

JewishTimes

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The Kolbuszowa rebbe, Yechiel Teitelbaum, is forced to pose for a photograph in his tallit and tefillin in front of his home in the ghetto. (1942) The rabbi was later relocated to the Rzeszow ghetto, where he and his two granddaughters were murdered.

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"DON'T STAND BY THE BLOOD OF YOUR FRIEND"

(LEV. 19:16)

Due to only 1 person's capture, Abraham and a small group risked their lives against 4 mighty kings. God shared that history of Abraham's risk, as God endorses risking life to save others. The Jerusalem Talmud states so openly. We must weigh the definite ongoing murders of Jews and Ukrainians vs. possible deaths through defending them. Abraham fought for Torah values and succeeded...as did King David against Goliath, Esther against Haman and the few Maccabees against 72,000 Greeks. Those fighting for Torah's values do not fight "alone." And we don't only defend our own, as Moses defended Jethro's daughters and the Egyptians.

MIN HAHAR

RABBI CHAIM OZER CHAIT

Sinful Silence

For most of the Jewish people, the policy on how we should react to one of our most precious gifts from G-D, the returning of the Har Habayit to the Jewish people, has been what we call "Shev V'al Taaseh" "sit and do nothing." In other words, be passive and do not get involved. From the story of the M'raglim we see the contrary, for the Torah gives praise and recognition to those—Calev and Yehoshua—who stood up and spoke out against the transgression of the people.

There are two other dictums that we have to consider to

determine what our responsibilities and actions should be towards the Har Habayit.

The Gemara in Bava Metzia (Daf 37b) tells us "silence is as admission." That would mean that by not speaking out we would be like accepting as correct the practices that are currently being done on the Har Habayit, and as I mentioned in my previous articles, a very serious violation of Halcha i.e. Kefira is involved.

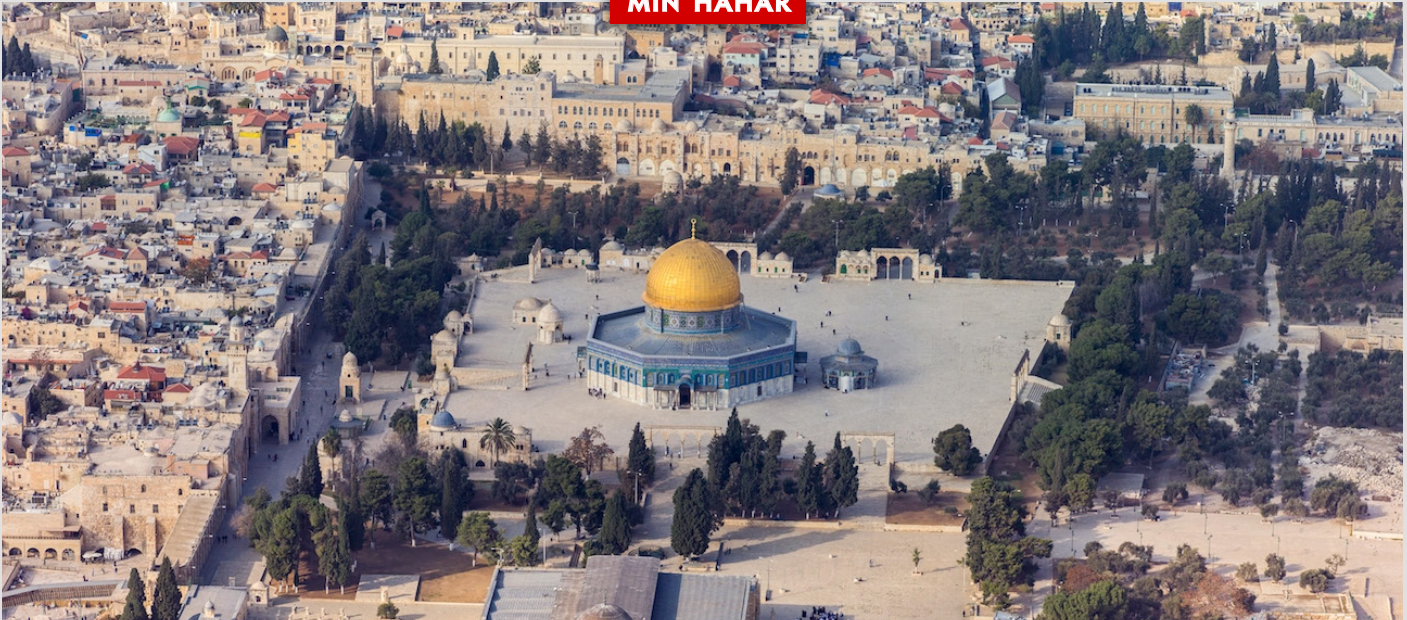
There is also a second dictum that we have to consider and that is best described in the introduction of the Ba'al

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Ha'moar, (Rav Zerachyah Halevi 1125-1186). The Ba'al Ha'moar's comments were critical of the Rif. In fact his questions were so poignant and piercing on the psak of the Rif that the Ramban felt compelled to defend the Rif and wrote his response calling it Milchamas Hashem (The Holy Battle). The Baal Hamaor did not want people to think that he does not respect or admire the great stature of the Rif. To explain his true feelings he quoted in his introduction to his work the Gemara in Shevuos on Daf 31a. The Gemara states, "How Do we know that a disciple sitting before his master, who sees that the poor man is right and the wealthy man wrong, should not remain silent? Because it is said, "From a false matter keep far" (Shemot 23,7). What the Baal Hamaor in essence is saying is, of course he deeply respects the great scholarship of the Rif and even looks to him as his teacher but what can he do? He must speak the truth or else he has the standing of a "liar." In other words, silence itself in the face of an injustice or corruption of Halacha is a Torah violation.

Furthermore, this will render some of our Tefillos as being hypocritical.

For example at the end of every Shmona Esrei we say, "May it be your will Hashem our G-D and the G-D of our forefathers, that the Holy Temple be rebuilt, speedily in our days." Do we really mean this, when we don't speak out against the deplorable policy on the Temple Mount?! When the Waqf is committed to do everything in their power to prevent the building of the third Beis Hamikdash. Our silence is tantamount to consenting to give them administrative control of the Har Habayit. We are in essence supporting their policies. How then do we ask of Hashem to return to us the Beis Hamikdash, when our actions are contrary to our request?

Furthermore, our actions of passivity only encourages the Waqf to be more aggressive in expressing their disdain towards Judaism. The area of the Temple mount is a rectangle of about 1500 ft x 1000 ft. The sanctity of the Har Har Habayit is 500 sq. amos (approximately 885 sq. ft.). That means a large portion of the Temple mount is not part of the sanctity of the Beis Hamikdash. This is mostly due to the extensions of the Temple Mount southward by the Hasmoneans, and later further south and west by Herod, and finally north during the Umayyad period. The Al-Aqsa Mosque is not situated in the five hundred amos of the sanctity of the Beis Hamikdash. That means that for over one thousand years there wasn't an active Mosque in the sanctity of the Beis Hamikdash. Muslims were not permitted to pray in the Dome of the Rock (as I explained in my last article). Under Israeli sovereignty four more Mosques were added. Two in the 500 amos, one in Shaar Rachamim which is the northeastern corner of the Beis Hamikdash (not of the Temple Mount as it exists today). The Waqf permit-

ted prayers in the Dome of the Rock, which makes this the second active mosque and this is in the Kodesh Kadashim...something that hasn't happened since the days of Mohammed (although it seems that there were times that certain Muslims did pray there as individuals). This is shocking and appalling to say the least. Did anybody speak out against this atrocity to our most sacred place? (Note: Gilard Erdan the Minister of Interior did speak out and said he will stop this degradation of our holy site, and committed himself to the closing of the additional mosques. However, he was not successful. I am not sure what happened and why he failed). Did anybody speak out against this move by the Waqf to increase Islam on the Har Habayit, clearly violating and a degradation our most holy site? Just ask yourself, would you allow the Muslims to pray in your Shul? Would you permit the Koran to be placed in the Aron Kodesh? Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveichick ZT'L points out that facing the Har Habayit during Shmona Esrei is of biblical origin (Nefesh Harav pg. 119). But we, the Jewish people have turned it into a mini Mecca, and most of the Jewish people really don't seem to be disturbed about this. Shocking! We must ask why there is so little interest in the Har Habayit? That is why it is so important to ascend the Har. Not only are you fulfilling two Mitzvot Da'raisa but you are waking up the consciousness of the Jewish people. Increased numbers capture the attention of King Abudullah of Jordan who complains to the Prime Minister's office that we are violating the status quo. The media picks up on this. The New York Times has written two articles on Jewish Prayer on the Temple Mount. I understand that Haaretz (English version) will soon be publishing an article on this. The world is beginning to realize that the Temple Mount has its origin and roots deeply tied to Judaism.

All those who wish to donate to our Yeshiva and Kollel or want additional information on the Har Habayit, please visit www.harhabayit.org ■

NOTE: One should not ascend the Temple Mount without proper Rabbinical instruction:

- 1) You should be informed of the various routes that are available according to the different Rabbinical opinions.
- 2) You must immerse in a Kosher Mikvah that meets the standards to be kosher *med'orisa*.
- 3) You must receive instructions for the proper preparations for the Mikvah (*Chafifah*)



**“DON'T
STAND
BY THE
BLOOD
OF YOUR
FRIEND”**

During a plague, a Rabbi peered out his window. Seeing someone collapsed in the snow, he ran to save him. He risked the chance of getting ill, against that person's definite illness.

**ALL OPTIONS TO SAVE LIVES MUST BE EMPLOYED,
EXCEPT INACTIVITY.**

Rabbi Moshe Ben-Chaim
& Howard Salamon

the Purpose of Mitzvah

Ibn Ezra's Crucial Message



Ibn Ezra, Exod. 31:18

Brainless people wonder what Moses was doing on Mount Sinai 40 days and 40 nights! And they don't know if he stood there with God this amount of time. [And even if you] greatly multiply this duration [that Moses stood on Sinai] he could not know [even] one thousandth of God's works and His ways and the fundamentals of all mitzvahs that God commanded Moses! [Brainless people wonder this] for they think that the "performance" [of mitzvah] is the essence. But this is not true; rather [the essence of mitzvah] is the "heart" [human intent]. [So be aware] that the actions, thoughts and speech [commanded by mitzvah] are merely to make one fluent [in following the laws]. And accordingly, it is written, "It is in your mouth and in your heart to perform it", and so have our early [Sages] said, "God desires one's heart." And the root of all mitzvahs culminates in loving God with all one's soul and clinging to Him. But this cannot be complete if one does not recognize God's works in the higher creations and in the lower ones, and in knowing His ways. And accordingly the prophet said, "Only in this shall the praiser praise himself: become wise and know Me." Then it will be clarified to him, "that God performs kindness, justice and charity in the land." But one cannot know God if he does not know his own inclination, his soul and his body. For anyone who does not know the nature of his soul, what wisdom does he have? And behold, Moses who prophesied 40 years in the desert and grasped great principles that God revealed to him on Mount Sinai, and yet, he said before his death, "You have only begun to show Your servant Your greatness." And behold now [even at that time] He [only] began to show him the greatness of God. [Bracketed words added for clarification]

Ibn Ezra describes a phenomenon equally applicable to today's Jew. Jews get caught up in the "performance" of mitzvahs, and not with understanding their profound lessons and the human perfection God truly intends. Yes, God gives us commands, and we must act...but we act only in order that we become fluent in the "laws," the ideas. Our acts are targeting a greater good. God does not merely desire the physical activities of waving a Lulav, wearing Tefillin, reciting Kiddush or giving charity. "God desires one's heart." That is, God wants his human creations to perform mitzvahs because they understand the principles behind the mitzvahs, and value them as precious truths. Performance is merely the barometer of one's conviction and also to regulate our fluency in their laws. But it is the conviction in the mitzvah's idea that is the goal of the mitzvahs.

The gift of intelligence is precisely in order to arrive at ever-growing knowledge of God and His ways. Had action alone been all God desired, the intellect's amazing capabilities

would be of no use. Furthermore, the tapping of the intellect's potential cannot be accomplished through simple action. Mitzvah requires great thought, and that's why Moses stood on Sinai with God for over a month, awake, day and night.

Brainless people wonder what took so long for Moses to descend Mount Sinai. "All he had to do was learn how to perform the mitzvahs, and then come back down the mountain," they think. They doubt Moses even needed 40 days! But as Ibn Ezra teaches, Moses could spend numerous years in communion with God and not even scratch the surface of God's knowledge.

Ibn Ezra's Formulation

He commences with a critique: people think action—and nothing more—is the goal of the mitzvahs. What causes a person to gravitate to the mitzvah's performance, and not go further? What prevents one from unraveling

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the clues in the mitzvah's design, and arrive at the fundamentals? Ibn Ezra immediately alerts us, "There's so many fundamentals and profound ideas, that even after 40 years, Moses barely scratched the surface." This was Moses' own admission. This will impact people and drive them to seek the lessons of the mitzvahs.

The error of preoccupation with performance, is due to our sensual nature, which has a head start over our intellects. "For the inclination of man's heart is evil from youth" (Gen. 8:21). Our instincts are with us from birth, but our intellects develop slowly, over many years. Most people find great difficulty controlling—and certainly abandoning—a sensual lifestyle. And when confronted with Torah obligation, people attach themselves to the components that are sensual, meaning the physical act. Since they have followed a lifestyle rooted in the senses alone, and not intellect, they view Torah and mitzvahs from their senses, not their intellects. They don't live in their intellects, but in their instincts, so all is filtered through their instincts. Mitzvahs, then, are treated identically: whatever does not touch their instincts and senses, is ignored. Therefore, all they sense is the act of mitzvah, and they ignore the mitzvah's laws and halachas that point to immense insight.

This is the flaw Ibn Ezra wishes to correct with this commentary. He appropriately refers to such people as "brainless" (literally "empty-brained") as an indication that this core faculty of intelligence is not engaged, when it truly should be.

He then addresses the obvious question: If performance is not the goal, why are mitzvahs relegated to thought, speech and action, which are performances? He answers that this is to accustom us, for repeated behavior conditions a person in a desired path, and rehearses the laws. He validates this with this verse, "It is in your mouth and in your heart to perform it" (Deut. 30:14), but then qualifies the true goal with the Rabbis' words, "God desires one's heart (Tal. Sanh. 106b)" based on God's words to Samuel, "Man sees with the eyes, but God sees the heart" (I Samuel 16:7). This verse also validates our idea that man is primarily sensual, "seeing with his eyes" and not looking into another person's heart and motives, like God does.

Next, Ibn Ezra explains why performance cannot be the end goal...



Loving God

This—Ibn Ezra teaches—is the goal of the mitzvahs. But what is the meaning of "loving God"? How is this mitzvah performed? How does one "love" God, when we don't know what He truly is?

Maimonides explains that one's love of God is in direct proportion to his or her knowledge of God (Hilchos Teshuva 10:10). Thus, love of God equates to "appreciating God's wisdom." The more one studies God's creations and Torah, the greater is his or her love of God. And although we cannot love God Himself, we are drawn to the Source of the wisdom and the goodness we witness in creation and Torah. This is what we call love of God.

Ibn Ezra quotes Jeremiah 9:22,23, teaching that man's true praise is not based on his morality, strength, or wealth. Rather, a person is praiseworthy only if he becomes wise and knows God. Read that again...he must "become wise" and know God. This means that one must study. Why? Because the mere performance of mitzvah is not the goal. One must study and learn if he or she is to uncover the brilliance of true Torah values. It is not the performance alone that God desires, but man's heart, his "understanding" and "intent". One can go through the motions, but this does not reflect on one's inner recognition of the mitzvahs' true messages. A man or woman has not perfected themselves by performance alone. Perfection is achieved only when one recognizes a truth, and values it enough to act on it. The act, then, is a barometer of

one's conviction. But it is the intellectual conviction that God wants..."God wants the heart".

And this is so sensible, since man's true essence is his intelligence; the faculty that distinguishes him over all other creations. It is then his intelligence that is his true worth. Animals can perform actions. But it is man alone who can recognize his Creator, and uncover His brilliance. Thus, actions are not our mark of distinction: it is our capacity to become wise through understanding the perfection and design of the universe and the mitzvahs, thereby attesting to those truths.

System of Knowing God

Ibn Ezra then teaches that man must first recognize God as the creator of what is above. This gives man the perspective that the universe and literally all that is, exists only due to a Creator. Once man recognizes God as "creator," meaning the exclusive "cause" of everything, he must also know how God "governs" His creations. This is what is meant by knowing the "lower ones," meaning man. We must know that, "God performs kindness, justice and charity in the land." And these are valued only if we understand our design: our instincts, soul and our body, as Ibn Ezra states. By understanding man's psychological, intellectual and bodily designs, only then do we learn what are man's needs, purposes and qualities, their hierarchy, and how God supplies these through acts that we call kind, just and charitable. Our appreciation

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for God's provision of food, clothing, and shelter grants us one level of appreciation for God. But as we study man's internal world, we learn of the multifaceted psyche, and how Torah laws guide us to a measured lifestyle that keep all drives in check, and enable us to grow intellectually and morally through the myriad of other laws and their designs. And with our study of the universe and of the Torah's halachic and philosophical systems, our minds find the greatest pleasure unraveling marvels and deep insights that fill us with the greatest experiences. Through study, we recognize God as creator and governor. And as we grow in our learning of God's creations and government of man, our appreciation (love) for God grows proportionately.

A Kind, Just and Charitable God

It is vital at this point to understand why God is all three: kind, just and charitable. On Jeremiah 9:23, Radak defines these three traits. Kindness is excessive goodness performed for another being, and has two expressions: 1) goodness performed for one who has no claim on you; 2) and goodness that is over and above what is due to another who has a claim on you. Charity is the act of giving another whatever it needs, as in food for the hungry and clothes for the naked. And justice is meting out reward or punishment depending on the person's merits and sins.

Justice is applicable to humans alone. The former two also apply in some measure to animals. None apply to inanimate beings.

Why are all these qualities necessary? It is because the needs of living beings vary. And as God is perfectly good, His response to varying needs varies. At times, a being only requires nourishment; God's providence for this is called righteousness. But at times, people require more than what meets their basic needs, due to emotional issues for example. Therefore, an added attentive measure called kindness is required to set such a soul on a path of happiness and equilibrium. For example, a depressed person will need additional attention and patience as compared to others who are functioning with normal optimism. And when one is evil, justice is required to correct that person or society, or to deter others.

It is only through understanding a spectrum of God's ways that we can

accurately appreciate each mitzvah, through understanding its insights and ramifications. If one is devoid of knowledge of God, his charity misses the mark, for he does not view charity as a means to set a person on a good path, in order to love God. He simply views it economically, not in connection with God. And this is not the mitzvah of charity. And if a person lives in accord with strict justice alone, and does not bend with the needs of the needy, he is not acting as God acts. For he allows his emotional temperament to dictate his acts, when he really should determine his acts based on God's values. And at times, this means we forgo what makes us comfortable, in order that another human being might find happiness.

As you can see, Ibn Ezra is correct...we can discuss God's mitzvahs for 40 days or even 40 years and not scratch the surface! This explains why the Talmud and Shulchan Aruch are so lengthy.

The Fundamental

Ibn Ezra takes us through a sequence of considerations in order to fully explain the goal of mitzvahs; that being the love of God. He informs us that aside from understanding a given mitzvah, we must possess the additional knowledge of God as both the creator and governor. And we must also understand the human being. This knowledge forms the crucial backdrop to understand all mitzvahs. If one waves the Lulav in all directions, without knowing God alone created produce, he misses the entire point of Lulav, which is our thanks for produce to the God who alone governs the heavens and Earth, and all of man's Earthly activities. If one wears Tefillin but does not know that we thereby attest to God's exclusive reign over Egypt and all natural laws, and no other powers exists, we again miss the purpose of this mitzvah, commanded right after the 10 Plagues. And if one prays to God but thinks, "God is physically inside me," and He is not the metaphysical being He truly is, one is not praying to God, but to his fantasy. And fantasies cannot respond to your prayers. Knowing our human design psychologically and philosophically, we appreciate how each mitzvah perfects us.

These insights must renew in us all a fresh perspective on mitzvahs, that will grant us true appreciation for the laws, but mostly, a love for the Creator's wisdom, and for His goodness in benefitting man through His gift of Torah. ■

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Eons & Dinosaurs

READER: Why was Earth populated for billions of years (in a naturalistic way) and why did G-d create the dinosaurs? Does the Torah mention dinosaurs? The Torah speaks about great tannin.

—Turk Hill

RABBI: Without God informing us of His exact planning of Earth, its prehistoric and ice ages, and essential eons, we can't talk with any certainty. But we can deconstruct the universe and appreciate that its creation required immense time to unfold. Galaxies' distances from each other, and their billions of respective stars are understood to take great amounts of time to arrive in God's desired state. We are in no position to say that God should have created everything in a single moment. For we are not the Creator. Similarly, we can't tell Henry Ford that he should have made his autos in a different way. For by doing so, it would no longer be a "Ford." So too, suggesting God could have made the world in a millisecond instead of 13.7 billion years, suggests knowledge we don't have, and refers to a universe that God did not imagine...its not "The Universe," but our own fantasy.

And finally, rabbis have suggested that, "great serpents" (Gen 1:21) may refer to dinosaurs. ■

Peace: Elusive or Undesired?

FRIEND: If all religions teach peace, why can't they achieve peace?

Rabbi: Peace is not sought by all religions; religious wars prove this. Religions may tout peace as a lure to amass adherents, as they feel numbers validates their faith.

But when religions finally seek truth as an end, instead of power, and they follow rationality and not human deification, superstition or blind faith...peace could be

fostered, even with disagreement. This is because the mutual appreciation of peoples searching for truth obscures agendas. Both parties seek the same thing, and there is no conflict when vital goals are shared. ■

Wisdom is Endless

RABBI: Rabbi Burstein questioned the following Rashi:

"Torah was given as a gift, like a bride to her groom, for it could not be studied entirely in such a small time frame like this" (Rashi on Exod. 31:18).

When God concluded speaking to Moses on Mt. Sinai, He gave him Torah. "For it could not be studied entirely" highlights the enormity of Torah's scope. Torah is vast and God could not communicate all its lessons to Moses during a mere 40 days on the mountaintop. Thus, after God concluded his rendezvous with Moses, much Torah was left to learn, so God gave Moses all of Torah in written form. This also teaches that Torah could be studied independent from God, explaining why God gave Moses Torah upon his descent.

What determines Torah's vastness? This must be due to its reflection of the Creator's will, as the Creator knows all. But of what's significance is Torah's magnitude? Would a smaller Torah be any less valuable?

The lesson is that the receipt of Torah was not a one-time event. It was only beginning of an endless pursuit throughout each person's life, and for all generations. Originally, Adam was to live eternally, and he was to occupy himself with God's wisdom, which could occupy an eternity of study. This is man's preoccupation in the afterlife, which does not end. Knowledge leads man from one question, to an answer, and to further questions...and that's exciting. Wisdom's nature as an eternal pursuit is a great part of wisdom's appeal. It is a pursuit into which man can invest all his energies, finding full satisfaction and no frustration.

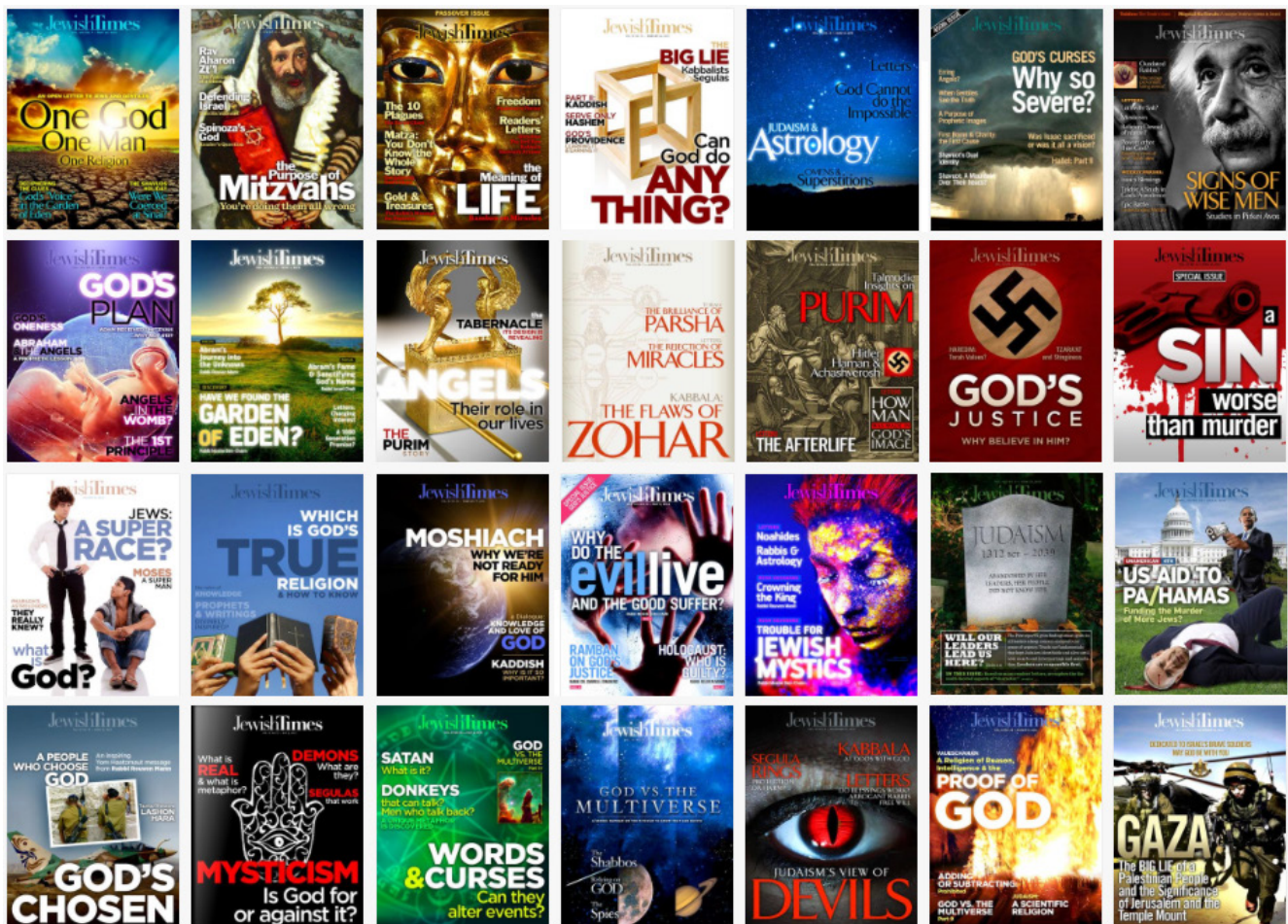
Thank you Rabbi Burstein for your question, which proves the very point that questions and answers continue...with no end in sight.

Rabbi Burstein offered his own explanation:

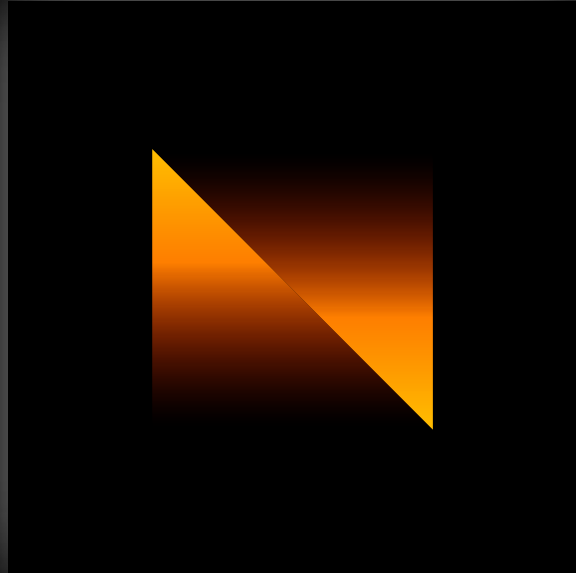
"What is the relationship between a brief timespan and a bride being given over to a groom? Maybe it means that when the couple start out, the groom doesn't see the complete package...i.e., how great a woman she is. But you have to take the plunge so to speak, and get married. So too Hashem gave us the Torah after a short amount of time so we would take the plunge so to speak and accept the Torah. Otherwise, if people needed to see everything in their spouse first, they could never get married. And if we needed to see everything in the Torah, we wouldn't be able to accept it." ■

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CONDÉ NAST





the Power of Gold

RABBI RICHARD BORAH

The parsha of Pekudai states the amount of gold required for the sanctuary:

24. All the gold that had been used for the work in all the work of the Holy the gold of the waving was twenty nine talents, seven hundred and thirty shekels, according to the holy shekel.

The other two metals utilized from the sanctuary are silver (kesef) and copper (nechoshet).

The majority of the gold was utilized for the following items of the sanctuary:

1. The holy ark – wood coated inside and outside with gold.
2. The ark cover – beaten from a single piece of gold.
3. The spice altar – wood coated on outside with gold.
4. The menorah – beaten from a single piece of gold.
5. The table for the showbread – wood coated on outside with gold.
6. Parts of the Kohane Gadole's clothing.
7. Additional small utensils of the sanctuary.

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It is quite clear that gold is the metal used for those objects that are most holy. The center of the sanctuary and the area most restricted for use or entry in the “Holy of Holies” which contained the holy ark and the ark cover, both of which are made of gold. The “Holy” which was the area immediately outside of the “Holy of Holies” contained the golden spice altar, the table and the menorah, all were gold. No silver or copper were used here. Outside of the Holy is the sanctuary courtyard was the washing basin and the altar on which the sacrifices were offered. These were both made of copper (some translate as bronze, which is a copper/tin alloy). Silver was primarily utilized for the sockets of the pillars that made up the structure of the sanctuary. But it is gold that is used for objects endowed with the highest level of holiness.

Why is gold the metal of choice for this purpose? Although very beautiful and enduring, gold has many negative connotations, the most prominent one being its use for the golden calf which the Jewish people constructed when they surmised that Moshe died due to his delay in descending from Mount Sinai. This sin is often regarded as the most damaging one in our history and one that reflects a fundamentally evil with which the Jewish people continue to struggle. Also, gold was associated with the Pharaohs and Egypt, from whose idolatrous and lascivious culture the Jews were rescued in their redemption from Egypt. One could certainly ask whether there are any positive associations with gold that make it the material of choice from turning ones thoughts to God in the sanctuary?

There is a very intriguing statement in the Shemos Raba 51:6:

Aaron said to them: “Break off the gold rings...” (Shemot 32:2). And the people broke off their golden rings and showered them upon him until he was compelled to exclaim: “Enough!” This was the point of Moses’ rebuke “And Laban, and Hazerot, and Dizahab” (Devarim 1:2)- (Dizahab is a hint as it can be read to mean “enough gold”) This can be compared to a young man who came to a city and found the people collecting money for charity, and when they asked him also to



subscribe, he went on giving until they had to tell him that he had already given enough. Further on his travels, he came to a place where they were collecting for a theater, and when asked to contribute toward it, he was also so generous that he had to be told, “Enough!”. Israel, likewise, contributed so much toward the Golden Calf that they had to be told, “Enough!” And they contributed so much gold to Mishkan that they had to be told, “Enough!” as it is said, “For their efforts had been more than enough for all the tasks to be done.” (37:7). The Holy One Blessed be He then said: “Let the gold of the Mishkan atone for the gold they brought toward making of the Golden Calf”.

Avivah Zornberg in her book “The Particulars of Rapture-Reflections of Exodus” notes a subtle point in that the midrash’s parallel example for the gold of the calf and the mishkan until they are told “enough!” is that of a man who gives gold to charity and then, afterwards gives gold to the theater, until he is told in both cases, “enough!” Ms. Zornberg explains that in the case of the man with the gold given to the charity and the theater the order is reversed to dispel the idea that there was some positive development in the case of the Jews “overgiving” for the

mishkan after the previous “overgiving” to the calf. In the case of the giver in the midrash, he gives first to charity and afterwards to the theater, reversing the order of the Jewish people making clear that no repentance or development took place between the two donations (the golden calf and then the mishkan) in the case of the Jewish people either. She explains that it is only by God’s mercy that that the previous donations to make the calf are atoned through the giving to the mishkan and not due to an actual transformation of the person’s perspective. The flaw remains, but God’s accepts this giving to the mishkan as an atonement, nonetheless. Ms. Zornberg states:

The sequence is confused, so that a simple optimism about right objects replacing wrong objects becomes impossible. The story of the young man, with his compulsive, morally opaque generosity, seeps into the midrashic narrative of the people. A linear progression from evil to good forms of energy is undermined in the parable structure, where the time sequence cannot objectively indicate redemption or atonement. It is only God’s words that retroactively restructure the events of the past expressing a “wish” that this should cover that. God’s words are in the jussive form: “Let it be...” Without His

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words, the facts carry no unequivocal meaning. Essentially, God suggests a possible world, imposing order on the promiscuous generosity of His indiscriminating people. (p. 468).

I would like to suggest another idea indicated by the midrash. Why did the gold of the mishkan atone for the gold of the calf? Perhaps this midrash helps to clarify that the degradation of the Jewish people's perspective which occurred with the golden calf to require the worship of God in a manner that partook of place and the creation of their own hands, need to be rectified in some manner. This need could not be reversed to the pre-calf level. But now the question was how to carry out this worship in a manner that was not so far from the truth that it remained idolatrous.

The inclusion of place and man-made objects had to be optimally included in the act of worshipping God. Once the people were at a level that required place and objects of their own making to draw their attention to God, what was the best manner in which such a place and such objects could be made? This manner was the place and the structure and materials of the mishkan. This was why it was, so to speak, an "atonement" or, more precisely, an optimal sublimation of the desire for physicality in worship.

The worship was now directed to a place; this place being the mishkan which was associated with the propitious acts which took place there, such as the offering of Yitzchak by Avraham in absolute servitude to God. This mishkan had the holy ark at its core. Within the ark was the "aseret hadibros" (the tablets of the 10 commandments or, more accurately, the 10 statements.) So at the heart of the mishkan was not an image, but a set on laws based on concepts which were abstract in nature and not at all physical. In this way the gold of the mishkan redeemed the gold of the calf. The gold that remained physical in the golden calf, here, within the ark at its center, housed the "aseret hadibros" ("ten commandments") and the physical gold was made to serve that which was of true value—the connection to non-physical God through wisdom.

Many great commentators have explained the use of gold in the mishkan based on its unique qualities. For example, gold represents purity and eternity in that it does not tarnish or change by mixing with other elements like silver and copper do. However, I would suggest that the gold is also simply alluring and attractive because of its beauty and association with wealth and grandeur. It was the metal of the powerful, the wealthy, the royal. As such, it was the best material to attract one's attention to that which was

truly most precious. Now the physical gold of the mishkan attracted the human mind to the true value - the worship of God and the inculcation of the ideas of the Torah represented by the tablets within the holy ark. The redeeming of the gold of the calf takes place because gold which previously drew man's mind away from the truth (in the case of the golden calf) was now utilized to bring man back to focusing on that which is of true value—the worship of the One True Being who is the source of all value through the ideas within the Torah (represented by the aseres hadibros—the "ten commandments" brought down my Moshe from Sinai).

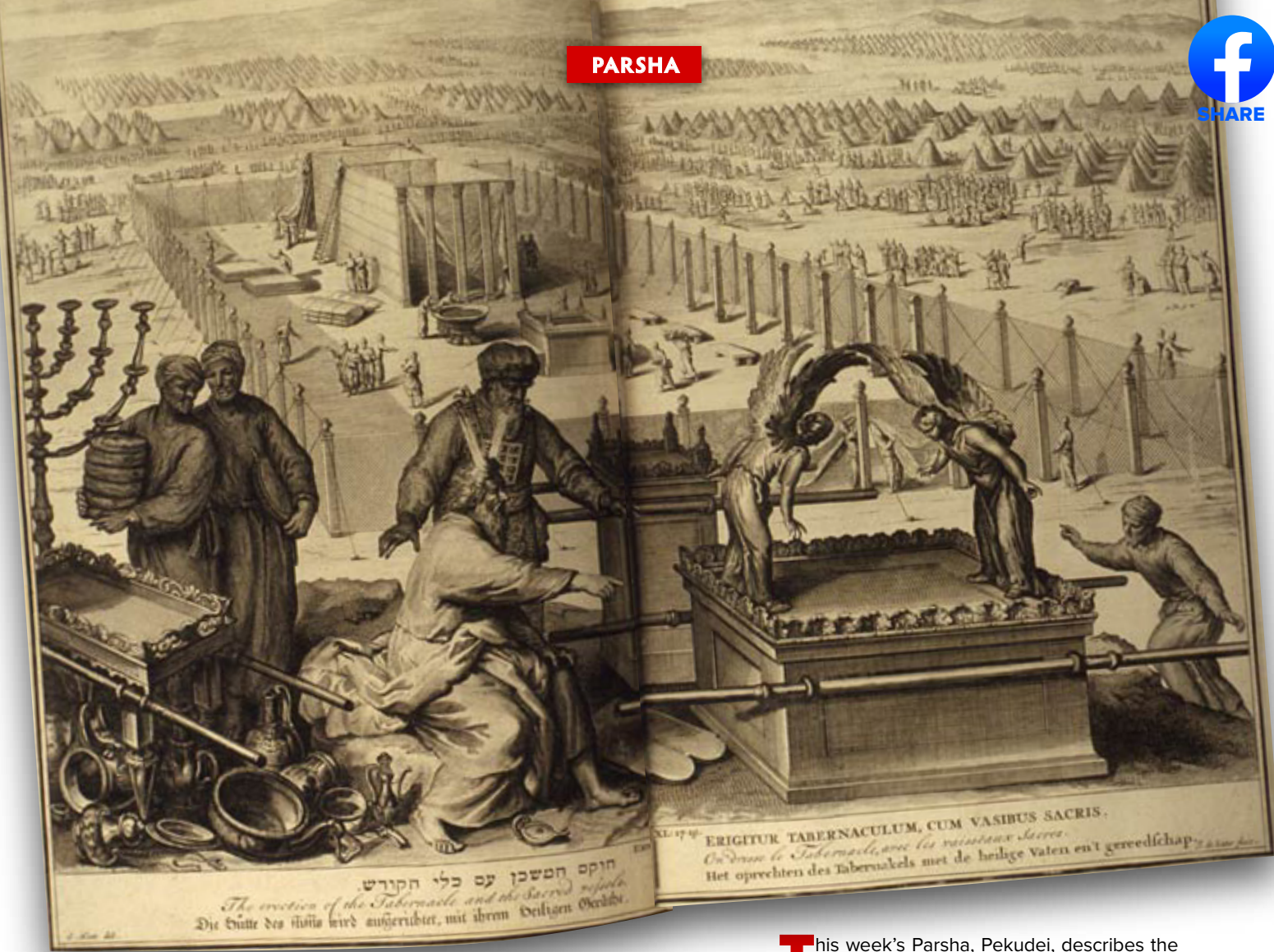
Regarding the solid gold ark cover with the two cherub figures, the Torah states:

Betzalel made the ark of shittim wood, two and a half cubits long, a cubit and a half wide, and a cubit and a half high. He overlaid it with pure gold within and without, and made a rim of gold to it round about ... He made the covering of pure gold, two and a half cubits long and a cubit and a half wide. He made two keruvim of gold, hammered out of one piece, at the two ends of the covering: one keruv at one end and the other keruv at the other end; he made the keruvim of one piece with the covering, at its two ends. The keruvim had their wings spread out above, shielding the covering with their wings. They faced each other; the faces of the keruvim were turned toward the covering." (Exodus 37:1,2,6-9)

The two cherubs (keruvim) that are atop the ark cover and resemble two winged children facing each other and looking downward. Regarding these, the Shadal (Rabbi Shmuel David Luzzatto, Italy, 1800-1865) states:

Prior to stating that [God] will meet with you and impart to you from above the covering ... the Torah states what is to be placed inside the ark, to teach us that the holiness of the ark stems from the stone tablets within it and not from its covering or from the keruvim.

Luzzatto makes clear his opinion that the holiness of the ark came from what was within it: the aseres hadibros representing the Torah and its wisdom. ■



The Faithful Artisans

Rabbi Reuven Mann

This week's Parsha, Pekudei, describes the actual construction of the Mishkan and brings to a close the second Book of the Torah. The main and recurring theme of this section, is that the craftsmen who had been commissioned to erect the Tabernacle, were meticulous in doing everything according to the exact instructions conveyed by Hashem through Moshe.

The dedication of the workers—to refraining from instituting any changes in G-d's design of the Sanctuary—was so significant, that Aaron himself comes in for praise on this matter. He was tasked, with lighting the Menorah in a very precise manner. The verse informs us that; "Aaron did so, toward the face of the Menorah he kindled its lamps; as Hashem had commanded Moshe." Commenting on this, Rashi says, that this is "to convey the praises of Aaron who did not deviate" (Bamidbar 8:3).

Apparently, the temptation to innovate in the manner of serving Hashem, is very great. But Judaism is extremely leery about man's religious imagination. He has a tendency to fashion deities that appeal to his emotions, but do not draw him close to the Creator of the universe. The Torah, therefore, abundantly emphasizes that the

(CONT. ON NEXT PAGE)

Mishkan's workers, relinquished their independent creativity and adhered to the instructions they had been given.

The Ramban points out, how truly amazing it was that Betzalel and the other artisans, were able to perform the very delicate sculpting that was required to fashion the Mishkan's vessels. For, he says, they did not receive that kind of training in Egypt; where to the contrary, they were subjected to arduous labor which would make them even less capable of carrying out skillful and delicate craftsmanship.

So how was Betzalel able to acquire the vast array of technical skills which he needed for his tasks?

"Hashem spoke to Moshe saying: 'See, I have called by a name; Betzalel son of Uri, son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah. And I have filled him with a G-dly spirit; with wisdom, insight, and knowledge, and with every craft. To weave designs; to work with gold, silver, and copper. And stone-cutting for setting and wood-carving; to perform every craft'" (Shemot 31:1-5).

In addition to these special talents, he possessed "great wisdom and understanding, to understand the secret of the Mishkan and it's vessels, why they were commanded and what they had reference to" (Nachmanides, Shemot 31:2).

The team of craftsmen, assembled to build the Mishkan, possessed great wisdom and outstanding moral qualities. In general, artists tend to be egotistical, quirky individuals who like to work in isolation. While building the Sanctuary, however, everyone had to put aside his ego, and act according to the divine instructions. The desire of all the builders was to glorify the Name of Hashem, by constructing a unique edifice, dedicated to His service.

There are many lessons we can learn from the successful construction of the Mishkan. One of them is, that Hashem has endowed certain individuals with great artistic talents. It is not always a blessing to have unusual capabilities. Many such people suffer because they have no viable outlet for their skills. They also are bothered by the fact that they are not recognized by society. Many biographies attest to the fact that people with great skills—in writing, painting, sculpting, singing, acting and so forth—lived painful, even miserable lives.

This is because the need for recognition and popular acclaim is very powerful; and if frustrated, can have dangerous consequences. Hashem "filled" Betzalel and Ahaliav and others with great talents; but He also gave them a heart of wisdom, to understand what is important and to what endeavors their efforts should be directed.

The call, which went out to the nation to contrib-

ute material resources and personal services to establish the Sanctuary, was met with great enthusiasm. Everyone came forth to offer something—until much more than was necessary, was brought—and Moshe put out the word that no more was to be brought. Nothing was taken from the people beyond that which was necessary. Every donation was used for its intended purpose.

May Hashem grant us the wisdom to know what is truly essential in life; and what we should donate our resources and personal capabilities to. It is only by joining together with the right people, who are devoted to the genuine service of Hashem, that we can attain a life of meaning and purpose. May we merit to achieve it.

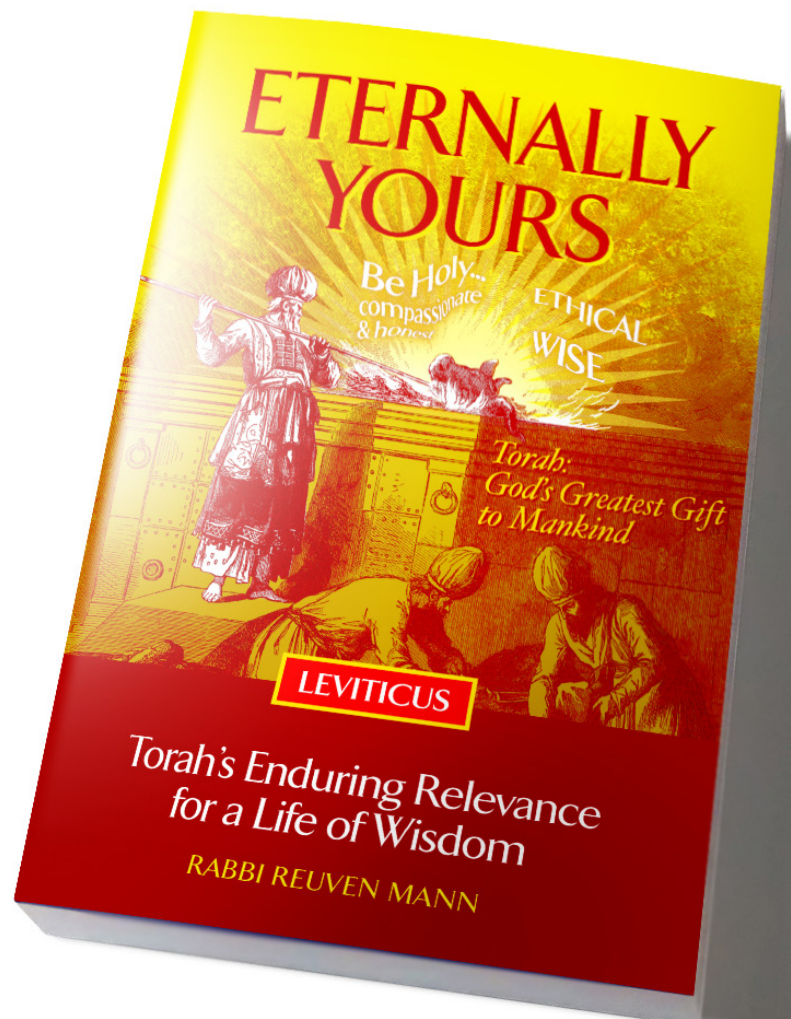
Shabbat Shalom.

Dear Friends,

I am pleased to announce that my newest book, *Eternally Yours: G-d's Greatest Gift to Mankind* on Vayikra, has been published, and is now available at <https://www.amazon.com/dp/B09SHRXS3Q>

We will soon be reading the third Book of the Torah, Vayikra, and I hope that my essays will enhance your reading and study of it. Additionally, I would greatly appreciate anyone, who would post a brief review on Amazon.com.

—Rabbi Reuven Mann ■



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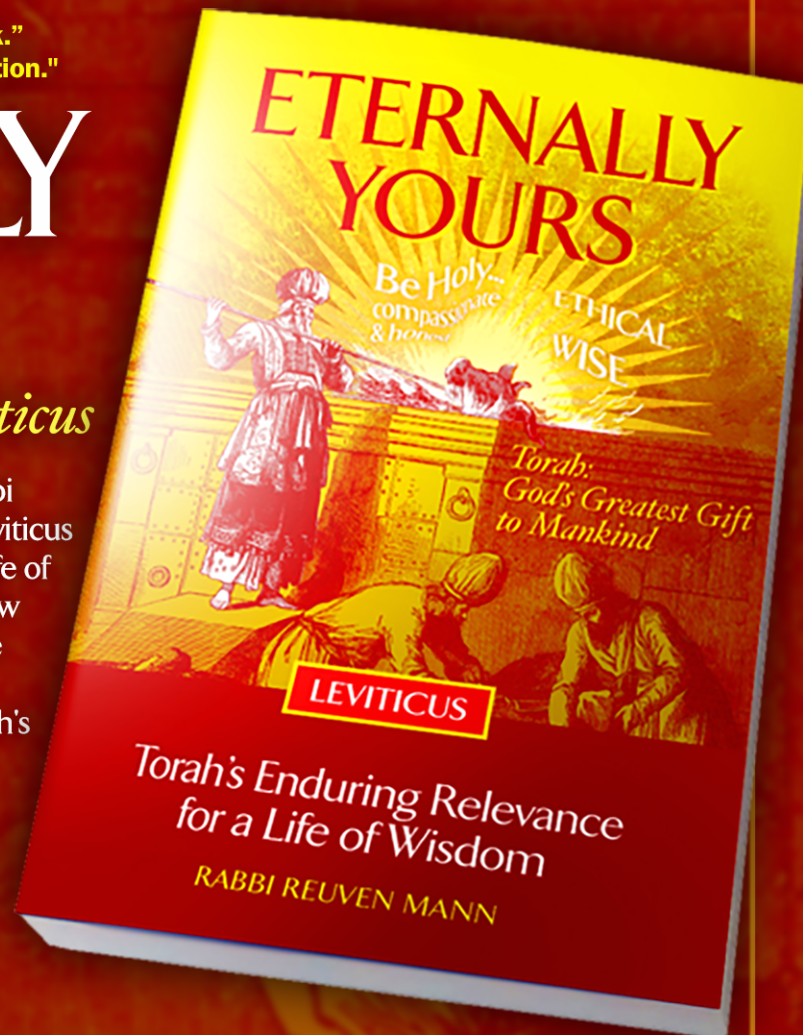
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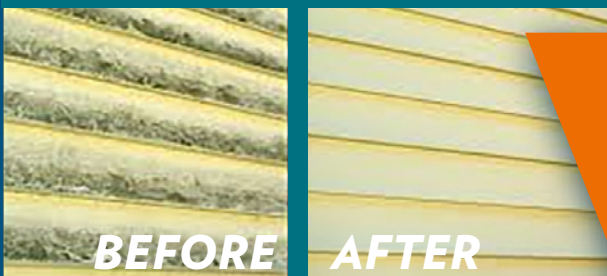
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OUR PURPOSE: WISDOM & MORALITY



God created man to live by truths concerning Him, creation, others and ourselves.

We must study God's instruction about what He is, what is idolatrous or fallacy, we must study nature, psychology, philosophy and morality. This draws us closer to God and He to us, and creates societal harmony which fosters greater Torah for all.

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Kindness: As equals, all humans must treat others as we wish to be treated. Charity, kindness and justice demand we rise above personal and selfish emotions and recognize that God made others as He made ourselves. Doing so creates harmony, and earns His kindness.

Racism: A Lie: Man descends from Adam. *Black/white twins* unveil the lie of racism. Bible denounces it: Moses' wife was black, our kings married Egyptians and Messiah descends from Moabites. "Better is the day of death than the day of birth" (Eccl. 7:1). Birth doesn't define us; how we live does.

Insecurity: Man's insecurities can be false, but reality is greater, as it is truth. Man seeks security about his future, accepting fallacies like astrology, amulets, omens, horoscopes and others. God prohibited such practices precisely because they are false. God is more powerful than false notions. Rely on Him alone.

Happiness: Many think wealth and success secure happiness. But Torah teaches happiness stems from study. When pursuing wisdom, one is most happy as Torah offers childlike amazement at every turn. Study offers the daily novelty necessary to retain interest and the depth that offers amazement.

Pleasing Others: Don't seek approval over truth. Torah says, "What can man do to me?" (Psalms 56:5). "Don't fear man" (Deut. 1:17). "Desist from man whose soul is in his nostrils, for what is he considered?" (Isaiah 2:22). Mortal attention is irrelevant. Following God earns all goodness.

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