Kol Rina
An Independent Minyan
Parashat Tetzaveh – Shabbat Zachor
March 8, 2025 *** 8 Adar, 5785

## Tetzaveh in a Nutshell

https://www.chabad.org/parshah/article_cdo/aid/1320/jewish/Tetzaveh-in-a-Nutshell.htm

The name of the Parshah, "Tetzaveh," means "Command" and it is found in Exodus 27:20.

G-d tells Moses to receive from the children of Israel pure olive oil to feed the "everlasting flame" of the menorah, which Aaron is to kindle each day, "from evening till morning."

The priestly garments, to be worn by the kohanim (priests) while serving in the Sanctuary, are described. All kohanim wore: 1) the ketonet—a full-length linen tunic; 2) michnasayim—linen breeches; 3) mitznefet or migba'at—a linen turban; 4) avnet—a long sash wound above the waist.

In addition, the kohen gadol (high priest) wore: 5) the efod—an apron-like garment made of blue-, purple- and red-dyed wool, linen and gold thread; 6) the choshen—a breastplate containing twelve precious stones inscribed with the names of the twelve tribes of Israel; 7) the me'il—a cloak of blue wool, with gold bells and decorative pomegranates on its hem; 8) the tzitz—a golden plate worn on the forehead, bearing the inscription "Holy to G-d."

Tetzaveh also includes G-d's detailed instructions for the seven-day initiation of Aaron and his four sons—Nadav, Avihu, Elazar and Itamar—into the priesthood, and for the making of the golden altar, on which the ketoret (incense) was burned.

## Zachor in a Nutshell

https://www.chabad.org/parshah/article_cdo/aid/73232/jewish/Zachor-in-a-Nutshell.htm

This being the Shabbat before Purim, on which we celebrate the foiling of Haman the Amalekite's plot to destroy the Jewish people, the weekly Parshah is supplemented with the "Zachor" reading (Deuteronomy 25:17–19) in which we are commanded to remember the evil of Amalek and to eradicate it from the face of the earth.

Remember what Amalek did to you on the road, on your way out of Egypt. That he encountered you on the way and cut off those lagging to your rear, when you were tired and exhausted; he did not fear G-d. And it shall come to pass, when the L-rd your G-d has given you rest from all your enemies round about, in the land which the L-rd your G-d is giving you for an inheritance to possess it, that you shall obliterate the memory of Amalek from under the heavens. Do not forget.

## Shabbat Zachor Haftarah in a Nutshell: I Samuel 15: 2-34

https://www.chabad.org/parshah/article_cdo/aid/647445/jewish/Haftorah-in-a-Nutshell.htm

This week's special haftorah discusses G-d's command to destroy the people of Amalek. This to avenge Amalek's unprovoked attack on the Israelites that is described in the Zachor Torah reading.

Samuel conveys to King Saul G-d's command to wage battle against the Amalekites, and to leave no survivors—neither human nor beast. Saul mobilizes the Israelite military and attacks Amalek. They kill the entire population with the exception of the king, Agag, and they also spare the best of the cattle and sheep.

G-d reveals Himself to Samuel. "I regret that I have made Saul king," G-d says. "For he has turned back from following Me, and he has not fulfilled My words."

The next morning Samuel travels to Saul and confronts him. Saul defends himself, saying that the cattle was spared to be used as sacrificial offerings for

G-d. Samuel responds: "Does G-d have as great a delight in burnt offerings and peace-offerings, as in obeying the voice of G-d? Behold, to obey is better than a peace-offering; to hearken, than the fat of rams. . . . Since you rejected the word of G-d, He has rejected you from being a king."

Saul admits his wrongdoing and and invites the prophet to join him on his return home. Samuel refuses his offer. "The Lord has torn the kingdom of Israel from you, today; and has given it to your fellow who is better than you." Samuel then kills the Amalekite king.

## FOOD FOR THOUGHT

### The Aesthetic in Judaism: Tetzaveh by Rabbi Jonathan Sacks z"l (5772)

https://rabbisacks.org/covenant-conversation/tetzaveh/the-aesthetic-in-judaism/

Why is the Torah so specific and emphatic, in this week's Parsha, about the clothes to be worn by the Kohanim (Priests) and the Kohen Gadol (High Priest)?

> "These are the vestments that they shall make: a breastplate [chosen], an apron [ephod], a robe, a knitted tunic, a turban, and a sash. Make them as sacred vestments for Aaron and his sons so that they will be able to be priests to Me." Ex. 28:4

In general, Judaism is sceptical about appearances. Saul, Israel's first king, looked the part. He was "head and shoulders" taller than anyone else (1 Samuel 9:2). Yet though he was physically tall, he was morally small. He followed the people rather than leading them. When God told Samuel that He had rejected Saul, and that Samuel should anoint a son of Yishai as king, Samuel went to Yishai's home and saw that one of his sons, Eliav, looked the part. He thought he was the one God

had chosen. God, however, tells him that he is mistaken:

> But the Lord said to Samuel, “Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. The Lord does not look at the things people look at. People look at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.” 1 Sam. 16:7

Appearances deceive. In fact, as I have mentioned before in these studies, the Hebrew word for garment, begged, comes from the same Hebrew word as ‘to betray’ – as in the confession ‘Ashamnu bagadnu’, ‘We are guilty, we have betrayed’. Jacob uses Esau’s clothes to deceive. Joseph’s brothers do likewise with his bloodstained cloak. There are six such examples in the book of Genesis alone. Why then did God command that the Kohanim were to wear distinctive garments as part of their service in the Tabernacle and later in the Temple?

The answer lies in the two-word phrase that appears twice in our Parsha, defining what the priestly vestments were to represent: le-kavod ule-tifaret, ‘for dignity [or ‘honour’] and beauty’. These are unusual words in the Torah, at least in a human context. The word tiferet - beauty or glory - appears only three times in the Torah, twice in our Parsha (Ex. 28:2, Ex. 28:40) and once, poetically and with a somewhat different sense, in Deuteronomy 26:19.

The word kavod - ‘dignity’ or ‘honour’ - appears sixteen times, but in fourteen (2x7) of these cases the reference is to the glory of God. The twice they appear in our Parsha are the only occasions in which kavod is applied to a human being. So what is happening here?

The answer is that they represent the aesthetic dimension. This does not always figure prominently in Judaism. It is something we naturally connect with cultures a world apart from the Torah. The great empires – Mesopotamia, Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Greece and Rome – built monumental palaces and temples. The royal

courts were marked by magnificent robes, cloaks, crowns and regalia, each rank with its own uniform and finery. Judaism by contrast often seems almost puritanical in its avoidance of pomp and display. Worshipping the invisible God, Judaism tended to devalue the visual in favour of the oral and aural: words heard rather than appearances seen.

Yet the service of the Tabernacle and Temple were different. Here appearances – dignity, beauty – did make a difference. Why? Maimonides gives this explanation:

> In order to exalt the Temple, those who ministered there received great honour, and the priests and Levites were therefore distinguished from the rest. It was commanded that the priest should be clothed properly with the most splendid and fine clothes, "holy garments for glory and for beauty" ... for the multitude does not estimate man by his true form but by ... the beauty of his garments, and the Temple was to be held in great reverence by all. Guide for the Perplexed, III:45

The explanation is clear, but there is also a hint of disdain. Maimonides seems to be saying that to those who really understand the nature of the religious life, appearances should not matter at all, but "the multitude," the masses, the majority, are not like that. They are impressed by spectacle, visible grandeur, the glitter of gold, the jewels of the breastplate, the rich pageantry of scarlet and purple and the pristine purity of white linen robes.

In his book The Body of Faith (1983), Michael Wyschogrod makes a stronger case for the aesthetic dimension of Judaism. Throughout history, he argues, art and cult have been intimately connected, and Judaism is no exception.

> "The architecture of the Temple and its contents demand a spatial thinking that stimulates the visual arts as nothing else does. It must be remembered that among the many artefacts past civilisations have left

> behind, those intended for ritual use almost are always the most elaborate and aesthetically the most significant."

Wyschogrod says that postbiblical Judaism did not, for the most part, make outstanding contributions to art and music. Even today, the world of religious Jewry is remote from that of the great writers, painters, poets and dramatists. To be sure, there is a wealth of popular religious music. But by and large, he says, "our artists tend to leave the Jewish community." This, he believes, represents a spiritual crisis.

> "The imagination of the poet is a reflection of his spiritual life. Myth and metaphor are the currency both of religion and poetry. Poetry is one of the most powerful domains in which religious expression takes place. And the same is true of music, drama, painting, and dance."

Rav Abraham Kook hoped that the return to Zion would stimulate a renaissance of Jewish art, and there is a significant place for beauty in the religious life, especially in Avodah - service - which once meant sacrifice and now means prayer.

An immense body of recent research into neuroscience, evolutionary psychology, and behavioural economics has established beyond doubt that we are not, for the most part, rational animals. It is not that we are incapable of reason, but that reason alone does not move us to action. For that, we need emotion – and emotion goes deeper than the prefrontal cortex, the brain's centre of conscious reflection. This is where visual stimuli play a key role. Art speaks to emotion. It moves us in ways that go deeper than words.

That is why great art has a spirituality that cannot be expressed other than through art – and that applies to the visual beauty and pageantry of the service of Tabernacle and Temple, including the robes and sashes of the priests. There is a poem in the Reader's repetition of Musaf on Yom Kippur that expresses this to

perfection. It is about Mareih Kohen, the appearance of the High Priest as he concluded his service and emerged from the Holy of Holies:

> As the brightness of the vaulted canopy of heaven,
> As lightning flashing from the splendour of angels,
> As the celestial blue in the fringes' thread,
> As the iridescence of the rainbow in the midst of clouds,
> As the majesty with which the Rock has clothed His creatures,
> As a rose planted in a garden of delight,
> As a diadem set on the brow of the King,
> As the mirror of love in the face of a bridegroom,
> As a halo of purity from a mitre of purity,
> As one who abides in secret, beseeching the King,
> As the morning star shining in the borders of the East –
> Was the appearance of the [High] Priest.

And now we can define the nature of the aesthetic in Judaism. It is art devoted to the greater glory of God. That is the implication of the fact that the word kavod, "glory," is attributed in the Torah only to God – and to the Kohen officiating in the house of God.

Judaism does not believe in art for art's sake, but in art in the service of God, giving back as a votive offering to God a little of the beauty He has made in this created world. At the risk of oversimplification, one could state the difference between ancient Israel and ancient Greece thus: that where the Greeks believed in the holiness of beauty, Jews believed in hadrat kodesh, the beauty of holiness. There is a place for the aesthetic in Avodah. In the words of the Song at the Sea: "Zeh Keili ve-anvehu," "This is my God and I will beautify Him." For beauty inspires love, and from love flows the service of the heart.

# Remembering Who We Are: Shabbat Zakhor by Gordon Tucker

https://www.jtsa.edu/torah/remembering-who-we-are/

The coming Shabbat is designated as Shabbat Zakhor. The word is quite prevalent in Jewish literature and thought, and its basic meaning is generally translated by the words “memory,” “remembrance,” or “memorial.” And as a people we seem always to be remembering, and exhorting others to remember. It’s at the core of what we believe to be essential in Jewish education. As Isaac Bashevis Singer once remarked: “Jews suffer from many diseases, but amnesia is not one of them.”[1]

But what are we to be remembering? The late Rabbi Harold Schulweis, a true moral hero, wrote the following in an essay some years ago:

> “I remember that whenever Reb Shapiro, our Talmud Torah teacher, was angry at us kids he would drop his chalk and begin his sarcastic tirade: ‘Sure, boys, go ahead and talk, play games, don’t pay me any attention. For this our ancestors died to preserve the holy text? For this they suffered from anti-Semites, so that you should talk and fool around?’ Reb Shapiro’s diatribe worked. We all felt properly guilty. We stopped snapping rubber bands, and paid him mock attention, but . . . [it] did not work for too long . . . This kind of scare may work once, twice, three times, but sooner or later it proves counterproductive and is resented as manipulative and insincere . . . Jews can’t be scared into life.”[2]

Remembrance in Jewish circles is usually not so much about God, Torah, ritual, culture, nor even ethics; it is much more about victimization, which let us stipulate is real and not invented. But still, say the words “Jewish remembrance,” or

“zakhor,” or perhaps the Yiddish “gedenk,” to yourself, and wait for images to appear. They are quite likely to include some selection of barbed wire, railroad tracks, selection platforms, and/or armed soldiers threatening helpless innocents. Try it on Google Images (best to spell it “zachor”) and see what you get.

It is true, of course, that there are more than enough events of horror and destruction in our past to darken our thoughts. We all know that, nor can we avert our attention from that. Surely not today, when there is more hostility being expressed toward Jews and Judaism than anyone can make their peace with. But if Schulweis is correct—and as an educator, as a rabbi, and as a parent and grandparent, I am certain that he is—then we had better expand our understanding of just what this imperative of zakhor is. Because, as he put it, “To be an anti-anti-Semite does not make you a Jew. It robs you of Jewish song and poetry, Jewish philosophy and Jewish joy.”

A tradition begun by the mystic Rabbi Isaac Luria is to recite six biblical injunctions of remembrances—Zekhirot—each day. Three of them do indeed, and rightly so, focus us on moments of negative valence: The communal failure of faith in the wilderness. The individual moral failure of Miriam—standing in for all of us—in casting aspersions on her own brother Moses. And most prominent is what we will remind ourselves of on Shabbat, i.e., the threatened destruction of the people by the ancient Amalekites. We are enjoined to remember all of those.

But they are not all. Because the other three are remembrances of an entirely different kind: Remembering the day we left Egypt. Remembering the day we stood at Mount Sinai. And remembering Shabbat. Note well: we are not enjoined to remember the slavery in Egypt. We are obligated to remember the day we left. A day on which we had no real past, but only a future, a yet-to-be-realized potential, spreading out before us—as was the case at Mount Sinai. A people with no past culture or structure, now first receiving the gift of a blueprint for what was to come

for them. And remembering Shabbat is perhaps the most primal of all. It takes us back to when God completed God's solo part in creation, and having just created the human race, invited us to join in the work of building a future for the world that would reflect the peace and joy of Shabbat.

This kind of memory is what we are too short on. Remembering who we are at our core, what our potential is, and the future that we can build given our spiritual resources. It is what a mentor of mine from many years ago, Rabbi Max Arzt, of blessed memory (a former vice chancellor of JTS), once pointed out to me on a Tishah Be'av afternoon. The Book of Eichah rather surprisingly indicts Israel by saying—Lo zakhrah aharitah—she did not remember her future (Lam. 1:9). Rabbi Arzt called this "anticipatory memory," and it has stayed with me ever since. We need to build as many monuments to this inner vitality of Judaism that still has so much to unfold and build in the future as we do to our moments of sorrow and loss in the past. As knowledgeable Jews, and Jewish leaders, we have to be sure to do more than take the absolutely essential care for the welfare of Jews, and their safety and security. We must also attend to the importance of anticipatory memory, that is, of knowing, understanding, and loving what Judaism means and can be in the future, and knowing how to convey that to the next generation. Even if no one were ever again to raise a threatening hand against us. *(Gordon Tucker is Vice Chancellor for Religious Life and Engagement and Assistant Professor of Jewish Philosophy at JTS)*[1] Interview with  Sander Gilman, Diacritics, Vol 4, No. 1 (Spring 1974), p. 33.  [2] In God's Mirror: Reflections and Essays (Jersey City: Ktav, 2003), p.71.

Parshat Tetzaveh: Details Details by Shimon Steiner

https://www.growtorah.org/shemot/2022/02/09-parshat-tetzaveh-all-that-is-gold-does-not-glitter

"On its hem make pomegranates of blue, purple, and crimson yarns, all

around the hem, with bells of gold between them all around."

This verse contains only a few of the myriad details regarding the construction and maintenance of the Mishkan, the movable sanctuary that accompanied Am Yisrael in traveling from Sinai to the Land of Israel. The instructions fill the parshiyot of Terumah and Tetzaveh. There are detailed instructions for curtains and altars and beams and clothes and many other things. This section in Tetzaveh is about the bigdei kehunah, the priestly vestments or garments. Even the hem of the Kohen Gadol's robe is decorated, with bells and fruit made of yarn going all around. Granted, it should be a nice robe. But why can't we pick the colors? Why can't we have a hem with fruits made from orange, yellow, or green yarn? There are fruits with such colors. Why such specifics? Come to think of it, why can't we design the Mishkan? If it's supposed to be a forum for our worship, why can't we have input into how it looks? Activity and participation help us learn and remember. So why can't some of the Mishkan's design be left to us?

As with many values, however, there are limits. And we don't have to wonder hypothetically about what would happen if we were left to design our own Judaism; the next parsha has a vivid example. When the people felt that Moshe should be down from the mountain already, they took matters into their own hands and "designed" their own form of worship: The Golden Calf.

The Golden Calf episode actually took place before the giving of the Mishkan's design, as Rashi explains in Shemot 31:18, based on the Gemara at Pesachim 6b: "There is no 'before and after' in the Torah (i.e., precedence in the text is not precedence in time.) The Golden Calf episode was actually before the work on the Mishkan."

Why does this matter? Because the people who hammered and sewed and carried and donated materials for the Mishkan had just recovered from a horrific episode of frenzied idol worship, punishment, and fratricide. Their process of

Teshuvah, penitence, culminated in the first Yom Kippur and the granting of the second tablets, and the day after that – they began the Mishkan.

These were people traumatized by their own excesses, by the results of their terrible decision to either instigate or go along with the designing of their own faith. They, and we, need a strong framework of details to work within. Our individuality has a million ways to be expressed, but the fruits on the hem will be blue, purple, and crimson. There are limits, and they are not only helpful but essential.

Take farming, for example; Humanity's first job. The instructions for Gan Eden were **לְעָבְדָהּ וּלְשָׁמְרָהּ** "to work it and protect it" (Beresheet 2:15). Like with the twin mitzvot of Shabbat, we have certain activities to do, and certain outcomes to avoid. Can we just toss seeds out the window, like Jack and his famous Beanstalk? Can we assume that the soil has all the Nitrogen, Potassium, and Phosphorus that are needed, not to mention Boron and Calcium? Can we water when it's convenient? Can we plant any variety and assume that the harvest will be the third week in August, just in time for the Camp GrowTorah kids to enjoy it? Certainly not. The commandment to till and protect the garden has specifics, and these are essential. We have to plant certain plants at certain times, in certain places and ways, with certain soil, and water when it's needed. This is the proper Avodah and Shmirah that will yield food and avoid pests, drought, and other problems. It would hardly be "work" for Adam Harishon to simply throw a few seeds and watch as food magically grew, and it wouldn't be work for us either. Certainly not fulfilling and creative work.

Analogously, the Mishkan is not an exercise in design but rather a set of instructions that we may not understand but is the detailed work we need to do to yield proper service. Details do not erase creativity but can enhance it, as with farming. Hashem is in the details. *(Shimon is a passionate gardener, teacher, father, and friend. A skilled handy-man and jack-of-all-trades, he served as a rabbi*

*in California and also worked in real estate. Most recently he taught at Mesivta of Clifton and Bruriah High School. )*

Tetzaveh: Silent Testimony  by the Accidental Talmudist
https://www.accidentaltalmudist.org/torah/2024/02/20/tetzaveh-silent-testimony-2/

Parsha Tetzaveh is the only one in the Torah after the birth of Moses that does not mention his name. The Baal HaTurim attributes this to Moses' plea to God on behalf of the Jewish people after the sin of the golden calf: "Now, if You will forgive their sin [well and good]; But if not, erase me now from Your book, which You have written." The words of a tzaddik (saintly and wise individual) have power, and when Moses told God to erase him from the Torah, God did so by erasing Moses from Parsha Tetzaveh.

This seems like a punishment, which is odd because when Moshe made that plea to God, it was coming from a place of great humility. Moses was willing to sacrifice himself to bring God's mercy upon the Jewish people. In fact, his tactic worked and the people were saved. So why is Moses being punished?

Rabbi Yissocher Frand explains that the omission of Moshe's name from Parsha Tetzaveh is not a punishment but rather a tribute to the most humble man who ever lived. Since every other parsha contains Moses' name, the absence of it in Tetzaveh is felt. Rabbi Frand characterizes it as a "silent testimony" to Moses. But why is Tetzaveh the parsha where Moses' name is absent? Rabbi Frand again invokes Moses' humility. The parsha is about the Kohen Gadol (High Priest) and his clothing. Moses' brother Aaron was the Kohen Gadol, and Moshe didn't want to steal the limelight from his older brother.

Little Golden Bells by the Accidental Talmudist
https://www.accidentaltalmudist.org/torah/2023/01/24/tetzaveh-little-golden-bells/

“Who is the one to be honored? The one who honors others.” – Ben Zoma (Avot 4:1)

Parsha Tetzaveh describes the garments worn by the Kohen Gadol (High Priest) while serving in the Temple. One interesting detail is the row of little golden bells at the bottom of his cloak.

Our sages explain that the bells alert others that the Kohen Gadol is approaching, so he doesn’t walk in on someone unexpectedly and cause embarrassment. We learn from this that we should always knock before entering a door, even in our own home.

Like the Kohen Gadol, may we honor God by honoring those around us!

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PURIM

Purim and the Longest Hatred by Rabbi Jonathan Sacks z”l (2002)

https://rabbisacks.org/archive/purim-and-the-longest-hatred/

In a few days’ time we’ll be celebrating the Jewish festival of Purim. It’s a joyous day. We have a festive meal; we send presents to our friends; and gifts to the poor, so that no one should feel excluded. Anyone joining us on Purim would think it commemorates one of the great moments in Jewish history, like the Exodus from slavery or the Revelation at Mount Sinai.

Actually though, the truth is quite different. Purim is the day we remember the story told in the book of Esther, set in Persia in pre-Christian times. It tells of how a senior member of the Persian court, Haman, got angry that one man, Mordechai, refused to bow down to him. Discovering that Mordechai was a Jew, he decided to take revenge on all Jews and persuaded the King to issue a decree that they should all – young and old, men women and children – should be annihilated on a single day. Only the fact that Esther, Mordechai’s cousin, was the King’s favourite
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allowed her to intercede on behalf of her people and defeat the plan.

Purim is, in other words, the festival of survival in the face of attempted genocide. It wasn't until way into adult life that I realised that what we celebrate on Purim is simply the fact that we're alive; that our ancestors weren't murdered after all.

Like many of my generation born after the Holocaust, I thought antisemitism was dead; that a hate so irrational, so murderous, had finally been laid to rest. So it has come as a shock to realise in recent months that it's still strong in many parts of the world, and that even in Britain yesterday a cleric appeared in court charged with distributing a tape calling on his followers to kill Jews.

What is it about Jews – or black people, or Roma, or foreigners – that causes them to be hated? The oldest explanation is probably the simplest: because we don't like the unlike. As Haman put it, "Their customs are different from those of other people." And that's why racial or religious hate isn't just dangerous. It's a betrayal of the human condition. We *are* different. Every individual, every culture, every ethnicity, every faith, gives something unique to humanity. Religious and racial diversity are as essential to our world as biodiversity. And therefore, I pray that we have the courage to fight prejudice, of which antisemitism is simply the oldest of them all. Because a world that can't live with difference is a world that lacks room for humanity itself.

Adar: Turning Grief to Joy as Resistance by Rabbi Tova Leibovic-Douglas

https://truah.org/resources/tova-leibovic-douglas-rosh-chodesh-adar-moraltorah_2025_/

During times of upheaval, I often find myself thinking of my ancestors, wondering how they navigated the challenges they faced. Though the circumstances are different, I imagine they too felt uncertainty, helplessness, and fear. I often ask myself: How did they find joy in their lives? As we enter the Hebrew month of Adar, I am reminded that not only did they find joy, but they were obligated to do so — and in this moment, that reminder is especially poignant.

With each passing day of this administration, and the ongoing devastation that marginalized communities are experiencing, it feels as though joy may be something we're not allowed to have. Most people I know seem overwhelmed by worry, grief, and exhaustion, with little capacity for happiness. Yet, our tradition tells us something different. Joy is not just permitted — it is essential. The Talmud teaches us: "When Adar arrives, we increase our joy." (Babylonian Talmud, Ta'anit 29a)

Adar is a month that invites us into an ancient, collective experience. It calls us to cultivate joy, even when we do not feel it naturally. Our ancestors knew there would be Adars when joy was hard to find, yet they committed themselves to honor the spirit of the month, to dare to seek joy even in the hardest times. This practice — choosing joy despite difficult circumstances — is a core part of why our people have not only survived but, in many ways, thrived through the generations.

Our tradition doesn't ask us what we feel; it tells us to live according to a spiritual value system greater than ourselves. In this way, we are not merely spectators of our emotions, but active participants in shaping our lives. The system compels us to act, even when we don't know how we feel. And it is through this very act of choosing joy that we connect to something larger, something that transcends our individual experience. Joy, then, is not just an emotion; it is a practice. It is something we must choose, especially when it feels out of reach.

What is it about Adar that invites this joy? For one, Adar is the last month of the mystical calendar, marking the completion of the year's cycle. It is a time of celebration, a time to reflect on what we've accomplished and look ahead. The Hebrew letter associated with Adar, kuf, is connected to the word kadosh, meaning "holy" — suggesting that joy has the power to elevate us, to connect us with the sacred. And of course, there is Purim, the holiday that falls during Adar, reminding us that joy can emerge from grief. The Hebrew Bible describes Adar as "the month

that was reversed for them from grief to joy." (Esther 9:22) This idea of transformation — from sorrow to happiness — is one of the most powerful aspects of this month. For those of us sitting in grief, this shift resonates deeply. It reminds us that joy is always possible, even when it feels impossible.

As we enter Adar, we are invited to move from grief toward the possibility of joy. This is not about denying our sadness, but rather about acknowledging it and then choosing to move forward. In doing so, we resist the forces of despair that seek to define this moment. It is through this act of choosing joy that we become resistors in a world that demands something else from us. By embracing joy, even in the face of hardship, we honor the resilience of our ancestors, who found ways to celebrate and live despite their struggles — and perhaps because of them.

Through our joy, we resist the forces that would have us stay in despair. We affirm our connection to something larger than ourselves — a connection that has sustained our people through every generation. In embracing the energy of Adar, we join with those who came before us, carrying their legacy forward. And through our joy, we not only survive, but thrive, becoming agents of resistance in this present moment. *(Tova Leibovic-Douglas is a rabbi, ritualist, spiritual coach, writer, and teacher based in Los Angeles. She is a graduate of the Ziegler School of Rabbinic Studies, a former fellow of New Ground, M2, and Atra, and the founder and director of The Ritual House.)*

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## Yahrtzeits

Mel Zwillenberg remembers his father Nathan Zwillenberg on Saturday March 8th

Karen Brandis remembers her father Stanley Grossel on Friday March 14th