

PART OF THE APPEAL OF IDOLS WAS SOCIETAL INTIMIDATION. BELIEFS ACCPETED BY SOCIETY EN MASSE FORCED OTHERS TO BLINDLY FOLLOW THEM. THIS HAPPENS TODAY IN JUDAISM WHERE PEOPLE FOLLOW PEOPLE, AND NOT GOD.

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## Parshas Kisisa

RABBI BERNARD FOX

**"And I will remove My hand and you will see My back. And My face will not be seen."**  
(Shemot 33:23)

Moshe ascends Mount Sinai. He asks the Almighty to reveal to him His essential nature. Hashem responds that a material being is not capable of grasping the Divine essence. However, Hashem agrees to allow Moshe to see His back. This apparently means that although we cannot attain an absolute understanding of the Almighty, we

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## The Golden Calf

RABBI ISRAEL CHAIT

Moses ascended the mountain to have a rendezvous with God to learn first hand the teachings of the Torah and then to transmit them to the Jewish people. Instead Moses descended to a nation of idolaters rather than a people committed to accept a moral law based upon their intellectual conviction. The Torah explains the reason for this transformation. In Exodus 32:1, the Torah tells us that the people saw that Moses tarried from coming down the mountain and that this precipitated their desire to build a golden calf. Rashi explains that the nation miscalculated the day of Moses's descent. Moses advised the people that he would return in forty days. Moses was not counting his departure as day one. He meant forty complete days, thus his return would be on the forty first day, which is the seventeenth of Tammuz. Therefore their calculations were erroneous by one day. Rashi teaches us that as a result of this miscalculation, on the sixteenth of Tammuz, Satan came and brought confusion to the world, and showed the Israelites a vision of thick darkness. This caused them to



*The mixed multitude identified with animal gods and instigated the Golden Calf sin*

say, "Moses is definitely dead", and it ignited their desire to serve other gods.

Upon analyzing this Rashi, two basic questions must be asked: What compels Rashi to utilize Satan as the vehicle for their confusion? Their mistake in determining Moses's return was based upon their erroneous calculations. This alone should have been sufficient justification for their concluding that Moses was dead and was not returning. Furthermore, Aaron devises different schemes to hinder their attempts to serve different God's. Why didn't he simply advise them of their mistaken calculation? Aaron certainly was aware of the proper count or at the very least recognized their mistake.

We must appreciate that the

Israelites had recently been liberated from Egypt. In Egypt they were exposed to, and influenced by, the pagan practices of that society. Therefore, they still had an attraction to the primitive, and were still subject to the insecurities of the instinctual part of their personalities. The entire event of Moses ascending the mountain to speak to God was to them, a mystical phenomenon. They were in great awe of this unique experience. Thus, when they saw the thick darkness, rather than attributing it to bad weather conditions, their emotions overwhelmed them. They had visions of Moses' failed mission which image was bolstered by their miscalculation. The Satan, as Maimonides teaches us, is the same as the yetser harah, man's evil

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# The Golden Calf

RABBI ISRAEL CHAIT

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inclinations. Their emotions, which were fostered by their insecurities and primitive proclivities, caused them to conjure these fantastic ominous visions. Chazal teach us that they saw an image of Moses in a coffin. This manifests, that they were regressing into the depths of their imagination. They were so overwhelmed by the mystical, that Chazal felt compelled to point out this image, to demonstrate that their total perception of reality was distorted.

Upon their concluding that Moses had died, the Israelites expressed their desire to make many gods that would lead them. Their need for a god was simply a need for security to fill the void that Moses' ostensible departure created.

Rashi notes that they desired many gods. This again reflects the primitive emotion they possessed. They had desires for different gods, to cater to each of their diverse needs. Their basic insecurities and trepidation's were expressed by their desire for different gods, that would satisfy all their personal whims and grant them a sense of security.

The insight the Torah affords us in delineating the story of the Golden Calf is extremely relevant. Modern man might think that these are paganistic emotions to which he is not susceptible. However, one need only observe Christianity to recognize the strong hold the emotion for idol worship has, even today. They idolize a physical statue which represents a human being whom they view as God. Objectively, it may seem absurd, but yet its appeal attests to mans primitive desire for the security of the physical.

Chazal appreciated the strength of these emotions. Rabbi Akiva did not want to learn that the "Et" of "Et



Hashem Elokecha teerah", as including Talmidei Chachamim because of this emotion. The deification of man is idol worship. Rabbi Yishmael argues and states that it includes the Talmid Chacham. The respect the Torah envisions for a scholar, is not for the individual per se, but rather the Chachma which he acquired. He is the embodiment of an individual who utilized his Tzelem Elokim for its true objective.

It would seem that Aaron also underestimated the strength of these emotions. Aaron recognized their clamor to create new gods as reflective of their primitive emotions. He recognized the futility in trying to demonstrate the error of their calculations. The nation was no longer operating under their intellectual faculty. The primitive behavioral patterns to which they were subject in Egypt, were exerting their influence over the nation. The mixed multitude whom departed Egypt with them, provoked much of their regression. Rashi advises us that the Mixed Multitude (not descendants of Abraham) used their 'magic'(1) to create the calf. In fact, they initiated this entire service and the Israelites followed. The Mixed Multitude had a greater yearning for the security of the physical as a means to relate to God. They therefore utilized the magic they learned in Egypt. Magic is not some supernatural force. It

too requires a discipline, where one learns to switch the apparent relationship between cause and effect to which we are accustomed. It therefore is fascinating because it distracts the observer who is amazed since it does not function in accordance with standard causal relationships.

Aaron took an active role in the making of the Golden Calf. However, the role Aaron played was really a result of careful analysis. In reality he did not try to facilitate its construction but rather attempted to hinder its completion. He analyzed the behavior of the Israelites and tried to deal with them based upon their state of mind. He recognized a step by step regression in their rational faculty as they became under the grip of this overwhelming emotion. Aaron's observations are expressed in a Midrash quoted by Rashi. Aaron observed several things. He saw the Israelites kill his nephew Chur, who tried to rebuke them. He observed and concluded that it would be better if the Israelites transgression was ascribed to him rather than to them. He also concluded that if they built the alter on their own, it would be finished immediately. He therefore undertook its construction hoping to tarry in his work, in order to delay them until Moses arrived. Aaron had recognized that their behavior patterns reflected the powerful sway of their emotions. The first thing the Israelites sought was a substitute leader. This reflected their need for the security of the physical. He requested their ornaments in an effort to appeal to their greed. This was essentially a delay tactic. He assumed that they would be reluctant because he thought that their greed would deter their actions. However, the Torah teaches us "Vayitparku" they readily

removed all their jewelry. He thereby recognized and appreciated the overwhelming and dominating effect of these emotions as evidenced by the alacrity with which they responded to his request for their valuables. Thereafter, he observed that they killed Hur. This represented that they were no longer functioning with even a scintilla of rationality. They could not tolerate Hur's rebuke and their murderous actions evidenced their total identification with the calf. He thus observed and concluded that at best, he could only slow their progress. Any attempt by him to have halted the construction of the calf would have been futile, and surely would have caused them to regress to the depth of their primitivism.

A precursory review of his actions would indicate that he was helping them, however a more scrupulous investigation as articulated, reveals his true intentions. He desired that their guilt be ascribed to him in order to assuage the guilty feelings they would experience upon Moses' return. If the Israelites felt absolute culpability because of their actions, their feelings of guilt would render them incapable of doing Teshuva.

God still finds fault with Aaron's action. Exodus 32:23 states, "And when Moses saw that the people were broken loose for Aaron had let them loose for a division among their enemies." This criticism is lodged against Aaron for one can not make compromises with idol worship. The emotion is so powerful that if one allows it to be expressed in his behavioral patterns, it will ultimately dominate his actions and destroy him. Moses upon his return took extremely drastic measures. He openly expressed outrage and threw the tablets to the ground and shattered them. He thereby gathered to his side the Levites, who killed three thousand men. Moses' extreme actions were purposeful to demonstrate that one can not compromise nor tolerate with the emotion for idolatry. The basic philosophy of Judaism is antithetical to these type of emotions. ■

## Magical Powers

RABBI REUVEN MANN

The idea that objects possess supernatural powers is absolutely contrary to Torah. The Torah makes it clear that nature operates according to fixed laws. Thus, objects only possess the natural powers they are endowed with. Whenever something occurs outside the frame of natural law the only cause is the Divine Will, i.e., what we call Providence. In the war against Amalek when Moshe lifted his hands the Jews would prevail and when he lowered them they would falter. Yet Rashi asks, "can the hands of Moshe wage war?" So too in the case of the copper snake those bitten would gaze upon the snake and be healed. Would you say that the copper snake had a special power to heal? Here too Rashi asks, "Can a snake heal?" and continues to explain that when the Jews subordinated their hearts to G-d then He would cure them. The same is true regarding the hands of Moshe. From the question of Rashi we can clearly deduce that he rejected the notion of ascribing non-natural powers to physical objects. It is important to remember the Chizkiyahu destroyed the copper snake when the people began to attribute powers to it. The jar of manna and many other objects were hidden for the same reason.

G-d did not give us any objects to cure us or help us with our problems. He told us that our fate would be determined purely by the quality of our faith, obedience to His will and level of perfection. If the stones of the ephod had the power to cause pregnancy why did Channa pray so bitterly and offer the child to G-d's service? Why were there any barren women? It is not mentioned that Channa or the woman who hosted Elisha swallowed any dust in order to become pregnant. This attitude of course represents a complete distortion of mitzvohs as the Rambam explains in regard to using mezzuah for medicinal purposes. On this point all intelligent people should agree.

Finally it is not our burden to disprove an idea which is contrary to Torah and common sense understanding of Torah. It is the burden of the person asserting a notion which runs contrary to the basic principals of Torah to demonstrate through authoritative and unimpeachable sources that his strange interpretation is authentic. ■

## When a Tzadik Must Get Angry

RABBI REUVEN MANN

A careful and honest study of the Torah makes it absolutely clear that Judaism categorically rejects the possibility of "miracle workers". In order to have a proper relationship with G-d, we must scrupulously avoid any attribution of "supernatural" power to mortals.

A fascinating episode in a recently read sedra (Vayetze) clearly illustrates this point. Rachel, who was childless, and envious of her sister Leah, pleaded with her husband to "give" her children or else she would die. Most of the commentators are puzzled with Jacob's angry dismissal of his wife's request. His lack of compassion and sensitivity to Rachel's emotional distress seems incomprehensible. Very surprising, as well, is his display of anger which is an emotion which the righteous must always avoid except in matters pertaining to heaven.

We must pay attention to the words of Jacob for they go to the heart of the matter at issue. The pasuk says "Jacob's anger flared up at Rachel and he said 'Am I in the place of G-d who has withheld from you fruit of the womb?'" The commentary of the Sforno is most illuminating. He says, "Jacob's anger flared up for saying 'Give me children', implying that he had the power to do so. In his zeal for the honor of G-d, he disregarded his love for her." Rabbi Raphael Pelcovitz in the notes appended to his translation of the Sforno explains, "Jacob was angry with Rachel for saying 'Give me' not 'Pray for me'. The latter request would have been proper, the former was not since it implied that Jacob had the power to grant that which only G-d can give....His great zeal for G-d's honor, however, caused him to set aside his feelings of love for Rachel, for his love for G-d was greater."

Jacob who ranks among the greatest of men displayed anger at any implication that he had the power to change the natural order of events. This type of overestimation of man violates the honor that is due exclusively to the Creator. The true tzaddik is the one, who like Yaakov Avinu, reacts with anger to even the slightest suggestion that he has transcended the bounds of human limitations and shares a power which is exclusively that of the Creator. ■

## The Necessity of Prayer

RIVKA OLENICK



"Thou hast stricken them, but they have not grieved." Jeremiah 5:3 With regard to the above statement in Tanach, the Rambam, in The Guide For the Perplexed (pgs. 331/332) says: "For this reason God commanded us to pray to Him, to entreat Him, and to cry before Him in time of trouble." Repentance is a major part of prayer, the focal point; otherwise why does the Rambam tell us to entreat Him and cry before Him in time of trouble if not to return to God? Entreat means to beg, to ask earnestly and cry before Him with a full and sincere heart. In time of trouble do we expect God to change our situation, to make it better just for the asking? Foolishly, we do! Isn't it true that most of the time we ourselves create our "time of trouble" and then conveniently blame it on God and say: "Why has God done this to me?" Shouldn't God change my situation, improve it, and just "get me out of it?" Can't I just rattle off the prayers and get results or should I ask myself: What is my obligation when I "entreat" God? Isn't it to ask God earnestly through prayer to assist us in our time of trouble? Shouldn't we first understand that we solicit God with the recognition of an important principle, which is that God takes notice of our ways and therefore, it is to God, Who we pray to.

We should really internalize this idea, otherwise what is the point of our prayer? Everything we say and do is "noticed." Through honest prayer we bind ourselves metaphysically to the Creator, because it is only the Creator who knows and hears all. Prayer is essential in life and the Jew was given definite instructions for appropriate prayer that should be utilized more seriously. There are many halachas - laws - regarding prayer, so it is not some erroneous, rote commandment and it is not an optional commandment either.

In time of trouble prayer is a great necessity and makes it an obligation for every person who has the capability to do so. A person may wish to fast voluntarily in addition to prayer during a time of trouble, which can have a very beneficial effect as it helps a person to be more introspective. Fasting, and tshuvah - repentance - through prayer can bring a

person back to who they aspire to be with the recognition that there is an ideal to reach. In turn this can help bring one to a better starting place with another opportunity to once again humbly return to God. We don't just go through the motions of prayer, we use prayer as a genuine opportunity for growth. Through prayer, a person is hopefully brought back to reality and thinks: "This is about me." For every other selfish need, isn't it "always about me?" Prayer is a different necessity; this is a need of the soul, an investment in the soul and in one's reality. This is what God wants from us. The Rambam says: "If we were convinced that we could never make our crooked ways straight, we should for ever continue in our errors, and perhaps add other sins to them since we did not see that any remedy was left to us. The belief in the effect of repentance causes us to improve, to return to the best of the ways and to become more perfect than we were before we sinned. "God can make our ways successful if we worship Him, or disastrous if we disobey Him and that success and failure are not the result of chance or accident."

What person would want to forfeit God making their ways successful? Who would be so foolish? Don't take prayer for granted. Even when things are "ok" there is always a need to repent. Not only from guilt, although guilt is a great motivator, but from actual sin. For every sin one commits, one is obligated to repent. God once again has given us the gift of prayer to be used as a tool for perfection. "Bring us back our Father, to your Torah and bring us near, our Kind to Your service, and influence us to return in perfect repentance before You. Blessed are You, Hashem, Who desires repentance." The Shemoneh Esrei. Have a great Shabbos! ■

# Parshas Kisisa

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are capable of some lower level of comprehension. This more mundane understanding is represented as seeing the Almighty's back.

The Talmud in Tractate Berachot comments on this episode. The Talmud explains that Moshe saw the knot of the teffillin worn by the Almighty on His head. These comments present two obvious difficulties. First, Hashem is not physical. He cannot be conceived as a being wearing teffillin. Second, Maimonides explains that Moshe achieved the highest possible understanding of the Almighty. It did not involve any corporeal element. It is possible that a less perfect individual might attribute some physicality to the Almighty. But how could our Sages claim that Moshe perceived Hashem wearing teffillin?

Rashi, in his commentary on the Talmud, provides some direction in interpreting the Sages' comments. He refers us to a previous text. In this text the Talmud explains that Hashem wears teffillin. The Talmud also deals with the contents of the Almighty's teffillin. The Talmud explains that these teffillin contain the passage, "Who is like Your nation Israel? They are a singular people in the land". This text is also difficult to understand. However, it provides an essential element needed to explain Moshe's vision. In order to appreciate the message of the Talmud, we must place Moshe's vision in context.

Bnai Yisrael had committed the sin of creating and worshiping the egel – the golden calf. This sin altered the relationship between the Almighty and His nation. Moshe wished to reestablish the intimate connection between Hashem and Bnai Yisrael. In this context, Moshe asked Hashem for a revelation of His nature. The Almighty responded by showing

Moshe the knot of His teffillin. This vision gave Moshe the knowledge he needed. With this new understanding, he was able to reestablish the relationship damaged by the sin of the egel. In this context, let us reconsider the comments of the Talmud. The Sages explain that the Almighty's teffillin contain a passage that affirm the unique relationship between the Almighty and Bnai Yisrael. In other words, the teffillin represent the bond between Hashem and His people. Moshe could not see the front of Hashem. He could not fully understand the nature of Hashem. He also could not view the front of Hashem's teffillin. This means that the relationship between the Almighty and Bnai Yisrael is a consequence of the Divine essence. Moshe's understanding of the relationship was necessarily limited. Without full understanding of Hashem's nature, he could not fully grasp the relationship. However, he could see the knot of the teffillin. He was able to study the relationship as an emanation or effect of the Divine essence. An analogy will help illustrate this concept.

Let us compare the Almighty to fire. When the ancient human discovered fire, this unsophisticated individual could not understand the scientific nature of combustion. However, our ancestors could study the effect of fire and heat on different substances. The study of these phenomena did not require a complete comprehension of fire itself. Similarly, Moshe could not understand the ultimate nature of the Almighty. Yet, he could contemplate the relationship between the Almighty and Bnai Yisrael. This understanding enabled Moshe to appeal properly to Hashem and beseech Him for forgiveness for His nation. We now understand that Moshe's vision did not involve any corporeal element. Our Sages are utilizing imagery to communicate an important message regarding Moshe's experience at Sinai.

**"And when Moshe came before Hashem to speak with Him, he would remove the covering until he went out. And he would go out and speak to Bnai Yisrael telling them what had been commanded. And the nation saw that the skin of Moshe's face glowed. And Moshe would restore the covering over his face until he came to speak with Him."** (Shemot 34:34-35)

Moshe ascended Mount Sinai a final time. On this occasion he achieved a profound understanding of the Almighty and His ways. This knowledge is the most advanced understanding of the Almighty that can be acquired by a human being. The Torah explains that when Moshe descended from the mountain his face glowed. At first, Ahron and the people were afraid to approach Moshe. However, Moshe called to Ahron and Bnai Yisrael to approach him. He then spoke with Ahron, the leaders and the nation. Upon completion of this address, Moshe placed a covering over his face. This covering hid the light that glowed from his face. Our passages explain the role of this covering. Whenever Moshe communicated with the Almighty he removed this covering. Most commentaries maintain that the covering remained removed while Moshe delivered Hashem's message to the people. After Moshe completed his presentation, he restored the covering. Moshe's face remained covered until he next communicated with Hashem.

Gershonides seems to differ on the use of the covering. According to his opinion, the covering was restored as soon as Moshe finished speaking with Hashem. When Moshe spoke with the people, his face was covered. The commentaries offer various interpretations of the glow and the covering. Most understand the Torah's account literally. Moshe's face actually beamed with light. The covering is also understood in the literal sense. However, Gershonides takes a different approach to explaining this narrative. He suggests that neither the beams of light or the covering should be interpreted literally.

Instead, they are to be understood figuratively. In order to understand Gershonides' interpretation it is important to remember that he maintains that the covering was only removed during Moshe's communication with Hashem. During his address to Bnai Yisrael, the covering was restored. Gershonides begins by explaining that Moshe achieved the highest possible level of prophecy. He explains that Moshe's prophetic ability developed over time. At Sinai, Hashem revealed to Moshe the most profound truths a human being can grasp. This implies that Sinai represented the full maturation of Moshe as a prophet. He was at the zenith of his prophetic powers.

Moshe's advanced level of prophecy expressed itself in various ways. Maimonides outlines the differences between Moshe and other prophets in his Mishne Torah. One of these differences is that other prophets can only receive prophecy after adequate preparation. The prophet must enter into an appropriate state. In this state the individual sheds all attachment with the material world. An inner peace and calm must also be reached. This is not an easily achieved state. The difficulty of attaining and maintaining this state limits the opportunity of the prophet to receive prophecy. Moshe could achieve prophecy at any time. He was always in the state requisite for prophecy. He possessed a super-human ability to detach himself from the material world and focus on the Almighty. Gershonides asserts that this distinction can be expressed in an even more basic manner. Other prophets are basically focused on the material world. In order to achieve prophecy, they force themselves to refocus their orientation. Through tremendous effort, they shed their material orientation and focus on the spiritual. In contrast, Moshe ultimately altered his basic orientation. When Moshe descended from Sinai, he was no longer similar to other human beings or prophets. He was completely focused on the spiritual. He was entirely detached from the

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material world. In other words, Moshe was innately focused on the spiritual.

We can now understand Gershonides' interpretation of Moshe's glow and his covering. Moshe descended from Sinai. He was no longer like other human beings. He was an essentially spiritual being. Ahron and the Bnai Yisrael sensed Moshe's complete detachment from the material world. The "glow" that emanated from Moshe was this super-human spiritual focus. Ahron and the nation reacted with awe. They could not approach Moshe. Neither could Moshe easily communicate with the material world and its inhabitants. This created a problem. Moshe was the Almighty's prophet. His responsibility was to deliver the Divine message to the people. Yet, a barrier now existed between Moshe and the nation. His very perfection, interfered with his relationship with Bnai Yisrael. The people were in awe of Moshe and could not approach him. Moshe, not longer related to the world he was commanded to instruct. In order for Moshe to communicate with the people, he was forced to reenter the material realm. For Moshe, this required an act of will. He was required to suspend some element of his spiritual orientation. This reorientation to the material is described as a covering. The covering symbolizes Moshe hiding his true nature. Moshe hid an element of his spiritual self in order to communicate with the nation. □

Mesechet Berachot 7a. Rabbaynu Moshe ben Maimon (Rambam / Maimonides) Moreh Nevuchim, volume 1, chapter 5. Divrai HaYamim I, 17:21. Mesechet Berachot 6a. Rabbaynu Shlomo ben Yitzchak (Rashi), Commentary on Sefer Shemot 34:33. Rabbaynu Avraham ibn Ezra, Commentary on Sefer Shemot, 34:33. Rabbaynu Levi ben Gershon (Ralbag / Gershonides), Commentary on Sefer Shemot, (Mosad HaRav Kook, 1994), p 440. See, for example, Rabbaynu Avraham ibn Ezra, Commentary on Sefer Shemot, 34:33. Rabbaynu Moshe ben Maimon (Rambam / Maimonides) Mishne Torah, Hilchot Yesodai HaTorah, chapter 7. Rabbaynu Moshe ben Maimon (Rambam / Maimonides) Mishne Torah, Hilchot Yesodai HaTorah, 7:4-6. Rabbaynu Levi ben Gershon (Ralbag / Gershonides), Commentary on Sefer Shemot, (Mosad HaRav Kook, 1994), p 440.

# The Daily Song

RABBI MOSHE BEN-CHAIM

The Talmud in Rosh Hashanna 31a discusses the reasoning behind the various songs which were recited each day together with the afternoon sacrifice. We now recite them each morning at the end of the morning prayers following Alenu. They are referred to as the "Song of the Day". It is interesting to note the Talmud's reasoning for the Song of the Day: Each day's song correlates to some element which was created on that corresponding day of the week during God's creation of the world.

**Sunday:** We speak of God's complete rulership, as this was the day in which God brought matter from non existence into existence. Giving existence to that which did not exist is the ultimate demonstration of rulership. **Monday:** Manipulation of existing matter shows sovereignty, or kingship - the theme on Monday - as God divided the upper and lower waters via the creation of the firmament (atmosphere). Interesting is that kingship is not dependent on man's existence, as man was not created until day six, nonetheless, God is referred to as a "king" on day two. **Tuesday:** In the third day of creation, God made land appear, and made it inhabitable. We therefore sing the song describing God as "standing in the congregation of God". Standing refers to land upon which man requires for standing. That God stands in the congregation of God teaches that man's existence finds purpose only when man lives in a congregation of God, that is, man recognizing God. **Wednesday:** On the fourth day God created the luminaries, namely the sun. Therefore, the Talmud continues, we describe God as a vengeful God, Who will exact punishment from those who worshiped the sun. **Thursday:** On day five, God created birds, among other things. We therefore read "sing unto God....". The reason given is that since man is impressed by the various species of fowl, man is struck with awe and an urge to sing praises to God. **Friday:** We commence song with "God is robed in majesty", as on day six, God completed the works of creation on that day and rules over them. **Sabbath:** We read the "song of Sabbath", referencing to the ultimate day of rest, the Next World.

I would like to address are the following questions: 1)What are the general concepts described by each daily song? 2)Why are these concepts not in line with physical creation, but also incorporate concepts like revenge, kingship, etc., which is additional to creating objects themselves? 3)What is the concept of referring to creation on each of the six days of the week, when the Sabbath is already devoted to commemorating God of creation? 4)Why not simply recall all seven ideas each and every day, instead of only one idea per day? Why are we mimicking creation by having the songs follow a seven day week, and aligning our days with God's days of creation?

We must say that the Rabbis deemed it essential that man have cognizance of God - the Creator - not only on the Sabbath, but on each day. This is proven by the fact that we recite songs dealing with elements of creation each day. This idea I believe is actually borne out of a passage in Genesis, where the Torah states, "six days you shall do your work and on the seventh day, rest". If this passage is to teach the command of the Sabbath, there is no need to make mention of what we should do on the six other days. Simply telling us to rest on the seventh day suffices. Since in this passage we do find a discussion of the other six days in connection with the Sabbath, I conclude that these 6 other days also partake of the very concept of the Sabbath. Meaning, we are to be cognizant of God's creation not only on Shabbos, but on each day of the week, and we are to do so by recalling some aspect created on that day.

This could very well be the source for the idea of reciting songs dealing with creation on a daily basis. It also makes sense that the

main idea man must be mindful of, should not be limited to only one seventh of his life. Contemplating that God is the Creator is critical enough that we should ponder it daily. (This answers "Question 3" above)

I would answer the remaining 3 questions above as follows:

Answer 1) Which ideas of creation are so essential for us to ponder weekly? This is exactly what the Rabbis were discussing in the Talmud:

**Sunday:** The first idea is that God has complete mastery over the world, to the point, that He can simply will matter into existence. Correlating to God's act of creating matter from nothingness. We must recognize God's creation of the world. **Monday:** God's separation of created matter-the firmament. We must recognize God's role as King. **Tuesday:** God made land appear and made it inhabitable. We must recognize God's will is for man to exist only in as much as he partakes of intelligence and learns about the Creator. **Wednesday:** God is vengeful. We must recognize God desires and dispenses man's justice. **Thursday:** God's created multitudes of species for man to stand in awe. God gave us the perfect means to achieve His goal for our contemplation of His wisdom - as it is reflected in all creation.. Our surroundings are designed to call attention to the existence of a Creator with magnificent abilities. (Perhaps birds call our attention to creation more than other species as they sing beautifully, attracting not only us visually, but audibly.) **Friday:** Initially I thought this day taught us that God's completion of creation displays that He did not deviate from His plan - teaching that God is trustworthy. However, after discussing this with my friend Jesse Fishbein, she asked that God being consistent should really be part of God's justice, as justice by definition means that God is fair to all, which is based on consistent acts. I agreed. I then realized that what is left from the central points of creation is that one might feel that God can create and leave the scene, leaving all creation Godless. However, this is impossible, as matter cannot exist of its own, as is proved by the very fact that it was brought into existence by God. This is an essential point. Matter could not have been created without God, and requires regular maintenance of its existence, to continue existing. If God would not will something to exist, it would cease to be. I believe this to be the concept of the sixth day. That is, that God completed the works of creation, but it continues, "and rules over them". Meaning, He continually supplies all matter with existence. This is actually a statement in our prayers, "uvi'tuvo michadesh b'chol yom tamid maseh beraishis", "He renews the works of creation each day regularly." **Sabbath:** Through the act of "resting" on God's part, God made a point of teaching us that abstinence from creation is firstly a positive quality, and secondly, was actually the goal of creation, as He blessed the Sabbath day, clearly distinguishing its elevated status. God created physical beings so they may partake of the highest good, that is the world of ideas, which like Sabbath, is not limited to the physical. On the Sabbath absolutely no matter was created, and being blessed teaches that this is God's desired state for man.

Answer 2) The physical world is not the goal of creation, but rather, the goal is man's reflection on ideas. It is for this reason that the Rabbis aligned each day, not with simple matter, but with a concept essential to man's existence, thereby teaching us that we aren't simply praising God for the creation which would make the physical an ends, but we are praising God for the higher aspects of creation, the world of ideas.

Question 4) This question I must think into more. □

# The Anointing Oil

RABBI MOSHE BEN-CHAIM

**Question:** My question is simple: "What do the five elements of the Holy Anointing Oil represent?" (Exodus 30:22-33) I have asked this question to various Rabbis and have received answers uniformly along the lines of (well,...um?), "it smells right." Bearing in mind that this unique mixture was used in the anointing of not only the Tabernacle, but All of the furniture of the Tabernacle, all of the utensils of the Tabernacle, Aaron and his sons, and the Kings. Without this unique anointing being applied, all mentioned (you fill in the blank) were unqualified to be of use in the service of God. As such, it can easily be said that the Holy Anointing Oil is higher/greater/of more import than the Tabernacle, all of it's contents, and the priesthood because IT was applied to THEM. I don't mean to sound flippant, I am just a bit frustrated. One might think that since the time of the Tabernacle someone would have discerned the meaning of this most significant if not forgotten item. I have done my own study to be sure, yet before I go shooting off my mouth I'd like a confirming or negating word a bit more studied than, "I dunno".

- Ramirez

**Mesora:** There are a few main questions we can ask regarding the nature of the anointing oil (Exod. 30:22-33);

1) What is the necessity to anoint the Tabernacle and the vessels? What is lacking if they are not anointed? The structure of these objects do not change subsequent to the anointing. They can function equally well without the oil. Why then is there a need for anointing? 2) The passage (Exod. 30:22-23) reads, "God said to Moses saying: "YOU take (such and such spices...)"'. What is the nature of the oil that Moses was instructed himself to create this oil? Why is such urgency placed on Moshe here, but not in other cases? Additionally, the medrash says that the oil which Moshe made had numerous miracles performed throughout. It actually endured more usage than its volume should have realized. Again this pays homage to Moshe's exclusive involvement, but what is the idea behind these miracles? 3) Why does the passage need to mention "to minister to Me (God)"? Who else would Aaron and his sons minister before in God's Temple?

I would commence by underlining a few points: Oil is a mixture, it must be made with chochma. The length at which the passages discuss the ingredients points to this. Moshe - to the exclusion of all others - was instructed to make the oil. What significance does Moshe lend to this oil?

We know that Moshe's distinction was his unique level of prophecy and wisdom, never to be approached by any man before or after him. Moshe is synonymous with high intelligence. There is some relationship be placed between the oil and intelligence.

I suggest that the emphasis on wisdom here is to indicate that vessels do not possess inherent value, despite their precise design. Without proper understanding of the purpose and meaning of the Temple's vessels, there is a danger that the people would project importance onto the physical structure themselves, divorced from their goals. Even after designing the Tabernacle's vessels, proper intent of their usage must exist, otherwise there is a danger that one might feel that there is something unique to these objects in themselves. To counter the notion that physical objects have inherent

meaning, and additionally, to teach that all matters pertaining to the Temple and God must be approached with the utmost wisdom, only Moshe was allowed to make this oil - displaying thereby that accurate designation of the purpose of the Temple's vessels can only be made by one with the highest level of knowledge, Moshe. Moshe represents true understanding par excellence, and by association, Moshe lent correct understanding that inauguration of the vessels was not simple, but required to be approached with wisdom. These vessels have no inherent value. However, if designated by Moshe - a wise man - with oil made with care and understanding, then man's relationship to the vessels will be guided by the overtone of Moshe's reputation. Man would understand that these vessels aren't simply entitled to be in the Temple without an understanding of their purpose.

This leads us to a crucial lesson. The very selection of Moshe to anoint these objects demonstrates that we are to approach our commandments not as meaningless, Torah-bound performances, but with understanding. Rashi teaches that fulfillment of commands without understanding are worthless. This does not mean we may abandon commands, the meaning of which we are bereft. It means that God's goal in giving man the Torah is to approach Him, and with no understanding of our commands, there cannot be any possible approaching of God. As Maimonides teaches, "Love of God is in direct proportion to our knowledge."

The reason such concern for understanding is placed on Temple related phenomena, is that this is the area in which man's religious emotions can run wild and lead him astray, even though the Temple and Tabernacle are Torah commands. The Talmud states that the evil inclination appeared as a fiery lion exiting the Temple's Holy of Holies. This metaphor teaches that in this area, there exists the most danger - the evil inclination yearns for "holy" things. The true approach to understanding the Temple's vessels is to realize that through them we come to understand God. Since the Temple is a vehicle by which we approach God(1) by definition, we must stress that wisdom be present in all areas, even the initial inauguration.

## Postscript

Perhaps also the oil's duration throughout the generations attests to the unique level of designation into which Moshe imbued this oil.

This theory also explains why the Rambam teaches in the Mishne Torah that during the Simcha Bais HaShoavah, only the chachomim - the wise men - were allowed to dance. This is to teach that they are the ones who have the accurate understanding of Torah, and therefore their gladness is the only true gladness which results in dance. To allow others to dance allows others to believe that they have arrived at true Torah knowledge. It also falsely teaches that happiness may be arrived at without perfection in Torah study. Even during the Rambam's time, men thought to be "the wise men of Israel" (2) had corrupt ideas.

When King Solomon brought the ark into the Temple, he too initially invited the elders and princes - those who portray intelligence. (Haftoras Pekuday; Malachim 1, Chap. 8) □

(1) See our article. "The Tabernacle" (2) Maimonides, "The Guide for the Perplexed", Dover Ed. pp161

