into being, the wars fought on her soil, the further unification of the Jewish People, the return of Jerusalem to the Jewish People, and the Torah's return to Land of Israel.

3. The Redemptive Torah. In other words, the Torah instructs the Nation about its current rebirth. The prophecy, "Joyfully shall you draw water from the wellsprings of salvation" (Yeshayahu 12:3), is rendered by Onkelos as, "Joyfully shall you receive new learning from the greatest of saints." There are different levels of saintliness. We honor and love all of the saintly, but there are different levels of saintliness, and the "greatest of saints" are at the top. And who are they? It is they who open for us the wellsprings of salvation in the Torah and fill us with the supreme joy of holiness. It is they who transmit to us the new learning that reveals the soul of rebirth.

Now we can understand how far Rav Kook goes and where Ha-Rav Tzvi Yehudah begins.

Their common ground is the Nation's rebirth in its Land, illuminated by the Torah. But Rav Kook elucidated the spiritual strengths at the foundation of that rebirth, while Ha-Rav Tzvi Yehudah spoke about the actual revelation inherent in a Jewish State and army.

There is a story that Ha-Rav Tzvi Yehudah asked his father, Rav Kook, "Where are we in the Redemption – at the beginning? The middle? The end?" Rav Kook responded: It depends on our focus. If we are talking about the practical Redemption, then we are only at the very beginning. If we are talking about the Nation's spiritual strengths, then we've already got it all stored away, from start to finish (Igrot Ha-Re'iyah vol 4, p. 67). The entire tree is already stored away in the seed.

Now we can understand why the Redemptive Torah constitutes the entire Torah. In the exile we were a scattered, divided people, both physically and spiritually. Every stream, every Jew, took one holy portion as his inheritance, devoting himself fully to that portion. Now the time of the collective has arrived. The Jewish People are uniting in their Land and becoming a collective entity once more. And the Torah as well is being restored to its collective nature, in study and practice, mitzvot and character refinement, law and homiletics, morality and faith. The entire Nation needs to rise up to rebirth.

Rav Kook ascended on High, but he left behind sustenance for the coming generations, many generations: the generations of rebirth. He prepared the rebirth of holiness.

Ha-Rav Tzvi Yehudah ascended on High, but his spirit affects us and lives on within us. Not only within his books and through his disciples, but even within the entire nation, which has absorbed his words, consciously or not.

We carry on, by the light of our great master, Ha-Rav Tzvi Yehudah, building our Land and country, and being rebuilt through it. We carry on with the rebirth of our Nation and the rebirth of holiness, amidst the miracles being wrought by G-d for His Nation and inheritance.

Shut She'eilat Shlomo - Questions of Jewish Law

Davening in a Costume on Purim

Q: Is it permissible to daven in a costume on Purim?

A: The basic Halachah is that one must daven in clothing that one would wear when standing before a king. Therefore, one should not daven in a costume. One exception is brought in Shut Shevet Ha-Levi (10:28): if someone is dressed up in the clothing of another type of Jew, i.e. a non-Chasidic Jew wearing a Shtreimel, it is permissible, since such clothing would be worn before a king (This is also brought in Sha'arei Yemei Ha-Purim, p. 57).

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