

Think about this: G-d stopped the sun and moon. Why?

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Weekly Parsha

Vayakhel

RABBI BERNARD FOX

"Every talented individual among you shall come and make all that Hashem has commanded." (Shemot 35:10)

Beginning in Parshat Treumah, the Torah deals with the construction of

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RABBI MOSHE BEN-CHAIM

My close friend Adam and I often exchange thoughts on various areas of the Torah. It's a pleasure to join in his enthusiastic excitement at the prospect of uncovering new ideas. Last week, he mentioned a question he had heard another person asking: "Why is the story of the sun and moon standing still at Joshua's prayer not recorded in other cultures' histories?" Certainly this surpasses all events in terms of witnesses. Additionally, the amazement of such an event should guarantee its being recorded. The event is recorded in Prophets:

Joshua 10:12-14:

"Then spoke Joshua to G-d on the day that G-d gave the Emorite before the Jews, and he said in the sight of

Israel, 'Sun in Gibeon be silent, and the moon in the valley of Ayalon'. And the sun was silent, and the moon stood until there revenged the enemy nation. Is it not written in the upright book, 'and the sun stood in the middle of heaven and it did not hurry to set like a complete day?' And there was not like this day before it or after it that G-d listened to the voice of man, for G-d was battling for Israel."

Joshua was battling the Emorites on a Friday and wished not to enter the Sabbath at war. He prayed that the sun and moon be still, and G-d made it so.

Rashi comments on this statement, "...the entire world was filled with the reputation of Joshua, 'and the

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sun stood in the middle of heaven and it did not hurry to set like a complete day.” So the question is answered: Rashi affirms that this miracle was in fact known throughout the world. Why records have not been found may be in part to the expiration of those cultures, or unfinished, current research on this specific event. There may be other reasons, but we do not have conclusive proof that no nation recorded this event.

When attempting to prove what is “not”, as opposed to what “is”, we are faced with a more difficult task. How can one prove that object “x” is non-existent? To prove that “x” exists, is easy – we set it on display. But disproving the existence of something is next to impossible. As Dr. Gottlieb taught, many cultures do not record history, which sheds poor light on their country. Ancient cultures’ historical recording was a method of self-aggrandizement. When the facts were disturbing, leaders ordered them not to be recorded. Regardless, had this miracle never happened, it would not have been recorded, let alone survived and promulgated throughout the world.

As is true in all areas of Torah, once you look into it with one focus, other matters jump at us, more doors open, and here is no exception.

One cannot help but to ask what gave Joshua any idea that he could pray for such an unprecedented miracle! During the Egyptian plagues, Moses merely responded to G-d commands that he move his staff, say certain words, address Pharaoh, or pray to G-d at Pharaoh’s request. We don’t see Moses, on his own, requesting some unnatural occurrence. Even in the face of almost certain annihilation on the Red Sea shore, Moses did not ask for a miracle, but prayed for G-d’s salvation – nothing specific was requested. In all cases, it appears that Moses followed G-d’s lead. In all honesty, Eliyahu did pray for life to be returned to the dead child (Kings I, 17:21). However, we may suggest that this too is not as extreme as Joshua’s request. The resurrection of the dead is a well-known promise, and within the scope of what G-d will do. In contrast, Joshua’s request was unprecedented.

What gave Joshua the idea that he may make such a request? Do we simply suggest that man may request anything at all from G-d? Is man justified to ask for wings? Is such a prayer the words of one who is perfected? Prayer is an institution whereby man may request that which helps in his or her perfection. But do we not see a pattern, that all those who prayed, asked only for that which fell within the realm of reality? Until G-d told King Solomon “ask what I can give to you”, (Kings I, 3:5) Solomon did not ask for knowledge from G-d. But once the door was opened by G-d’s words, he then asked for wisdom. Man knows that knowledge is arrived at through study alone, and no other means. Therefore, no man ever asked G-d to instantly imbue him with knowledge. This is unheard of.

Up to this point, we have the following questions:

- 1) What was Joshua’s thinking, leading him to believe his request for the sun and moon to halt would be answered?
- 2) Why did G-d respond to him?
- 3) What is so significant about this miracle that G-d will never do it again, nor did He ever perform it before?
- 4) If the reason given why G-d enacted this miracle was because “G-d was battling for Israel”, why should G-d not repeat such a miracle, if He again fights for us?
- 5) What is behind the statement, “Is it not written in the upright book, ‘and the sun stood in the middle of heaven and it did not hurry to set like a complete day?’” This is certainly odd, that the book of Prophets will refer to

another section of Scripture. What may we derive from this?

6) And what of this other part of Scripture? Why is another part of the Torah (Exodus 34:10) referring to this miracle? If we look into this reference we have additional questions...

After the Jews sinned with the Golden Calf, G-d would no longer be in their midst - a disinheritation. Moses prays to G-d to go in their midst, to forgive them and to re-inherit them. G-d rescinds His decree:

Exodus 34:10:

“...Behold I will cut a treaty, against all your people I will do wonders that have never been created in all the land and with all the nations, and all the people that you are among will see the acts of G-d that they are fearful, that I do with you.”

In the book of Joshua (10:12), Radak (towards the end) says that the words “I will do wonders that have never been created in all the land and with all the nations” refer to this miracle of G-d causing the sun and moon to stand still. Radak says, “...‘acts of G-d that they are fearful’ refer to the miracle of Moses’ faces shining with light.”

We have located the source referred to in Joshua when it says, “Is it not written in the upright book”. This verse in Exodus foretells Joshua’s sun and moon miracle. According to Radak, Exodus is the “upright book”. (There is a dispute among the commentaries as to which Torah verse is referred to by the book of Joshua. However, our verse in Exodus does state, “I will do wonders that have never been created in all the land and with all the nations.” This is directly supported by G-d statement in Joshua, “...And there was not like this day before it or after it...”)

We have a few more questions:

- 7) Other future miracles are not foretold. Why then must Joshua’s miracle be foretold in Exodus?
- 8) Why is Joshua’s miracle joined with the miracle of Moses’ face shining?
- 9) What is its relevance to Moses’ request here?
- 10) How does man benefit with these two miracles?
- 11) What is significant about this miracle being “never created in all the land”?
- 12) And how does this verse in Exodus address Moses’ prayer that G-d once again inherit the Jewish nation, and forgive them?

An Explanation of the Luminaries and Moses’ Light

Returning to our story in Joshua, how did Joshua know he could pray for such an astounding, heavenly event as the sun and moon standing still? It appears Joshua was actually quite certain of a positive response, as his prayer was performed in the sight of the Jews. He purposefully made known his prayer. I believe the very first word in that account is the answer: “Then”. What does this introductory word indicate? It teaches us that Joshua only prayed for this miracle, at a precise moment, i.e., “then.” “Then”, meaning immediately after something happened, only “then” did Joshua make such an unmatched request. What happened immediately prior to this prayer? The verse states that G-d sent large stones from heaven upon Joshua’s enemies that killed more than those who were slain at war via the Israelites’ swords. This means that this first miracle of G-d casting large stones from the sky

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taught Joshua something. I believe from this first “heavenly” miracle, Joshua understood that G-d was in fact indicating that the heavens were given over to Joshua for this sake of a victorious battle. Joshua must have understood such a phenomenon of stones falling from heaven as a message that the heavens were to be used by him. Only now did Joshua feel justified in requesting G-d to cause another heavenly phenomenon of halting the sun and moon. Normally, one may not ask for such deviation as we mentioned earlier. But Joshua was sanctioned to do so by G-d’s first miracle.

Why did G-d wish that Joshua make such a prayer so He may perform this never-before performed miracle? Perhaps as a response to Moses’ plea that G-d reunite with Israel and return to their midst, G-d demonstrated His continued, abiding in the Jew’s midst via an overt miracle. His halting of these two luminaries was evidence par excellence that “G-d warred for the Jews”, and these are His exact words in Joshua. Moses prayed that G-d be with the Jews, and G-d agreed to Moses’ prayer. Not only was G-d with the Jews later with Joshua, but, G-d reunited with the Jews in the form of a continued providence with Moses. Moses face shining demonstrated that G-d was with the Jews through Moses. Thus - the luminaries halting and Moses face shining - are in one verse, as they are a single response to Moses’ prayer. Both miracles are a demonstration of the single idea that G-d reunited with the Jews. But why tell us in Exodus, that G-d will remain with Israel throughout Joshua’s time? We may answer that a complete answer to Moses request would be in the form of guaranteeing His providence in a “continued” format. Mentioning Joshua’s miracle long before it occurred, in Exodus, accomplished just that. Additionally, G-d makes mention of His providence with Joshua first in the verse. Why? Perhaps to indicate that a “continued” providence is better demonstrated by depicting a later event first.

The fact that the book of Joshua recalls the original oath is testimony to G-d’s fulfillment of His word. When G-d initially made this promise to Moses, He meant to teach him that He would remain with the Jews through all generations. In order to demonstrate this, G-d need not make such overt miracles in each generation. All that is required is that a “continuance” is seen past Moses’ own time. This was demonstrated in Joshua’s time, the immediate successor to Moses. This single event sufficiently qualifies G-d’s word. No additional, overt miracle is needed. There is a continued providence seen from Moses to Joshua. G-d’s word is upheld. We may now understand why G-d said this will never happen again, nor did it happen before. No other nation may lay claim to obtaining G-d’s favor in the form of such a miracle. The Creator of heaven and Earth favors those who follow His Torah. Perhaps this explains why the miracle incorporated the luminaries – they are the most evident works of the Creator. Unifying this idea, Moses too shared in a miracle of “light”, as his miracle was light emanating from his face.

The verse says that G-d would do miracles among “all the peoples.” Perhaps only when Joshua was warring against five kings was there a case of “all the people”. Only such an assembly of other nations qualifies as “all peoples”, and thus, G-d waited for this moment to create a miracle that was never before performed. In Exodus, G-d also referred to the miracles He would perform as those that He would “do with you.” The words, “with you” teach that G-d will return to the “midst” of the Jews. G-d displayed through His miracles for Joshua and the nation that He rescinded His former decree not to be amongst Israel. ■

Parsha

THE TABERNACLE

RABBI MOSHE BEN-CHAIM



The Tabernacle has been the center of the eye of the world both during its existence in days of the great kings, and even afterwards today, as we all await its final reconstruction.

But why? What is so important about this structure? What was God's objective for its existence? As we study it, we will find that its form is very specific in design, aiming towards some very crucial ideas.

The object of this article is to shed light on the Tabernacle's following requirements: The purpose of the two rooms (the Holy, and the Holy of Holies), the various vessels found therein, and the restriction of entering the Holy of Holies except for the high priest on the Day of Atonement, Yom Kippur.

The form of the Tabernacle is rectangular, 30 cubits long by 10 cubits wide. A cubit measuring approximately 1.5 feet. Its only entrance is on the eastern side. The first ten cubits upon entering are called the Ulam. No articles are placed in this area. In the next ten cubits are found the Candelabrum, the Table and the Inner Altar. Together the Ulam and these additional ten cubits form the Kodesh, the Holies. The remaining ten cubits are separated from the Kodesh and is called the Kodesh Kodashim, the Holy of Holies, separated by a curtain called the Paroches. In this Kodesh Kodashim is placed the Ark, which contains the Tablets of the Law (the Ten Commandments), the staff of Aaron, the canister of oil used for anointing the kings of Israel, and the jar of the Manna - the food with which God fed the Jewish people in the desert forty years. The question is, what are all of these objects for?

There is one command with regard to the High Priest which I believe begins to shed some light. The High Priest, and certainly other priests can never enter into the Kodesh Kodashim, except for one day of the year-Yom Kippur. On this day, the Jews are forgiven for their transgressions. The High Priest only enters on this day into the Kodesh Kodashim and brings in the incense from the inner altar and places it in front of the Ark and causes it to cloud that room. He leaves and enters only one more time to remove the fire pan with its ashes. What objective is there of the command that none should enter into this room?

Interestingly, a peculiarity of this room is that God says that He causes a voice to emanate from this room from between the two cherubs which are above the ark. This implies that God is commanding us not to approach the point at which He causes this voice to project from. This I feel demonstrates the idea that one cannot approach God with one's limited understanding. As God had told Moses, "You cannot understand Me while alive". We can only "go so far". Therefore, abstaining from entering this room demonstrates that we cannot understand God in our present state.

This explains the relevance of the vessels in this room.

The Ark contains the Divine Law which man could have never developed on his own, ideas which must be of Divine origin -thus belonging to God's realm. The oil was used to anoint the kings of Israel who were chosen only by God - man has no knowledge as to who will be king. When Samuel thought to select King Saul's successor, Samuel said of Eliav (David's brother), "This is God's anointed", whereby God replied to Samuel (Sam. 1.XV, 1:7) "Look not on his countenance nor on the height of his stature because I have refused him". Thereby teaching Samuel that he had the flaw of assuming God's Knowledge, and therefore he had to be corrected.

The staff of Aaron was placed in this room as well. This was the staff which miraculously blossomed into almonds during the revolt of Korach. Korach was claiming the Priesthood for his family, assuming that Aaron (already chosen by God) had erred in acting as the priest. Thus, Korach was suggesting that he knew better than Divine Wisdom. This staff was also placed in this Holy of Holies, as it too testifies to God's supreme, unapproachable, and unknowable wisdom.

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Parsha

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The Manna is also a demonstration of Divine Wisdom in that while it is a food, it does not produce any waste within the process of human digestion. Its appearance was miraculous, which the Jews wondered "what is it?"

All of the articles found in the Kodesh Kodashim share a common distinction - they epitomize that which man cannot approach. In Samuel I, 1:19, a passage occurs which concurs with this idea: "And God had smote the men of Bet Shemesh because they had looked into the Ark of the Lord". The sin of these people was that they were acting upon the idea that they could see something (about God) by looking into the Ark. Their error was generated by a need to make God tangible somehow, which is the worst of philosophical crimes. We must - above all things - have the correct ideas concerning God. We must know that our proximity (in terms of perfection) to God is directly proportional to our understanding of His Laws, not to the proximity of physical creations. Rambam states that "proportional to our knowledge is our love of God."

Now that we have posited that the Kodesh Kodashim - the room behind the curtain - is to remind us of that which we cannot approach, we may suggest that the Kodesh deals with the concepts that are understandable to us regarding our relationship to God. We need not guess what those concepts are, for they are already familiar to us.

If we look at the prayers which we recite on the High Holidays, we see that there are 2 praises to God. 1) He is Omnipotent 2) He is Omniscient. That is, God is all-powerful and all-knowing. There are only these two categories, for all acts which God performs are understood by us to be a display of either His Power or His Knowledge. In order for us to be constantly aware of this, God commanded Moses to create the Table, upon which there was always to exist the twelve loaves of bread. Twelve signifying the twelve tribes, and bread to signify God's ability to provide

sustenance. God also commanded Moses to build the inner altar. Upon the Altar the priests would offer the incense, a man-initiated relationship between us and God, demonstrating that God is aware of man's actions. The Table reminds us of God's Omnipotence, while the Altar reminds us of God's Omniscience.

What then is the purpose of the Candleabrum? If we look at the daily prayers, we begin every morning with "Blessed be the One Who spoke and the world came into being, blessed be He." In Daniel's blessing of God after God had granted his request to be informed of Nevuchadnetzar's dream and its interpretation, (Dan. II:19, 20) Daniel said "To the One Whose name is Eloka, blessed is He forever and ever". In both of these cases God is defined first, before any praise is made. This is to say that when one relates to God, it is essential that he is aware of Who he is directing his thoughts towards. Therefore, we first define to Whom we direct our praises each day. Daniel did the same, and perhaps the Candleabrum serves this very purpose. Namely, to define (not God forbid to embody, which is impossible) that the God which we are relating to in the Tabernacle is the God Who created the world and rested on the seventh day. We are reminded of this by seeing the Candleabrum which is composed of seven branches, six branches emanating from the seventh, as there were six days of creation and a seventh of rest. The six branches pay homage to the seventh as their wicks must all be directed to the center seventh. The seventh, center branch displays the seventh day as the purpose of creation. Contrary to the popular view that creation was an end in itself for the physical, Judaism claims that the purpose of the six days of creation was actually to result in a more real goal: A day of physical abstention, enabling man time for pondering the world of wisdom. Finally, the command to create the Candleabrum from one solid

block of gold (not made through soldering segments) might serve to remind us of the concept of the Unity of this Creator.

Thus, we have three main concepts derived from the Kodesh:

1) We must understand before all, that we are relating to the God who created the world in six days and rested on the seventh. We define Who we are praising. This is the Candleabrum, the Menora.

2) This God is Omnipotent-all powerful. This is represented by the Table.

3) This God is Omniscient - all knowing. This is represented by the Inner Altar. An altar only makes sense if the Recipient - God - is aware of human beings and their attempts to draw near to Him.

These are the categories of that which is knowable to man, and therefore, what we are reminded of by the objects in this room.

There is one question that one can ask: If we cannot approach God directly, how is it that the High Priest can enter the Kodesh Kodashim, the Holy of Holies, and why with incense? Why is he commanded to make it smoke-up the room (as the Torah states, Leviticus XVI:13) "that he die not", and why on Yom Kippur? The answer is that as we have said, the incense represents our approach to God. The High Priest's entrance into the Holy of Holies shows us that there is a "closer relation" to God on this day due to God's act of forgiving our sins. He therefore brings in that which represents our approach to him. That which represent our prayer (incense) is figuratively brought closer to God. The same idea is represented with the levels of restriction upon man at Sinai: Moses alone drew to the top of the mountain, Joshua lower, and others still lower. The purpose of the priest smoking up the room is to remind him while he is there, that his understanding of God is still blocked, represented by the smoke. God knows that even a person who is on the highest level enters into the Holy of Holies, he is still in danger of forming erroneous ideas about God. Smoking up the room physically demonstrates that there is a 'veil' between him and God,...even in this room. Similarly, when God revealed Himself to the Jews on Mount Sinai,

the Torah tells us that there was "darkness, cloud, and thick darkness (fog)." This again was all done for the purpose of demonstrating that there is a constant vale between us and God.

In regards to why there is a specific arrangement to the vessels in the Kodesh, the following reason may be given: Both the Candleabrum and the Table are placed close to the dividing curtain to represent that these two concepts are closer to perfection (closer to the Holy of Holies) than is the altar. The altar, being man's approach, is not always perfect, and is thus removed further from the Paroches than are the Table which represents God's Power and the Candleabrum which defines which(1) God we are relating to. These two being undoubtedly perfect in that they emanate from God.

In summary, the Tabernacle is a structure which represents our limited understanding of God, but also informs us which ideas we can form. It is a vehicle for us to be aware of our constant level of relationship to God on the different days of the year, as we see differences in the sacrifices on different days. And conversely, when we witness the absence of the Tabernacle, we are made aware of a severed relationship.

Addendum

The priest wore 8 special garments as part of his dress. Two of which point to interesting ideas: The gold headplate, the "Tzits", had "Holy to God" inscribed upon it. He also wore a breastplate which had 12 stones, corresponding to the 12 tribes. I believe these are to relate two aspects of a person living on the highest level: The headplate denotes that one's thoughts, his intellect, should be used primarily for understanding God. This is why it is placed on the head, the figurative location of the soul. The breastplate is placed upon the heart, demonstrating that one's heart, the seat of the emotions, should be devoted to his brethren, the 12 tribes. Thus, both aspects of man, his intellect and his emotions are subjugated to the correct areas. Perhaps our tefilin demonstrate the same.

(1)"Which God" does not imply there are others. It is meant to clarify that we admit to the God of creation, and not a fantasy which is not supported by reality. A fantasy god is meant by implication. ■

TORAH vs CULTURE

Affecting
the
Dead

RABBI MOSHE BEN-CHAIM

Reader: Can we provide any benefit to a deceased person's soul? Once the person has left this world, is their soul affected in any way from our actions? How does it work?

Mesora: Moses told the people: (Deuteronomy, 30:19)

"I give cause to testify you today heaven and Earth. Life and death I place before you, the blessing and the curse. And choose life, that you will live, you and your seed."

At the end of his life, Moses instructed the Jews to make a terminal decision. If the possibility exists that a soul may be affected positively post mortem, Moses would not have taught that man may select life, or death. "Selecting death", means selecting a terminal, negative outcome. How can there be a negative outcome, if someone yet alive can change your soul after you die?

But Moses did tell the Jews that their Earthly decisions have real consequences. This was the teaching of the two goats of Yom Kippur, as well as the two mountaintops of Grizzim and Eval. In all three cases, Moses taught that there are two paths one may lead: 1) Devastation, as seen in the dismembered scapegoat, and Mt. Eval's barren nature, and 2) True Life, displayed in the second Yom Kippur goat belonging to G-d, and in Mt. Grizzim's lush topography. So important is the sense of ultimate culpability that Moses spoke many times about it. Saadia Gaon too writes extensively on his opinion that punishment is never ending. (See his work, "Emunos v'Daos", "The Book of Beliefs and Opinions") Our opinion must be one that is well researched, and well thought out, not parroted from others seeking irresponsible comfort.

Man's decisions on Earth have permanent consequences. Moses states this openly. Let us not be concerned with popular notions we frequently hear, such as "giving a Neshama an Aliya", "elevating one's soul." So odd is this practice, as it is made while people drink a scotch and eat cake, assuming a ceremonial "kiddush" makes amends for the deceased's evil. Although popular - even with contemporary rabbis - our barometer for truth is the Torah of Moses, not currently practiced/preached Judaism. Once the practice of meticulous adherence to Torah is lost, Judaism loses its authenticity and all value, and is Judaism by name alone.

Suggesting that the living can benefit the dead teaches the heretical notion that man is not responsible for his decisions. It teaches that man may sin grievously, die, and his righteous, living son will right his father's wrongs. As a friend often mentions, "Can Hitler's descendant make Hitler a "tzaddik", a righteous man? If this is true, what of the reverse? Can a dead, righteous man be made a sinner by his live son's poor actions?" We see the absurdity in such a position. What may propel belief in this notion is a true love one has for the deceased. While these emotions are tender, we do not compromise truth to placate one's feelings.

Another source for this belief is one's own fear of ultimate culpability for his actions. If a person feels he can alter his father's fate after death, ipso facto this means, that his own fate may be improved after his own death. It is insurance one wishes for the self.

More centrally, I agree with the person who submitted this question: By what system, and by what justice does a living person make amends for the evil generated by someone dead? G-d's Torah says: (Deuteronomy, 24:16)

"There will not be killed fathers for sons (sins, nor) are sons killed for father's (sins). Each man in his own sin will be killed."

It is clear. G-d's system of justice is perfect. The one who is corrupt pays the price for his crimes. His corruption cannot be removed unless he repented during life. If he failed to repent, he died in a corrupt state, and he can no longer undo his evil. This concept of affecting the dead is 1) bereft of reason, and 2) is a corrupt violation of G-d's very words.

Repentance is also completely denied with the belief that the living can atone for the dead. If this were so, the concept of Teshuvah, repentance, has no place in Judaism: "I might as well sin my whole life, because my son will make amends after I die." Nonsense. In his Laws of Repentance, 4:1, Maimonides states that one who says he will sin and repent before death is not forgiven. How much more so, one who sins and does NOT repent before his death!

You will notice that with a few inquiries, those espousing this belief are dumbfounded: Ask them how it works that you may affect the dead. They have no answer. Why? Because it is not a true principle, and as it is with all fallacy, it cannot be supported by reason. Rationale is the litmus test for determining what is an accurate, Torah tenet.

As Moses presented two options, I ask you the same: Are we following pop-Judaism, or the greatest thinkers and their profound, rational and Torah-based concepts?

Take an example from G-d's rule of man's Earthly affairs: We are well aware of G-d's promises and fulfillment of victory and defeat, for the good and for the evil. We know of many cases where G-d miraculously saved the righteous, and punished the wicked. As this is clearly G-d's method of justice, why would one think that after death, G-d should work any differently? Death is a change in man, not in G-d! "For I am G-d, I do not change..." (Malachi, 3:6)

Maimonides' Laws of Repentance, 9:1:

"For if man does not acquire wisdom here, and good actions, he has nothing through which he merits, as it states, 'for there is no action, and calculation, and knowledge and wisdom in the grave.'"

Maimonides is clear. Once one dies, there is no change. I truly hope this motivates us to do the good, even though it is out of fear. Better one should salvage his life from fear and not from a love of G-d, than not to salvage his life at all. Certainly the higher level is to be attached to Torah, i.e., Torah wisdom, out of recognition of wisdom's primary place in our lives. This may only be achieved through diligent study, which in time, is all one would prefer to do. To master Torah study takes time, and requires us to redirect our energies, which includes some pain. But over time, you will find nothing as rewarding, fulfilling, enjoyable, and pleasant.

Maimonides' 11th Principle:

"Principle XI. That God gives reward to he who does the commandments of the Torah and punishes those that transgress its admonishes and warnings. And the great reward is the life of the world to come and the punishment is the cutting off of the soul [in the world to come]. And we already said regarding this topic what these are. And the verse that attests to this principle is (Exodus 32) "And now if You would but forgive their sins - and if not erase me from this book that You have written." And God answered him, "He who sinned against Me, I will erase from my book." This is a proof that God knows the sinner and the fulfiller in order to give out reward to one and punishment to the other." □

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the Mishkan. However, Parshat VaYakhel represents a transition in the discussion. To this point, the Torah describes instructions that Hashem gave to Moshe. Now, the focus of the Torah's discussion changes. The Torah describes Moshe's presentation of the instructions to Bnai Yisrael and the actual construction and assembly of the Mishkan.

In our pasuk, Moshe addresses the nation. He calls on all the talented craftsmen to join in this endeavor. In the following passages, Moshe provides a general description of the project. He lists the components that will be created and assembled. Why does Moshe provide this inventory of the items to be created? It would seem more appropriate for Moshe to list the skills that are required!

Nachmanides offers an interesting response. He explains that Moshe was commanded to do this. The individual craftsmen were not fit to participate in the project until each knew the breadth of the project and an outline of its details. Each was required to understand the entire project and perceive the manner in which it would be accomplished.[1]

This seems to be a strange requirement. Most of these participants had a specific role in the construction of the Mishkan. Some craftsmen created the curtains. Others fashioned the upright boards that supported the tent. Another group was metal workers. They fashioned the sockets into which these boards were fitted. It is reasonable that each worker should understand his task. However, why should each be required to grasp the entire project?

In order to explain Nachmanides' comments, it is important to appreciate that the Mishkan was constructed as an integrated whole. The identity of Mishkan did not emerge with the assembly of the components. Instead, each component was created as part of the entity of Mishkan. This entity includes the structure of the Mishkan and the vessels within. Therefore, in creating a socket, the craftsman was not fashioning a mere insignificant item that upon assembly would become part of the Mishkan. At the time of creation, he was fashioning a portion of the integrated Mishkan.

We can now understand Nachmanides' observation. It is obvious that in order for a craftsman to participate in this project, he must be qualified to execute his responsibility. His responsibility was not to merely create a socket or weave a curtain. His job was to create the socket or curtain as part of the Mishkan. There is a major difference between these two responsibilities. In order to create a socket, the craftsman need only understand the design

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specifications of the socket. He does not need to understand or appreciate the entire project and the role of his socket within the whole. However, to create a socket that is an integrated component of a Mishkan, a far more imposing qualification is requisite. The craftsman must understand the entire project and the role of the socket within the entirety. With this broader and more comprehensive knowledge, he can execute his responsibility. He can create a socket that is part of the integrated whole. This is the reason Moshe described to the craftsmen the entire project. Only after mastering this description were the craftsmen qualified to participate in the project.

Nachmanides observes that this insight explains another set of passages. In Parshat Pekudey, the Torah describes the presentation of the components of the Mishkan to Moshe. The Torah recounts in detail the order in which the components were presented. What is the purpose of this elaborate account? Nachmanides explains that the account of the presentation demonstrates that the craftsmen understood the relationship of the various components within the whole of the Mishkan.[2] Each component was presented in the proper order in relation to the other parts. In

other words, this account demonstrates that the craftsmen succeeded in fashioning the components as part of an integrated whole.

“And the men came with the women. Every charitable person brought bracelets, earrings, rings, and body ornaments. All were objects of gold. There were also all those who brought offerings of gold to Hashem.” (Shemot 35:22)

This is a difficult pasuk to translate. The above translation interprets the passage to mean that their husbands accompanied the women. Why was this necessary? Rav Naftali Tzvi Yehudah Berlin ZTL (Netziv) explains that the property donated by the women often required the acquiescence of the husband. In order to assure that both parties agreed to the donation, the husband came with his wife.

Meshech Chachmah offers another explanation. His comments are based upon a more literal interpretation of the pasuk.

Literally translated, the pasuk indicates that the jewelry was brought while still worn by the women. The procedure used for donating this jewelry was unusual. A woman would come to the collection point wearing her jewelry. When the woman arrived, the jewelry would be removed and donated to the construction of the Mishkan. Why was this odd procedure required?

Meshech Chachmah begins by explaining that these contributions were collected after the sin of the Egel HaZahav – the creation and worship of the golden calf. A review of that incident will help answer our question.

Bnai Yisrael were distraught with the fear that Moshe had died on Mount Sinai. The people came to Ahron and asked him to create an idol. The idol would act as an intermediary between the nation and Hashem. Rashi explains that Ahron knew that Moshe would return. He hoped to delay the people until Moshe descended. He told the people to bring him the jewelry from their wives and children. Ahron reasoned that the owners of these valuables would resist. This was a miscalculation. Our Sages explain that the women did not willingly contribute their jewelry. But their husbands forcibly removed these valuables from their wives. The gold was quickly collected and donated for the creation of the Egel.

An object that has been consecrated to idolatry becomes prohibited. It can no longer be used for any purpose. This prohibition applies once some act has been performed upon the object to associate it with idolatry. A verbal declaration has no effect in prohibiting the object. However, the Meshech Chachmah maintains that a verbal declaration will render the object unfit for use in the Mishkan.

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This law created a problem. How could Moshe accept any jewelry for the Mishkan? The possibility existed that this jewelry had previously been committed to be used in creating the Egel. Even a verbal declaration would disqualify the object for use in the Mishkan!

The solution required identifying those women who had successfully resisted their husbands. This was done by requiring the jewelry to be brought while still worn. A woman came to the donation point wearing the valuable she wished to donate. This indicated that her husband had not been successful in securing the object for use in creating the Egel.

“And he made the sacred oil for anointing and the pure incense using the technique of a perfumer.” (Shemot 37:29)

In VaYakel and Pekuday the Torah retells the construction of the Mishkan and the vestments of Kohanim and the Kohen Gadol. Virtually every element is described in specific detail. However, there are two notable exceptions. These are the items mentioned in our pasuk.

The Shemen HaMishchah was the oil used for anointing the Kohanim and the Mishkan. This anointing was part of the process of conferring sanctity on these individuals and the Mishkan. The instructions for the creating of the oil are outlined in Parshat Ki Tisa. There, the Torah explains that the Shemen HaMishchah was created through introducing specific fragrances into pure olive oil.[3]

The Ketoret was an incense burned in the Mishkan. In Parshat Ki Tisa, the Torah discusses the compounding of the Ketoret. The Torah lists the elements contained in the Ketoret and their proportions. The parasha also describes the preparation of the incense.[4]

In our Torah portion, the manufacture of these two items is not recounted at length. Our passage contains the entire discussion. The Torah merely states that these items were created as required.

The question is obvious. Our Torah portion discusses the manufacture of the Mishkan and the garments. The instructions for the creation of the Mishkan and the garments were previously provided, in detail, by the Torah. Nonetheless, in our portion the Torah meticulously describes the actual manufacture. Yet, the Ketoret and the Shemen HaMishchah are excluded from this review! Why are these items not reviewed in our Torah portion?

Rabbaynu Avraham ben HaRambam offers a fascinating response. He explains that the Shemen HaMishchah and the Ketoret differed from the other items described in the parasha. These two items were highly processed. The finished product did not resemble the original

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components. The Shemen HaMishchah was created through burning the various fragrances. The oil then absorbed the smoke from the fragrances. The final product did not include the substance of the original aromatic elements. Only their fragrance remained in the oil. The Ketoret was created through thoroughly grinding the original elements. The individual elements could not be identified in the final compound. Rabbaynu Avraham posits that because the original elements of these two items were not identifiable in the final product, their manufacture is not described in detail.[5]

Rabbaynu Avraham's response requires analysis. He presents a fundamental distinction between the Shemen HaMishchah and the Ketoret as compared with the other elements of the Mishkan and the garments. However, a question still remains. Why is this distinction important? Why does the Torah only review the manufacture of items in which the constituent components remain evident?

It seems that the purpose of our Torah portion is to communicate a visual image of the components of the Mishkan and the garments of the Kohanim. This is accomplished through describing their manufacture. Describing the manufacture of the Ketoret and the Shemen HaMishchah would not contribute to creating a visual image of these items in their final form. Therefore, the creation of these items is not discussed in detail.

This insight helps resolve another issue. The Torah describes the construction of the Mishkan and the garments in excruciating detail. We now know that this was done to create a visual image. Why is this image necessary?

The Torah includes six hundred thirteen mitzvot. Most apply at all times. However, the mitzvot relating to the Mishkan are an exception. The Mishkan and the Temple do not currently exist. Exile from the land of Israel and the destruction of the Temple deprived these mitzvot of their physical expression. As a consequence of exile an important portion of the Torah does not exist in material form. These mitzvot will not be fulfilled again until the rebuilding of the Temple.

This creates a paradox. The taryag mitzvot –

the six hundred thirteen commandments – are eternal. They must be real to every generation. How can the mitzvot related to the Mishkan remain alive even when there is no Bait HaMikdash. The Torah addresses this problem. These mitzvot are preserved through creating a detailed visualization. The Mishkan does not exist in physical form. However, it is still real to the student reading the Torah. In this manner these mitzvot are preserved for all times. □

[1] Rabbaynu Moshe ben Nachman (Ramban / Nachmanides), Commentary on Sefer Shemot 36:8.

[2] Rabbaynu Moshe ben Nachman (Ramban / Nachmanides), Commentary on Sefer Shemot 36:8.

[3] Sefer Shemot 30:22-33.

[4] Sefer Shemot 30:34-36.

[5] Rabbaynu Avraham ben HaRambam, Commentary on Sefer Shemot 37:29.

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“And these are the accounts of the Mishkan - the Tabernacle of the Testimony – that were calculated by Moshe. It was the service of the Leveyim under the authority of Itamar the son of Ahron the Kohen.” (Shemot 38:21)

This pasuk introduces Parshat Pekudey. The parasha provides an account of the materials donated for the Mishkan and a description of the manner in which these materials were used.

The pasuk refers to the Mishkan as the Tabernacle of the Testimony. The simple meaning of this term is that the Mishkan housed the Luchot – the Tablets of the Decalogue. These Luchot provided testimony. They evidenced the authenticity of the Torah and the relationship between Hashem and His nation.

Rashi, based on Midrash Rabba, offers another interpretation of the testimony identified with the Mishkan. He explains that the Tabernacle indicated that Hashem had forgiven Bnai Yisrael for the sin of the Egel HaZahav – the Golden Calf. Upon the completion of the Mishkan, the Divine Presence descended upon the Tabernacle. This indicated that the relationship with Hashem was reestablished.

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This interpretation of the midrash creates an interesting difficulty. The end of the pasuk explains that the service in the Mishkan was entrusted to the Leveyim and Kohanim. This was not the original design. Initially, service was commended to the first-born. However, the first-born became involved in the sin of the Egel. In contrast, the Leveyim and Kohanim withstood temptation and opposed the Egel. As a consequence, the responsibility for service in the Mishkan was transferred from the first-born to the Leveyim and Kohanim. The end of the pasuk confirms this change from the original plan.

According to the Midrash, the pasuk delivers a confusing message. The first part of the pasuk indicates that the Mishkan testified to Hashem's forgiveness. The second part of the pasuk seems to indicate the opposite. The service was not restored to the first-born. This seems to imply that the sin of the Egel had not been completely forgiven.

Meshech Chachmah offers an interesting answer to this question. Maimonides explains that a Kohen who practices or confirms idolatry may not serve in the Temple. This law applies even if the Kohen repents fully from his sin. Why can the repentant Kohen not return to service? Presumably, Hashem has forgiven him! It seems that once the Kohen becomes associated with idolatry he is permanently unfit for service in the Mishkan. Repentance and forgiveness do not remove this association.

Based on this law, the Meshech Chachmah explains the message of the pasuk. The pasuk explains that Bnai Yisrael had, indeed, been forgiven for the sin of the Egel. Nonetheless, the first-born were no longer qualified to serve. They had identified themselves with the idolatry of the Egel and were permanently disqualified from service in the Mishkan.

"And they beat the gold into thin plates and cut them into threads, which they included in the blue, dark red, crimson wool, and fine linen as patterned brocade." (Shemot 39:3)

The garments of the Kohen Gadol contain a number of materials. The basic threads are blue wool, dark red wool, crimson wool, and fine linen. The vestments also contain gold threads. However, the gold threads are interwoven into the other threads. How is this accomplished? Each thread of blue wool, dark red wool, crimson wool and fine linen is composed of seven strands woven together. Six of the strands are of the basic material of the thread. The seventh strand is gold. For example, a thread of blue wool in composed of seven individual strands woven together to create a single thread. Six of these strands are blue wool. The seventh strand is

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gold. In this manner, gold is included in each of the threads of the garment.

Our pasuk describes the process through which these gold threads are created. A quantity of gold is beaten into a thin plate or foil. Then, this foil is cut into fine threads.

The Torah does not provide many details regarding the manufacturing processes used in creating the Mishkan and the vestments of the Kohanim. For example, the craftsmen created silver sockets. The boards that supported the curtains of the Mishkan were inserted into these sockets. The Torah does not describe the process by which these sockets were fabricated. These details of the manufacturing process are not included in the Torah's narrative.

The only detail that the Torah does provide is the method by which these gold threads were fashioned. It is odd that this detail should be mentioned. Why does this detail deserve special attention?

Nachmanides offers an answer to this question. He explains that the Torah did not dictate the specific manufacturing processes. The Torah described the elements of the Mishkan and the vestments of the Kohanim. However, the Torah did not command the craftsmen to manufacture these items in any specific manner. The craftsmen were free to rely on their own ingenuity to fashion these items. For this reason, the specific manufacturing processes are not included in the Torah. These processes were not part of the commandments to create a Mishkan and vestments for the Kohanim.

This presented the craftsmen with a dilemma. They understood the description of the Kohen Gadol's garments. They realized that the individual threads of the garments must contain a gold strand. However, they were not familiar with a process through which gold thread could be manufactured. This challenge exceeded their experience and knowledge. They were required to invent some novel process for manufacturing these gold strands. The Torah is describing the manufacturing process invented by the craftsmen of the Mishkan. This process is described in order to demonstrate the wisdom of these craftsmen. They invented a completely new process.[1]

"And he burned incense on it as Hashem had commanded Moshe." (Shemot 40:26)

After the craftsmen completed the Mishkan, they brought it to Moshe for assembly. There is a difference of opinion regarding the date of this event. Many authorities maintain that the Mishkan was first assembled on the twenty-third of Adar. On this date, a seven-day period of initiation began. Moshe assembled and took down the Mishkan every day. According to some Sages, Moshe repeated this process as many as three times daily. Ahron and the Kohanim did not perform the services during this seven-day initiation. Instead, Moshe acted as the Kohen Gadol and the only Kohen. On the eighth day – the first of Nissan – the Mishkan was again assembled. However, on this day it was not disassembled. Ahron and his sons began to assume the duties of the Kohen Gadol and the Kohanim.

Our passage states that, as one of his duties, Moshe burned incense on the altar. It is not at all clear from the Torah whether this service was only performed on the eighth day, or whether it was also performed during the seven-day initiation period. Nachmanides takes the position that Moshe offered the incense each of the seven days of the initiation.[2]

This position presents a problem. In Parshat Tetzaveh, Hashem commands Moshe to conduct the seven-day initiation. The Torah describes the sacrifices that Moshe was commanded to offer. In our parasha, Hashem commands Moshe on the procedure he was to follow in erecting the Mishkan. Hashem tells Moshe that he should place the Mishkan's vessels in their proper place. He also tells Moshe to light the Menorah and place the bread on the Shulchan – the table. However, no mention is made of offering incense. In short, in neither instance in which Hashem instructs Moshe on the procedures of the seven-day initiation is any mention made of offering incense. Why did Moshe perform a service not commanded by Hashem?

In order to answer this question, we must resolve another difficult issue. Why does the Torah divide the instructions for the initiation period between Parshat Tetzaveh and our parasha? Why are some instructions provided to Moshe in Parshat Tetzaveh and other instructions included in our parasha within the directions for the assembly of the Mishkan?

The answer is that these two sections are dealing with completely different aspects of the initiation process. Parshat Tetzaveh deals with the special offerings required to initiate Ahron, the Kohanim, and the altar. This parasha does not include the lighting of the Menorah or the placing of the bread on the Shulchan. These activities

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were not special services performed to initiate the Mishcan and the Kohanim.

Our parasha deals with a different aspect of the initiation period. During this period, Moshe performed the daily activities that are fundamental to the Mishcan. These activities include the lighting of the Menorah and the display of the bread on Shulchan. This section does not mention the special sacrifices offered as initiation. These sacrifices were not among the daily activities fundamental to the Mishcan.

It is noteworthy that the offering of the Tamid sacrifice is mentioned in both sections. The Tamid sacrifice is a daily offering made in the morning and afternoon. Why is the Tamid included in both sections? The answer is that apparently the Tamid serves two purposes. First, it is one of the fundamental daily activities of the Mishcan. For this reason, it is included in the instructions in our parasha. Second, all other sacrifices are offered after the morning Tamid service and before the afternoon Tamid. Therefore, the special offerings of the initiation period could only be sacrificed in conjunction with the Tamid. The requirement to sacrifice these special offerings generated an obligation to offer the Tamid sacrifice in the morning and afternoon. Therefore, the discussion of the special sacrifices in Parshat Tetzaveh includes mention of the Tamid.

We can now answer our question. Why did Moshe offer the incense during the seven-day initiation period? The answer is that our parasha clearly indicates that those services that are fundamental to the operation of the Mishcan were required during these seven days. For this reason, the lights of the Menorah were kindled and the bread was displayed on the Shulchan. Moshe recognized that the offering of incense is also a fundamental performance.

He concluded that the commands to light the Menorah, display the bread on the Shulchan, and offer the Tamid were only examples of a more general obligation to perform all services fundamental to the Mishcan. Therefore, he included in his daily service the offering of the incense. He realized that this service is included in the general obligation of performing all of the fundamental services.[3] ■

[1] Rabbaynu Moshe ben Nachman (Ramban / Nachmanides), Commentary on Sefer Shemot 39:3.

[2] Rabbaynu Moshe ben Nachman (Ramban / Nachmanides), Commentary on Sefer Shemot 40:27.

[3] See comments of Nachmanides Sefer Shemot 40:27.

Media Bias - REAL PROGRESS ON THE 'T-WORD'

Courtesy of

HonestReporting.com

For over three years, in continual alerts and through TerrorPetition.com, HonestReporting has led the campaign to insist that news outlets call Palestinian terror "terror." (See our extensive webpage devoted to this issue.) Now, as the scourge of Islamic terrorism continues to spread throughout the globe, it is more important than ever that Israel's struggle against terrorism be properly identified as part of the larger battle to preserve civil, democratic society against militant Islam.

The past week saw the horrific bombing of commuter trains in Madrid, and the Palestinian terror attack at the Israeli seaport at Ashdod. While the bombings in Madrid were of greater magnitude in terms of human loss, in essence the two were very similar terror attacks targeting sensitive areas of national infrastructure with the goal of destroying the opposing society. This time, while some news agencies continued to show a double standard vis-a-vis Israel, we're pleased to report that others are beginning to heed HonestReporting's insistent call to refer to Palestinian terror as "terror." Here's a review, starting with the duplicitous offenders:

News Agency	Coverage of Madrid bombings	Coverage of Ashdod bombings
Associated Press	Headlined "Terror Bombs Kill at Least 198 in Spain"	Headlined "Eight Die in Israeli Port Suicide Attack"
Washington Post	"Millions of Spaniards united... to denounce the terrorist attacks that killed nearly 200 people in the capital a day earlier."	"Two Palestinian suicide bombers blew themselves up at one of Israel's largest industrial seaports late Sunday afternoon..."
BBC Agence	Interviewed politicians regarding the "Madrid terror attack"	Reported "the suicide blasts in the southern Israeli port of Ashdod."
France-Presse (AFP)	"...investigators probed a claim that the Al-Qaeda network was behind the deadliest terrorist attacks in Spain's history."	"Two explosions in ... Ashdod were carried out in a joint operation by the hardline Palestinian groups Hamas and the Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades"
LA Times	"The body bags outside Madrid's Atocha train station and the commuters sitting stunned on the tracks were graphic reminders of terrorism's evil."	"Two Palestinian militant organizations, Hamas and the Al Aqsa Martyrs Brigade, claimed joint responsibility for the attack"

News Agency	Coverage of Madrid bombings	Coverage of Ashdod bombings
New York Times	"when terrorists blew up commuter trains packed with run-of-the-mill people... suddenly the equation changed."	"If the terrorists did come from Gaza, south of here, it would be the first time in more than three years of conflict ..."
CNN	"One of the five men identified Sunday as suspects in last week's terrorist attacks in Madrid..."	"Hamas and the Al Aqsa Martyrs Brigades... claimed joint responsibility for the terror attacks"
Christian Science Monitor	"Terrorist Bombings Jolt Spain"	"It was not the first time terrorism exerted its veto power over attempts to lure Israelis and Palestinians back to discussions"
The Guardian	"...the terrorists behind the March 11 attack have ties to a radical Islamist group..."	"It was also the first time that militants from Gaza have staged a terrorist attack"

[And of course, the "news" agency Reuters held by their absurd editorial standard to refer to no attack as "terrorism" - they called the Spanish bombs a "guerrilla attack."]

We reiterate that this is not merely an academic, semantic issue. As the West unites against barbaric Islamic terrorism that now also haunts continental Europe, it is essential that Israel's struggle against Palestinian terror be properly identified as part of the larger battle. When news outlets differentiate between a port attack in Israel and a train attack in Madrid, they expose an editorial decision that the Palestinian attack is somehow more justified. That's wrong, dangerous, and far from "neutral reporting."

It is encouraging indeed that four major news outlets have responded to the hundreds of emails sent by HonestReporting subscribers, and have finally begun calling Palestinian terror "terror." Now is the time to write to the other news agencies above, encouraging them to join their colleagues in rectifying this longstanding anti-Israel double standard. (See yellow box above right) ■



Top: Madrid attack, 3/11
Below: Ashdod attack, 3/14

Meanwhile, the New York Times, CNN, The Christian Science Monitor and even London's The Guardian are to be commended for breaking from past policies and calling both attacks "terrorism": (See chart below-left)

Comments:

Associated Press:
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Washington Post:
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LA Times:
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