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Weekly Parsha

Terumah

RABBI BERNARD FOX

“And they should create for me a sanctuary and I will dwell among them.” (Shemot 25:8)

In this pasuk, Hashem instructs Moshe to command Bnai Yisrael to construct the Mishcan. Hashem tells Bnai Yisrael that through this

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Dedicated to Aaron:

*“Ki Ale Melech
Rofay Ne-eman
vRachaman Atah”*

TEMPLE

COMPENDIUM

SPECIAL ISSUE

*Collection of our
Temple-related articles
from the past 10 years*

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Weekly Parsha

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Mishcan, He will dwell among the people.

This passage cannot be understood literally. In order to understand the difficulty presented by a literal interpretation of the pasuk, an introduction is needed. Maimonides, in his commentary on the Mishne, enumerates the basic foundations of the Torah. The third of these basic principles is that the Almighty is not, in any sense, material.[1]

Maimonides discusses this principle in further detail in his Mishne Torah. He, again, explains that the Almighty is not material. He adds that it is also inappropriate to attribute to Hashem any of the characteristics associated with physical bodies. For example, Hashem does not have a front or back. One cannot ascribe physical actions to the Almighty. Also, one cannot ascribe a place to Hashem.[2]

This principle, identified by Maimonides, is a logical extension of the proposition that Hashem is a unity. The Torah clearly states, "Hashem is one." [3] This statement tells us that there is only one God. However, our Sages understand the passage to also mean that the Almighty is a perfect unity. This means that He has no parts or aspects. He is not subject to division. He is an absolute representation of "oneness." [4] The principle of Hashem's unity precludes attribution of a material existence to Him. Any material entity has parts, or aspects. It has a front and back, or dimensions. These characteristics contradict the concept of absolute unity.

Furthermore, the Torah clearly states that Hashem is not material. This principle is communicated in Moshe's review of the event of Revelation. He reminds the nation that they had experienced Revelation at Sinai. In this experience, the Almighty was not represented by any material image.[5]

We can now understand the difficulty presented by our passage. If our passage is interpreted literally, it contradicts this principle. Literally understood, our passage attributes location to the Almighty. The passage states that Hashem will dwell among Bnai Yisrael! This is impossible. Hashem is not material. Therefore, it is not correct to say He dwells in any place.

Unkelus is sensitive to this anthropomorphism.

In his translation of our passage, he alters the problematic phrase. In his rendering, the phrase reads, "and I will cause the Divine presence to dwell among them." Unkelus' intention is to remove any attribution of place to the Almighty. According to Unkelus, the passage refers to Hashem's Divine presence or influence. In other words, the passage describes a providential relationship. The Almighty will exercise His providence over the Mishcan and the people.

Rav Yosef Albo, in his Sefer Halkkrim, uses the same approach to explain various anthropomorphic expressions found in the Torah. A few examples will illustrate this approach. Hashem tells us, in reference to the Temple, "Mine eyes and Mine heart shall be there perpetually." [6] Hashem does not have eyes or a heart. The intent of the passage is to communicate that a special providential influence exists over the Mikdash.[7] The Torah states that at Revelation, "the appearance of the glory of the Lord was like a devouring fire on the top of the mountain." [8] This passage does not intend to communicate that Hashem was present at Revelation. This would attribute a place to the Almighty. Instead, the passage is stating that the influence of the Almighty was evidenced through a physical manifestation. In this case, the manifestation was the conflagration that appeared at the top of Sinai.[9] It should be noted that the pasuk



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(Terumah continued from page 2)

Weekly Parsha

refers to the “glory” of the Almighty. This supports this interpretation. The Almighty was not present. However, the fire indicated His “glory” or influence.

One anthropomorphic expression has occasioned considerable discussion among the Sages. One of the names used for the Almighty is HaMakom – the Place.[10] This is popularly understood to mean that the Divine presence extends everywhere. However, our Sages provide a different explanation of the term. They explain that the term means that Hashem is the makom – the place – of the universe.[11]

This explanation is very difficult to understand. How can the Sages refer to Hashem as the place of the universe? Hashem is not material. He is not a place! Rav Yitzchak Arama offers a novel interpretation of the Sages’ comments. He explains that the term place can be understood as the base upon which something rests or is supported. As an example, he cites the second mishne of Tractate Avot. The mishne explains that the world stands on three pillars – Torah study, Divine service, and acts of kindness. The intent of the mishne is that these three activities are essential to the existence of the world. The mishne expresses this idea by representing the world as standing on these activities. In other words, standing in a place – upon the pillars of Torah study, Divine service and acts of kindness – represents dependency. Rav Arama explains that the name HaMakom communicates the universe’s dependency upon the Almighty. He is the “place” upon which the universe stands. This means the universe only exists as a result of His continuing will. His will supports the universe’s existence. Without His will, the universe would cease to exist.[12]

“And you should overlay it with pure gold. On the inside and outside you should overlay it. And you should make a gold crown surrounding it.” (Shemot 25:11)

The Torah describes the construction of the Aron – the Ark. The Aron was made of acacia wood. It was overlaid with gold. The gold covered the inner and outer surfaces of the Ark.

Rashi explains that the Ark was composed of three separate boxes. The smallest box was made of gold. A slightly larger box was constructed from acacia wood. The largest box was made of gold. The acacia box was placed within the largest gold box. The smallest gold box was placed within the acacia box. This fulfilled the requirement of the passage. The inner and outer surfaces of the wood box were covered with gold.[13]

The Chumash refers to the gold as an “overlay.” The term overlay implies that the gold was an adornment of the Ark. The essential material was apparently the wood. This is difficult to reconcile

with Rashi’s description of the Aron’s construction. According to Rashi, the Aron was constructed of three boxes. Each had its own structural integrity. In fact, it would seem more correct to define the gold as the essential component. The wood box was hidden within the two gold boxes!

Rabbaynu Avraham ibn Ezra disagrees with Rashi. He maintains that the gold overlay was not created through constructing a series of boxes. Instead, he interprets this requirement literally. The overlay was a coating over the wood of the Aron.[14] We can easily appreciate the reason for Ibn Ezra’s position. The Torah refers to the gold as an overlay. According to Ibn Ezra, this description is completely accurate. However, according to Rashi, this does not seem to be an appropriate description.

Rabbaynu Avraham ben HaRambam offers a brilliant explanation of Rashi’s position. An introduction is necessary to understand his insight.

The Chumash describes the dimension of the Aron. It was two cubits long, one and a half cubits wide and a cubit and a half high.[15] This requirement presents an interesting problem. The Aron was composed of three boxes. Each had different dimensions. Obviously only one box could conform to the dimensions required by the Torah! To which box did the required dimensions apply?

Rabbaynu Avraham ben HaRambam responds that the measurements were applied to the acacia box. This box was required to conform to the dimensions dictated by the Torah. The inner and outer gold boxes were designed to accommodate the measurements of the middle acacia box.[16]

This answers our question. The application of the measurements to the acacia box indicates that

this was the essential box. In this manner, the Torah acknowledges the fundamental nature of this middle box. Accordingly, it refers to the gold boxes as an overlay. It is true that these boxes had independent structural integrity. However, in function, they were an overlay. ■

[1] Rabbaynu Moshe ben Maimon (Rambam / Maimonides) Commentary on the Mishne, Mesechet Sanhedrin 10:1.

[2] Rabbaynu Moshe ben Maimon (Rambam / Maimonides) Mishne Torah, Hilchot Yesodai HaTorah, 1:11.

[3] Sefer Devarim 6:4.

[4] Rabbaynu Moshe ben Maimon (Rambam / Maimonides) Mishne Torah, Hilchot Yesodai HaTorah, 1:7.

[5] Sefer Devarim 4:15. See Rabbaynu Moshe ben Maimon (Rambam / Maimonides) Commentary on the Mishne, Mesechet Sanhedrin 10:1.

[6] Melachim I 9:3.

[7] Rav Yosef Albo, Sefer HaIkkarim, volume2, chapter 14.

[8] Sefer Shemot 24:17.

[9] Rav Yosef Albo, Sefer HaIkkarim, volume2, chapter 17.

[10] See, for example, Mesechet Avot 2:9.

[11] Midrash Rabba, Sefer Beresheit 68:9.

[12] Rav Yitzchak Arama, Akeydat Yitzchak on Sefer Shemot, Parshat Terumah.

[13] Rabbaynu Shlomo ben Yitzchak (Rashi), Commentary on Sefer Shemot 25:11.

[14] Rabbaynu Avraham ibn Ezra, Commentary on Sefer Shemot, 25:10.

[15] Sefer Shemot 25:10.

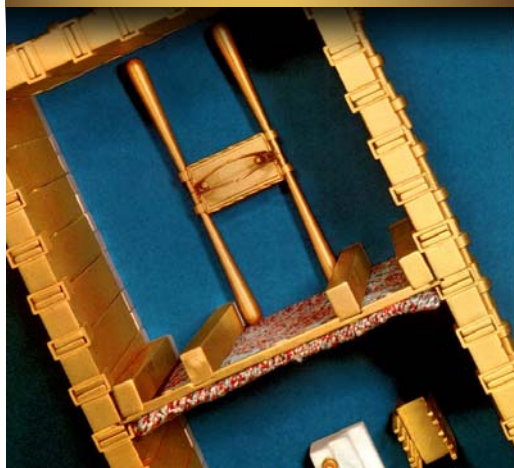
[16] Rabbaynu Avraham ben HaRambam Commentary on Sefer Shemot 25:11.



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The Temple and 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. I.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.

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 Candelabrum? 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 Candelabrum 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 Candelabrum 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 ends in itself for the physical,

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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 Candelabrum, 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 veil 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

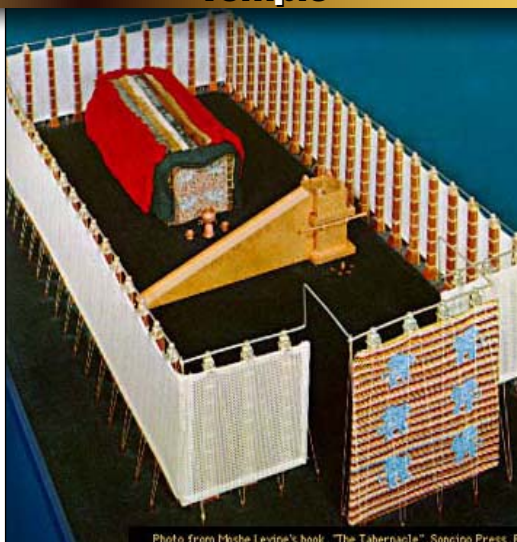


Photo from Moshe Levine's book, "The Tabernacle", Soncino Press, E.

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 God(1) 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 "Tzitz", 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.

Sacrifice

There is a famous argument between Ramban and Maimonides on the purpose of sacrifice. Maimonides writes in his great work the Guide for the Perplexed (Book III, Chap. 46) that the purpose of sacrifice is to eradicate false notions that certain species of animals were deities. By sacrificing to God, the heathens' worshiped species, we counter the problem, as Maimonides writes:

"....In order to eradicate these false principles, the law commands us to offer sacrifices only of these three kinds: 'Ye shall bring your offering of cattle, of the herd and of the flock' (Lev. 1:2). Thus the very act which considered by the heathen as the greatest crime, is the means of approaching God, and obtaining His pardon for our sins. In this manner, evil principles, the diseases of the human soul, are cured by other principles which are diametrically opposite."

Ramban argues vehemently on Maimonides in the beginning of his commentary in the book of Leviticus (Lev. 1:9). There, Ramban lodges two salient arguments:

1) We see that sacrifice existed in the days of Adam's son Able, and in Noah's days when idolatry of this kind did not yet exist. Therefore Maimonides cannot be correct to suggest that sacrifice is to function to remove idolatrous notions.

2) Sacrifice is really viewed as an approach to God, as shown by Bilaam's offerings, not a neutralizing procedure. How can sacrifice be a negative, i.e., an agent countering idolatry, when it is described as a positive, "a pleasant fragrance".

These questions certainly require a response. But I wondered, is Ramban really suggesting that Maimonides was ignorant of the stories in every Torah, that of Able, and Noah and Bilaam? This possibility is absurd. So what exactly is Ramban saying when quoting the facts that these early individuals offered sacrifice?

We are forced to say that Maimonides knew very well that sacrifice existed prior to the command at Sinai. Perhaps then, Maimonides' reasoning is that the Sinaic command of sacrifice is that alone to which he refers which is to counter idolatry. But cases prior to the Sinaic command of sacrifice were not for the eradication of idolatry. But again, this answer is far too basic that someone like a Ramban would not consider. I am of the opinion that Ramban considered this answer, and yet, still lodged his arguments against Maimonides.

Perhaps Ramban held that even with the sacrificial command at Sinai, sacrifice can not be removed from its original form. This I believe to be the pivotal

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point between Ramban and Maimonides.

Ramban held that although a new command and Torah system was given, nonetheless, if sacrifice had an inceptional structure, i.e., to approach God, it cannot deviate from this form. It may have incorporated additional purposes at Sinai, but it cannot be exclusively to eradicate idolatry as Maimonides holds. There is sound reasoning as to why Ramban takes this approach. When something comes into existence, its form at that moment is integral to its definition. Water was created in a moist state, and as such, it is inherently moist. Water without moisture is not water. Once dust was created inherently dry, this feature forms part of its very definition. So also, sacrifice at Adam's, Able's and Noah's time, emerged as man's own attempt to approach God. Since this is the very inception of the institution of sacrifice, sacrifice by nature is an approach to God, and cannot be viewed as lacking this property. Sacrifice without approach to God is no longer sacrifice, according to Ramban. Based on this reasoning, Ramban held that sacrifice could not be defined solely as that which eradicates idolatry. It must - by definition - include the inceptional property of an approach to God.

However, Maimonides was of the opinion that although sacrifice came into existence in this form, as Ramban says, nonetheless, Sinai has the ability to redefine its structure from the ground up, and completely undermine its original nature. But this addresses Ramban's second argument alone, dealing with the structure of sacrifice. I believe his first argument to be dealing with the goal of sacrifice. There, Ramban is of the opinion that just as the structure cannot deviate, so also the goal of approaching God must be an inherent property of sacrifice. It is for this reason that Ramban gives two arguments, as each addresses an additional point of contention Ramban had with Maimonides' view.

According to Maimonides, Sinai had the ability to take an institution and completely redefine it. The new reality of "national commandments" given at Sinai are so overwhelmingly objective in their truth, so real, as they emanate from God as part of His Will, that commandments go so far as to define what truth is. The Sinaic Commandments redefined reality for the Jew. Sacrifice according to Maimonides for all halachik intents and purposes didn't exist prior to Sinai. Historically it did, but now as the Jews had new laws governing their lives, previously known activities were only similar in name, and nothing else. Sacrifice prior and subsequent to Sinai were as divergent in nature as are color and weight. This was clear to Maimonides, and he therefore had no qualms about explaining sacrifice as if it never existed before.

Ramban was of the opinion that although Sinai redefines our actions, it only adds the nature of 'command' to a preexisting institution of sacrifice, but it does not redefine its original nature. ■



Temple & Altar: Two Structures – One Goal

Parshas Vayikra commences the Torah's laws of sacrifices. When studying Maimonides' laws of the Selected House (the Temple) we come across many astounding findings, and much philosophy, not usually found in his formulations of Jewish law:

Law 1:1:

"It is a positive command to make a House to God, prepared to offer the sacrifices in it."

Law 1:3:

"Once there was built the Temple in Jerusalem, all other places became completely prohibited to build a House to God, and to sacrifice in them sacrifices. And there is no House for all generations except in Jerusalem alone, and on Mount Moriah that is there, as it states, 'And David said, 'this is the House of God and this is the altar of sacrifice to Israel.'"

Law 2:1:

"The Altar's place is exceedingly precise, and it may not be exchanged from its place forever, as it states, 'this is the Altar of sacrifice to Israel.' And in the Temple (here, Maimonides exchanges Altar for "Temple"), Isaac our father was bound (for sacrifice by Abraham) as it states, 'and go for yourself to the land of Moriah', and it says in Chronicles, 'and Solomon commenced to build the House of God in Jerusalem in Mount Moriah that was shown to David his father, that was prepared in the place of David, in the threshing floor of Arnan the Jebusite.'"

Law 2:2:

"And the transmission is in the hands of all, the place where David and Solomon built the Altar in the threshing floor of Arnan, it is the (same) place that Abraham built the altar and bound on it Isaac. And it is the (same) place that Noah built (his altar) when he exited the Ark. And it is the (same) Altar that Cain and Abel sacrificed upon. And on it Adam the First sacrificed a sacrifice when he was created, and from there, was he created. The Rabbis stated, 'Adam, from the place of his atonement was he created.'"

Genesis 28:17, 19:

(Jacob fled from his brother Esav who sought his life for taking the birthright. Jacob arrived at a place where he slept. After Jacob awoke from his famous dream of the ladder with ascending and descending angels, he made this statement)

"And he was afraid and he said, 'How awesome is this place. This is no other than the House of God, and this is the gate to heaven.'" "And he called the name of that place Beth El (God's House)."

Genesis, 35:1: (Many years after the previous quote) "And God said to Jacob, 'arise and ascend to Beth El, and dwell there, and make there an altar to the God Who appeared to you when you fled from your brother Esav.'" (After Jacob's troubles were terminated, God commanded him to return to the House of God (Beth El) and offer a sacrifice.)

Chronicles I, 22:1:

"And David said, 'this is the House of God and this is the altar of sacrifice to Israel.'"

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Immediately, a distinctly clear theme forces itself upon us: God's House (Temple) and the Altar are inseparable. From Maimonides' formulations, to the very Scriptural verses, in every case, the Temple is tied to the Altar! What is this relationship?

Let us outline all our questions, as there are many:

1) What is the concept of each, the Temple and the Altar?

2) What is the relationship between Temple and Altar? Is one more 'primary'? Does one precede the other, as a basis for the other? We notice Maimonides' formulation of Temple as "a place prepared to offer sacrifice. And they celebrate to Him three times a year, as it says, 'And make for Me a Temple...'"

Temple and Altar are clearly bound up with each other. How? (Maimonides includes "celebrate to Him three times a year" perhaps to focus on the significance of a location, to visit.)

3) Maimonides' formulation seems out of order: In chapter one, he discusses the laws of the Temple, and even describes some of the Temple's vessels, such as the Menorah. We would assume that he would complete his laws of the Temple (Menorah and other vessels) prior to discussing the Altar. But he does not. After commencing chapter one with laws of the Temple, he introduces his laws of the Altar in chapter two. In chapter three, he picks up with the Menorah. It would seem that laws of the Altar interrupt an unfinished discussion of the Temple and its vessels. Why does Maimonides discuss Temple, then prioritize Altar by positioning its laws right after laws of the Temple, and then return to the Temple's vessels?

4) In law 1:2 Maimonides describes the historical sites of the Temple and the Altar. In law 1:3, Maimonides teaches that once the Temple was built in Jerusalem, no other place was fit for it, or for sacrifice. What is the reason behind this law?

5) Once I know from law 1:3 that both the Temple and sacrifice can never be relocated from Jerusalem, why does Maimonides seemingly repeat in law 2:1 that we can never change the Altar's location?

6) One point astonishes us: While discussing the Altar in law 2:1, Maimonides teaches that the Altar can never be relocated. But he brings a proof from the location of the Temple! How is the Temple's location a proof that the Altar cannot be relocated? Proof for the Altar's location should be from a source relating to the Altar, not the Temple! Why are the two interchanged?

7) What is significant about the location of our forefathers' sacrifices, all offered at the identical location, and that Adam was actually created from that very spot? This is truly amazing, but what is the idea?

8) When Jacob arose from his prophetic dream, what is the concept of his referring to that place as the "House of God" and the "gates of heaven"? What do these two terms mean?

9) Why did God command Jacob to return to Beth El, the House of God, to offer a sacrifice? Why was this required?

10) A question that underlies all we have asked this far is the following: Why is "location" so integral to the Temple and the Altar? Isn't the act of sacrifice i.e., Temple worship, more essential than 'where' they are performed?

Defining the Temple

Let us begin to answer these questions. However, before moving further, we require a definition for both, the Temple and the Altar. What is the distinction between the two?

Temple is a fixed location for the sacrifices of the Altar, as Maimonides stated, "It is a positive command to make a House to God, prepared to offer the sacrifices in it". We learn that Temple is subordinated to Altar, as it modifies sacrificial practice by confining it to a set locale. Why is such a confinement necessary? Perhaps in part, this addresses the unbridled, religious emotion in man, seen rampant in the sin of the Golden Calf. Sforno teaches that Temple was in fact a response to the sin of that Calf. A delineated "location" for sacrifice, contains man's religious emotion. As stated by the Rabbis, the Temple or "religious expression" is the primary avenue where man's emotions lead him furthest from the truth, furthest from God.

But the main reason is found in the fact that Adam, his sons, Noah, Abraham, Jacob, David and Solomon sacrificed at the same, exact location: they testified to the significance that this place held. But significance of a location must call back to an event. What happened here? As Maimonides taught, its initial significance is that God created Adam there. From that point forward, all of these great individuals recognized the role of God, as man's Creator - their primary focus. By sacrificing to God at this location, they emphasized the importance of this concept. Each sacrifice on this Altar highlighted and reiterated the fundamental of God's existence, and His position as the Creator of the universe - and man. Adam's original sacrifice at this location underlined his place of creation, and the act of sacrifice, as recognition of the Creator. Therefore, we may define Temple as the "fixed location whose identification with fundamental truths properly directs man's approach to God." As the central focus of Temple is the Ark that houses the Torah, Temple functions to embody truth.

Sacrifice had always been associated with a "significant location". Man's "approach to God" is not free, religious expression. It must be guided by precise, fundamental concepts, primarily the

correct notion of God, i.e., the Creator. Sacrificing at the same location of Adam's creation reiterated this idea.

Defining the Altar

Altar is man's approach to God. That is, man sacrifices to draw near to his Maker. We learn from Maimonides that Altar and sacrifice existed from the time of Adam. Altar preceded Temple. (But as you will see from the next paragraph, this is true only in structure.) After he was created, Adam responded to his Maker with sacrifice. Adam was also "created from the place of his atonement", from the place of his sacrifice. What does this mean? It means that even before Adam was created, there was a "place" for his sacrifice. Euphemistically, this means that inherent in man's design, is the need for sacrifice - atonement. So, we can speak of Adam's place of atonement predating him in this respect: sacrifice is integral to man's existence. This means that man has no option; he requires atonement, via sacrifice. Why does man require atonement? It is due to his very nature, as a being that possesses free will and instincts. It is impossible that man never sin: "For man is not righteous in the land who does good and does not sin." (Ecclesiastes, 7:20) Therefore, we say that Adam was created with an inescapable need for atonement, or "man was created from the place of his atonement."

But not all sacrifice was for atonement. Some were for thanks, as in Noah's case, being saved from the Flood. Some were out of recognition for God, as is the case with Adam, upon his creation, prior to sin. Even without sin, sacrifice is part of man's required function. We derive from this that man's existence must include approaching God, i.e., sacrifice. Man does not have an option in this respect. As a created entity, possessing intelligence and instincts, God designed man with the purpose of studying the works of his Creator. It is in this pursuit that man will achieve the most profound fulfillment, and be awed by his studies. If man does not seek out his Maker, he will live unfulfilled and never approach his purpose or true happiness. His central faculty of intelligence will go unused - his purpose, lost. No other being was offered this gift of intelligence. And as a Rabbi taught, such a precious gift, that man's soul is stamped with God's name, the "Tzelem Elokim", "Form of God".

We arrive at a dual nature contained in sacrifice: personal atonement, and recognition of God. However, both share equally in man's approaching God, man's purpose.

Temple and Altar - Ancient Partners

Earlier, we asked what is the relationship between Temple and Altar, and is one more primary. Even before the Temple existed, Jacob

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said, "...How awesome is this place. This is no other than the house of God, and this is the gate to heaven." Before the Temple existed, Jacob already understood the fundamentals underlying these two structures-to-be: "House of God" refers to a "significant location", and "Gates of heaven" mean man's approach to God, or sacrifice as stated by Ramban. Even before our two structures existed in the Law, the concepts of an "instructional location" (Temple) and "approaching God" (Altar) already existed, as all true ideas are eternal. (Torah is a formalization of eternal truths into a system for man. - Proverbs)

This prophetic event of Jacob's is a paramount model for Temple and Sacrifice. It embodies both institutions, while also teaching of their complimentary natures. It is quite a find! Jacob was awed by the realization of alighting upon a location wherein God's providence had resided. Arriving at such a place demands that man call out to God. Perhaps this is why God commanded Jacob to return to this place, named Beth El at that time, and offer a sacrifice. Jacob had not sacrificed there on his first visit, so perhaps he was lacking a perfection realized only through sacrifice at Beth El.

Can we derive any lesson from the very nature of Jacob's dream? Genesis 28:12 describes the dream as a ladder based on the ground reaching heaven, with angels of God ascending and descending, and God standing at the top. I would humbly suggest that the ladder's position and connection between Earth and heaven teaches a relationship between man and God. This relationship also has God at its "destination", or goal. This is man's purpose, to "approach God". The relationship between man and God can only exist via knowledge, i.e., the angels. Cherubim are affixed to the Ark that houses Torah knowledge for the same reason; the relationship between man and God is based on man's knowledge of God, the system of knowledge is conveyed by the cherubim. With no accurate knowledge of God and His Torah, man has no relationship with God; he has no means by which to comprehend God. We may suggest, based on this interpretation, that the very concepts verbalized by Jacob, i.e., "House of God" (Temple) and "gates of heaven" (Altar) are derived from the nature of the dream. Jacob's words are in fact a response to this dream.

The Temple and the Altar go hand in hand. For this reason, Maimonides discussed the Temple in chapter one, and then the Altar in chapter two, before completing all the details of the Temple's vessels. This teaches that Temple exists on par with the Altar. And for this reason, Maimonides formulates his very first law, as "It is a positive command to make a House to God, prepared to offer the sacrifices in it."

We now come to Question 4. "Once the Temple

was built in Jerusalem, no other place was fit for it, or for sacrifice." Perhaps a Temple, built on Mount Moriah, the location of our forefathers' sacrifices, now embodies what all previous Temples did not: man's perfected approach to God, prior to the Golden Calf sin. Our forefathers' sacrifices were untainted with improper, religious expression. Ironically, perhaps the Temple on Mount Moriah reaches its zenith of perfection: it reminds us of the era in which a formal Temple was not required, an era prior to sinful religious expression. On Mount Moriah, the Temple carried with it a never-before achieved status. A new, halachic designation was achieved which could not tolerate relocation. Therefore, relocation is prohibited, as sacrifice now achieved its initial undiluted form displayed by our forefathers. Temple was now synonymous with sacrifice of the most perfected status. It must be retained. Keeping the Temple on Mount Moriah means retaining the significance of approaching God out of a pure recognition of His role as Creator, and not from a subsequent concession to man's Gold Calf sin.

This complimentary relationship of Temple and Altar explains why Maimonides exchanges their terms. Both function together as one unit. Temple has no meaning without Altar, and without the words of the prophet (law 2:4) Altar cannot exist without Temple. This complimentary relationship is also seen by the specific location of the Altar: it must be lined up with the opening of the Temple. This close proximity and alignment conveys their close relationship.

The Torah says, (Exod. 25:8) "And make for Me a Temple, and I will dwell in it." God cannot "dwell", nor can He be "in" anything! Kings I, 8:27, "...the heavens, and the heavens of heavens cannot hold You, how much less this Temple". What does this verse in Exodus mean? Perhaps it embodies our idea: God will associate His name with a location: "in it" means God permits us to view the Temple with a distinct designation associated with Him exclusively. He allows man to use a place to remember Torah fundamentals. "I will dwell in it" means that man may identify the Temple, a location, with true concepts of God.

Discussing this area with Rabbi Reuven Mann, he reminded me of the famous Talmudic saying. Today, although we do not have the Altar, and the Temple does not stand, prayer replaces sacrifice, "Tefilah bimakome karban", "Prayer is in place of sacrifice." (Talmud Brachos, 26a) Rabbi Mann added that even without a quorum, man benefits more when praying in temple. My friend Rabbi Burstein told me of a Gemara where two Rabbis selected to pray where they learned. What do these two Talmudic sections teach? They teach us this very idea that our approach to God must be associated with, and directed by truth, which both our

temples and places of learning represent. Just as our ancient Temple and Altar worked together to purify our approach to God, basing it on truths, so too today, our prayers in place of sacrifice are to be directed by our temples, and our Torah study halls.

As Sforno taught, Temple is a concession to man, and his need to relate to life as a physical being. It is strictly prohibited to have any physical relationship with God, as God is not physical. A physical relationship with God via practices like the Golden Calf is both prohibited, and impossible. However, man is a sentient being requiring physical expression. The concession? Temple and Altar are created as the vehicles through which man uses the physical to obtain true ideas, and express his attachment to God. Unguided, with no sacrifice or location of significance, man created the Golden Calf. However, via the Temple and Altar, man is directed by God's wisdom with precise laws that guide man to true concepts.

The fact that God revealed a prophecy to Jacob, and that He gives prophecy in general, teaches the most primary lesson of our existence: man's purpose goes unrealized without God's intervention i.e., God's instruction. Man makes his most grave error when assuming he is autonomous. Without Temple to define the vital fundamentals of truth, and Altar to relate to our Creator, man is a fish out of water, doomed to failure.

Postscript

Temple and Altar are co-dependent: The knowledge of God acquired through Temple demands that man relate to God, and this is via Altar. Conversely, Altar, as a means to relate to God, requires that our thoughts are refined, and our knowledge of God, true. Temple is a prerequisite for Altar, and Altar is an expression of our perfection obtained via Temple. ■

The Ark's Poles

What is the purpose of haftoras Pekuday teaching that the Cherubim not only covered the Ark with their wings, but they also covered the poles of the Ark? What is derived from this? Additionally, what may be derived from the command (Exod. 25:15) that the Ark's poles are never to be removed? Lastly, what may be derived from the order of the Ark's assembly, (Exod. 40:20) "he (Moses) placed the Tablets into the Ark, he placed the poles on the Ark and he placed the Kapores (Ark cover) on the Ark"? Shouldn't the poles be last, as the Kapores should most certainly be prior, as it is more essential than the poles?

I believe the answer to all these questions is one concept, that is, that the Ark has no "destination"

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i.e., the Temple. The Ark outweighs the Temple in importance, as the Ark houses the Law - man's main pursuit in life. Suggesting that the Ark has found 'purpose' in something else, attributes greater import to something other than the Ark itself. This is as if to say that a higher purpose in the Ark has been realized by the Ark's arrival in the Temple. This is not so. Torah study must always claim top priority for man. To demonstrate that the Ark has not 'come to finally rest' in the Temple, the poles are never to be removed. This informs us that the Ark which houses the law must be the central focus of the Temple - counter intuitive to what we would expect of such a marvelous structure.

This is why Moses inserted the poles prior to covering the Ark, to demonstrate that the poles of all other objects are merely for transport. But the Ark's poles are integrally tied to the Ark's purpose and designation. Moses therefore displayed the pole's essential character, giving them prominence by inserting them even prior to covering the Ark with the Kapores. This also explains the passage in the haftora that the Cherubim not only covered the Ark with their wings, but they also covered the poles. ■

Temple: Response to the Golden Calf

In Exodus, 25:8, God instructs man, "Make Me a Temple and I will dwell among you."

Sforno comments on the purpose of the Temple in 25:9 as follows: "In order that I may dwell in your midst, to speak to you and to accept your prayers and the (Temple) service of Israel, not as the matter was prior to the Golden Calf, as was stated, (Exod. 20:21) "In every place that you mention My name, I will come to you and bless you." Sforno says that prior to the sin of the Golden Calf, the statement in Yisro, "In every place that you mention My name..." teaches that God's relationship to man was that anyone, anywhere, would have his prayers recognized by God. But subsequent to the Golden Calf, a new system was demanded, "In order that I may dwell in your midst, to speak to you and to accept your prayers and the (Temple) service of Israel..."

Sforno teaches a startling concept; the Temple may have had no objective need, but was a concession in response to the Golden Calf. If the Jews hadn't sinned with that Calf, the structure of Temple, the ark, the menorah and all the vessels might not have been commanded, according to Sforno. "Make Me a Temple and I will dwell among you" teaches that after the Calf, without the

Temple, God will not dwell with us. One might suggest this is an impossible theory, as the Temple appears in the Torah before the sin of the Calf. But Rashi addresses this in Exodus 31:18, "There is no chronology in the Torah; the Golden Calf preceded the command of the work of the Temple by many days..." Rashi again makes mention (Deut. 10:1) that it was only on Moses' descent from Mount Sinai did God first command him on the work of the Tabernacle. It was at the time of his descent that the Jews had already sinned with the Golden Calf.

What was the precise sin of the Golden Calf, and how does the institution of the Tabernacle and Temple rectify the problem? Sforno also teaches that prior to the Calf, one's prayer was readily noticed by God, afterwards it was not. This needs an explanation.

A few other relationships are seen between the sin of the Calf and the Temple/Tabernacle, which supports Sforno's explanation. Those who sinned with the Calf were not allowed to serve in the Temple. For this reason, the entire tribe of the Levites who abstained from the sin of the calf merited Temple service. One might suggest a simple explanation; idolaters are prohibited to officiate in God's service. But perhaps there is more to this command. Additionally, no gold was used in the service of the Holy of Holies, due to the reason that "the accused cannot be come the defender". That is, the accused - the gold (representative of the Gold Calf) cannot be part of man's service seeking atonement. One does not mention his gravest sins when seeking pardon for his offenses. Similarly, the Torah teaches that the High Priest's garb including gold must not be worn when entering the Holy of Holies. Prior to entering, he must change into his white garments. Again we see a tie between Temple law and the sin of the Golden Calf.

The Torah teaches that the Jews gave their jewelry for the creation of the Calf, (Exod., 32:3) "And they removed, all the people, the rings of gold, that were in their ears, and they brought it to Aaron." We also learn that the Tabernacle was created from the peoples' donation of Terumah, "...from every man whose heart motivates him you shall take my Terumah". Is there any parallel between these two acts of giving, that the Torah wished to record both?

Another verse in response to the sin of the Calf reads "And Moses took the tent and pitched it outside the camp, far from the camp, and called it the 'Tent of Meeting', and it would be that anyone seeking God would, go out to the Tent of Meeting that was outside the camp." (Exodus 33:7) This verse teaches that prior to the sin, God communicated with Moses within the camp. But after the sin, this close relationship could no longer be. Moses therefore demonstrated this by his removal of his tent to outside the camp of the nation. What may we learn from this act of moving the tent? Isn't it clearly

stated that whoever sought God would exit the camp? So God was still found. What purpose is there in distancing the Tent of Meeting from the people?

To clarify, Sforno is not suggesting that without the sin of the Golden Calf, there would be no institution of sacrifice. Sacrifice dates back to the first men. Adam's children brought sacrifices. Noah, Abraham and so many other figures sacrificed long before the Golden Calf. To clarify, Sforno is suggesting that the institution of Temple alone is due to the sin of the Calf, but he agrees that sacrifice always existed. So our main question is how the Temple addresses the problem of the Golden Calf sin.

How do we begin to answer this main question? The first step would be to understand the sin. We should look for an expression of the sin exhibited by the sinners. This would make for accurate analysis. God's own words describing the Jews' precise flaw would provide an even better clue. Fortunately in this case, we have both.(1) The mixed multitude said about the Calf, (Exod. 32:4) "These are your gods Israel, who took you up from Egypt." Later, after the giving of the tablets to Moses, God says to him concerning the Jews' worship of the Calf, (Exod. 32:8)"They have turned quickly from the path which I have commanded them, they made for themselves a molten calf, and they prostrated to it and sacrificed to it and they said, 'These are your gods Israel, who took you up from Egypt.'" God purposefully repeated this statement in His Torah, "These are your gods Israel, who took you up from Egypt." I believe this is to point us to the Jews' precise error.

God is teaching us that the Jews' sin was due to their wish to relate to God in some tangible form. Ramban and Or Hachaim dismiss the notion that the Jews thought the Calf to be God. Ramban said, "no fool would say the gold that was in their ears is what brought them up out of Egypt." (Exod. 32:4) Ramban explains that the Jews did not say the Calf was God, but that this Calf was some force of God.(2) Or Hachaim says on "they turned aside", that they violated "you shall not make intermediaries." Both Ramban and Or Hachaim agree that the Jews admitted to God's existence, and that this Calf was not viewed by the Jews as God. The Jews' error was their belief that the Golden Calf had forces which effect reality.

Consider the Jews words when they felt Moses was no longer returning, "...Moses the man who took us up from Egypt, we know not what has happened to him." Why did they mention Moses "the man"? This statement too points to the Jews' inability to relate to God as he is, above the physical, "metaphysical". They became attached to the "man" of Moses. When they miscalculated Moses' stay on Mt. Sinai, they were confronted

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with a false belief that Moses was gone. They feared not having some tangible leader, so they created the Golden Calf and said this was responsible some how for their exodus. They desired something physical to relate to. This is not tolerated in Judaism, and many have been killed (Samuel I, 6:19(3)) because of their projection of physical qualities onto God. Judaism demands above all else that we do not project any physical nature onto God, (Deut. 4:15) "And guard yourselves exceedingly for your lives, for you did not see any form on the day God spoke to you on Horeb (Sinai) from amidst flames." The Torah stresses how fundamental it is to know that God is not physical. We saw no physical objects when we heard God speak to us on Sinai.

Maimonides third principle of his 13 Principles reads:

"Principle III. The Denial of Corporeality in Connection with God.

This is to accept that this Oneness that we have mentioned above (2) is not a body and has no strength in the body, and has no shape or image or relationship to a body or parts thereof. This is why the Sages of blessed memory said with regards to heaven there is no sitting, nor standing, no awakeness, nor tiredness. This is all to say that He does not partake of any physical actions or qualities. And if He were to be a body then He would be like any other body and would not be God. And all that is written in the holy books regarding descriptions of God, they are all anthropomorphic. Thus said our great Rabbis of blessed memory The Torah spoke in man's language (i.e. using human terms so that man would have some understanding). And the Rabbis have already spoken at length on this issue. This is the third pillar and is attested to by the verse "For you saw no image" meaning that you did not see an image or any form when you stood at Sinai because as we have just said He has no body nor power of the body."

Perhaps now we may answer how the Temple addresses the sin of the Golden Calf. The Temple had many unique qualities and vessels. But most central was the fact that it was constructed of two rooms; a Holies, and a Holy of Holies. In this second room, no man was allowed to enter, save the high priest on Yom Kippur, and even then, only with smoking incense, a veil. Sinai too was accompanied by smoke and darkness. God created His "appearance" as cloud. In all cases, we are taught that there is an impenetrable veil - cloud - between God and man. "For man cannot know me when alive." (Exod. 33:20) Man must accept his mind's shortcomings, his inability to know God. We have but five senses of perception. All that cannot be perceived through these senses is completely out of

our range of knowledge. In a dark room, vision does not function, as vision requires light. God is not physical, similarly, He cannot be perceived by human sensation, which requires physical stimulation.

The sin of the Golden Calf was man's futile attempt to grasp what man cannot grasp. When man assumes there is a sensory connection between God and the physical, man forfeits his purpose. His existence is worthless, as all he knows or learned in his life, to him, stems from an imagined physical god, not the true metaphysical God. His knowledge is completely inaccurate. His life is wasted due to his incorrect notions of God. He deserves death. Therefore, those who worshiped the Calf were killed, just as those who looked into the Ark when it was returned by the Philistines. (Samuel I, 6:19) In both cases, man assumed something physical in connection with God. In truth, the underlying flaw is man's overestimation in his own knowledge. In both cases the sinners felt all must be within their grasp, including God. They could not accept human inability.

We mentioned that the Temple has two rooms, one of which is off limits. The Temple attempts to teach man through man's distance from a certain room, that man must admit complete ignorance about the nature of God's existence. Even more, man must not even try to approach any understanding of God's existence - it is impossible for our minds to apprehend, and is "off limits". We cannot know Him. A location, the Holy of Holies, coupled with the command never to enter, opposes man's assumption that God is approachable, and teaches that in fact, we cannot fathom God's existence. What we do know concerning God, is as Maimonides explains, is what He is not. We can only have negative knowledge of God. That is, we know He is not physical, He has no emotions, He occupies no place, He is not "in" this world, etc. Te Rabbis say, "He is the 'place' of the world, and the world is not His place." This means that God is the "place" or source of the world, but He occupies no place. He is not physical.

Prior to the sin, the people had not demonstrated a false notion of God. Therefore, as Sforno states, in any place they called to God, He responded. This is because they were calling on the true God. However, subsequent to their sin, they corrupted their view of God, and he therefore could not answer. They did not call to "Him", but to an imagined idea of God. An imagination cannot answer someone's call. Moses' removal of his Tent of Meeting was a demonstration that there was a separation between God and the people after the sin of the Golden Calf.

Perhaps we can also answer why the Temple was constructed from free donations. Such an act demonstrates that the donor is not attached to the

precious metals, gems, and materials, but he gives freely. In fact, his focus on physical property is replaced by an act of following a Divine command, to build a Temple to God. Such a donation enables man to remove his grip on the physical, which the sinners could not accomplish. Man is also perfected by this display of following God's commands, not man's own fantasies. ■

(1) But even the Jews' sin is recorded by God's divine words, so in fact, both are God's clues for our study.

(2) Either notion is a corruption in our view of God, and is prohibited.

(3) The Jews looked into the ark upon its return from the Philistines. This demonstrated their belief that there is something to be seen in relationship to God. They harbored a notion that God is connected with the physical. A large amount of Jews were punished there with death by God's hand.

The Menora: A Lesson in Subordination to God

This week's Torah portion "Truma" outlines the Temple and the various vessels housed therein. Of considerable detail is the Menora, the structure of which includes mandatory decorations of cups, knobs and flowers, unlike the other vessels: the Ark, the Table or the Altars. It possesses seven branches, six of which emanate from the center stem with identical design requirements; three branches on each side of the center stem. The seventh, center stem contains more designs than the others, and the entire Menora was required to be hammered from a single block of gold: it could not be made piecemeal and assembled.

Not too much information or explanation is readily available about these designs, but as we research the Menora, we start to learn of a few references to Menora in the Torah. I wish to cite these references, and try to understand their uniting theme.

The Menora is one of three institutions over which Moses was perplexed. The Talmud states that a fiery Menora descended from heaven to convey its form to Moses. (Menachos 29a) What is the meaning of this statement?

Perhaps the most popular source of the Menora is the holiday of Channukah. After the Jews won the war, they returned to resume Temple service by lighting the Menora. Finding insufficient, pure oil to last eight days until they could press new oil, God

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created the famous miracle where one day's supply of oil lasted those eight days. Unable to light each day was not the Jews' fault, so we wonder the need for such a miracle, as the Jews were already victorious. It is not a miracle that saved the Jews, nor was it needed. Why then did God perform this miracle?

Parshas Beha-alosecha commences with the command of Aaron lighting the Menora. This follows the inauguration of the Tabernacle (Temple) as the first service. Why is Menora the first service?

On Shabbos Channukah we read the Haftorah of Parshas Beha-alosecha found in Zechariah. It describes God's promise to enable the reconstruction of the second Temple through Darius, Queen Esther's son. In this portion of the Prophets, Zechariah sees a vision, part of which reveals a golden Menora. Zechariah also sees olives which on their own, are miraculously pressed and provide golden oil for the Menora. The lesson according to Rashi is that just as this vision of the olives required no man to press oil from them, so too, no man will be required to create the situation where the Temple will be rebuilt, as the verse states, "not by an army and not by strength, but by My spirit, says God of hosts." Meaning, this part of the vision is an analogy to future events: just as man is unnecessary to create oil and light the Menora, man is equally unnecessary to enable the situation to rebuild the Temple; God alone will accomplish this. The question is what does the Menora have to do with God's message to Zechariah? The Menora's presence seems arbitrary. Any item could be used to convey God's message... why a Menora?

However, we notice in all three of these sections, a Menora is found, and the section is dealing with either resuming temple service (Channukah), initiating Temple service (Beha-alosecha) or the rebuilding of the Temple (Zechariah). What is this central role of the Menora, when the Ark is truly the focus of the Temple, as it houses the Torah? Additionally, while donning Tefillin each morning, we recite these words: "and the good oil pour out on the seven branches of the Menora, to spread forth Your goodness to Your creations." What is this statement's meaning? What does the Menora have to do with God pouring out His "good oil" (goodness) to His creations?

One more matter is essential to our discussion: Sforno's explanation for the very need for Temple. Of course, Temple is not "for" God, as God needs nothing. Temple is for man. But as Sforno taught, Temple was a response to the Golden Calf. The Jews expressed an idolatrous need, as Moses presumably was dead, and the nation could not bear existing with no physical figurehead. Thus, the Jews said, "...Moses the man who took us up from Egypt, we know not what has happened to him." Why did they mention Moses "the man"? It was due to their over attachment to man, instead of God.

Sforno explains that the Jews then created the Golden Calf to replace Moses. They did not truly assume the Calf was God, but that this Calf would be the means through which they could relate to God. Nonetheless, this was a grave sin. However, this sin displayed the level of the Jews, that they required a tangible method of approaching God. Temple was God's response: it would act as a controlled outlet of sorts. God would allow their tangible approach to Him, never once allowing the Jew to view God as tangible, but merely offering them a means, on their level, to worship God. If we understand God's message to the Jews here, we can now answer our main question regarding the role of the Menora.

With Temple, God teaches mankind that our own means of approaching Him – the Golden Calf – must fail in truly relating to God. Human ideas by definition are qualitatively and quantitatively less than God's perfect knowledge. But not only are our ideas flawed, the central point I wish to make is this: man cannot initiate a relationship with God, unless God makes this relationship a reality, and does so first. For the Jews to presume that creating a golden animal will realistically relate them to God, is a crime, which earned them death. Our understanding of the true means by which we relate to God is so essential, that without it, our lives are worthless. We may now understand why Menora is so essential to Temple.

Temple, as we said, is God's allowance for mankind to relate to Him in an Earthly and tangible fashion. But since the Jews sinned, assuming they might initiate a relationship with God on their own, and with their own fabricated devices and acts, God corrects us. And not only did those Jews possess the emotion responsible for the Golden Calf's creation, we are all still the same "human" design, sharing the seeds of that sin, and in need of keeping a "lid" on those idolatrous emotions. The Talmud teaches that the Yetzer Hara – the evil instinct – emerged from the Temple's "Holy of Holies" in the form of a fiery lion. This parable means that it is in the religious sphere (Temple) that man's idolatrous emotions are most powerful. And therefore, in this religious sphere (Temple worship) we find the most exacting of laws to restrain this emotion. We find today all too often, many Jews wishing to express greater "religiosity" than others. Man's ego teams with his religious emotion, and seeks grandeur in the eyes of his fellow, instead of in God's eyes. God, having created our religious emotions, warns us not to add to the Torah, for this very reason. Radak's last "Yaish Omrim" in Zafania 1:8 explains how God punished Jews who dressed differently than the other Jews, just to present themselves as more religious. We have digressed, but for good reason. Let us return to the Menora.

Now, as Sforno taught, man sinned by assuming

he knew how to relate to God: he thought his arbitrary actions of creating a Golden Calf might have some real meaning before God. However, this is pure idolatry and imagination. How does God correct us? We require this vital lesson that we cannot initiate a relationship with God, but it is God who does so, and it is God's prescribed actions and laws, which are truly recognized by Him. We are taught of the Menora's essential role in our aforementioned three cases.

When reestablishing Temple service during Channukah, God made certain that the very initiation – Menora lighting – was not by natural means, but through that miracle. When God gave Zechariah his vision, again, God informed him that the Temple would be rebuilt through God: "not by an army and not by strength, but by My spirit, says God of hosts." (Zech. 4:6) Meaning, man's relationship to God (Temple service) in these two cases, required a reminder that this relationship exists... only due to God's will, and man cannot effectuate a relationship arbitrarily, without God's will. We learn that man must subordinate his religious desires, to God's exact prescriptions of service. The honest person will ask, "How can man relate to the Creator of the universe?" And a great, honest man did already express this: "What is man that you are mindful of him, or the son of man that you remember him? (King David, Psalms, 8:5) Humility demands this response of King David. However, God does create a relationship, for which we must be thankful. So our two cases teach that God intervened, not allowing man to assume he might relate to God, without God's will or methods. Perhaps this also explains the Talmudic portion citing the "fiery Menora" that taught Moses of its perplexing design. The concept of a "perplexing design" suggests this idea again: that we must subordinate our knowledge, to God's knowledge. Even the most perfect and intelligent man relied on God's instruction.

But now you will ask, "Where was there any act of God in the inaugural service in Beha-alosecha?" To this, I ask you, "Why did God select the Menora, and not another item, to function as His lesson in Zechariah and during Channukah?"

Again: Temple (man's service to God) demands that man recognize God's methods, and that God initiates any relationship with man. I cannot explain the Menora's knobs, cups and flowers, but I wish to suggest why it is designed with six branches emanating from a seventh. I believe this refers to Creation, from which six days emanated, and rest was established for the seventh. The very concept of creation is the most primary example of God's relationship with everything: His creation of matter's very existence is the most primary expression of His relationship with matter, with the entire universe. Perhaps for this reason, God uses the

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Menora to demonstrate this lesson, that He creates this "relationship" with man, just as he forged the basis of all relationships, by granting everything existence. The act of creation is the expression of God's relationship to matter, per excellence. He therefore structured the Menora to embody an expression of "Creation" so that Temple will have an item displaying the foundation of our relationship with the Creator: an object which resembles creation, an emanating six days, paralleled by an emanating six branches. Perhaps for this reason we recite, "and the good oil pour out on the seven branches of the Menora, to spread forth Your goodness to Your creations" as we wind the Tefillin "seven times" on our arms. Again here, when in service to God wearing His Tefillin, we remind ourselves that without His Mitzvos or His desire, we have no means to relate to Him.

Menora resembles creation, and by contemplating creation, we realize the idea of God relating to creation. And as this Menora sits in the Temple, the place where we desire to approach God, we are made aware of this truth, that only through God's methods, will we have any relationship with Him. We are thereby averted from subjective, idolatrous, religious expressions as displayed by the Jews who created the Golden Calf. Menora reminds us to rely on God's means to approach Him, so that we truly approach Him, and not imagine we do. God creates the truth that we can relate to Him, and thus, He created miracles when the temple was reestablished and rebuilt. Temple service devoid of a clear teaching that God enables such service is false. God desires we live by truth, so God teaches us with lessons as these.

This is a primary lesson for us all. We must recognize by Torah study what is true and what is false concerning our notions of God. We must then adhere meticulously to His commands, as He alone knows the only means for our relationship with Him.

Studying God's Torah is the greatest command, and where we find our true expression as intelligent beings. But although as we said, the Ark which houses the Torah is the true focus of the Temple and our lives, the Menora teaches a vital lesson as well, regarding our relationship with God. Temple addresses the entire human being, and part of our Earthly existence encompasses not only Torah study (Ark), but also our approach to God in a relationship. Menora is the vehicle that educates man on this relationship, restraining our religious expression to only what God deems proper, and teaching that our relationship follows His methods, not our own.

To partake of reality, man must subjugate his feelings, to God's true knowledge. This, I feel, is a goal of the Menora. ■



My friend Jessie was reviewing the Incense Altar in Parshas Tetzaveh. She wondered why it was omitted from inclusion in last week's Parsha Terumah, where the other vessels were discussed. The incense altar is one of four vessels located in the Temple. The other three are the Ark, the Showbread Table and the Menorah. Why was the Incense Altar not included in the discussion of the other three vessels?

I started to look over this section and noticed that the command to burn incense is connected to both; the cleaning and lighting of the Menorah, each morning and evening respectively:

"And on it Aaron shall fumigate a spice incense every morning, when he cleans the lights, he shall incense it. And when Aaron lights the lights in the evening, he shall incense it, a regular incense before God for your generations." (Exod. 30:7,8)

What is the connection between the Incense Altar and the Menorah? Is the burning of incense only accidentally tied to these two parts of the day, or does something in the incense require this timing? The Talmud teaches that the incense is to be burned quite literally "during" the cleaning of the Menorah: the priests would clean the wicks and ashes from 5 of the 7 bowls of the Menorah; interrupt their cleaning with the lighting of the incense, and return to clean the remaining two bowls. What is the

reason for this interruption? Which demands which: does Menorah demand incense, or does incense demand Menorah? Perhaps, they require each other. Reading the actual verses below, it appears to me that the Incense Altar follows the 'lead' of the Menorah: it is fumed, only when work is done with the Menorah. So we conclude that the time of burning incense is subordinated to the Menorah. What is this relationship? What purposes do these two vessels serve? God's laws must be reasonable.

Another interesting point is the Torah's law regarding the Incense Altar's position. It is actually described first:

"And you shall place it before the Parochess, which is over the Ark of Testimony; before the Kaporets which is on the Testimony, by which I meet you there." (Exod. 30:1)

Of course we wonder why two relationships are stated. The Incense Altar is to be placed, 1) before the Parochess (separating curtain) and, 2) before the Kaporets (the Ark's cover with the golden Cherub figurines). So which one is this Incense Altar to be placed in front of: the Parochess or the Kaporets? And why is its position considered "before" the Parochess? It is in fact not directly in front of it: this Incense Altar is further away from this Parochess curtain, than are the Menorah and the Showbread Table. Rashi answers: it is equidistant from the left and right walls as one enters the Temple. In contrast, the Table was at the north side at the right, and the Menorah on the south side at the left, not centered, as was the Altar. Rashi states that "before the Parochess" teaches that one must align the Incense Altar to be directly in line with the Ark's position. This means that there is a relationship between the Altar and the Ark. What is it?

An interesting chapter in Maimonides work, the "Guide" is apropos at this point.

Maimonides' Guide for the Perplexed – Book III, CHAPTER IX

"THE corporeal element in man is a large screen and partition that prevents him from perfectly perceiving abstract ideals: this would be the case even if the corporeal element were as pure and superior as the substance of the spheres; how much more must this be the case with our dark and opaque body. However great the exertion of our mind may be to comprehend the Divine Being or any of the ideals, we find a screen and partition between Him and ourselves. Thus the prophets frequently hint at the existence of a partition between God and us. They say He is concealed from us in vapours, in darkness, in mist, or in a thick cloud: or use similar figures to express that on account of our bodies we are unable to comprehend

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His essence. This is the meaning of the words, "Clouds and darkness are round about Him" (Ps. xcvi. 2). The prophets tell us that the difficulty consists in the grossness of our substance: they do not imply, as might be gathered from the literal meaning of their words, that God is corporeal, and is invisible because He is surrounded by thick clouds, vapours, darkness, or mist. This figure is also expressed in the passage, "He made darkness His secret place" (Ps. xviii. 12). The object of God revealing Himself (on Sinai) in thick clouds, darkness, vapours, and mist was to teach this lesson; for every prophetic vision contains some lesson by means of allegory; that mighty vision, therefore, though the greatest of all visions, and above all comparison, viz., His revelation in a thick cloud, did not take place without any purpose, it was intended to indicate that we cannot comprehend Him on account of the dark body that surrounds us. It does not surround God, because He is incorporeal. A tradition is current among our people that the day of the revelation on Mount Sinai was misty, cloudy, and a little rainy. Comp." Lord, when thou wentest forth from Seir, when thou marchest out of the field of Edom, the earth trembled, and the heavens dropped water" (Judges v. 4). The same idea is expressed by the words "darkness, clouds, and thick darkness" (Deut. iv. 11). The phrase does not denote that darkness surrounds God, for with Him there is no darkness, but the great, strong, and permanent light, which, emanating from Him, illuminates all darkness, as is expressed by the prophetic simile, "And the earth shined with His glory". (Ezek. xliii. 2)."

Maimonides makes it quite clear that God orchestrated Revelation at Sinai with clouds. This was done precisely to teach our ignorance of what God is. One might think – especially at Sinai – that he has received some positive knowledge of God. Therefore, God cloaked that event amidst darkness, cloud and rain. He desired no one to walk away, assuming they acquired any positive knowledge about Him. Moses too reminds the people: "you saw no form" when referring to that awesome event. So disastrous is the fallacy that we might know anything about God, that God killed 57,000 people when they looked into the Ark upon its return from the Philistines. Once someone feels there can be something "seen" in relation to God, he has forfeited his life, as he errs in the most primary of all areas: what God is and what He is not. He is worthy of death.

Clouds

God manifests His providence over Israel via cloud - both in the Temple, and during the Exodus. God uses cloud to embody the idea that He cannot be understood: His true nature is "clouded" by our

very physical natures, as Maimonides stated. On Yom Kippur the High Priest smokes the entire Holy of Holies, lest he too fall prey to a notion that something may be seen in connection to God, in that exalted room housing the stunning Cherubs and the miraculous Ten Commandments.

Ramban's Equation

The first Ramban on Parshas Terumah states that of one were to study the account of Revelation at Sinai, he would understand the Temple and Tabernacle. I did uncover that, to which Ramban alludes. His equation is strictly limited to a parallel between the Temple and Sinai, and nothing else. However, I did notice some eye-opening parallels:

- 1) The Jews left Egypt behind them – where, via the first Passover sacrifice, they denounced animal worship.
- 2) Upon their exit from Egypt, the Jews were led by God's cloud by day, and His pillar of fire at night.
- 3) They were sustained with Manna, God's miraculous bread.
- 4) All of this took place en route to Sinai where the Torah was given.
- 5) Sinai took place amidst a flaming mountain.
- 6) God's words emanated from the darkness.

Now compare those to these:

- 1) The priest leaves the altar behind him outside the Temple – where animals are killed.
- 2) Upon entrance in the Temple, he first encounters the Gold Altar of incense, which makes clouds only by day, while he lights the Menorah only at night.
- 3) In the Temple is the Table housing the showbread, twelve loaves correspond to the Twelve Tribes.
- 4) All of this is en route to the Holy of Holies, where God's Torah is housed.
- 5) The Ark is a golden structure that mimics the flames.
- 6) God's words emanate from the concealed Holy of Holies.

History Reiterated – Temple Embodies God's Providence

I am not offering a conclusive explanation here. I merely wish to suggest my observations. But I do find them intriguing. Why do we reiterate the cloud, the pillar of fire, Manna, and Sinai in the Temple's vessels and design? These events imparted to us levels of knowledge of God's providence – this is how God works. Such knowledge is our objective: to arrive at an ever growing knowledge of God's ways, His justice, kindness, mercy, and all other methods. These historical events become eternally solidified in the Temple's vessels. Each one alludes to some

aspect of how God relates to man, teaching us more truth about the Creator. Although we never experienced it first hand, all future generations benefit from what God imparted to those Jews who left Egypt, by studying or experiencing the Temple. The Divine providence they experienced, teaching them new truths about God, is also available to us through studying the Torah's record of those events, and through Temple.

Subordinate to the Menorah

I again suggest inconclusively. Besides recalling the pillar of fire, perhaps the Menorah's light also alludes to "knowledge of God". Its seven branches certainly remind one of Creation's seven days...an allusion to God's wisdom. Light too in Torah is equated to Torah knowledge, "For a flame is a mitzvah, and Torah is light". (Proverbs, 6:22) Perhaps then, our limited knowledge of God must be tempered by the Incense Altar's cloud. As Maimonides taught, cloud always encompasses God. Similarly, cloud must encompass light. The Altar must always provide cloudy fumes when actively working with the Menorah. That which embodies the knowledge of God – the Menorah's light – must be accompanied by the realization that we never achieve positive knowledge of God: He is cloaked, and thus, the incense must cast a veil with its billows.

For this reason, the Altar is to follow the Menorah's lead: when one works with the Menorah, only then does the Altar enter the picture. The Altar "negates" something, and does not exist of its own. It is therefore not recorded together with those other three vessels that impart positive concepts. The Incense Altar reminds man that he cannot possess any positive knowledge about God.

Not only is it true that we have no positive knowledge of God, but if we were to assume this, we would then follow with an additional error: we would 'project' onto God. It is man's nature that when he is familiar with something, that he assumes more than what reality dictates. You might meet someone new who is similar to an old friend, and then you might assume other similarities to exist, although you never witnessed such similarities. The same is the case in connection to God. If one were to make one false assumption, he would make others. Perhaps this is an additional reason why we are so careful not to make any assumptions about God. The very existence of this Incense Altar addresses the need to constantly reiterate never to cross that line.

Position

This approach would also answer the position-

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ing of the Incense Altar. It was aligned with the Parochess, as this very "curtain" carried the same function as the Incense Altar: they both serve to "cover" something. I found the verse describing the positioning of the Incense Altar quite interesting. I will note it again: "And you shall place it before the Parochess, which is over the Ark of Testimony; before the Kaporess which is on the Testimony, by which I meet you there." (Exod. 30:1) The verse keeps shifting what it is exactly that we place the Altar before: is it the Parochess, the Kaporess, the place where God speaks to us?

Perhaps the very structure of this verse alludes to the elusive nature of knowledge of God. We are not told to place the Altar before one, single object, but many references are given, as if to say, even in Temple, there is no such idea of "before God". He is not physical. He takes up no space. He is not "in" the Temple.

On this point, my friend Shaye suggested this verse conveys "degrees of separation" between God and us. And this is conveyed only in the Temple. For it is only when a 'relationship' exists – in Temple – that degrees of separation may apply.

However, the Parochess is mentioned first in our verse because of its similar function to the Altar. However, ultimately, we are to arrive at the purpose of the Temple: greater knowledge of God. Thus, the end of the verse refers to the place where God speaks from, from where knowledge emanates. This is the objective of Temple.

Addendum

On a micro level, Menorah and the Incense Altar create light and darkness respectively. Through them we are mindful of what we can and cannot know. On a macro level, again we see this parallel: God's first creations included light and darkness. As if these two entities precede all others in importance, and rightfully so: knowledge is the purpose in God's creation of a universe...for mankind to study His wisdom. The parallel continues even into man's very workings: man's conscious and unconscious minds deal with what is known, and what is hidden.

In Genesis, God created lights from the darkness. Of all his physical creations, most stupendous are His heavenly luminaries. Conversely, man moves in the opposite direction: declaring his ignorance of He who is all knowing. God created the great lights, while man strives to escape his "night".

Perhaps we have shed some light on the fact that we are in the dark. ■



Egypt to Sinai: In the Dark Part II

Last week we observed a very interesting parallel between the Jews' history, and the Temple's structure. We noted that the Jews left animal worship behind them upon their Egyptian exodus. God led them through a desert by way of pillars of smoke and fire, while sustaining them miraculously with the Manna. They arrived at Sinai obtaining God's Torah. These events are directly paralleled by the Temple's design: the priests enter the Temple with the animal sacrifice behind them. Inside, they encounter smoke from the Incense Altar, fire

from the Menorah, and bread set on the Showbread Table. These are all in service of the primary vessel, the Ark that houses God's Torah. It too is cloaked by a Parochess curtain, as was Sinai cloaked in darkness, rain and cloud.

These phenomena of pillars of smoke, fire, and the Manna, were not simply conveniences, but precisely planned by God. Each served a lesson, not just for the Jews who left Egypt, but also for all future generations. So important are their lessons, they form the design of the Temple: God desired that the Egyptian, terrestrial journey mirror every man and woman's internal journey. We all must leave our own "Egypt". Life is a struggle to abandon our infantile and primitive natures, our own Egypt, and adhere to the truth, embodied by the Menorah's light. And as we said, we temper our knowledge with our admission of our ignorance, conveyed by the Incense Altar's cloud. And if we truly devote ourselves to this mission for which we were created, God's Manna - His providence for our physical needs - will be readily found, just as it was prepared for the Jews. And just as the Manna was miraculous, we too will not understand how God provide as we engage more hours in Torah study than in work, but He does. God wishes that man devote himself more to study, than to accumulation of wealth. The Manna was actually commanded to be on display in the Temple as a proof of God's ability to sustain us. Again we learn: the lessons of the desert are to be permanent lessons. Maimonides also teaches that for one who abandons the life of monetary concerns, devoting himself to study God's Torah, God will provide his needs. (Mishneh Torah: Laws of Shmita and Yovale, 13:13)

As the Jews eventuated at Sinai to obtain the Torah, so too, the Temple's focus is the Ark which houses the Torah. We are reminded daily of our true purpose: to arrive at an ever-increasing love of God. This may only be accomplished by studying His creation and His Torah. We therefore learn how essential it is that we are aware of our inner natures - our primitive and instinctual tendencies. We all possess them. These emotions and drives work on us each day. We must evaluate which urges rule us, understand their destructive natures, and abandon them, or satisfy them properly. But our minds are to rule our emotions, not the reverse. This too was exemplified by the Jews' Passover sacrifice. Before being redeemed, they had to display their disbelief in the Egyptian animal god. For many, it was too strong a desire, and they perished with the Egyptians in Egypt. One cannot simultaneously adhere to God and an

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animal deity.

It ends up that all those ancient events are not quite so ancient. It would appear that God desired those events to embody mankind's mission...in each generation. It follows that God commanded our recurring Jewish Holidays to set on permanent display these educational episodes. This journey applies to us all, and Temple is the permanent reminder. There are other similar laws. The new moon for example is said to wax and wane, teaching man that he too may decrease by sin, but like the moon, he may again wax to glow in his perfection. The Rabbis indicate that this is an actual purpose in the design of the moon's orbital phases.

Our internal world is quite hidden, and rarely studied. Temple teaches that matters should be just the opposite: we must examine our natures, admitting our poor character traits, and work on improving them as outlined in the Torah. This is where the Keruvim come in.

The Keruvim, or cherubs, were the childlike, gold figurines, which form the Ark's cover. Why were such images attached to the most prized of all Temple vessels housing God's Torah? What do they have to do with the Torah? The Rabbis teach they were similar in design to an infant.

What is an infant? How is it distinguished? I believe cherubs are to embody man who is not yet distorted; he does not yet follow the instinctual, primitive and idolatrous emotions. He is innocent. Keruvim portray man in his yet, uncorrupted state: a child. This is what the knowledge of Torah (housed under the Keruvim) target. Man should return to that state where his emotions have no affect on him. Keruvim are the focus of the Temple, as man's focus is to return to a state where he is similar to a child in this respect.

The zenith of man's existence is when he is untainted with sin, as a child. But this is joined to his other spiritual element: his soul. Man has two missions, to free himself from his instinctual, and cleave to the intellectual, the world of wisdom. But they work hand in hand: man's attachment to the world of wisdom, (the Tablets inside the Ark), is proportionate to how far he removes himself from the grips of his emotion, the Keruvim. The Ark's dual nature of Tablets and Keruvim above, embody man's dual nature of an intellectual and emotional being.

Although the ancient Jews made but one journey from Egypt to Sinai on the ground, all Jews must journey from "Egypt to Sinai" each and every day. ■

The Place of the Altar

YAAKOV TRACHTMAN

Rambam, Hilchos Beis Habechira 2:2, "It is a well known tradition that the place that David and Solomon built the altar in Goren Arnona, was the same place that Abraham built the altar upon which he sacrificed Isaac, and it was the same place which Noah built an altar when he left the ark, and that was the altar which Cain and Abel sacrificed upon, and Adam brought a sacrifice there when he was created...and he was created there. The Rabbis say man was created from the place of his 'kapara', atonement."

This Rambam raises numerous questions:

1. Most of the sacrifices he lists were not done for forgiveness (The Akeda of Isaac was a trial, and Cain and Abel were showing gratitude.). So what does Rambam mean that, "man was created from the place of his 'kapara', atonement"?
2. Why was man created from this place, the place of his "kapara"? What does this teach?
3. What is the significance of these individuals building their altars in the "same place"?
4. What is the significance of these specific, historical examples?
5. What is 'history' doing in a law book?

To begin, let us define "kapara". Kapara – or atonement – means to say that a person can relate to God, even though he is inherently a lowly being. This is an astonishing thing, as King David states (Psalms 8:5) "Ma Enosh Ki Tizkerenu?", "What is man that You shall be mindful of him?" Man should be trapped in his mundane activities, unable to reach the metaphysical.[1] When a person offers a sacrifice, he is recognizing his state, and the ability to bring himself to closeness with God. This explains the Rabbis' statement: "Mimakom kaparato Nivra", "From the place of his atonement was man created." It was essential to man's creation, that there was the capacity to relate to God. If the means of attaining closeness to God was not specifically set up in his creation, man would be unable to create such a relationship; man's existence would be worthless.

This is why all of these individuals built their altar in the same place. They all desired their sacrifice to reflect the idea that a person's ability to relate to God is only due to God's kindness in endowing man with that capability.

The events the Rambam lists were not merely personal sacrifices. Rather, each one of these sacrifices marked the beginning of a new period in human existence. At the beginning of each

period, the person brought a sacrifice to express the fact that the nature of this existence is one of "kapara".[2]

Adam brought a sacrifice at the first moment of human existence (even before man ever sinned). Cain and Abel (Adam's sons) brought a sacrifice from the fruit of their labor, which was the new state of man's existence due to Adam's punishment. Noah brought a sacrifice at the beginning of a new period of man. God recreated the world through Noah (albeit with lesser lifespans) after man was worthy of destruction. At the Akeida, Abraham was initializing a new framework for man to operate in. Since most of man had turned to idol worship, God selected Abraham to be the progenitor of a nation whose role is to perfect the world: in contrast to the original plan, which was for the whole world to reach perfection on their own.

Each of these individuals brought a sacrifice to demonstrate that even though man is at a lower level of existence, the foundation of man's existence must be a relationship with God (through whichever framework is currently at his disposal). This relationship is demonstrated via sacrifice.

King David knew this idea and therefore he chose this place for the altar for all generations. He desired every person who brought a sacrifice to recognize the idea of "kapara", which is the essence of sacrifice.

What about Rambam's insertion of history, into a law book? The Rambam placed history in a book of law in order to show that there is an entity of altar outside of the framework of Temple. The place of the altar does not stem from its identity as a vessel of the Temple, and has no designated place in the Temple's Courtyard (like the Menora in the Heichal). Rather, that the idea of altar – sacrifice – exists in its own right, as the place of man's "kapara". The Rambam teaches this by including the entire history of the "Makom kapara" (place of atonement) in his definition of the "Makom kapara", "place of the altar". ■

[1] "Kapara" in the forgiveness sense means the same thing; namely that even though the person sinned and should be permanently distant due to his low level. When he does teshuva God allows the relationship to be reestablished.

[2] In other words, as mankind began a new epoch in his existence, (viz, Adam upon his Creation, Noah after the Flood, etc) this new era demarcating man's 'renewed existence' demanded the characterization of man's inherent need for atonement. Man, without the notion of atonement, is a flawed view of man.

Temple

Testimony to Truth

RABBI DR. MICHAEL BERNSTEIN

The Tablets upon which the Ten Commandments were engraved were placed in the aron kodesh, the holy ark (25:16). "And you shall put testimonies I give you into the ark." In what way are the Ten Commandments considered testimonies?

As understood by many of the great medieval rabbis, the revelation at Sinai, as it was before an entire nation of some three million people, serves as proof of the Torah's veracity. The following quick and necessarily superficial exposition of this proof is based on the Kuzari and further elaborated by Rabbi Israel Chait.

All knowledge falls into two categories, firsthand information, which is observed or deduced directly, and secondhand information, which is received from others in oral, written or any other form. Although firsthand information is the most credible, our lives depend to a great degree on secondhand information that we cannot verify from our own experience. For example, if we go to a doctor, how do we know he attended medical school? And how do we know that what he was taught there is accurate? If we board an aircraft, how do we know the pilot is qualified to fly it? We must rely on secondhand knowledge at every turn, but how do we know it is reliable? How can we believe anything we read in a history book, a textbook or a newspaper? The answer is that we can know by logical deduction. Something is either true or false. If we can determine that it cannot be false, we know it is true.

Secondhand information may be false for only one of two reasons. Either there has been a deliberate lie, or there has been a mistake. If we know that neither of these two factors could be present, we can correctly deduce that the information is true. The events at Sinai were unmistakably miraculous; there was no possibility of error. Furthermore, it occurred before millions of people; it would have been impossible to get them all to share a lie. Since it was impossible to create the record of such an event through error or deceit, the Torah must be true. Was it possible that the Torah was introduced at a later time? It could not happen; the people would never have accepted as true a document containing onerous obligations and describing a critically important event in their own history of which no one had ever heard or spoken.

Let us now focus on the Ten Commandments? Why were they even necessary? The Halachah makes no differentiation among any of the six hundred and thirteen commandments of the Torah. In fact, the Rambam contends that the congregation should not stand up for the reading of the Ten Commandments to avoid any implication of preference.

Rav Hai Gaon and the Maharal, among others, addressed this question by giving a universal significance to the Ten Commandments. According to Rav Hai Gaon, they encapsulate the general principles of all the Torah; any of the other six hundred and three commandments can be traced to a concept they represent. According to the Maharal, the Ten Commandments represent successive layers or levels of infractions, the first five against God; the last five against people.

According to both opinions, we can understand how the Ten Commandments are a testimony to the entire Torah. The revelation at Sinai served as proof of the Torah's veracity for all generations. Since every new commandment Moses would introduce related in some way to the Ten Commandments that everyone had already heard, they would be accepted as the truth.

The "proof of Sinai" supports the conviction that the Torah is true through rational proofs or at least persuasive evidence. Judaism does not demand that we accept the truth of the Torah on faith alone. It would seem that any true religion of God would have to include some rational proof of its veracity. Otherwise, how could a just God hold anyone responsible for that which they cannot know?

It follows that a seeker of truth can determine that the only logical place to investigate is Judaism. Presuming someone has concluded there is a God for whatever reason³cosmological, teleological, ontological, the big bang or several others⁴he will limit his investigation to those religions professing the existence of the one God and claim to be demonstrably true. Christianity and Islam, the other two major religions of monotheism, do not claim they can prove Jesus or Mohammed received an instruction from God. When it comes right down to it, they claim it must be accepted on faith. Since these religions do not make claim to be demonstrably true, they must be false. They are in contradiction. They maintain that a just God holds people responsible to believe that, which cannot be known. This last logical wrinkle does not prove the truth of Judaism, but it establishes it as the only place for an earnest monotheist to seek the true way to worship God. ■



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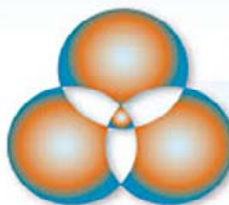
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