

In response to the massive earthquake and tsunamis in Japan, UJA-Federation has set up an emergency fund , used exclusively to provide relief to the people affected.

http://www.ujafedny.org/japan-quake-fund/?j=19926462&e=rosenthalr@ujafedny.org&l=953483_HTML&u=226918157&mid=113902&jb=0&utm_medium=ET_email&utm_content=rosenthalr@ujafedny.org&utm_campaign=March-11-2011_11_Japan_03_11_2011&utm_source=11_Japan_03_11_2011

Donors should make their checks payable to: UJA-Federation of New York and write "Japan Earthquake Relief Fund" in the memo line.

Checks should be sent to:

*UJA-Federation of New York/
Japan Earthquake Relief Fund
P.O. Box 4227
New York, NY 10261-4227*

CSH March Shabbat Service Schedule

March 26 | Parashat Shmini /Shabbat Paraha

Friday, March 18, 2011 Candle Lighting 6:42 pm (Sag Harbor)

This week's Torah reading: Tzav / Shabbat Zachor

Annual: Leviticus 6:1 – 8:36 (Etz Hayim, p. 613)

Triennial: Leviticus 6:1 – 7:10 (Etz Hayim, p. 613)

Maftir: Deuteronomy 25:17 – 19 (Etz Hayim, p. 1135)

Haftarah: 1 Samuel 15:2 - 34 (Etz Hayim, p. 1281)



Musings on Tzav – *It is the fire that we keep burning on the altar that assures that, when we are ready to bring that which we have to offer, it will be fully accepted by God.*

Why is it so important to keep the fire burning on the altar? If it goes out, you light another one. Perhaps the fire is more than combustion; it resembles God. "The Eternal your God is a consuming fire" (Deuteronomy 4:24, 9:3). And that might be why God twice instructs Moses and Aaron to make fires that must always burn: "Have the Israelites bring the clear oil of beaten olives for lighting, for kindling a perpetual flame" (Exodus 27:20, Leviticus 24:2). And now we learn that there is also supposed to be a perpetual fire going on the altar - a fire for consuming sacrifices and with them, the designs of men. Surely if they get consumed, then the request had been accepted (consummated?). Fire is the core symbol of transformation, the process whereby matter becomes energy, right before our eyes. Remember, the possibility of being consumed is ever present. It takes any "somethingness" and turns it into "nothingness."

From Kushner and Mamet, *Five Cities of Refuge: Weekly Reflections on Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy* (New York: Schocken Books,2003), p. 85.



In Jewish sources, a connection is frequently drawn between the altar in the Temple, and the altar we build within ourselves. Within the soul of every Jew, our tradition teaches us, there is a spark of holiness. The midrash identifies this as the meaning of the passage in **Proverbs** which states, "The candle of God is the human soul" (20:27). Just like the fire on the alter in the Tabernacle, the fire within us is never to be extinguished. But sometimes it may linger only as a small spark. All we must do then, in order to bring the spark to full blaze, is to feed the fire with inspirational study and acts of goodness every day.

This idea is exemplified in a story taught by the famous preacher and storyteller, the Dubno Maggid. The **Maggid** (preacher or storyteller) once came to a large town to speak to the Jewish community. After the talk a cynic, who was totally unaffected by the Maggid's words, approached the famed preacher. "The sages tell us," began the sceptic, "that words spoken from the heart, penetrate the heart." He continued, "Rabbi, I assume that you spoke from your heart. Your words, however, have had no impact on me whatsoever! How can that be? Why didn't your words penetrate my heart?"

The Rabbi smiled. In his usual fashion, he responded with a parable. "A simpleton once went by the workplace of a blacksmith, who was holding a large bellows. After a few squeezes, the flames of the smith's fire blew into a raging inferno. The man, who always found it difficult to start a simple fire in his own fireplace, marvelled at the contraption. He immediately went and purchased this amazing invention. Entering his home, he proudly announced, "I have discovered how to make a raging fire with the simple squeeze of a lever!" He set a few logs in the cold fireplace and began to push the two ends of the bellows together. Nothing happened. The logs lay cold and lifeless. Enraged, the man returned to the blacksmith and complained about the faulty implement. "I want a refund!" he shouted. "This blower doesn't work!"

"You fool," laughed the experienced blacksmith. "You were blowing on cold logs! You must start a small fire on your own! If you don't start with a spark, a fire will never erupt!" The Maggid turned toward the cynic and shook his head sadly. "If there is no spark, the largest bellows will not make a fire."

It is not enough to have a fire burning on the altar, our text suggests. There must also be a perpetual fire of spirit within us when we approach our God. In Chassidic thought there is a concept known as **hitlahavut** - literally "being aflame" or "fiery enthusiasm." Martin Buber wrote that hitlahavut "is the goblet of grace and the eternal key." Fire is a gift of God, which can enhance life, but also destroy. When maintained properly, fire is a blessing, bringing warmth to our bodies and bringing light to our souls.

<http://www.kolel.org/pages/5762/tzav.html>

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**Musings on Purim-- Who Knows: Humility and Hope in the Story of Purim**

By Rabbi Sharon Cohen Anisfeld American Jewish World Service

I have come to believe that the most important verse in the entire megillah—the verse that represents the pivotal turning point in the Purim story—comes near the end of chapter four, when Mordechai sends a message to Esther, urging her to reveal her identity to King Achashverosh and plead on behalf of the Jewish people.

Remarkably, Mordechai's message to Esther hinges on two simple words that promise nothing and change everything. Mi yodea? Mordechai says—"Who knows?" Mi yodea im la'et kazot higa'at la'malchut?—"Who knows if it wasn't for just such a time that you became queen?"

These are the words that set Esther in motion, that inspire her to take action in spite of her own resistance, in spite of her fears about her own fate, in spite of her doubts about her own position and power in the king's court.

"Who knows?" This is hardly the kind of message we look for to motivate us to act with courage in a crisis. We generally look for a message that inspires a little more confidence: "This is precisely why you became queen! Your actions will make all the difference! This is why God put you in this position. Nothing happens without a purpose."

But the world of Purim—not unlike our world—is a world without guarantees, certainties and signs from God. It is a world in which we don't know—can't know—the limits or possibilities of our own power. It is a world in which we can't be sure where our actions will lead and whether our efforts will be for naught. It is a world in which, if we are able to discern God's presence at all, it is through our own faltering attempts at courage and compassion.

Often when we say "Who knows?" it's accompanied by a gesture of resignation—a shrug of the shoulders, an upward glance—as if uncertainty or not-knowing relieves us of responsibility. How can we effectively respond to poverty in developing countries? Who knows, it's too complicated for me to get involved. How real is the threat of global warming, and what can we do to address it? Who knows, we just have to wait and see what happens. What can and must we, as Jews, do to end the genocide in Darfur? Who knows, I have no idea what I could do to make a difference. All too often in our own lives, "Who knows?" becomes an excuse for inaction, a pretext for paralysis.

But in this remarkable exchange between Mordechai and Esther, something quite different happens. "Who knows?" becomes not an excuse but an invitation:

Consider the possibility, says Mordechai, that you are here for a reason, that there is something bigger and more important than your fear, that you have more power than you imagine. Consider the possibility that it is up to us to act out of love and responsibility for each other in order to make room for God's presence in this world.

Esther's willingness to act on a possibility is what makes her a prophetess, according to the midrashic tradition. A few verses later, when she enters the king's court, she is frightened, even terrified, and yet prepared to risk her own life. The text of the megillah says that "she clothed herself in royal garments," but a linguistic idiosyncrasy in the verse leads the Gemara to suggest that what was really happening in this moment was that "she clothed herself in the Shekhina." In other words, this is prophecy from the ground up. Not a heavenly voice intruding in human affairs, but a human being—full of doubts yet determined—bringing God's presence down to earth.

"Who knows if it wasn't for just such a time that you became queen?" This is the legacy that Mordechai and Esther bequeath to us—a dual legacy of humility and hope, of radical uncertainty and radical responsibility.

What are our obligations on this holiday of *hester panim* (the hiddenness of God's face)—this day when we reckon with the ultimate mystery of the Divine? To take care of each other. To send treats to our neighbors and friends. To expand our circle of concern even further, giving gifts to the poor.

Through these small acts we choose interdependence over isolation, responsibility over the retreat into despair. We turn toward each other, and discover the promise of sweetness in the face of uncertainty, and love in the face of fear.

Who knows? Consider the possibility that this is why we are here.

[http://ajws.org/what\\_we\\_do/education/publications/chag\\_vchesed/5770/cc\\_purim\\_5770.pdf](http://ajws.org/what_we_do/education/publications/chag_vchesed/5770/cc_purim_5770.pdf)



**Yom Huledet Sameach**

Shira Zeller (belated)

**End Quote –Purim Greetings** from Simon Jacobson

May you be turned inside out  
upside down  
and outside in

May your masks be masked  
and your inside unmasked  
May your countenance (panim) shine from within (panim)  
as you meet yourself face to face

May your masquerade no longer be needed  
as the shrouds fade away

May your child smile and dance  
as the facade is lifted

May you just be

**Worth A Look - The Maccabeats - Purim Song**

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kgJInVvJSZg&feature=player\\_embedded](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kgJInVvJSZg&feature=player_embedded)

Shabbat Shalom v'Chag Purim Sameach.

Stacy