

Toras



Ayyy!

The torah newsletter that consistently asks, "What would Fonzie do?"

RABBI DOV KRAMER

Taking a Closer Look

Where did G-d communicate to Moshe from in the Mishkan? Rashi (Shemos 29:42) brings two opinions; the first says that G-d spoke to Moshe from above the altar upon which the offerings were brought, while the second saying that it was from the covering of the Aron (the ark within which the stone tablets upon which the "Ten Commandments" were chiseled were kept).

The basis for the first opinion, Rashi tells us, is the verse he is commenting on. The offering described in the previous verses was brought "by the entrance of the Ohel Moed (Tent of Meeting), before G-d, where I will communicate with you," meaning on the copper altar that was in the courtyard of the Mishkan. Since the Torah describes G-d communicating with Moshe "there," that must be where the communication took place. Rashi continues by explaining the second opinion, quoting a verse (25:22) that says explicitly that G-d communicated with Moshe from above the "Kaporet," the covering of the Aron, "from [the area] between the two Keruvim that are on the ark of testimony." As far as the verse that implies it was from above the altar in the courtyard, Rashi explains that the point of communication is not referring to the altar, but to the Ohel Moed that the altar was in front of, which was also referenced in the same verse. Rashi does not explain why, if this was not the exact spot where this communication occurred, it was important to mention G-d communicating with Moshe in the Mishkan as part of the description of the offerings. Nor does Rashi explain how the first opinion explains the verse that says explicitly that this communication was elsewhere.

The source of the first opinion is the Beraisa d'Meleches haMishkan (14:3), which actually brings three opinions - none of them being that G-d communicated with Moshe from inside the "kodesh hakadashim," the inner sanctum of the Mishkan (the "holy of holies") that contained the Aron. Each of these opinions are based on the fact that the Torah mentions G-d

communicating with Moshe "there" as part of the description of a specific vessel or function, implying that this was where the communication took place.

First Rabbi Noson says it was from the incense altar, which was inside the Ohel Moed. Although the description of this altar (30:1-10) includes a mention of G-d communicating with Moshe "there," since it is within the verse that tells us where exactly to place the altar - directly opposite the Aron but on the other side of the curtain that separated the "kodesh" (the Ohel Moed) from the "kodesh hakadashim"- the "there" could just as easily be referring to the Kapores as to this altar. However, since there would be no apparent reason to tell us that it was from the Kapores during the description of the altar, Rabbi Noson posits that this was where the communication took place.

Next, Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai says that rather than being from the exact spot of this altar, it was from "next to" it. His source is from the description of the incenses brought upon the altar, which includes a mention of G-d communicating with Moshe there (30:36). Here too the context of the incense being brought "before the testimony" (referring to the luchos inside the Aron) "inside the "Ohel Moed" could make the location of the communication anywhere in the Ohel Moed or specifically by the Aron. While ostensibly agreeing with Rabbi Noson, Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai seems to understand the mentioning of the communication also by the incense to be teaching us that it was not from the altar itself, but from where the incense was most potent, i.e. near it. Why we need both verses according to Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai, or the verse by the incense according to Rabbi Noson, is unclear.

Finally, the Beraisa brings the opinion of the student of Rabbi Yishmael, who says it was from the altar in the courtyard (or more literally, considering the different wording of Rabbi Noson and Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai, next to that altar). This is the first opinion Rashi brings, but all three would need to explain the verse that says explicitly that G-d spoke to Moshe from on top of the Aron.

TORAS AYYYY IS A COOL PURIM PUBLICATION.
NO, IT'S NOT JUST COOL...
IT'S THE ABSOLUTE COOLEST!
GOT THAT CUNNINGHAM?



“What in the world possessed you to do a Purim issue with a picture of the Fonz on it?” Excellent question, no? Too bad no one bothered asking. Because if someone had asked the question I might have been tempted to launch into a long detailed diatribe regarding what it actually took to get the creative juices flowing enough to come up with such an original, fantastic idea. Not to mention a huge run-on sentence.

Aw, heck, I'll answer the question anyway. I'll just pretend like it was asked.
Was it creative genius?

Only partially.

In truth, it was total brain-fry.

After all, how would YOU feel after sitting at a desk for hours at a time, staring at a computer screen and doing tax returns?

BWAHAHAHAH! (evil manic laugh)

There are several other verses that are relevant to this discussion as well. The most similar to the three used by the Tanaim in the Beraisa (which say either "asher iva'ed lachem shamah" or "asher iva'ed lecha shamah") comes after Korach's rebellion, when Moshe was told to take a staff from the leader of each tribe, including from Aharon, and "place them in the Ohel Moed, before the testimony, where I will communicate with you" (Bamidbar 17:19). The context of this verse clearly puts the place of communication either "in the Ohel Moed" and/or "before the testimony," i.e. in front of the Aron. While this could mean the space on the eastern side of the curtain, between the curtain and the incense altar, it cannot mean the altar in the courtyard where the offerings (aside from the incense) were brought.

We have already seen that included in the commandment to make the Aron and its Kapores was an explicit reference to it being the location from which G-d will communicate (Shemos 25:22); a similar reference is made after the Nesi'im brought their offerings when the Mishkan was first consecrated (Bamidbar 7:89), telling us that Moshe heard G-d's voice speaking to him from above the Kapores. On both of these verses Rashi explains that Moshe stood inside the Ohel Moed (which he says refers only

to the "kodesh," and does not include the "kodesh hakadashim") and heard G-d's voice emanating from above the Kapores.

In his commentary on the Beraisa (dMhM), Rabbi Chaim Kanievsky, shlita, uses this idea to explain all three opinions given in the Beraisa; G-d's "voice" (as it were) emanated from above the Kapores, but Moshe heard it either from the inner altar, next to the inner altar, or next to the outer altar. This would be difficult to fit into Rashi, who says explicitly (on Shemos 29:42) that the opinion that says G-d communicated with Moshe by the (outer) altar disagrees with the opinion that says it was from the Kapores. It is problematic anyway, since there are so many references to G-d communicating with Moshe "in the Ohel Moed," eliminating the outer altar from being the place where Moshe heard G-d's speaking.

We are therefore left with the following issues to resolve: (1) How do we explain the opinion that says it was from the outer altar, if (aside from the one verse) every indication is that it was not from there; (2) Why does the Torah reference the place where the communication took place by the incense altar and by the incense if either of the two (or both of them) are not where it actually took place; (3) Why is there a reference by the outer altar if it didn't occur there; and (4) Why did Rashi only quote one opinion from the Beraisa, and not all three?

It would seem that the normal means of communication was for G-d's voice to emanate from above the Aron in the "kodesh hakadashim," and for Moshe to be in the "kodesh" (the Ohel Moed) during the communication. Where in the Ohel Moed? By the Menorah? By the Shulchan? No, between the Mizbe'ach Hazahav, the golden altar upon which the incense was brought, and the Paroches, the curtain that separated between the "kodesh" and the "kodesh hakadashim." Just as we go to the Kosail Hama'aravi, the Western Wall, which is the closest spot to where the Temple stood and the Shechinah rested, to communicate with G-d, so too did Moshe stand by the Paroches opposite the Aron - which was near the Mizbe'ach Hazahav. The communication is mentioned by this altar and by the incense brought on this altar precisely because this was where Moshe stood to receive G-d's words. As far as why two verses are needed, being that there is also a verse that references this communication by the outer altar, perhaps two verses are needed by the inner altar to show that it was there (near the inner altar) that Moshe stood during the normal process of divine communication. I would suggest that Rabbi Noson and Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai do not disagree about this; each brought a different one of the two verses that indicate that this was where Moshe heard G-d's voice, so both are quoted. And because this was the normal means of communication, it is really included in the second opinion Rashi brought, that G-d's voice emanated from the Kapores.

Even though this was how the communication usually occurred, there were exceptions. And not just on the "eighth day," when "a fire went out from before G-d and consumed [what was] on the Mizbe'ach" in the courtyard (Vayikra 9:24), which some commentators say the verses in our Parasha (Shemos 29:43-46), which follow the reference to the communication by the outer altar, are referring to (see Rashbam and Chizkuni). When Miriam thought that Moshe was wrong for separating from his wife, G-d called her and Moshe and Aharon to the Mishkan (Bamidbar 12:4). The "amud anan" (cloud pillar that contained G-d's divine presence) "descended and stood at the entrance of the Ohel" (12:5), near the outer altar, "and G-d called to Aharon and Miriam." When Moshe transferred the leadership to Yehoshua before his death, even though both of them went inside the Ohel Moed (Devarim 31:1), the "amud anan" was outside of it, by the entrance (31:15). In these types of situations, when G-d's presence had to be seen by all, did G-d's voice still emanate from above the Aron, or was it from the divine presence that was near the outer altar? Rabbi Yishmael's student is telling us that there were also times when it came from the area near the outer altar. Not that it always emanated from there; only on those occasions when there had to be a public display of what was happening (hence the plural "you," "lachem," by this reference and by Korach's rebellion). The verses that say that G-d's voice emanated from "between the Keruvim" are referring to what usually happened, but (according to this opinion) not always. The other opinion Rashi brings says that even in these situations G-d's voice emanated from the "kodesh hakodashim;" the reference is made by the outer altar only to tell us that sometimes it was heard outside the Ohel Moed too.

When the verse about the outer altar (Shemos 29:42) mentions G-d communicating with Moshe, does it mean that G-d's voice sometimes emanated from near this altar, or only that it was sometimes heard there? Rashi brings both opinions, neither of which affects how most of the communication occurred - emanating from above the Kapores to where Moshe was standing, near the Mizbe'ach Hazahav. © 2009 Rabbi D. Kramer

I contend that for a nation to try to tax itself into prosperity is like a man standing in a bucket and trying to lift himself up by the handle - Winston Churchill

RABBI SHLOMO RISKIN

Shabbat Shalom

An important question about the essential character of the festival of Purim relates to a very difficult gloss of Rav Moshe Isserless (16th Century Ashkenazi legal authority known as the Ramoh) in his Laws of Purim:

Concerning the custom to wear costumes on Purim ("false faces," partzufim) and for men to dress in women's clothing, there is no prohibition of this conduct. Their intent is merely for the sake of rejoicing" (Shulhan Arukh, Orah Haim, end of 696).

Now why should rejoicing on Purim outweigh the Biblical prohibition of men dressing in women's garb? It would seem that masquerading - dressing like someone else - is of central significance to the festivities of Purim. Why?

In order to understand our Sages' approach to Purim, I believe it is necessary to go back to the very first Biblical personality who masqueraded: Father Jacob, dressing in the garb of his elder brother Esau (Genesis 27: 15,16) in order to receive his father's blessing. Described in the Bible as a "...wholehearted individual, a studious tent dweller" (25:27), why does Jacob agree to dress himself in the garb of his aggressive and outdoor brother, so very much out of his own character?

On a psychological level, given that Jacob's naïve, introspective and serious personality was seemingly rejected by his father in favor of the more extroverted, materialistic and silver-tongued Esau (Gen.25:28), apparently brother, Jacob wanted to become Esau so that he could finally receive his father's embrace and love!

However, it often happens that when someone masquerades a kind of transformation takes place and the masquerader becomes the other, forsaking his true and essential self; Jacob, masquerading as Esau, forsook his pure, whole-hearted self which was the truest expression of the Divine spark within him and exchanged it for the outer garb of Esau. Over the course of several Biblical chapters we witness how Jacob, who spends more than two decades with his Uncle Laban, becomes an accomplished and aggressive businessman - herdsman, a materially successful cattleman who knew very well how to look out for "number one." The outer garb of Esau quickly replaced the inner voice of Jacob.

The English word personality comes from a word in Latin which means 'mask.' Thus when we speak of our personalities we're also speaking of our 'masks,' forsaking our essential and truest selves for a persona that essentially is not us.

In fact, Judaism posits that external clothes do not necessarily make the man, but - very often, - fake the man. That's why the Hebrew begged, or garment, is derived from a root verb which means 'to deceive,' and the Hebrew me'il, which means outer cloak, comes from a root verb which means 'to embezzle.'

From this perspective, we can better understand the characters of the Esther Chronicle. Jews in exile, especially Jews who wish to be part of the Gentile class, often masquerade (another word for assimilation), appearing to be as Gentile as possible. Hence Esther, whose real Hebrew

name was Hadassah (a myrtle branch, which blooms even in the desert) served as an external calling card, deriving from the Persian Goddess Astarte; similarly the name Mordecai is derived from the Persian Marduk. Esther hides her true self - her Jewish identity - by not revealing her nation or her homeland (Esther 2:10). She spends twelve months in preparation for her meeting with Ahashverosh, perfumed and preserved in an array of sweet-smelling aromas so that her wholesome and pure body is "masked over" with all sorts of external fragrances. It is reasonable to assume that she certainly does not act as a Jewess (at least externally) when she ascends lofty position as Queen. Similarly when we read that "Mordecai told the courtiers that he was Jewish" (Esther 3:4) in order to explain his refusal to bow down to Haman, it's reasonable to assume that he did not appear as a Jew with phylacteries and ritual fringes; if he had, he wouldn't have had to inform them of his Jewish ancestry. Thus we can conclude that to a certain extent Esther and Mordecai were both masquerading as Persians in order to retain and maintain positions of influence within the Persian Magisterial Court.

Remember, the masquerader puts on a false exterior, a façade, a word whose Latin root is shared with the word "face", but in Hebrew the word for face is panim, which literally means the internal self, the true and interior being. Similarly, although Exile by its very nature encourages assimilation and masquerade, nevertheless the Hebrew word galut actually means 'to reveal' or 'uncover,' and - as the Bible guarantees - there will always come the moment of truth in which the assimilated Jew will return to his true self and re-establish his deepest roots in his homeland (Gen. 15:16, Ex 1:7,8; Lev.26:44,45). The masquerading Jew will either return to his true nature by throwing off his masquerade in a profound moment of repentance, as when Jacob succeeded in exorcizing the spirit and envy of Esau from within himself and returned "whole" to his ancestral home and homeland as Yisrael ("...he strove against beings divine and human, and he prevailed." Gen 32:29), or when an anti-Semite such as Haman forced a moment of truth upon Mordecai and Esther, and they decided in favor of their truest selves as Jews ready to risk their lives for their people and their G-d. At the end of the day, the masquerade falls to the ground and the true Jew must re-discover himself.

Purim cries out to us to recognize the falseness of our daily masquerades and to uncover our truest essential selves, the essence of the Divine which is the essence of every human being. But before we can even begin the search to discover our real beings, we must recognize that we usually mask ourselves in false garb pretending to be who we are not. This is the significance of the scene in the Scroll of Esther when Mordechai (led by Haman) is dressed in King Ahashverosh's garb, the clothes Mordechai

thought he needed to wear as an important leader in Persia. And this is why a male can even dress as a female on Purim, clearly a costume which is not his true self.

But ultimately Purim is the festival of truth - and the most painless way for the truth to emerge is not through the reminders of a wicked Haman but rather through the wine which brings out all hidden secrets and reveals the true personality of us all. Hence we drink on Purim in order to uncover - if only to ourselves - who we really are so that we may begin to repair whatever needs repairing. © 2009 Ohr Torah Institutions & Rabbi S. Riskin

Warn people from Nigeria: If you get any emails from Washington asking for money, it's a scam. Don't fall for it!

RABBI BEREL WEIN

Wein Online

In the times of the Mishkan (four centuries worth) and then in the times of the First Temple (another four centuries) the High Priest of Israel was installed by being anointed with the holy oil prepared by Moshe in the desert as described in this week's parsha.

The kings of Judah were also anointed and inducted into office in the times of Samuel and later prophets by the use of this holy oil. In Psalms, King David makes reference to this means of induction into holy office in his reference to the visage of Aharon and his countenance and beard.

In Second Temple times this container of holy oil prepared by Moshe was no longer available. No substitute was ever prepared. So the Talmud teaches us that the induction of the priests in those Second Temple times (also approximately four centuries) was by the means of officially dressing the priests in their vestments and garments. Also it was observed that their service in the Temple also served as an official induction to their tasks. So to speak, doing the job made one worthy of being appointed to fulfill that role.

Thus, even though the holy oil of Moshe was no longer present the Torah tradition had provided for alternate methods of consecrating the priests to their official tasks in the Temple. The people of Israel certainly longed for the return of the oil of Moshe but it was not in itself - indeed as the Temple itself was also not - critical for Jewish survival and vitality.

Every person has something to contribute to human life and civilization. There are those who are fortunate enough that this becomes a holy calling, anointed so to speak by the oil of Moshe. In First Temple times these people were identifiable by their relationship to the prophets of Israel and to the experience of prophecy itself.

In Second Temple times this gift of prophecy was no longer present in Jewish society. So, people were called to higher service in the Temple by donning the special and holy uniform, if you will, of the priesthood. Yet the Talmud teaches us that one also became consecrated to the holy task of service in the Temple by basically and actually working at the task of service and holiness in the Temple.

To paraphrase a gross commercial advertisement of current times, the Torah taught us that the way to do it was to just do it. The Torah is therefore a series of laws - commandments and activities that require performance and behavior on our part. We no longer have supernatural means of sanctifying ourselves to G-d's service. The oil of Moshe has been hidden away from us.

Nor do we have any official garb or vestments that grant us the mark of holiness and service to G-d and man, all reports and mores to the contrary notwithstanding. But we retain the ability to just do it - to behave in a holy and exalted fashion and to adopt the yoke of service to G-d and man upon ourselves. The ability to consecrate ourselves to that service has never been diminished or taken away from us. The results are up to us.

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If you're American when you walk into the bathroom and American when you leave the bathroom, what are you when you're in the bathroom?

European! ©

RABBI AVI WEISS

Shabbat Forshpeis

This week's portion deals primarily with the priestly garments.. Right at the outset, the Torah states that they were worn by the Priest for "honor" (kavod). In the words of the Torah, "and you shall make Holy garments for your brother Aharon (Aaron), and they shall be for honor (kavod) and beauty (tiferet)." (Exodus 28:2)

But honor seems contrary to the Torah ideal. R. Eliezer HaKapar states: "jealousy, desire and honor take a person from the world." (Avot 4:28) Shouldn't the Torah, therefore, request a priest to aspire to achieve the highest level of humility, rather than honor?

The answer may lie in a deeper understanding of the Hebrew word kavod. Rav Ahron Soloveichik argues that the word kavod contains within it, the root of the word kaved. Kaved means "heavy" and is linked etymologically to kavod. In concrete terms, heaviness is determined by the pull of gravity upon an object. In conceptual terms, weight is determined by

the degree of responsibility one has. The greater responsibility (kaved), the greater the potential honor once those obligations are fulfilled.

The meaning of our verse now becomes clear. The goal of the priestly garments is not honor, but rather to serve as a reminder that the priest has a greater responsibility to the community.

Notwithstanding its relationship with kaved, kavod can still be productive. While honor can sometimes lead to bloating of the ego which, in turn, can get in the way of real accomplishments, it can also be a powerful and important tool to help others. When one assists others, kavod is not only brought to the giver, but G-d is honored as well. Note the liturgy on Shabbat, the Keyl Adon prayer that echoes the language of our portion when it states, pe'er v'kavod notnim lishmo, "splendor and honor are given to G-d's name".

Note the Midrash on the verse, "And you shall love the Lord your G-d with all your heart. (Deuteronomy 6:5) The rabbis note that the Hebrew for heart (Lev) is written in the plural (Levavkha). Since the heart symbolizes human nature, the use of the plural here is viewed by the rabbis as meaning that G-d is to be worshipped with both the good and bad inclinations. In the same vein, the natural human tendency to enjoy being honored can be a factor in spurring us to undertake beneficial efforts on behalf of people in need. Perhaps the honor of the priestly garments can lead the Priest to work with greater vigor for Am Yisrael.

Sometimes greater responsibility can lead to honor and, at times, honor can inspire greater commitment. It has often been said that "Clothes make the man." The Torah here is completing the sentence, with the teaching that clothes are there to make us act for others. © 2009 Hebrew Institute of Riverdale & CJC-AMCHA

My accountant is shy and retiring. The IRS found him \$40,000 shy, so he's retiring! ©

YESHIVAT HAR ETZION

Virtual Beit Medrash

STUDENT SUMMARIES OF SICHOT OF THE ROSHEI YESHIVA

HARAV YEHUDA AMITAL SHLIT" A

Translated by Kaeren Fish

Our parasha opens with the command to maintain an eternal flame: "And as for you-command Benei Yisrael and let them take to you pure beaten olive oil for light, to kindle an eternal flame" (Shemot 27:20). A review of the text preceding this command shows a long series of units devoted to constructing the various vessels needed for the Mishkan. It is therefore curious that we suddenly find a command concerning the lights. Admittedly, this is one aspect of the service in the Mishkan, but it is not directly related to the list of vessels.

In fact, the question arises already in last week's parasha, where the text repeats a number of times the command to gather a variety of materials for the purposes of building the Mishkan: "And this is the contribution that you shall take from them: gold and silver and brass, and blue and purple and scarlet [thread], and fine linen, and goats' hair; and reddened rams' skins, and skins of techashim, and acacia wood; oil for lighting, spices for the anointing oil and for the sweet incense..." (25:3-6)

In addition to the command to take the materials for lighting the menorah, we also find a command to take the materials necessary for offering up incense- which is likewise part of the Mishkan service, but not directly part of the list of vessels. Seemingly, the best proof that the menorah and the incense are not among the vessels of the Mishkan is the fact that the function of the Mishkan is essentially to atone, while the menorah and the incense have nothing to do with this function. Why, then, do we find the command to prepare the lights of the menorah and the command to offer up incense among the units describing the construction of the Mishkan and its vessels?

In order to answer this question we must first address a different one, which is posed by the Rishonim: why is Moshe's name mentioned nowhere in the entire parasha? This seems very strange, and certainly deliberate, since even in those verses where we would expect to find his name, it is absent. Instead, the Torah says, "You shall command..."

One of the possible answers proposed by the Rishonim is that this parasha is always read close to the anniversary of Moshe's death (7th of Adar), and the absence of his name hints to his own absence. However, I do not find this explanation satisfactory. It seems to me that the absence of any mention of Moshe in the parasha actually serves to emphasize his importance.

As we know, there is a perpetual dialectic between religious experience and involvement in Torah study. Throughout our history the proper ratio and relationship between them has been subject to debate: the most extreme example, perhaps, was the fierce conflict between the Vilna Gaon and the early Chassidic leaders. This was a principled disagreement so profound that the Vilna Gaon refused to meet with Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi. In the Vilna Gaon's view, Chassidut had adopted the element of religious experience while rejecting or ignoring the value of Torah study. After some time it became apparent that Chassidut had not abandoned Torah study, but it seems that this was the Vilna Gaon's concern.

Coming back to our parasha, we may suggest that since these two values seem to conflict with one another, Moshe wanted to be both the giver of the Torah and the Kohen. He wanted to show that it is necessary to

combine and integrate the religious experience-as expressed in the service in the Mishkan-and the Torah; he wanted to show that there is no separation between these two spheres. However, G-d decreed that it would be Aharon and his descendants who would be responsible for the Mishkan service. Moshe had the merit of conveying the Torah to Am Yisrael, but when it comes to the commands concerning the construction of the Mishkan there is no mention of him-since this sphere was given over to Aharon and his descendants.

However, Moshe was apprehensive about this severance-just as the Vilna Gaon was, so many centuries later. Therefore, in order to reassure him, G-d conveyed the command to take the materials for lighting the menorah (expressing Torah study-"For a commandment is a candle, and the Torah is light"-Mishlei 6:23) along with the other materials for building the Mishkan. G-d was hinting to Moshe that although he was not appointed over the service of the Mishkan and the realm of religious experience, there was no separation between this realm and the realm of Torah.

Moshe symbolizes the complete, perfect, G-dly man. The Midrash accentuates this point, teaching that from waist up Moshe was an angel, and from waist down a man. This depiction emphasizes Moshe's "lack of belonging" to our world, in view of which it is somewhat problematic that it is Moshe who receives the Torah and conveys it to Am Yisrael. After all, G-d did not want to give the Torah to the angels; He meant it for man, with his mortal desires and inclinations. G-d did not mean for Moshe to keep the Torah for himself. Therefore, when He conveyed the command concerning the lights (which, as we have said, symbolize Torah study), He said to him, "As for you-you shall command..." The mortal part of you, the part that may be addressed as "you," is the part that must give the Torah, not the "angelic" part.

Thus, in these units G-d is emphasizing a dual message to Moshe. On the one hand, Torah and religious experience go hand in hand, and there is no severance between them. On the other hand, the Torah is not given to the "angelic," G-dly Moshe. Rather, it is conveyed to the human, mortal, "you." For this reason, Moshe's name is not mentioned in the command concerning the construction of the Mishkan and the taking of the materials for the menorah and the incense, but these commands nevertheless appear consecutively. (*This sicha was given on Shabbat parashat Tetzaveh 5767 [2007].*)

A young woman teacher with obvious liberal tendencies explains to her class of small children that she is an atheist. She asks her class if they are atheists too. Not really knowing what atheism is but wanting to be like their teacher, their hands explode into the air like fleshy fireworks.

There is, however, one exception. A beautiful girl named Lucy has not gone along

with the crowd. The teacher asks her why she has decided to be different.

"Because, I'm not an atheist."

Then, asks the teacher, "What are you?"

"I'm Jewish."

The teacher is a little perturbed now, her face slightly red.

She asks Lucy why she is Jewish.

"Well, my mom is Jewish, and my dad is Jewish, so I am Jewish."

The teacher is now angry. "That's no reason," she says loudly. "What if your mom was an idiot and your dad was an moron. What would you be then?"

Lucy paused, smiled and said, "Then, I'd be an atheist!"

RABBI JONATHAN SACKS

Covenant & Conversation

Tetzaveh is the priestly sedra par excellence. The name of Moses does not appear—the only sedra of which this is true from the beginning of Exodus to the end of Deuteronomy. Instead, the place of honour is occupied by Aaron and his sons, the priests—their tasks, their vestments, their consecration. In this study I want to look at an argument between two of the great medieval sages, Maimonides and Nahmanides, in relation to prayer. What is the nature of worship in Judaism?

On the duty to pray, Maimonides writes the following: "To pray daily is a positive duty, as it is said, 'And you shall serve the Lord your G-d' (Ex. 23:25). The service here referred to, according to the teaching of tradition, is prayer, as it is said, 'And to serve Him with all your heart' (Deut. 11:13), on which the sages commented, 'What is the service of the heart? Prayer'. The number of prayers is not prescribed in the Torah. No form of prayer is prescribed in the Torah. Nor does the Torah prescribe a fixed time for prayer... The obligation in this precept is that every person should daily, according to his ability, offer up supplication and prayer..." (Mishneh Torah, Laws of Prayer, 1: 1-2)

Maimonides regards prayer as a biblical command, even though the details (texts, times and so on) were formulated by the rabbis. Nahmanides (in his glosses to Maimonides' Sefer haMitzvot, positive commands, 5) disagrees. He points to the many indications in the literature that suggest that prayer is only a rabbinic institution. Prayer in the Bible, he says, is a privilege, not a duty (with the sole exception of the command to cry out to G-d at times of national distress). Worship in the Bible takes the form of sacrifices, not prayer. How are we to understand their disagreement?

There is a key passage in the Talmud (Berakhot 26b) which sets us thinking in the right direction: "It has been stated: R. Jose son of R. Hanina said: The prayers (morning, afternoon and evening) were instituted by the

patriarchs. R. Joshua b. Levi said: The prayers were instituted to replace the daily sacrifices."

According to R. Jose son of R. Hanina, the patriarchs set the precedent for prayer. Abraham established the morning prayer, as it is said 'And Abraham got up early in the morning to the place where he had stood' (Gen. 19:27). Isaac instituted the afternoon prayer, as it is said, 'and Isaac went out to meditate in the field towards evening' (Gen. 24:63). Jacob instituted the evening prayer when he received his vision, at night, of a ladder stretching from earth to have heaven with angels ascending and descending (Gen. 28). The sages cited proof texts to show that each of these was an occasion of prayer.

According to R. Joshua b. Levi, however, the prayers correspond to the daily sacrifices: the morning and afternoon prayers represent the morning and afternoon offerings. The evening prayer mirrors the completion of the sacrificial process (the burning of the limbs) which was done at night.

This is a fascinating dispute because it reminds us that there were two different spiritual traditions in the Torah: the priestly and the prophetic. These were different roles, occupied by distinct kinds of people, and involved different forms of consciousness.

Prophetic prayer in the Bible is spontaneous. It arises out of the situation and the moment. We think of Abraham's prayer on behalf of Sodom and Gomorrah; Jacob's prayer before his encounter with Esau; Moses' prayer to G-d to forgive the Israelites after the golden calf; Hannah's prayer for a child. No two such prayers are alike.

Quite different was the service of the priests. Here, what was primary was the sacrifice, not the words (in fact, though the Levites sang songs at the Temple, and though the priests had a fixed formula of blessing, for the most part the priestly worship took place in silence). The actions of the priests were precisely regulated. Any deviation—such as the

spontaneous offering of Aaron's two sons, Nadav and Avihu—was fraught with danger. The priests did the same thing in the same place at the same time, following a daily, weekly, monthly and yearly cycle. R. Jose son of R. Hanina and R. Joshua b. Levi do not disagree on the facts: the patriarchs prayed, the priests offered sacrifice. The question is: to which tradition do our prayers belong?

There is another passage, this time in the Mishnah (Berakhot 4: 4), suggesting a similar disagreement. Rabban Gamliel states that at each prayer a person should say the 'eighteen blessings' (the original form of the Amidah, the 'standing prayer'). Rabbi Joshua says that one should say an 'abbreviated eighteen'. Rabbi Eliezer says: if a person makes his prayer 'fixed' (keva) then it is not a genuine 'supplication'. Later sages, in both the Babylonian

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and Jerusalem Talmuds, argue over what exactly Rabbi Eliezer meant. Some suggest he was talking not about the words we say but the way we say them: we should not regard prayer as 'a burden' or read it 'like one who reads a letter'. Others say that he meant that we should say a new prayer every day, or at least introduce something new into the eighteen blessings. This is a disagreement about the respective places of structure and spontaneity in prayer.

A further argument in the Mishnah [Rosh Hashanah 4: 9] concerns the role of the individual as against the community in prayer. The anonymous view in the Mishnah states that 'just as the leader of prayer [sheliach tsibbur] is obligated [to recite the prayer] so each individual is obligated'. Rabban Gamliel, however, holds that 'The leader of prayer exempts the individual members' of the congregation.

This cluster of disagreements testifies to a profound difference of opinion as to which tradition of prayer is primary: the priestly or the prophetic. The priest offered sacrifices on behalf of the whole people. His acts were essentially communal and followed a precisely ordered, invariable pattern. The patriarchs and prophets spoke as individuals, spontaneously, as the circumstance required. Rabbi Eliezer, with his opposition to keva, favours the prophetic tradition, as does the view that each individual is obliged to pray. Rabban Gamliel, with his insistence on a fixed text and his belief that 'the leader of prayer' exempts the individual members of the congregation, sees prayer in a priestly perspective. The 'leader of prayer' is like a priest, prayer like a sacrifice, and worship an essentially communal act. There are other ways of interpreting these passages, but this is the simplest.

We now understand the disagreement between Maimonides and Nahmanides. For Maimonides, prayer goes back to the dawn of Jewish history. The patriarchs and prophets spoke directly to G-d, each in their own way, and we, by praying, follow in their footsteps. For Nahmanides, though the patriarchs prayed, they did not set a binding precedent. Throughout the biblical era, the primary form of worship was the sacrifices offered by the priests, first in the Tabernacle, later in the Temple, on behalf of the whole people. When the Temple was destroyed, prayer replaced sacrifice. That is why prayer is only a rabbinic, not a biblical, obligation. It was established by the rabbis in the wake of the destruction.

For Maimonides, at the heart of prayer is the prophetic experience of the individual in conversation with G-d. For Nahmanides, by contrast, prayer is the collective worship of the Jewish people, a continuation of the pattern set by the Temple service.

We can now appreciate the astonishing synthesis of Jewish tradition- because, remarkably, each prayer (with the exception of the

evening prayer) is said twice. We pray once silently as individuals; then out loud (the 'reader's repetition') as a community. The first is prophetic, the second priestly. Jewish prayer as it has existed for almost 2,000 years is a convergence of two modes of biblical spirituality, supremely exemplified by the two brothers, Moses the prophet and Aaron the High Priest. Without the prophetic tradition, we would have no spontaneity. Without the priestly tradition, we would have no continuity.

The sedra of Tetsaveh, in which the name of Moses is missing and the focus is on Aaron, reminds us that our heritage derives from both. Moses is a man of history, of epoch-making events. Aaron's role, though less dramatic, is no less consequential. The priestly dimension of worship-collective, structured, never changing-is the other hemisphere of the Jewish mind, the voice of eternity in the midst of time. © 2009 Rabbi J. Sacks & torah.org

The French President is sitting in his office when his telephone rings. 'Hallo, Mr. Sarkozy!' a heavily accented voice said. 'This is Paddy down at the Harp Pub in County Clare, Ireland. I am ringing to inform you that we are officially declaring war on you!

'Well, Paddy, this is indeed important news! How big is your army?' 'Right now,' says Paddy, after a moment's calculation, 'there is myself, me Cousin Sean, me next door neighbor Seamus, and the entire darts team from the pub. That makes eleven!'

Sarkozy paused. 'I must tell you, Paddy, that I have 100,000 men in my army waiting to move on my command.'

'Begoora!' says Paddy. 'I'll have to ring you back.'

Sure enough, the next day, Paddy calls again. 'Mr. Sarkozy, the war is still on. We have managed to get us some infantry equipment!'

'And what equipment would that be Paddy?' Sarkozy asks.

'Well, we have two combines, a bulldozer, and Murphy's farm tractor.'

Sarkozy sighs amused. 'I must tell you, Paddy, that I have 6,000 tanks and 5,000 armoured personnel carriers.'

Also, I have increased my army to 150,000 since we last spoke.'

'Saints preserve us!' says Paddy. 'I'll have to get back to you.'

Sure enough, Paddy calls again the next day. 'Top o' the mornin', Mr. Sarkozy! I am sorry to inform you that we have had to call off the war.'

'Really? I am sorry to hear that,' says Sarkozy. 'Why the sudden change of heart?'

'Well,' says Paddy, 'we had a long chat over a few pints of Guinness and we decided there is no way we can feed 150,000 prisoners.'



**“Hog”
Samayach!**