



Why did quantities of Temple dedications correlate to lifespans of great people; their ages at the birth of their first sons, and figures associated with the Torah?

In "Inauguration of the Temple"

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Weekly Parsha

Naso

RABBI BERNARD FOX

“Speak to Ahron and to his sons saying, “In this manner you should bless Bnai Yisrael. Say to them” (BeMidbar 6:23)

This pasuk introduces the mitzvah for the Kohanim to recite a blessing over the congregation. This blessing is incorporated into the Amidah. It is recited prior to the final blessing of the Amidah – Seem Shalom. In the Bait HaMikdash the blessing was recited every

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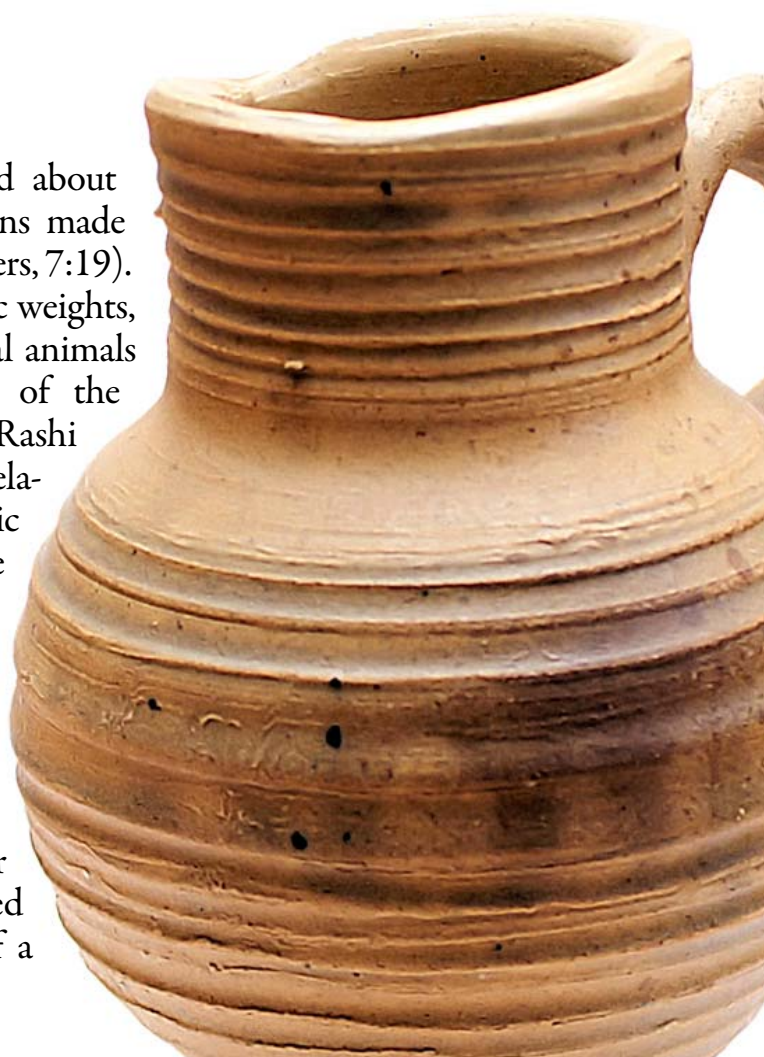
INAUGURATION OF THE

TEMPLE

RABBI MOSHE BEN-CHAIM

A close friend inquired about the Tabernacle’s donations made by Israel’s princes (Numbers, 7:19). Vessels of precise numeric weights, and numbers of sacrificial animals are mentioned as part of the Tabernacle’s donations. Rashi offers interesting correlations between the numeric weights of vessels and the numbers of animals, and between numeric values noted in the Torah. Below I have listed he numbers that Rashi correlated. The “value” column represents either the weight of a donated vessel, or the number of a species sacrificed:

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Weekly Parsha

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day. In Israel, this remains the practice. Bait Yosef maintains that this practice should also be observed outside of the Land of Israel.[1] However, Rima disagrees. He comments that the prevalent practice outside of the Land of Israel is to recite the blessing only on Yom Tov. On weekdays and Shabbat it is not recited. Rima offers an interesting explanation for this practice. He begins by explaining that it is appropriate for the Kohanim to be in a positive state of mind when reciting the blessing. On weekdays and even on Shabbat, people are often distracted by the concerns of daily life. These distractions are an impediment to achieving the requisite level of happiness that is appropriate for reciting the blessing.[2] Although these are the two basic positions regarding the reciting of the blessing outside of the Land of Israel, there are other variations. For example, some congregations do not recite the blessing on weekdays but do recite it on Shabbat.

“Hashem should bless you and watch over you. Hashem should shine His countenance upon you and enlighten you. Hashem should lift His countenance to you and grant you peace.” (BeMidbar 6:24-27)

Sefer HaChinuch, in his discussion of this blessing raises a question. His question is based upon the assertion that the Kohanim do not actually bestow their blessing upon the congregation. Instead, Hashem bestows the blessing.[3] An analysis of the actual blessing seems to support this assertion. The passages above are the text of the blessings recited by the Kohanim. As the text indicates, the Kohanim do not actually pronounce a blessing upon the people. Instead, they appeal to Hashem to bless the people. In short, this mitzvah does not require that the Kohanim bless the people. Instead, it requires that the Kohanim ask for Hashem to bless the nation.

Sefer HaChinuch asks: why does the Torah require the Kohanim to play a role in this process? If Hashem wishes to bless the people, He certainly will do so without the intervention of the Kohanim! Sefer HaChinuch's answer is somewhat cryptic. His response has two components. First, he explains that we sometimes receive Hashem's blessings and sometimes we do not. This is not because Hashem at times withholds His blessings. Hashem never withholds His blessings. Instead, Hashem's blessings are always available to us. Whether we receive them or not is determined by whether we deserve. Therefore, we were given the Torah. The Torah provides us with the

means of attaining righteousness. Through attaining righteousness, we are able to merit the blessings that Hashem is constantly bestowing.

Second, he explains that Hashem wishes for us to request His blessings and that this request should be made through the sacred and pure Kohanim. This very act of asking through the Kohanim is meritorious and through this merit we receive the blessings of Hashem.[4]

A thorough discussion of the first element of Sefer HaChinuch's answer is beyond the scope of this discussion. Essentially, Sefer HaChinuch wishes to stress that Hashem is perfect, an absolute unity and never changes. Therefore, although it sometimes seems that the ways in which Hashem relates or acts towards us change, this is merely our perception. In truth, Hashem is unchanging. If it seems to us that He sometimes bestows His blessings upon us and at other times withholds these blessing, this is not actually the case. Hashem does not change. We change. When we deserve, we experience the effect of His blessings. When we do not deserve, these blessings cannot devolve upon us.

A simple analogy may help explain this concept. A pitcher throws a fastball to the catcher. The catcher easily catches the pitch. The pitcher throws a second pitch and the catcher drops the ball. The catcher is disappointed with his performance. But he assumes that the pitcher must have put a little something extra on the second pitch. However, the reality is that the two pitches were identical. The catcher missed the second pitch because he was a little distracted. Like the catcher, we assume that whether we “catch” the blessing or not is determined by Hashem. But in truth, like the pitcher, Hashem is perfectly consistent. We just sometimes do not deserve and we miss the pitch!

Sefer HaChinuch's second point is a little more difficult to understand. Why is it so important that we ask for the blessings before they are bestowed? And why is it important that we ask through the sacred Kohanim?

Let us begin with the first question. Chovot HaLevavot discusses a related issue that provides important insight into this question. Chovot HaLevavot explains that we are surrounded by the benevolence of Hashem. Yet, most of us do not fully appreciate or comprehend this benevolence. What prevents us from recognizing the many blessings that Hashem bestows upon us? Chovot HaLevavot identifies a number of factors. One is relevant to our discussion. He explains this factor through a parable. A wealthy person adopted a foundling. He raised the foundling from

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infancy and treated this child as his own. At a later point, he became aware of a person that has been taken captive by a cruel person. This captive was living in complete destitution and treated with extreme brutality. The wealthy person took it upon himself to save this persecuted person and redeemed him from his captor. Chovot HaLevavot asserts that inevitably the former captive will be far more appreciative of the generosity of his benefactor than the child. Why? He explains that the captive experienced his suffering at a time in his development at which he could fully comprehend the experience. He passed from wretchedness to tranquility at a point in his intellectual development that allowed him to fully appreciate the kindness of his benefactor. In contrast, the foundling passed from destitution to comfort during infancy. At that time, he could not begin to comprehend the event of his rescue. By the time he was mature enough to grasp the experience of redemption, he had no memory of his former destitution and suffering. The only life he remembered and to which he could relate was the life he experienced as the privileged adopted son of his benefactor.

Chovot HaLevavot explains that our relationship with Hashem is akin to that of the foundling with his benefactor. We are surrounded by Hashem's blessings from birth. As a result, we take these blessings for granted. We do not comprehend or appreciate Hashem's kindness towards us.[5]

In short, by nature we are somewhat blind to Hashem's kindness. How can we overcome this failing? It seems that Sefer HaChinuch is addressing this issue. It is important that we train ourselves to acknowledge Hashem's benevolence. Training requires repetition. In order to impact our attitudes and our innate insensitivity to Hashem's kindness we must remind ourselves of this kindness consistently



and repeatedly. One of the ways in which we accomplish this is by reciting blessings of thanks to Hashem. For example, each morning we recite a series of blessings that acknowledge a variety of kindnesses that we receive from Hashem. We recite blessings before we eat. These blessings remind us that we cannot take for granted the food that we are about to eat. However, it is also important that we ask Hashem to respond to our needs. By asking for Hashem's blessings we acknowledge that these blessings come from Hashem and should not be taken for granted.

But why are we required to ask specifically through the Kohanim? Perhaps, Sefer HaChinuch is alluding to his thinking in his description of the Kohanim. He describes the Kohanim as "the servants (of Hashem) that are constantly camped around the House of Hashem. All their thoughts are directed towards His service and their souls are directed towards awe of Him all the day." [6] Certainly, Sefer HaChinuch is not asserting that every Kohen achieves the level of spiritual perfection that he is describing. Instead, he is describing the role or mission assigned to the Kohanim by the Torah. In other words, it seems that – according to Sefer HaChinuch – those members of Bnai Yisrael that are assigned the role of achieving the highest level of spiritual perfection are required to request that Hashem bestow His blessing upon the nation.

Sefer HaChinuch's position can be better understood when considered in conjunction with the first element of his answer. He explained that the blessings that we experience from Hashem are proportionate to the degree to which we deserve of these blessings. The role of the Kohanim within Bnai Yisrael is to strive for the highest level of spiritual perfection. It follows that in asking Hashem to bestow his blessings upon the people, the appeal should be made by those most deserving of these blessings. However, it should be noted that a full understanding of this position requires a more thorough discussion. ■

[1] Rav Yosef Karo, Bait Yosef Commentary on Tur, Orach Chayim 128.

[2] Rav Moshe Isserles, Comments on Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayim 128:44.

[3] Rav Aharon HaLeyve, Sefer HaChinuch, Mitzvah 375.

[4] Rav Aharon HaLeyve, Sefer HaChinuch, Mitzvah 375.

[5] Rabbaynu Bachya ibn Paquda, Chovot HaLevavot (Feldheim, 1970), pp 125-127.

[6] Rav Aharon HaLeyve, Sefer HaChinuch, Mitzvah 375.

INAUGURATION OF THE TEMPLE

Value	Correlative
930	Adam's years
130	Adam's years when his first son was born
620	Noah's years when his first son was born
70	The nations of the world which emanated from Noah
1	One Torah
10	Ten Commandments
613	Total mitzvos
1	Abraham
1	Isaac
1	Jacob
1	The ram to atone for the sale of Joseph
2	Moses and Aaron
3	3 sets of Jews: Israelites, Levites, Kohanim, also the 3 festivals
3 x 5	2 sets of 5 commands per each tablet, 1 set of the Five Books of Moses

The question of course is, what the significance is of these correlatives? Additionally, what do these correlatives have to do with the inauguration of the tabernacle? Take a moment before reading on. Try to categorize the correlatives.

It is interesting that the correlatives fall into three categories:

Populating Earth	Torah Transmitters	Torah
Value	Correlative	
930	Adam's years	
130	Adam's years when his first son was born	
620	Noah's years when his first son was born + 20 years prior to the Flood's decree	
70	The nations of the world which emanated from Noah	
1	One Torah	
10	Ten Commandments	
613	Total mitzvos	
1	Abraham	
1	Isaac	
1	Jacob	
1	The ram to atone for the sale of Joseph (?)	
2	Moses and Aaron	
3	3 sets of Jews: Israelites, Levites, Kohanim, the 3 sections; Torah, Prophets, Writings	
3 x 5	2 sets of 5 commands per each tablet, 1 set of the Five Books of Moses	

It appears that God's will here, is that man's attention be drawn to three concepts upon the erection of the Temple - the completion of the system of the Torah. All else was complete except for the building of the Tabernacle. Upon its completion, God willed that these three categories of importance be recognized as the primary goals of human life:

1) Man must Populate the world; 2) Man must follow/recognize competent Transmitters of the law; and 3) Man must recognize Divine law.

1) The essentiality of man populating the world is self-evident. God created the world for the sake of man to appreciate his Maker. Therefore, all members of mankind must admit to the good which they enjoy as created beings, and bestow that very good on another human, by

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procreating. The act of procreation is a father's recognition of his ultimate benefit: God formed him as created, thinking being. Procreation is a father's endorsement of life - intended by God, for others too. The father follows his Creator's command to procreate.

The reason why only Adam's and Noah's ages at their first child's' births are mentioned, although countless others contributed by fathering children, is due to the exclusive role both these men played. They were the only two people who can be considered "population's forerunners". Adam was the cause of all mankind, and Noah began the world again in the post-Flood era. No man other than these two can claim such a significant role of populating Earth, without whom, the world would be barren.

2) Why are transmitters of the law essential? We can also ask why God gave the Torah to Moses in the manner He did, i.e., to pass it down, man to man. Why did God not give the Torah to each man individually? Perhaps this would convey a false notion that man is inherently entitled to the Torah. This is not so. Man must toil in Torah to uncover the truths. The more he toils, the deeper the wisdom he penetrates, "If you dig for it like silver, and search it out like a buried treasure, then you will understand the fear of G-d, and the knowledge of G-d will you find" (Proverbs, 2:4-5).

Perhaps, then, the very act of orchestrating a system of 'transmission' of the Torah, is to teach the very idea of how profound and deep the Torah is. But why is this idea so essential? Why must man know that Torah is so deep? It is because it reflects on its Creator, and teaches that God has infinite wisdom. Perhaps man's search for wisdom needs to be fueled by the idea that the Source of all Torah is infinitely wise. Only with this realization will man thrust

himself into his learning, guaranteed by this concept that his mining for wisdom will always yield precious gems.

The relevance of the 930 years lived by Adam rides on the coattails of this concept: Adam's length of days teaches us that the wealth of knowledge in existence far exceeds man's lifetime. Were man to live a thousand years, he would still just scratch the surface of knowledge. By correlating Adam's years to the Tabernacle, we realize the amount of learning available far surpasses a man's lifespan - even one of Adam's age. It adds to our appreciation of God's infinite wisdom.

3) The Torah itself required highlighting. Just as in the Tabernacle, the focus was the Ark, which contained the broken tablets, and the Torah, so also the inaugural gifts must embody this concept. In all major areas of Torah, we will find that the Torah and wisdom in general take the spotlight. (See the article: The Ark's Poles)

According to Rashi these essential and primary concepts must inhere in the inauguration. The inauguration - the final commencement of the Torah system - required a focus on these primary goals of creation. The structure of the Tabernacle was not an end, but a means for achieving these goals. The one method for focusing on the goals was permeating the inaugural services with these concepts. ■

BLESSINGS OF THE

PRIESTS

I often wondered about the purpose of "Birchat Kohanim", the priest's blessings, discussed in Numbers, 6:24-26:

6:24. "God shall bless you and watch you."

6:25. "God should shine upon you favorably and show you grace."

6:26. "God should lift His face towards you and place peace before you."

Ibn Ezra explains these blessings as follows:

6:24: God should assist in your monetary needs, 6:25: God should answer your prayers, and 6:26: No evils should befall you.

We must ask of the necessity for these bless-

ings, as the perfect God does only that which is necessary. This is a perfection of His ways. Therefore, why were these blessings bestowed on the Jews...via the priests? We read in 6:27, "and place My name upon the children of Israel, and I will bless them". Clearly, God alone blesses the Jews: it is not in the hands of the priests, any man, priest, or Rabbi. What then is the need for the priests to utter these blessings? God bestows blessings Himself without the priests' declaration. This last question forces the Torah student to think into the relationship between the Jews and the priests.

The first step in answering this question is to properly categorize the role of the priests in these blessings. They are acting as 'benefactors' of some sort. They are blessing the Jews. Our next question is, "What is the purpose of the priests to be benefactors of the Jews?"

By analyzing at the dynamics between the Jews and the priests, perhaps their relationship affords some insight. The priests receive gifts from the Jews. The priests also serve in the Temple. The Jews do not. What attitude might be generated from such a relationship where one party receives gifts from the other, and where they also have exclusive rights to Temple service, not granted to Jews? Would the Jew feel justified in his resentment, because he toils for his possessions while the priests receive them from the Jew for free? The Jew might also resent the priests "closer" proximity to God, since they alone serve in the Temple.

Perhaps this is exactly what the blessings address. They preempt the strife, which might occur based on the Jews' resentment of priestly gifts, and the exclusion of the Jew from Temple service. I suggest that precisely to rid Jewish society of such resentment, God commanded the priests publicly bless the Jews in these two areas - monetary needs, and concern that God pays attention to Jews, the desired result of prayer. By doing so, any ill feelings will be addressed before they become an issue.

God developed Birchat Kohanim so that Jews regularly heard the priests wishing their monetary success, and that God would respond to their prayers. As the priests show concern that the Jews be blessed by God in those very matters in which the Jew is excluded, the priests create a harmonious state for all Jews, preempting Jewish resentment towards the priests, necessary for the Torah system to operate.

Since the goal is harmony between Jews of both roles, I believe the final blessing is appropriate, that is, the blessing of peace. ■



A FRIEND

Chapter 1, Mishna 6: "...Acquire for yourself a friend..."

We last left off discussing the Rambam's explanation of the prohibition to take revenge and bear a grudge. The Rambam says that one who recognizes that the true good is not to be found in the material world will not feel the need to take revenge, for another person can never take away this true good. We asked how this principle would apply in a case where one does take away the real good, such as where one person takes away another's time for involvement in learning Torah. In such a case, would the Rambam then say that revenge is justified?

RABBI ISRAEL CHAIT

Written by a student

In order to understand this question, we took up an interesting story in the Talmud that gives us insight into how one should relate to knowledge and learning. The Talmud, in Tractate Berachos, tells us of a discussion that took place when Rabbi Yochanon visited Rabbi Eliezer who was sick. Rabbi Eliezer was crying so Rabbi Yochanon asked him why, for if he was crying that he didn't learn enough Torah, then that is not a problem for "whether one has a lot or a little, as long as his heart is towards heaven". At first glance, the consolation of Rabbi Yochanon seems difficult to understand- does he mean to tell us that how much one knows doesn't matter? This would seem to contradict a statement in the Jerusalem Talmud that says that one word of Torah is worth as much as fulfilling all of the commandments!

Understanding this gives us an understanding of how we are to relate to learning Torah. A wise man doesn't relate to learning as a conquest and acquisition of Torah; rather, to him the overall relationship to Torah is the value: a few pages of learning don't make the difference. If one lost the ability to learn a bit more than he can now, he isn't on a lower level, because his relationship to Torah is the same.

This idea is also expressed by the law of 'Toraso Umenaso', that one whose work is learning Torah, is exempt from certain commandments. Rabbeinu Asher (known as the Rosh), an early commentator on the Talmud, explains that to be considered one who is 'Toraso Umenaso' one doesn't have to spend all day learning. Rather, one must utilize every free moment for learning. In doing so, he demonstrates that involvement in the knowledge

of Torah is most valuable to him. From here we can also see that the issue isn't merely the amount of time spent learning, but rather the relationship to learning that is important.

With this point of view, we can return to the Rambam and answer our question. One who values his relationship to knowledge will never take revenge, even on time taken away from learning, for he knows that his perfection is found in his state of mind and nothing can take away from that. What another person does can't affect the way another person relates to Torah and knowledge. Therefore, revenge is never justified.

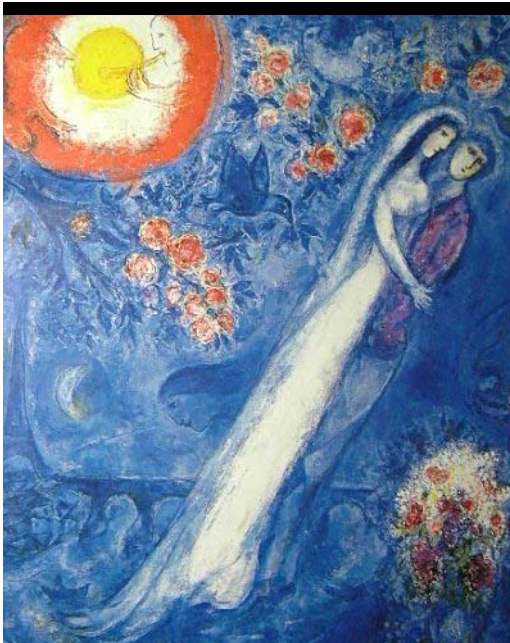
An interesting observation may be gleaned: one who perfects himself for his own personal gain actually lacks in perfection. When one reaches a level of perfection where one loves God, his actions are not done for himself, but rather for God. Love of God means that the person is focused on that which is external to the self, namely the idea of God, so that personal gains are no longer the motivation of the person.

From our discussion, it appears that the prohibitions to take revenge and bear a grudge are for people who are already on a high level. How could the Torah demand of everyone that they reach this philosophical level? While it may be true that most people don't have this viewpoint constantly, at least at the time that they guard these prohibitions, they will realize these ideas. This, in and of itself, will be of benefit to the person.

The Rambam, commenting on this part of the Mishna, quotes Aristotle as saying something beautiful: "You are your own friend", and then he cites Aristotle's three types of friendships. The first types of friendship are those who are friends for personal gain and benefit. The second type is where the friends gain pleasure from being with each other. The third level is where they are friends for a higher purpose, which is to help each other do the good.

When we analyze these categories of friendships, there are a number of questions that arise. First, why does the Rambam say that the first type of friendship, where friends seek some gain, is considered a friendship at all? Second, what exactly is the difference between the second type and the third type? They both are intended for some gain, so what is the difference if it is for personal purpose, or a 'higher' purpose? Third, the Rambam makes the point that in the friendship for the higher purpose, they want the good for each other. Here too we may ask: why is this characteristic of the third type...the other types can have it as well? Take the first type for example: the two may wish both to benefit and gain. Why does the Rambam say this is only applicable to the third type of friendship?

To be continued. ■






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the Book

of

Job

EPILOGUE GOD ADDRESSES JOB

Chapter 38

RABBI ISRAEL CHAIT

Transcribed by students

"12. Hast thou commanded the morning since thy days; and caused the dayspring to know his place; 13. That it might take hold of the ends of the earth, that the wicked might be shaken out of it? 14. It is turned as clay to the seal; and they stand as a garment. 15. And from the wicked their light is withholden, and the high arm shall be broken."

What is God stating in these verses? God is indicating that His Providence must mesh with the laws of nature, viz. when God asks if Job could take the end of the earth and shake off the wicked, God is trying to say that it is not so easy to get rid of the wicked. Meaning, there is an intricate system regarding how the wicked will be addressed. God impresses upon Job the precise laws that exist.

The Ibn Ezra says that Job's first answer was not correct. And he says that the reason why he did not answer correctly was because Job did not justify God. He only claimed his ignorance. But he did not concede to God's omniscience. Therefore God answered a second time and described the beasts that have strength in the land, and the

Leviathan that has strength in the ocean. How was God's second address different from the first? We must take note that Maimonides did not include God's answer to Job because it was not any different than Elihu's answer. So why did God answer at all? God did so to remove Job's difficulty in accepting Elihu's answer. In truth, once Elihu spoke, Job was quiet. He could not respond because he saw that Elihu was correct. Job's act of acknowledging Elihu's ideas elevated him, where God would now relate to him. That is why God did not speak to Job until Elihu did. This is because God's system relates to man in proportion to his perfection. And after hearing Elihu's truths, Job accepted them, thereby raising his very level of perfection. Only now could God relate to Job.

We then ask what God added, if not new content? There is one difference that the Ibn Ezra mentioned and that is the discussion of the powerful beasts. But what effect did this have on Job and again, what more did God accomplish, which Elihu did not?

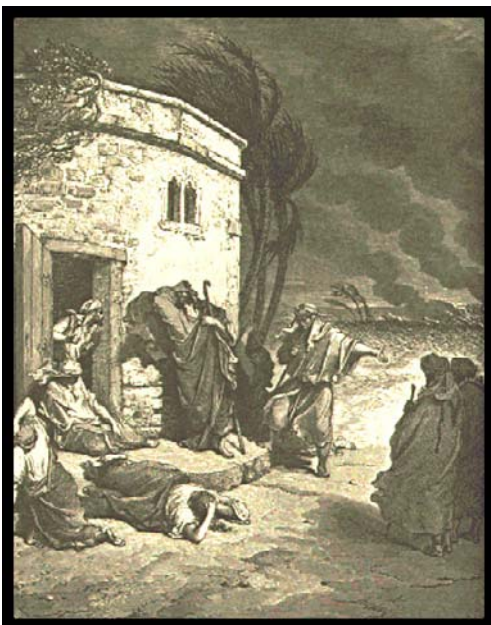
God's first answer broke down Job's ego. That was His objective with His questions, viz. "where you there?" "Could you do this?" "Can you control that?" God's questions are broken up into three categories: 1) those concerning Job as a creator, "who made..." 2) those concerning Job as a controller of God's creating things, "can you chain Orion?" 3) and those concerning Job's knowledge, "do you know..."

God went one step further, and that was to convince Job not only that he is nothing, but also that God is everything. Job did not affirm God's absolute and exclusive reign until the second answer which expressed via the powerful beast; the immutability of the laws of nature. Job desired reality to conform to his wishes; therefore, God taught him the existence of nature's laws about the beasts. The first two verses in chapter 41 prove this:

"1. Canst thou draw out leviathan with a hook? Or his tongue with a cord which thou lettest down? 2. Canst thou put a hook into his nose? Or bore his jaw through with a thorn?"

First, God asks, "Who can stand before the monster" and then, "Who can stand before Me?" In other words, the metaphor of the monster is an equation to God's laws.

The Book of Jobs ends, as Job receives all that he lost returned, and in even greater measure. This is because once Job was "Matzdik God" (affirmed God's righteousness) thereby; he brought himself directly under God's "Specific Providence." ■



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