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ISSUE NO.

*Dedicated to Scriptural and Rabbinic Verification
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JewishTimes

Volume X, No. 18...Mar. 25, 2011

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Weekly Parsha

Shemini

RABBI BERNIE FOX

"Speak to Bnai Yisrael and tell them to take unblemished animals: a goat for a sin offering, a yearling calf and a lamb for a burnt offering, and a bull and a ram for a peace offering." (VaYikra 9:3)

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Weekly Parsha

The Blessings of Man

RABBI ARI GINSBERG

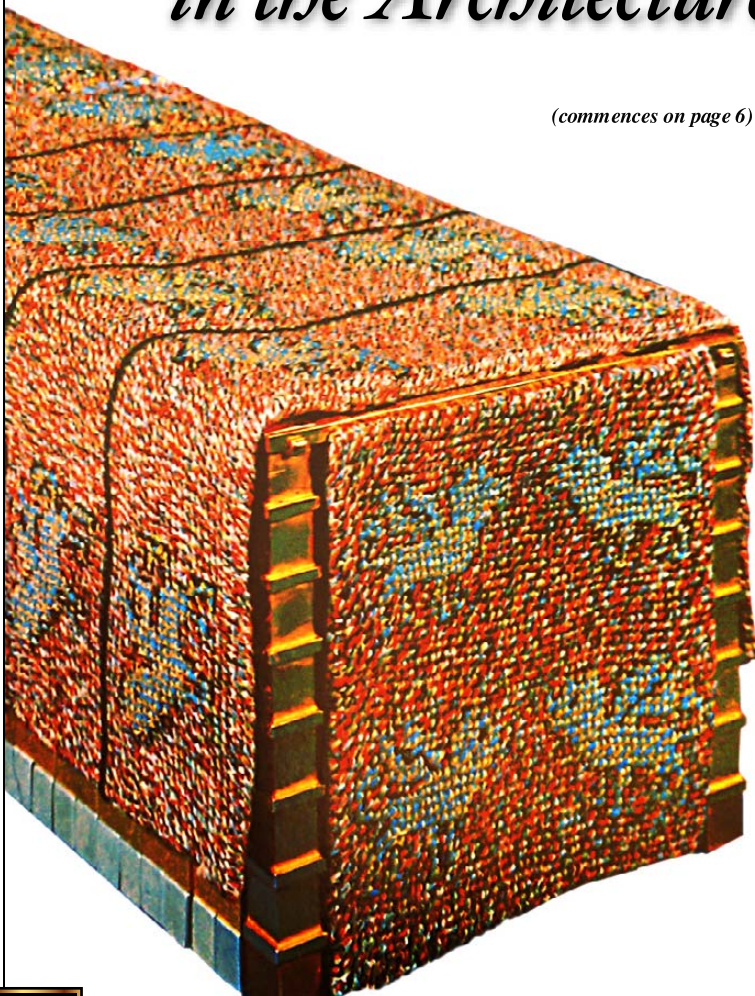
Parshas Shemini begins with an account of the final day of the consecration of the Mishkan. The Torah describes the various sacrifices that were offered by Aharon which culminated in Hashem's presence being manifest in the Mishkan. Just prior to the appearance of the shechina, there is an enigmatic verse indicating that Aharon gave a blessing to klal yisroel. "Aharon lifted his arms toward the people and blessed them, and he came down (from the mizbeach) following the sin offering, burnt offering, and peace offering" (Vayikra 9:22). The Torah mysteriously mentions this blessing without indicating its

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Fundamentals

ANGELS in the Architecture

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Weekly Parsha

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Our parasha describes the sacrifices offered on the eighth day of the inauguration of the Mishcan. Our pasuk indicates that Bnai Yisrael offered a sin offering and two Olah sacrifices. Why were these specific sacrifices required? Gershonides observes that these sacrifices are similar to those required to atone for idol worship. If the nation unintentionally engages in idolatry, it must atone through sacrifices. The required sacrifices are a goat as a sin offering and a bull as an Olah sacrifice. In our case, a goat was brought as a sin offering. However, two Olah sacrifices were required. One was a calf and the other was a lamb. Gershonides asks the obvious question. Why did the Olah offerings differ from those typically brought to atone for idolatry?

Of course, there is a more basic question. If these sacrifices were intended to resemble the atonement for idolatry, the nation must have been guilty of that sin. What act of idolatry had the nation performed? Gershonides suggests that the calf was intended to atone for the Egel HaZahav the Golden Calf. The lamb was offered because the Egyptians had worshipped this animal. This explains the significance of these two offering. Nonetheless, we are still left with a question. We can understand that the need to atone for the Egel. However, why was the nation required to offer a lamb representing the deity of the Egyptian? Initiation of the Mishcan required an absolute repudiation of the idolatry. Bnai Yisrael had been influenced by the idolatry of the Egyptians. The nation was now required to again reject these practices. The Egyptians worshiped the lamb. Through the Olah offering, Bnai Yisrael rejected the Egyptian deity. This does not completely resolve the issue.

The nation had already performed the service of the Pascal lamb before leaving Egypt. This service certainly demonstrated the nation's rejection of Egyptian practices. Why was this further demonstration needed? The answer lies in the second Olah offering. This Olah was a calf. It represented atonement for the Golden Calf the Egel HaZahav. Through constructing the Egel, the nation returned to idolatrous practices learned in Egypt. Therefore, Bnai Yisrael was required to again repudiate these attitudes.



The Midrash Torat Kohanim offers a different reason for offering a goat as a sin offering. This sacrifice atoned for the goat slaughtered by Yosef's brothers. The brothers killed a goat and dipped Yosef's cloak into the blood. They sent the garment to Yaakov and suggested that Yosef had been killed by a wild animal. With this deception, the brothers attempted to conceal their own treatment of Yosef. Why was it necessary at this point to atone for this sin? What is the relationship between the inauguration of the Mishcan and the brother's plot against Yosef?

We must consider the brothers motivation for wishing to destroy Yosef? One factor was Yosef's claim that he would assume a position of authority over the brothers. Yosef told the brothers that they would not all be equals. He would be a leader over the others. The brothers rejected this vision. They

were unwilling to accept the arrangement Yosef described. Bnai Yisrael was now faced with a similar situation. The service in the Mishcan would be performed by a single tribe Shevet Leyve. The other tribes would not participate in this service. The nation was required to demonstrate acceptance of this arrangement. The goat offering provided this demonstration. Through offering this sacrifice, the nation rejected the view of Yosef's brothers. The nation acknowledged the right of Shevet Leyve to assume a leadership role. The people confirmed that the tribes would not be entirely equal.

"And a fire went forth from before Hashem. And it consumed the Olah sacrifice and the fats from upon the altar. And the nation saw. And they sang out and fell upon their faces". (VaYikra 9:24)

The Mishcan was completed and inaugurated. Ahron, the Kohen Gadol offered his first sacrifices. A flame came forth, directed by the Almighty, and consumed the sacrifices from upon the altar. The nation of Israel responded in song. Targum Unkelos explains that the song of the people was not a mere expression of joy. The song was composed of praise of the Almighty. Why did Bnai Yisrael feel compelled to praise Hashem at this moment? The Almighty is the Creator of the Universe. He is exalted above all of His creations. Yet, He relates to and cares for humanity.

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It is easy for us to misinterpret this relationship. We can become egotistical about this special attention. There is an even greater danger. Chovot HaLevavot explains that we can begin to take G-d's kindness for granted. We may even begin to believe that we deserve this attention from the Creator and He owes us this special treatment. The Torah requires that we never forget the greatness of Hashem. He does not act with grace towards humanity to satisfy His needs. He has no needs or wants. We must realize that the Almighty's love for us is an expression of His unfathomable kindness. We cannot explain His benevolence. We can only conclude that it emanates from His incomprehensible essence.

The flame descended and consumed the sacrifices upon the altar. Praise was essential at this moment. Bnai Yisrael must be reminded of Hashem's greatness. The people could not allow the Almighty's attention to lead to a diminution of His greatness. This praise helped assure that the people remained focused upon the infinite greatness of Hashem.

"Moshe said to Ahron, 'This is exactly what Hashem meant when He said, 'I will be sanctified among those close to Me, and I will be glorified'. And Ahron was silent." (VaYikra 10:3)

Ahron's sons Nadav and Avihu offer a sacrifice that is not authorized. They are killed by the Almighty. Moshe consoles Ahron. He tells Ahron that he had realized that the sanctity of the Mishkan would be demonstrated through the death of a righteous individual. Nadav and Avihu have provided this demonstration. Ahron accepts this consolation. Moshe communicates a second message to Ahron in his consolation. Ahron is required to offer the sacrifices on this eighth day of the inauguration. This will prevent Ahron from mourning his sons. Ahron accepts Moshe's direction. He does not forsake his responsibilities as Kohen Gadol. Instead, he continues to serve in the Mishkan. Rashi explains that Ahron was rewarded for his silence and his acceptance of Moshe's direction. As a result of his response, Ahron received a commandment directly from the Almighty.

Hashem rewards us in a manner that corresponds with our merits. How did this reward correspond with Ahron's behavior?

Maimonides explains that a person cannot receive prophecy when sad or mourning. This is



the reason Yaakov did not receive prophecy during the period he mourned for Yosef. Yet, Ahron experienced prophecy almost immediately after the death of his sons! How is this possible? Moshe's condolences were not merely aimed at comforting Ahron. Moshe did not want Ahron to allow his personal tragedy to interfere with the inauguration of the Mishkan. According to Rashbam this was the essence of Moshe's message to Ahron. Through continuing to serve in the Mishkan, Ahron would demonstrate that this service was more important than mourning his sons. Ahron's silence indicated that he had accepted Moshe's counsel. We can now understand the relationship between Ahron's silence and the prophecy he received. This prophecy was a direct result of Ahron's response to Moshe's words. Ahron realized that it was not appropriate to mourn. He continued to serve the Almighty in happiness. As a result, he was fit to receive prophecy. Hashem rewarded Ahron in a manner that demonstrated Ahron's remarkable character.

"To distinguish between the unclean and the clean and between the animals that may be eaten and the animals you may not eat." (VaYikra 11:47)

The Torah discusses the species that are prohibited and those that we may consume. This discussion ends with the above pasuk. On a superficial level the pasuk is explaining the reason for the preceding discussion. The Torah requires that we distinguish between the clean and unclean animals. We must know which species are permitted and which are prohibited. In order to fulfill this obligation, a body of law is required. The lengthy discussion provides the legal basis to perform our obligation.

Sforno offers an alternative explanation of our pasuk. He explains that the Torah is revealing the reason for the prohibitions. Certain species are permitted and others are prohibited. The reason for these laws is to teach us to distinguish between the prohibited and the permitted. This explanation is difficult to understand. In short, Sforno is saying that the Torah requires that we distinguish between various species so that we learn to distinguish. This seems circular!

Sforno is teaching us an important lesson. To understand his message we must remember that the human being is composed of a material element combined with a spiritual component. The mission of the human being is to exert the power of the spiritual over the material. How is this accomplished? We cannot ignore our material element. We must eat and respond to other material needs! How do we prevent ourselves from becoming excessively involved with our material element? The Torah responds to this dilemma. It provides a means by which the material function of eating can be converted to a spiritual expression. Through following the laws of the Torah we learn to guide our desires by a system of law. Eating becomes an expression of halacha rather than a purely instinctual function. This is Sforno's message. The laws teach us to distinguish. This process of discerning the permitted and the prohibited transforms the act of eating into a spiritual activity. ■

Rabbaynu Moshe ben Maimon (Rambam / Maimonides) Mishne Torah, Hilchot Shegagot 12:1. Rabbaynu Levi ben Gershon (Ralbag / Gershonides), Commentary on Sefer VaYikra, (Mosad HaRav Kook, 1997), pp. 119. Rabbaynu Bachya ibn Paquda, Chovot HaLevavot, Part 3, Chapter 2. Rabbaynu Moshe ben Maimon (Rambam / Maimonides) Moreh Nevuchim, volume 2, chapter 36. Rabbaynu Shemuel ben Meir (Rashbam) Commentary on Sefer VaYikra 10:3. Rabbaynu Ovadia Sforno, Commentary on Sefer VaYikra, 11:46.

contents, nor does it record the reason for the blessing. Therefore, understanding the nature of this blessing on a deeper level is crucial to fully appreciating the necessity of this verse in this week's parsha.

The Ramban on the aforementioned verse notes the puzzling nature of this pasuk. He first quotes Rashi, and then offers his own opinion on the idea of this blessing. He compares Aharon's blessing to the blessing of Shlomo upon the completion of the building of the Bais Hamikdash. "Shlomo stood before the mizbeach of Hashem, and he outstretched his hands toward the heaven" (Melachim Aleph 8:22). "He stood up, and blessed all of the people in a grand voice" (Melachim Aleph 8:55). Similarly, the Ramban maintains that Aharon outstretched his hands towards the heavens, and he addressed the nation with a blessing. The Torah specifically refers to this blessing in an ambiguous manner to demonstrate that it was a personal and unscripted expression. However, even with the Ramban's commentary, the purpose of this bracha is still unclear.

Another interesting idea to ponder is why it is necessary to outstretch one's hands when blessing the nation? The Torah depicts an instance where Moshe Rabeinu stretches out his arms toward Hashem. At the end of Parshas Beshalach, Moshe Rabeinu is instructed to lift up his arms toward the heavens in order to ensure a victory in the

battle against Amalek. Rashi explains (Shemos 17:12) that Moshe's hands were outstretched to Hashem in proper prayer. Tefilah is typically a silent experience where one should be still with his hands clasped at his heart (Shuchan Aruch OH 95). Why was it therefore necessary for Moshe Rabeinu to open his arms toward Hashem? Perhaps the answer lies in the public nature of this expression. A leader must be cognizant of the potentially dangerous distortions that may arise as a result of their position. Very often, the masses attach godly and supernatural qualities to their leaders, and thus enter an initial path of idol worship. There are numerous examples throughout history where this has occurred, the most obvious of which is the origin of Christianity. Therefore, Moshe, Aharon, and Shlomo, needed to clearly illustrate through physical expression that they themselves did not possess any real power[1]. However, Moshe had to demonstrate clearly that Hashem would be the cause of their victory, and not himself. Both Aharon and Shlomo had to demonstrate that Hashem is the only source of bracha, and no human being has any innate power to bless. Thus it was critical for all these leaders to present themselves with outstretched arms to the heavens in order to indicate that Hashem is the source of everything.

This idea that outstretching one's hands to the Heavens signifies that God is the source of victory and blessing can give insight into Aharon's bracha.

Aharon recognized the elevation of klal yisroel through the experience of building the mishkan. They had willingly dedicated the mishkan's materials, and were instrumental in constructing this holy place. He saw the perfection of klal yisroel, their knowledge of and belief in God, as an appropriate inspiration for requesting the bestowment of bracha. Therefore, Aharon seized an opportunity to daven on behalf of klal yisroel. We see this with Shlomo HaMelech, as well, where he utilized the finishing of the Bais Hamikdash and the resulting effect on bnei yisroel as an opportunity to beseech Hashem to bless klal yisroel.

There are several key concepts and important lessons that emerge from analyzing Aharon's requesting Hashem to bless klal yisroel. The idea of stretching one's arms out toward the heaven is integral to preventing disastrous falsity in bnei yisroel's perception of their leaders. The concept that Hashem is all powerful and the only true cause of bracha must be made glaringly obvious to the people; this is done through the visual cue of actually reaching toward Hashem. Once klal yisroel understands this idea the leader can then utilize special situations to pray on their behalf. Aharon's bracha illustrates his awareness of the appropriateness of tefilah at the completion of the mishkan. He was able to publicly display his prayer in a manner that focused on Hashem's ultimate control of the world. ■

[1] Mishna, Rosh Hashanna 3:8



Halacha Folding a Talis

RABBI DR. DARRELL GINSBERG

In most shuls, it is common to see congregants conclude Shabbos morning davening by folding up their talleisim. However, a perusal of the issue of folding clothes on Shabbos reveals that this seemingly innocuous action is not nearly as simple as it seems and introduces surprisingly interesting concepts.

At first glance, there seems to be a general problem with folding clothes on Shabbos. The Shulchan Aruch (OC 302:3) writes that one may fold clothes on Shabbos, provided there are certain conditions met: the clothes will be worn again on Shabbos, the clothes are folded by oneself, the clothes have been used (meaning not yet washed),

they are white, and the individual has no other garment to wear on Shabbos. If even one of these conditions are not met, one may not fold clothes. However, the Shulchan Aruch then stipulates that if one folded the clothes in a way that did not follow the creases, it would be permissible, regardless of the listed conditions (this will be clarified later).

To get a better handle on this issue, it is important to understand the rationale behind this prohibition, and its applicability to a tallis. The Rambam (Hilchos Shabbos 22:22) essentially follows the pesak of the Talmud (Shabbos 113), as cited above by the Shulchan Aruch. His reason for this prohibition is that it raises the issue of mesaken, or fixing/improving the garment. When one folds clothing on its creases, he is "repairing" it. Rashi (ibid) explains that this repair refers to folding the garment right after it is washed, for fear it will become wrinkled and disheveled. Therefore, according to the Rambam and others, the problem is one of tikun kli. The Raavad (Hilchos Shabbos 23:7) argues with this understanding of the prohibition. He explains that the problem of folding has to do with tircha, where the person is demonstrating a high level of involvement in an

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Halacha

activity beneficial to chol, not Shabbos. It is for that reason that if the garment would be worn again on Shabbos, folding it would seem not to be a problem.

How do we understand this argument? How exactly is it considered tikkun kli to fold the garment – normally, fixing or improving an object is a clear differentiation from an unusable to a usable state. For example, repairing or tuning a musical instrument is forbidden. How does the same apply to folding clothes? From the Raavad's standpoint, how is folding the clothes considered tirtcha? The crux of the debate revolves around two different viewpoints of clothing. On its most basic level, clothing serves a functional purpose. A shirt is a garment that covers our upper torso, pants covering our legs. From this perspective, according to the Raavad, one can see why folding is a problem. Once a person takes off his shirt, for example, it obviously loses its functional role. Folding the shirt, then, is not related to the previous wearing. Its only purpose is to ensure it is ready for the next occasion when it will be worn. Therefore, the activity of folding is a tirtcha. There is another feature to clothing, more abstract and subjective, but important nonetheless. Looking at wearing a shirt from the standpoint of fashion, its appearance plays a significant role. For example, take cargo pants versus dress pants. Both have the same function. However, the wearer distinguishes the different styles of the garments. The key, then, is that part of the definition of the shirt or pants is the value of its appearance by the wearer. This could be the main point of the Rambam. In the case cited in the Talmud, as understood by Rashi, after washing clothes (as done back then), if the clothes were left out to dry without folding them, they would lose their form as a shirt or pants. Folding them in a careful manner would create within them the appearance of a shirt, of vast import to the wearer. If this is the case, one could see how this is an improvement in the garment. Folding the garment produces no true physical change in it, but it does designate its appearance as a shirt. Therefore, according to the Rambam, folding them would be a problem on Shabbos, excluding the above listed circumstances.

Bringing tallis into the picture at this point, based on the above explanation, would leave us with a problem folding it on Shabbos after tefillah. According to the Rambam, it would be mesaken, while according to the Raavad, it would be involvement in preparing for after Shabbos. Tosafos (Shabbos 113) explicitly states that based on the Talmud, it is a problem to fold a tallis after it is used on Shabbos, since it is obviously being done for the following day (in line with the thinking of the Raavad). Not all is lost though. The Aruch Hashulchan (OC 302:10) makes a crucial distinction that changes the dynamic of this

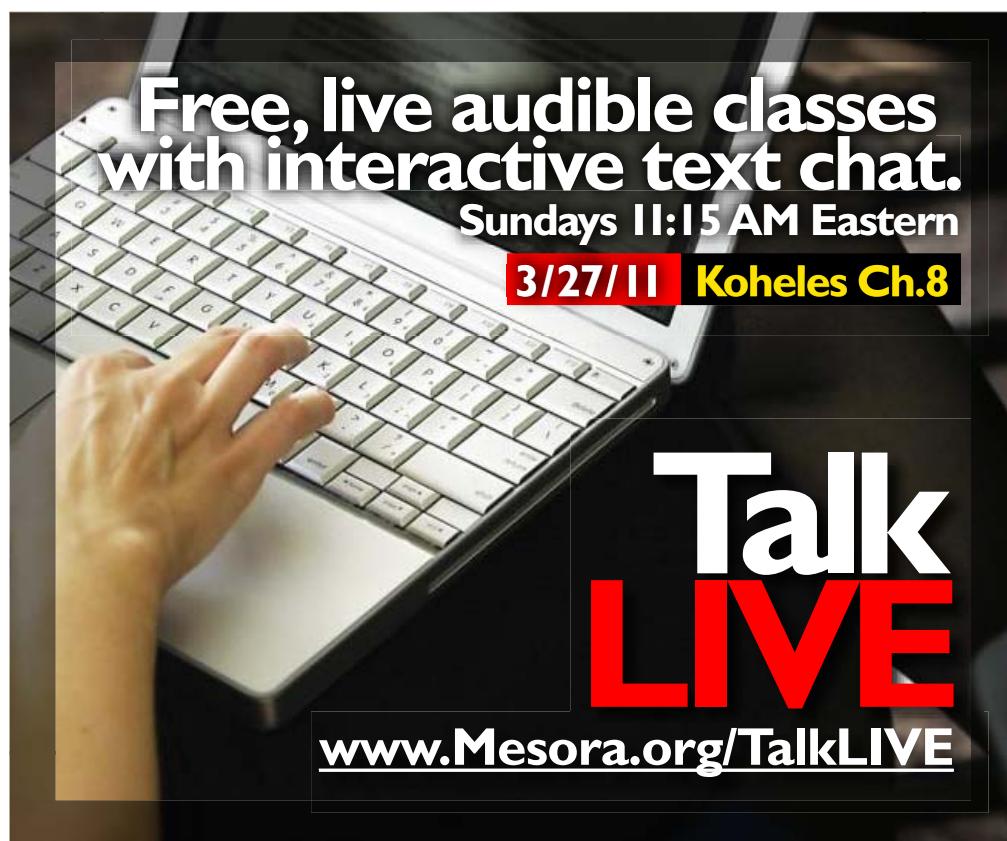
halacha. If one looks at the entire halacha as written by the Rambam, the situation described seems to apply to work of an expert. In other words, the folding described in the Talmud was a type of folding (i.e. – creating the pleats) that is within the venue of the expert, such as a tailor, not a layman. Regular folding of clothes, though, is not considered this type of action, thereby negating the issue of tikkun kli. If this is the case, folding clothes or a tallis pose no problem. In fact, the Kol Bo (31a) writes that folding clothes today is nothing like folding in the times of the Talmud, where more concern was paid towards the creation of pleats and creases.

However, there is the Raavad/Tosafos to contend with. The Raavyah (as cited by the Mordechai 245) offers a unique differentiation in folding that helps those seeking to continue folding their tallis on Shabbos while following the opinions of the Raavad and Tosafos. He explains that there is a difference between folding the garment on its original defined creases (kipul rishon) versus folding it in a different way. A person would therefore be allowed to fold his tallis, just not along the original creases. Rather than relying on a historical change to justify the leniency (our folding today being different than centuries ago, as per the Kol Bo), the Raavyah seems to be offering a more conceptual idea. It could be his approach

involves a refinement of the previous understanding of the Raavad's position. As mentioned above, once a person takes off his garments, their functional role ceases, and folding them indicates his preparation for the next time they are to be worn. The Raavyah is qualifying the act of folding. When one folds along the original creases, there is a greater degree of precision, demonstrating his increased involvement in the activity. As a result, it is this type of folding that personifies tirtcha. However, if one folds it in a haphazard way, there is nothing in the action that indicates a preparation to wear the clothes again. Therefore, according to the Raavyah, one may fold his tallis if he makes sure not to fold along the original creases.

Practically speaking, there are different conclusions reached by the Acharonim. The Aruch HaShulchan (ibid) notes that many people fold their tallis after tefillah, relying on the pesak of the Rambam and Rashi. R Ovadia Yosef (Yechave Daat 2:40) writes that when folding one's tallis, he should try to avoid folding along the creases (per the Raavyah), but has those to rely on to fold it normally. The Mishneh Berura (OC 302:19) writes that if one chooses to be stringent and not fold it at all, it is considered good.

It is important to emphasize that this is not a complete review of all the issues, and one should consult with his posek. ■



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a Lesson on
KNOWLEDGE

ANGELS
in the
Architecture

RABBI MOSHE BEN-CHAIM

"And Moses raised up the Tabernacle, and he gave it its sockets, and he placed its upright beams and he gave its [horizontal binding] poles, and he raised its pillars". (Exod. 40:18)

Sforno comments that the words "And Moses raised up the Tabernacle" refer to the woven covering alone. Meaning, since the Tabernacle's four structural components make up the remainder of this verse, the item referred to by "Tabernacle" must be something other than sockets, uprights, poles and pillars. Sforno says what Moses first raised up was the woven covering, referred to by "Tabernacle" in this verse. Sforno states this again in Exodus 21:1, "And the Tabernacle, make 10 sheets..." where Sforno comments, "The sheets were referred to by the name Tabernacle".

Sforno says this covering was the "essence" of the Tabernacle structure, but in what manner? Not only that, but that Moses somehow held the coverings in their place (or they were suspended by a miracle, says Sforno) and then Moses assembled the Tabernacle's components, underneath it. This is an intriguing method of construction. Sforno

means to say that the Tabernacle's essence – the covering – must be erected first, presumably to indicate it's primary role. We wonder: when is greater value given to a covering or a roof, than the structure beneath? Keep this question in mind.

The covering was composed of 10 equal-sized sheets; 5 stitched together, and the other 5 stitched together. These two sets of 5 sheets were joined into a single covering of 10 sheets via gold clasps. This point, or seam where they joined by clasps was positioned exactly over the Paroches curtain, which later was suspended and separated between the Holies, and the Holy of Holies. Thus, the covering – before all else was placed under it – was to bear this distinction of the soon-to-be-created two rooms. It would appear from this, that upon the very commencement of building the Tabernacle, the lesson of the two rooms was essential. We might say, Tabernacle cannot – at any point – be disassociated with whatever concept these two rooms teach. Additionally, Exodus 26:6 states when joining these two sets of 5 sheets, that the Tabernacle then became "one". This verse suggests the combination of the two rooms creates a unity of some sort. What is this unity...this "one"?

We must also note that the cherubim – birdlike figures with children's faces and wings – were embroidered into these coverings. What are cherubim? Maimonides explains them as angels[1], the vehicle of prophecy:

"Naturally, the fundamental belief in prophecy precedes the belief in the Law, for without the belief in prophecy there can be no belief in the Law. But a prophet only receives divine inspiration through the agency of an angel. Comp. 'The angel of the Lord called' (Gen. xxii. 15) 'The angel of the Lord said unto her' (ibid. xvi. 11) and other innumerable instances. Even Moses our Teacher received his first prophecy through an angel, 'And an angel of the Lord appeared to him in the flame of fire' (Exod. iii.) It is therefore clear that the belief in the existence of angels precedes the belief in prophecy, and the latter precedes the belief in the Law."

"...the belief in the existence of angels is connected with the belief in the Existence of God; and the belief in God and angels leads to the belief in Prophecy and in the truth of the Law. In order to firmly establish this creed, God commanded [the Israelites] to make over the ark the form of two angels. The belief in the existence of angels is thus



inculcated into the minds of the people, and this belief is in importance next to the belief in God's Existence; it leads us to believe in Prophecy and in the Law, and opposes idolatry. If there had only been one figure of a cherub, the people would have been misled and would have mistaken it for God's image which was to be worshipped, in the fashion of the heathen; or they might have assumed that the angel [represented by the figure] was also a deity, and would thus have adopted a Dualism. By making two cherubim and distinctly declaring 'the Lord is our God, the Lord is One' Moses dearly proclaimed the theory of the existence of a number of angels; he left no room for the error of considering those figures as deities, since [he declared that] God is one, and that He is the Creator of the angels, who are more than one."

God doesn't talk directly with man, other than with Moses. Prophecy is always via angels. And Maimonides teaches that even Moses' first prophecy was via the angel, in the burning bush proph-

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ecy. Prophecy is essential for validating Judaism, for without a belief in prophecy, we deny Revelation at Sinai, for this event included prophetic elements. And prophecy relies on the angels, or cherubs. So to accept the truth of God and His only religion, man must accept cherubim, which are angels.

What are angels? We do not know their true natures, but suffice it to say that they are metaphysical beings that communicate God's will to man. With this background, we can begin to address our questions.

We once explained the concept of a Holies, and a Holy of Holies. These two rooms correspond to the two "areas" of knowledge: 1) what man can know, and 2) what man cannot know. Thus, man is punished with death for entering the Holy of Holies. Such entrance is akin to saying "I can approach God; I can know what He is". But God told the greatest man ever – Moses – "No man can know me while alive". (Exod. 23:20) Therefore, it is vital that we accept our complete ignorance of what God is. Even the High Priest must smoke-fill the Holy of Holies upon his once-a-year visit, to establish this "veil" between him and God.

Nonetheless, the priests do enter the Holies daily. This conveys the idea that there are areas of knowledge open to mankind's exploration. We must know that the world requires a Creator, who rested on the seventh day. So we understand seven-branched Menora is in the Holies. We must know that God is omniscient, all-knowing, so an incense Altar makes sense, indicating God "knows" man's sacrifices. And we must know that God is omnipotent, all-powerful, so a Table with 12 bread loaves indicates His ability to sustain the Tribes.

So we enter the Holies, but never the Holy of Holies. Our approach to understanding God's universe is two-pronged: 1) we accept there are areas open to human investigation, and also, 2) there are areas we cannot penetrate, indicated by the Paroches curtain that restricts entrance into that room housing the Ark and the cherubim. Just as we do not know what God is, we also cannot know what angels are. What is unapproachable, is placed in that unapproachable room. This explains why the cherubim were in the Holy of Holies, as were the Tablets of the Law that target God's knowledge.

Two Realms of Knowledge

Our objective is to arrive at a love for God through the study of matters available to human intelligence. God revealed great wisdom in His creations and in His Torah. But as created beings,



we cannot grasp the Creator Himself. Even the angels praise only God's "name" and not Him directly: "Baruch kivode Hashem mimkomo", "Blessed is God's honor from His place". His honor is what is blessed, for even angels cannot bless God Himself, the unknowable One. Additionally, our Kedusha (taken from Isaiah 6:3 and Ezekiel 3:12) cite the angel's admission that God is separate, or rather, unknowable.

So crucial is this notion, that upon Moses' construction of the Temple (which exists to impart knowledge to man) the coverings were raised first, constructed of two joined halves: the half that covers the Holies, and the other half that covers the Holy of Holies. Immediately, we are confronted with this truth that knowledge has two realms, and one is off-limits to man. This lesson is particularly required in Tabernacle, wherein one might be misled to believe God is actually "there" occupying space. For God said, "You shall build be a temple and I will dwell among you". King Solomon too was aware of this danger, so upon his completion of the Temple, he said, "Can God truly be on Earth? The heavens and heavens of heavens cannot contain You, how much less this house that I have built?" He wished to warn the people, lest they believe God occupies space. (Kings I, 8:27) So we fully appreciate the need for man to be reminded – especially at the Temple's inauguration – of what is beyond the pale of human apprehension.

If we ever would conclude that we have fully exhausted any area of knowledge, we have fooled ourselves. For if we perceive true knowledge, we sense there is so much more awaiting discovery...but we also know we'll never tap the full depths of that knowledge. Albert Einstein said, "My religion consists of a humble admiration of the illimitable Superior Spirit who reveals Himself in the slight details we are able to

perceive with our frail and feeble mind." Einstein attested to this very point: God's wisdom is unlimited, and we are very ignorant. Maimonides said, "Know that for the human mind there are certain objects of perception which are within the scope of its nature and capacity; on the other hand there are, amongst things which actually exist, certain things which the mind can, in no ways grasp; the gates of perception are closed against it." [2]

When we do arrive at a truth, it is accompanied by the realization that we have only scratched the surface, but this truth leads to even greater wisdom, much of which we will not uncover. And this must be, since knowledge by definition is a reflection of the Creator, who is unlimited. Thus, the knowledge we perceive must reflect this "illimitable Superior Spirit". In this manner, knowledge is identified with the Source of that knowledge – God. And this must be our objective in the pursuit of wisdom, to know God. The covering was not one unified set of 10 sheets. It was made of two sets of 5 sheets each, as stated. They are joined together. This joining is to indicate that attainable knowledge – 5 sheets covering the Holies – is inherently related (clasped) to the other area of unknowable truths – 5 sheets covering the Holy of Holies. And in this fashion, the joining of the 2 sets of sheets, makes "one" Tabernacle. One, referring to a unified approach to wisdom. This approach demands that drawing close God must always be the objective of our study, not that we study an area for itself, so that we might merely better manipulate the world and its resources.

A "Covering" Over What?

It is therefore quite fitting that Sforno holds these coverings to be of central importance. We asked where else a covering is more important than the structure below it. But think about the word "covering". Isn't that the idea we just explained? There are areas of knowledge that are "covered". This may be Sforno's message. Perhaps he has intimated that these sheets are to teach us the idea of "concealment". Meaning, Tabernacle is to educate man, and a primary lesson is that certain knowledge is concealed. Therefore, the Tabernacle's covering is a lesson itself, and the rigid structure beneath it is merely there as a frame to support this covering. Therefore, the covering must be erected first, indicating the primary importance of the Tabernacle. Intriguing, isn't it! This covering is to teach man to accept that there are matters beyond his grasp... "covered" matters.

But you may ask: "I understand why the Holy of Holies is covered, but why cover the Holies? Was this area not open to human comprehension?"

(continued on next page)

Yes, but even those ideas derived from the Holies, first require a process of analysis, so these ideas too are initially "covered"! All knowledge increase is accurately described as an act of "uncovering".

We can now suggest why the cherubim were embroidered in both sets of sheets. Perhaps not restricted to prophecy, but even knowledge attained in our waking state, knowledge of all areas, might require a system of angels, through which we obtain new insights. How is it that one second we are clueless, then later one we make a discovery? If the knowledge was not with us beforehand, how did it arrive in our minds later on? This might explain why the covering is the proper item to display forms of cherubim. But there is yet an additional facet to the complimentary nature of the knowable and the unknowable...

Knowledge Demands Recognition of God

Only with the acceptance that all we know emanates from God, do we know anything at all. There is an intimate relationship between these two areas of knowledge: the knowable and the unknowable, just as these two sets of sheets are related. If one does not know of God, then all of his knowledge is false. For he is unaware that what he discovers was created by God, and by definition, his knowledge is bereft of its primary truth. Knowledge is only knowledge, if our minds view that knowledge as part of God's will. Otherwise, we simply possess a means to manipulate the world. For example, an atheistic doctor might cure cancer, but his understanding of life is not related to the Creator. Thus, his scientific knowledge fails to reach its objective. His existence is an absolute failure. An expert agriculturist who does not view food as a sustainer of human life so man can discover his Creator, also fails to attain real knowledge. Although both doctor and scientist can sustain life better than anyone, they are both ignorant of what life is, as they fail to realize the human objective of relating to God...the very purpose of our creation.

Angels: Gold vs. Embroidered

Angels exist in the metaphysical world, not on Earth. This is expressed by the gold cherubim being limited to the Holy of Holies, unapproachable by us sensually. Is there something to be derived from the fact that the cherubim in the coverings were merely representative diagrams, but not real gold figurines?

All of our experiences are as sensual beings, and even our encounters with angels in prophetic visions must be a filtered presentation of those angels. For we cannot relate completely abstractly, even in dreams, as we are physical and they are

not. We cannot relate to purely metaphysical angels. Human imagination presents the angel to a prophet at times in the form of a man, "And three men stood upon him..." So, although there exists "real", metaphysical angels...the prophetic vision is a representation for man's sake. This parallels the "real" gold angels over the ark, while only illustrations are embroidered in the curtains. The curtains represent human knowledge and how we relate to it. But beyond this world, real angels exist in their full "form", just as in the Holy of Holies, there are golden angel forms. Thus, the illustrated angels woven into curtains and the gold angels in Holy of holies, stand in direct relation to angels in prophecy and true angels. The curtains and gold figures parallel reality to educate us.

In conclusion, Maimonides writes [3]:

"We have already stated that the forms in which angels appear form part of the prophetic vision. Some prophets see angels in the form of man, e.g., 'And behold three men stood by him' (Gen. xviii.2): others perceive an angel as a fearful and terrible being, e.g., 'And his countenance was as the countenance of an angel of God, very terrible' (Judges xiii. 6): others see them as fire, e.g., 'And the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a flame of fire' (Exod.iii. 2). In Bereshit Rabba (chap. l.) the following remark

occurs: "To Abraham, whose prophetic power was great, the angels appeared in the form of men; to Lot, whose power was weak, they appeared as angels." This is an important principle as regards Prophecy; it will be fully discussed when we treat of that subject (chap. xxxii. sqq.). Another passage in Bereshit Rabba (ibid.) runs thus: "Before the angels have accomplished their task they are called men, when they have accomplished it they are angels." Consider how clearly they say that the term "angel" signifies nothing but a certain action, and that every appearance of an angel is part of a prophetic vision, depending on the capacity of the person that perceives it."

Thank you to Moshe Abarbanel and Chaim Salamon for their insights during our studies these past two weeks. ■

[1] "Guide", book III, chap. XLV

[2] "Guide", book I, chap. XXXI -- Thank you to Rabbi Richard Borah for citing this quote on his blog: rambamrav.blogspot.com

[3] "Guide", book II, chap. VI



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Why live a Torah life? The answer is not simple, or brief. This is not to say the answer is difficult. Rather, the answer includes a number of principles and considerations. If we follow the path reason, we realize that Judaism is designed by God; that it perfectly compliments our human natures; and that a life of Torah Judaism offers us the most rewarding and fulfilling existence.

Our emotional tendencies were surely affected during our upbringing. Our natures, and those who nurtured us, contribute to who we are today. It is crucial that we accept the affect of emotional influence, that these emotions conflict with reason, and this must be addressed in order to accept truths, untainted by emotion. For this reason, the Rabbis taught that we must educate only those who have proper character traits. Otherwise, we can try to teach, but a person with poor traits will reject education based on his or her emotional biases. We will have wasted our time.

Happiness. It's what each person desires. But does having a desire demand we follow it? How do we determine this? If we should, and happiness is a worthwhile pursuit...how do we achieve true happiness? And can I avoid fooling myself in my search for happiness? Just as we follow a rational path to attain other goals, we must do so in our spiritual and emotional lives. Certain causes have very definite effects on our plans. Other causes

have no affect. To arrive at any objective, we must engage in only those causes proven to achieve a desired outcome. To choose causes that cannot produce desired results, is foolish...regardless of the deluded masses who assume otherwise.

Happiness is a state where our primary needs are satisfied. They include health, shelter, financial stability, self-esteem, friends, morality and understanding. If any of these are lacking or absent, we are unhappy. Of these, the satisfaction of more primary needs leads to greater happiness. While we need friends, we are less concerned about them when we are starving. And even with ample food and friends, we feel empty if we do not engage our souls and our minds. Regarding this central part – our mind – man senses this is truly his mark of distinction; what elevates us above animals. Man feels most insulted when called stupid, as opposed to poor or sloppy. Intelligence defines man, more than other considerations.

Additionally, we can only eat so much, and partake in pleasures only so often until we tire or sense pain. But the pursuit of wisdom and understanding can be sustained, and also offers the greatest rewards. For this reason, the Aristotles, Freuds, Einsteins and Maimonides of the world pursued wisdom over all else. They were known to be captivated by scientific problems for weeks on end, something we never hear about in connection with physical pleasures. This must draw our interest, if these wise men found such captivation and fulfillment while studying God's universe and His Torah. If they could find the deepest satisfaction in these pursuits, others can too. We share one common design.

But there is an advantage possessed by the Torah student...we have direct communication from the Creator. No other people lay claim to an

event witnessed by masses, incorporating supernatural phenomena, and God's communication addressing those masses from amidst flames. The survival of this transmission through today attests to the reality of that event. For no fantastic claim of mass attendance will be accepted and then transmitted, without proof. No people numbering 2.5 million would repeat the words referring to Sinai, "Lest you forget what your eyes saw", unless they saw it. While other religions "claim" miraculous events without proof, they lack mass witnesses; they demand blind faith and some possess conflicting accounts of their presumed histories. Other religions do not possess proof.

In contrast, Judaism possesses a single history spanning thousands of years with only one version. Astonishing events witnessed by millions, thereby dispelling fabrication of distortion. Even others accept our Torah as truth. They cannot deny historical fact. Torah histories – namely Revelation at Sinai – would never have reached us today, had they never occurred. The Torah's sustained, verbal transmission validates

Torah Judaism as the only God-given system. Had Moses been an impostor, attempting to proliferate lies of a miracle attended by masses, telling a people "You were there"...not one person would agree to being where he or she was not. Not one person would replace his or her true history with Moses' fabrication. Certainly, Moses' lies would not become the singular history of those people 3000 years later.

However, we possess one miraculous transmission, and no other history, since Torah is accurate.

God taught us how to live the greatest life. He gifted us with commands – each one targeting the good for mankind. Communal laws foster harmony and security. Monetary laws direct us to exact fairness and protect ownership. Moral laws remove questions of when life begins, and when to take or preserve a life, and when punishment or reward is warranted. And the philosophic commands like Tzitzis, Tefillin and Mezuzah engage us in a high level of thought and understanding of the Creator.

We exist because God alone created each of us. He gave us laws, for our own good...to be truly happy. He created "happiness", so He knows best how man might achieve happiness. God does not need our service, or need anything. His creation of mankind obligates each of us in His laws. We exist for a reason. And fulfilling that objective entitles us to continued life. It behooves us to study Torah, to learn from the patriarchs, the matriarchs and the Prophets, and to understand how the study and performance of each command contributes to our happiness, and eternal life. And as we study, we experience the most enjoyable life, since the process of discovery in Torah study is unmatched by any other pursuit.

You must experience this discovery to accept this as true. So do so. ■

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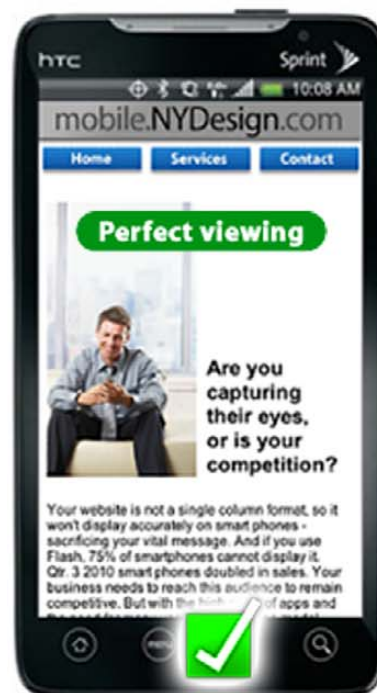
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