

# Toras Aish

## Thoughts From Across the Torah Spectrum

**RABBI SHLOMO RISKIN**

### Shabbat Shalom

**W**hat is the significance of the symbol of the cloud, and its twin symbol, fire? The cloud and the fire are two symbols of the Divine Presence. The cloud is described here as resting on the Sanctuary and again in the Book of Numbers as directing the Israelites in the desert by day (Numbers 9:15-23). The fire directed the Israelites in the desert by night and confirmed the Divine acceptance of ritual sacrifices (ibid. Exodus 24:17, Kings 1, 18:38).

Combined these symbols represent the heavens, for the Hebrew word "shamayim" is comprised of two words, aish (fire) and mayim (water). Water is the stuff that clouds are made of and turn into. Fire and water are also the ultimate antinomies, eternal opposites. The heavens are the Divine abode, and they also express the consummate paradox which miraculously brings together in peace even those elements which seem to be constantly at war with each other, fire and water!

Furthermore, clouds express protective cover and life-giving rain, symbolizing security as well as growth and development. And fire expresses warmth, which likewise nurtures life, and creativity.

There is however yet another message which the Torah conveys by using these two powerful symbols of the Divine Presence. The Torah insists that as long as the cloud rested on the Tent of Meeting, Moses was forbidden from entering it - unless he was expressly summoned by G-d. Hence the Book of Exodus concludes with Moses' inability to enter the Sanctuary (Exodus 40:35), and the Book of Leviticus opens, "And G-d called out unto Moses and the Lord spoke to him from the Tent of Meeting" (Leviticus 1:1). The Midrash goes so far as to declare that "The Holy One Blessed be He took hold of Moses and physically brought him into the Cloud" - it goes on to explain that there is a small letter aleph at the conclusion of the Vayikra (And He called) to stress that as long as the cloud was in evidence, Moses would require a separate and specific summons from G-d before he could enter the cloud and stand in the Divine presence.

Similarly, while fire can bring warmth; it can also devour and destroy. One benefits greatly from drawing close to fire - but one can get burnt by getting too close. The great Rabbi Eliezer declared, "Warm

yourself by fire of the Sages, but be careful of the coals lest you be burnt" (Mishnah Pirkei Avot 2, 15). If this is true of Torah Sages, how much more so must this be true of the Almighty Himself!

From this perspective, the symbols of cloud and fire are warning us to temper our love and desire for closeness to the Divine with reverence and awe which engenders distance. "Serve the Almighty with joyous love, but let there be a degree of trembling in your exaltation" (Psalms 2: 11). Too much familiarity can lead to a relaxation of discipline. Ecstatic devotion of the moment can sometimes lead one to overlook a religio-legal command. Passion is a critical component of religious piety, but it must be moderated by Divine law or it can run wild. As the Psalmist declares, "Cloud and haze are around Him, so righteousness and just law establish His throne." (Psalms 97: 2)

Moreover, cloud and fire, the lack of clarity expressed by a cloud ("looking through a cloud darkly") and the inability to gaze directly into a flame, likewise express one of the deepest truths of the Jewish message: religion is not so much paradise as it is paradox, G-d demands fealty even in the face of agonizing questions and disturbing uncertainty. Egypt, with its omni-present waters of the Nile and its unchanging social order of masters and slaves represents certainty; the desert, on the other hand, and especially the rain-expectant and manna-less Land of Israel represent the unknown. G-d expects us to have the courage to enter into the abstruse haze, to scale the heights of the unknown, to take the risks of uncertainty as to immediate outcome in order to act as partners of the Divine. We must attempt to make light from darkness, order from chaos, gardens from swamp lands, justice from inequity. And just as the Almighty took a risk, as it were, by creating a human being with freedom of choice, so must we take risks by venturing into the unknown. "I remember the loving kindness of your youth, the love of your engagement years, when you went after Me in the desert, in a land which was not seeded" (Jeremiah 2: 2)

Perhaps only a people who believe in a G-d who cannot be circumscribed by form or defined by sculpture can have the courage to attempt an adventure whose every step has not been chartered in advance; perhaps only a nation which has fealty to a G-d who is profoundly unknowable can enter into a cloud of the unknown. But even if the precise details of the challenge are not prescribed or circumscribed, we do

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have a Torah which specifies right and wrong ways to pursue our mission. And, at the very least, the end-goal is certainly guaranteed, when "nation will not lift up sword against nation, and humanity will not learn war anymore," (Isaiah 2: 4) "When the Knowledge of the Lord will fill the world as the water (from the clouds) will cover the seas." (Habukak 2: 14) ©2011 *Ohr Torah Institutions & Rabbi S. Riskin*

### **RABBI DOV KRAMER**

## **Taking a Closer Look**

“**A**nd Betzalel the son of Uri the son of Chur, of the Tribe of Yehuda, did all that G-d had commanded Moshe" (Shemos 38:32). Rashi points out that the verse does not say that Betzalel did everything Moshe commanded him to do, but that he did everything G-d had commanded Moshe should be done, implying that Betzalel didn't follow the instructions Moshe gave him, but figured out what G-d had really commanded Moshe to do, and did them. Specifically, Moshe told Betzalel to make the vessels of the Mishkan first and then the Mishkan itself, but Betzalel questioned whether this was really the order in which G-d wanted things done, with Moshe telling Betzalel he was right, that G-d really wanted the Mishkan made first and then the vessels.

Which did G-d really command Moshe to have made first, the vessels or the Mishkan? Rashi's wording, first quoting the verse (that Betzalel did "all that G-d had commanded Moshe") and then adding "even [regarding] things that his Rebbe (Moshe) didn't tell him, his (Betzalel's) thought process was consistent what was said to Moshe at Sinai," strongly indicates that what Betzalel figured out was what G-d had actually commanded Moshe. Did Moshe misunderstand G-d's commandment? Did he purposely change it? Maharal (Gur Aryeh) suggests that Moshe, who was focused on the inner meaning of the Mishkan and its vessels, forgot that G-d wanted the Mishkan made first. The Talmud (Berachos 55a) says that G-d commanded Moshe to make the Mishkan first but Moshe switched it and commanded Betzalel to make the vessels first. That's not "forgetting," that's changing! How could Moshe deviate from the commandment G-d gave him?

Another issue discussed at length by the commentators is the order stated in the verses. In

Parashas Terumah, it is pretty clear that the commandment to make the Mishkan and its vessels (Shemos 25:10-27:19) has the vessels being made first. It is also pretty clear that when they were made (36:8-38:20), the Mishkan was made first and then its vessels. It is this discrepancy that seems to have led to the Talmud to say that Moshe switched things (see Raavad, quoted by Sefer Hamichtam, and R"A Alshevili on Berachos 55a). However, the Torah is explicit that these were the words G-d spoke to Moshe (25:1); how can Moshe be blamed for putting the vessels first if that's what G-d had told him?

Rashi and Tosfos (Berachos 55a) address this issue by telling us that in Parashas Ki Sisa (31:1-11) the Mishkan was put before its vessels. In fact, the Mishkan was put first by Moshe himself when he first mentioned the project to the nation (35:11-19), and some question why this is not considered following G-d's instructions (in Ki Sisa) to make the Mishkan first. Others suggest that even in Parashas Terumah G-d put the Mishkan first, telling Moshe (25:8-9) to "make for me a Mikdash" (referring to the Mishkan), "in every way that I show you, [for] the structure of the Mishkan and [for] the structure of all of its vessels," with the Mishkan being mentioned first, "and so shall you do," i.e. you shall "do" the Mishkan first. Many approaches to explain Moshe's "switching the order" revolve around the different possible reasons why the order was reversed in the main commandment to make the vessels and the Mishkan, but unless we take the approach of the Shita M'kubetzes (and others) that Moshe really knew what G-d wanted but was testing Betzalel to see if he could figure it out too, the question still remains as to how/why Moshe could make the mistake of telling Betzalel to make the vessels first.

Many commentators on Rashi discuss nuances in how Rashi paraphrased the Talmud, specifically Moshe responding "so I heard from the mouth of G-d" and then, in what seems to be a separate statement/response, adding, "you were in G-d's shadow ('betzel E-l,' a play on Betzalel's name), for this is certainly what [G-d] commanded me." Why are there two separate statements from Moshe, not just one?

The first part of Rashi (up to, and including, what I quoted in the second paragraph above) is a direct quote of the Yerushalmi (Peah 1:1), which also appears in Beraishis Rabbah (1:14) and Yalkut Shimoni (415). In early manuscripts of Rashi, this is where his commentary on this verse ends. According to Rabbi Sh'muel Yehoshua Gold z"l (Iyunim B'Rashi, pg. 196), the rest of our "Rashi" was added by Rabbi Eliezer Tolideno in 1491 when he published a Chumash that included Rashi's commentary. There is no discussion in these sources (or the early editions of Rashi) about what it was that Moshe was commanded and Betzalel figured out despite not being taught it by Moshe. Chizkuni, who had the "original" version of Rashi, therefore explains that the aspects that Betzalel figured

out on his own were things like the tops of the pillars around the perimeter of the courtyard being silver-plated, something mentioned at the end of Vayakhel (when these pillars were made), but not at the end of Parashas Terumah (where they were commanded). This approach puzzles me, as Rashi (even in the shorter, original version) clearly states that Betzalel figured out things (or something) that Moshe was commanded but didn't share with him. The verse in Terumah is what Moshe was commanded; if Moshe was commanded to cover the tops of these pillars with silver, it should be in these verses. Maharai (who obviously also had the shorter original version of Rashi) says that Rashi can't be referring to whether to make the Mishkan first or its vessels first, as this wouldn't qualify as "something [Moshe] didn't tell [Betzalel]" (but something that was relayed incorrectly). Instead, Maharai suggests that Moshe purposely didn't give Betzalel all the details, so that he (Moshe) could finish the Mishkan himself. (However, since Betzalel figured out these things too, Moshe had no part in making the Mishkan, only putting it together.)

The rest of "Rashi" not really being Rashi greatly mitigates the need to understand the nuances of the wording. Nevertheless, since the idea is based on the Talmud (and the Ramban, whose commentary was also published by Toledino, connects the Yerushalmi with the Bavli in Berachos), the need to understand what Moshe "overturned" is just as strong. Additionally, we can still work within the mistaken guidelines of the commentators on Rashi if it helps us understand what they were working with, and what the real author of these words might have meant.

When Moshe was told that Betzalel would be in charge of the construction, even though there were no instructions that were to be given to Betzalel, it was made clear to Moshe that the Mishkan should be made first. And Moshe mentioned the Mishkan first when the project was announced to the nation, in Parashas Vayakhel. Everything was in place. The materials were collected, the list of things to be done was shared with everyone; all that was needed was for Betzalel to start the work (including assigning it to the others working on the Mishkan and its vessels). But Betzalel still needed to get the detailed instructions from Moshe.

So Moshe sits down with Betzalel and teaches him the detailed instructions, word for word, exactly as he had heard it from G-d. However, because the focus of the Mishkan was the Ark that contained the Torah, this had been the first thing taught to Moshe in detail, and therefore the first thing taught by Moshe to Betzalel in detail. Then, just as Moshe was taught in Parashas Terumah, he taught Betzalel the details about the other vessels, and then the details of the Mishkan and its coverings. Betzalel questioned why Moshe was teaching him about the vessels first, since the Mishkan should be made first, to which Moshe responded, "this is how I heard it from the mouth of the Holy One,

blessed is He." Moshe wasn't telling Betzalel to make the vessels first, just repeating the instructions on how to make them exactly as he had learned them, in the exact same order.

Because Moshe was instructing Betzalel how to make the Mishkan, repeating the instructions he had heard from G-d in the same order could have been misunderstood to mean that they should be made in that order. Nevertheless, even though Moshe had "turned around" the order in which things should be done (in order to reflect the order in which the details were commanded), Betzalel picked up on what G-d really had in mind, and made sure he had figured things out correctly. Rashi (in Berachos) tells us that Moshe knew the order from Parashas Ki Sisa (not from the very beginning of Parashas Terumah) because that's where Moshe was taught the order in which it should be made, in a way that did not include sharing that specific information with Betzalel (it was part of a narrative told to Moshe, how Betzalel would do it, not as a command to tell Betzalel to do it this way). And because there were two separate statements from Moshe to Betzalel, the first explaining why he taught the instructions for the vessels first ("that's how I was taught it" and the second confirming that Betzalel had understood it correctly ("you were in G-d's shadow, as He certainly told me that the Mishkan should be made first" they were stated separately. © 2011 Rabbi D. Kramer The full version can be read at <http://rabbidmk.posterous.com/parashas-vayakhel-5771>

#### **RABBI MORDECHAI KAMENETZKY**

### **Fleeting Eternity**

**T**his week, Parshas Pekudei, culminates the Book of Shemos (Exodus). This closing portion discusses the final assembly of the Mishkan, the Holy Tabernacle in the desert, built to be the temporary resting home which would host the Divine Presence during the 40 year sojourn in the desert. But that is not entirely accurate. I will explain.

After the sin of the Golden Calf, the Almighty almost decided to destroy His people. He forgave the Children of Israel, and instructed them to build a Mishkan in which he would rest His presence. Through Moshe, Hashem instructed the Children of Israel to donate gold, silver copper, jewels and fine wools and linens—all towards the construction of this sanctuary. The people who had previously donated for a Golden Calf now directed their efforts into something very spiritual. But a careful analysis in the context of history begs a particular insight.

The Jews were about to enter the Land of Israel. They were not planning to spend forty years in the desert. That long sojourn only happened when the Jews were punished for accepting the blasphemous reports of the spies and their reluctance to enter the land of Israel. In essence within a few months of the building of the Mishkan, the edifice should have been

dismantled. There would have been an entry into Israel and the building of a Stone Bais Hamikdah, as Shlomo HaMelech built according to the proscription of the Rambam, who explains when the Jews would enter the land of Israel they were to build the Holy temple.

So the question is simple. All the money, the efforts, the work, the investment-for what reason? For a few months of temporary service? Why would they do it? Why would they work so hard, and invest so much for a Sanctuary that may have only lasted a few months?

In 1942, General Erwin Rommel and his vaunted Afrika Korps were already at the doorstep of Alexandria, Egypt. German bombers had already strafed Tel Aviv, and the Yishuv (Jewish community in Israel) knew it was in mortal danger. If Rommel could break through the British defenses in Egypt, how could the tiny Yishuv stop them from conquering Palestine?

The Jewish Agency in Palestine began destroying sensitive documents and shipping other records out of its headquarters. The Orthodox Yishuv declared days of public prayer and fasting.

Two brothers, members of the wealthy Solomon family of Kovno, came to consult the Ponevezher Rav, who had escaped Europe after losing almost his entire family, about the threat that was hovering over the yishuv. They told him that informed sources reckoned that within ten days Rommel would be in control of the country. How were they to respond to such an outcome?

The Rav listened to them carefully, his serious demeanor attesting that he fully comprehended the gravity of the situation. Yet his response was swift and startling. His son, Rav Avraham Kahaneman, was present and related that his father was suddenly gripped by strong emotion and said, "Ten days... In ten days the enemy will invade... So, we still have ten days? In that case, I'll get on with building a yeshivah, and if I succeed, it will endure!"

In the midst of the general fear, Rabbi Yosef Kahaneman, the Ponevez Rav, whose family was destroyed by the Nazis back in Europe, laid the foundation cornerstone of the planned new Ponevez Yeshivah in B'nei Brak.

Events vindicated his trust. British Field Marshal Montgomery's victory over Rommel at El Alamein ended the direct threat to Palestine. The cornerstone that was laid then still is the cornerstone of the Yeshiva that thrives to this very day!

My zaide, Rav Yaakov Kamenetzky, of blessed memory, whose Yahrzeit is this Shabbos, notes this tremendous and selfless devotion in the building of the Mishkan. He attributes it to a purely devoted service of G-d with out calculations to future ramifications.

A true turnabout from the sin of the Golden calf. Even if the Mishkan was to be dismantled within a few months of its construction, the Jews of the desert did

not spare any effort in fulfilling the command for the moment.

Perhaps it is that strength that gave brave men like the Ponevez Rav the fortitude to build in the face of imminent threat of destruction.

Even if the yeshiva would last a week, it would be worth it.

The call to act is a call for now.

The threat of imminent destruction or dismantling may indeed be looming, but if one acts in the spirit of commitment, then his mission will not be for naught.

Not only will the adage, "If you build it, they will come" be fulfilled, but "if you build it, it shall last," as well. © 2011 Rabbi M. Kamenetzky and torah.org

#### RABBI AVI WEISS

## Shabbat Forshpeis

**T**he second book of the Torah concludes at the end of this week's portion. As the final words are recited, the assembled call out hazak, hazak, ve-nithazek, be strong, be strong and may we be strengthened. Indeed, we say these words when completing each of the Five Books of Moses.

Most interpret these words to speak first to the individual, and then to the collective whole. Hazak is a singular term. When uttered twice it creates a sense of community. Hence, ve-nithazek - together we will gain greater strength and prevail.

However, if we examine the end of Genesis and Exodus, the first two places where we actually utter this phrase, a deeper understanding emerges. Genesis concludes with Joseph's death. Exodus comes to a conclusion with the cloud of glory resting upon the newly finished Tabernacle.

A common thread can be seen. Both books conclude with endeavors left unfinished-left to be concluded by the next generation. When Joseph dies, slavery is about to begin-fulfillment of the covenant with our ancestors, in the form of redemption, comes many years later. Similarly the Exodus narrative ends with the Tabernacle just constructed, but the fulfillment of the use of the Tabernacle has not yet taken place. Not only has it not been used, but it serves as a blueprint for the ultimate House of G-d, the Holy Temple built many years later.

Note that the three other places where hazak is recited fall into the same pattern. Leviticus and Numbers end with laws of tithing and inheritance. Those laws are given, although they can only fully become a reality after possessing land in Israel, which occurs later. And, of course, Deuteronomy concludes with the death of Moshe. The irony of his life is that the greatest leader of our people never realized his greatest dream, to enter the land of Israel - a mission only to be achieved by those he left behind.

An important lesson emerges. Often, in life, we think that there is nothing we cannot accomplish. The culmination of each book teaches us-no. No one leaves the world fulfilling all of their dreams, all of their hopes and expectations. In the words of Rabbi Tarfon, it is not for any of us to complete the task. (Avot 2:21)

The story is told of an elderly man who plants a carob tree. "Foolish man," a passerby proclaimed, "why do you waste your time? Surely, you will not live long enough to see the tree produce." The old man sighed and responded, "My father planted trees for me and I, in turn, must plant trees for my children."

Notwithstanding that no one can fully complete the task, Rabbi Tarfon adds that we are not free from doing our share, from embarking on our goals with our utmost energy and strength. This in fact, may be the deeper meaning of the refrain: first we proclaim hazak hazak-be strong, be strong, let us each make sure to do our share, knowing all along that we will not complete every goal.

But then, we call out together, ve-nithazek, may we be strengthened in the recognition that together, our task be concluded, even if it takes generations to make it a reality.

With this in mind, I suggest that this week, and every other occasion that we complete a book of the Torah, we take a moment of pause to recognize that as we surround the Torah, that we appreciate the gifts of the generations that preceded us. At the same time, we should hold our children close in the prayer that they continue the mission of our people and Torah.

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#### **RABBI NAFTALI REICH**

### **Legacy**

If we were to count up all the verses in the Torah that describe the construction of the Mishkan in minute detail, beginning with Parashas Terumah and culminating with this week's Torah portion, the number would reach into the hundreds. Why does the Torah pay such extraordinary attention to the construction of a building that existed only in Biblical times and was eventually replaced by the Temple, which was of totally different dimensions? What message does this painstaking description convey to us today?

In order to find the answers we must go back to last week's parashah. As their contribution to the

construction of the Mishkan, the Nesiim, the tribal princes, offered to wait until the end and provide everything that still remained to be done, a most magnanimous gesture. But was this indeed a good offer?

Let us try to find a parallel in a contemporary setting. A philanthropist comes to a major charitable organization or institute of Torah study and offers to cover the annual deficit for the next ten years. No matter what the shortfall, he will foot the bill. What would the reaction be? Wild celebration! Ecstasy! The philanthropist would be hoisted onto the shoulders of the administrators and fund-raisers, and they would dance through the streets. A grand dinner would be arranged in his honor, and he would be presented with a beautiful plaque.

This was also the offer of the Nesiim, and it would seem that it, too, should have been greeted with appreciation and gratitude. But it was not. The Torah castigates them subtly by omitting a letter from their name (35:27). Our Sages point out that, although their intentions were noble, they should not have postponed their contribution until the very end. But the question remains:

Where exactly did they err? What was wrong with offering to guarantee that there would be no deficit?

The commentators explain that the Nesiim's error was in bringing a businesslike attitude to the construction of the Mishkan. From a very practical point of view, their offer was excellent. But Hashem did not ask for contributions to the Mishkan because he needed help making ends meet on the construction project. He wanted the people to contribute their love, their passionate devotion, their enthusiasm, their excitement. He wanted the Mishkan to be constructed of the outpourings of Jewish hearts. The gold and silver of the donations were simply the conduits by which these sentiments were infused into the structure of the Mishkan. The Nesiim, however, took a cool, pragmatic attitude, and for this lack of passion and irrepressible fervor, the Torah takes them to task.

In this light, we can understand why the Torah meticulously enumerates each minute detail of the construction. Each little nugget of gold, each little piece of embroidery represented another piece of a Jewish heart aflame with devotion to our Creator, and as such, it is infinitely and eternally precious.

A very wealthy man once came to the director of a large charitable institution. "Rabbi," he said, "my father just passed away, and in his memory, I would like to cover your entire budget for the coming year."

The rabbi looked at him for a moment, then shook his head. "I will accept a nice donation from you, but I cannot accept this offer."

"But how can you refuse?" asked the wealthy man, completely taken aback.

"Don't you have a responsibility to the poor families who depend on you?"

"Let me explain. Every year, our fund-raisers travel to distant towns and villages, collecting small contributions from hundreds, even thousands of Jewish people. Hashem could undoubtedly provide for our needs more easily, but He surely wants all these good people to share in the mitzvah of giving charity. So you see, I have a responsibility to these people, and I cannot deprive them of this mitzvah."

In our own lives, we are often inspired to get involved with important causes, but we might sometimes feel that what we can contribute, either in time, talent or resources, is simply inadequate. How will the big picture be affected, we ask ourselves, by the few dollars or hours we can contribute? It seems to us like a drop in the ocean. Unfortunately, such feelings may prevent us from participating to the full extent of our capabilities. Let us remember the lesson of the Mishkan-that Hashem does not seek our help, only our hearts. It is not how much we do that is important, but how we do it. If we contribute with love, caring and compassion, then even the smallest contribution assumes tremendous proportions. © 2011 Rabbi N. Reich & torah.org

#### **RABBI BEREL WEIN**

### **Wein Online**

**R**amban (Rabbi Moshe ben Nachman, 13th century Barcelona) points out that the conclusion of the book of Shemot, with its detailed recording of the construction and expenditures involved in the completion of the Mishkan/Tabernacle, places the Jewish people as a whole at the level of spirituality that was present in the homes of our patriarchs and matriarchs at the conclusion of the previous book of Bereshith.

Just as the spirit of the Lord hovered over the tents of our forbearers, so now did it become recognizable and present amongst the nation of Israel. Constructed for that purpose, the spirit of the Lord dwelled within the Mishkan/Tabernacle. There is an important message contained in this observation.

This Jewish tradition teaches us that there are two places, so to speak, where the Lord's presence may be experienced and should be cultivated. G-d's glory fills the entire universe; He is omnipresent. But the puny human being cannot encompass the entire universe in all of its vastness and complexity. We need a personal G-d that we can relate to somehow.

That G-d can be found according to Jewish tradition in two places in our small and narrow world. One place is in our home, our family and our daily lives. The second place of G-dly encounter is in the house of worship and study and Torah service. That is our substitute Mishkan/Tabernacle where the spirit of G-d hovers over those buildings and is recognizable to us

only if we are attuned and sensitive enough to experience it. These two pillars of Jewish life have accompanied us on our long journey the world-and through our history.

Both of these bastions of Jewish strength and vitality-the home and the synagogue/study hall-the meeting places so to speak of Israel with its G-d, are under siege and attack in today's modern society. The home, marriage, children and the sense of family has given way to relationships, moving-in and out, later marriages, a large number of divorces and spousal abuse, and the sacrifice of children and family on the altars of career and hedonism.

Without strong Jewish families there cannot be a strong State of Israel or a viable Jewish nation. Certainly intermarriage has eroded the concept of Jewish family but even when this does not occur, the bonds of family are frayed by television, the internet and the society generally. Sometimes even well meaning gestures are counterproductive.

During my years as a rabbi in Miami Beach we always had many Shabat guests and because of that, contact between us and our own young children was pretty much eliminated. One Friday one of our younger daughters said to my wife: "Mommy, are children also guests?" We got the message and then made certain that one of the Shabat meals would be exclusively with our children.

The synagogue also has lost much since it became the matter of the whims and comfort of the attendees and no longer the House of G-d where He is to be glimpsed and served according to His wishes as expressed in Torah and halacha. I hope that the message of the Ramban will certainly not be lost upon us. © 2011 Rabbi Berel Wein- Jewish historian, author and international lecturer offers a complete selection of CDs, audio tapes, video tapes, DVDs, and books on Jewish history at [www.rabbiwein.com](http://www.rabbiwein.com). For more information on these and other products visit [www.rabbiwein.com](http://www.rabbiwein.com)

#### **RABBI YISROEL CINER**

### **Parsha Insights**

**T**his week we conclude the Sefer {Book} of Shmos with Parshas Pekudai-the accounting of materials used for the construction of the Mishkan {Tabernacle}. The Ramban, at the beginning of the Sefer, described Shmos as the Sefer of Galus and Geulah-Exile and Redemption. With this he explains why Shmos began with the names of Bnei Yisroel {the Children of Israel} who went down to Mitzrayim {Egypt}, even though that information had already been given at the end of Breishis. He writes that Shmos, as the Sefer of Galus and Geulah, had to begin with the very beginning of the Galus-that descent to Mitzrayim.

As such, it follows that Shmos will end with the final stage of Geulah-Redemption. There's often a lot of confusion over what constitutes this redemption. Many would describe Geulah as leaving Mitzrayim, but that

took place in the middle of Shmos. Others would say that it was receiving the Torah on Har Sinai {Mount Sinai} but that also took place in the middle of Shmos. Still others would maintain that the stage of redemption would only be reached when we'd enter Eretz Yisroel {the Land of Israel} but that doesn't take place until long after Sefer Shmos.

If so, what was the true redemption that was reached at the end of Shmos?

The end of Pekudai tells what happened once the Mishkan had been erected and all the vessels had been positioned in their proper places: "And the cloud covered the Ohel Moed and the Honor of Hashem filled the Mishkan. [40:34]" The redemption was Hashem's presence resting amongst Bnei Yisroel. That tangible presence of Hashem that had been seen and felt so clearly on Sinai was now a constant reality, traveling with them wherever they went.

We too can get a bit confused over what constitutes redemption. Once, I accompanied my highschool students on an overnight trip to Boston. On the way we stopped at the Touro Synagogue in Newport, Rhode Island. One sensed the foundation of religious freedom being laid when reading the resonating words written by George Washington in response to a letter sent to him by Moses Seixas, the warden of the congregation.

Washington wrote: The Citizens of the United States of America have a right to applaud themselves for having given to mankind examples of an enlarged and liberal policy: a policy worthy of imitation. All possess alike liberty of conscience and immunities of citizenship. It is now no more that toleration is spoken of, as if it was by the indulgence of once class of people, that another enjoyed the exercise of their inherent national gifts. For happily the Government of the United States, which gives to bigotry no sanction, to persecution no assistance requires only that they who live under its protection should demean themselves as good citizens, in giving it on all occasions their effectual support.

May the children of the Stock of Abraham, who dwell in this land, continue to merit and enjoy the good will of the other Inhabitants; while every one shall sit in safety under his own vine and figtree, and there shall be none to make him afraid. May the father of all mercies scatter light and not darkness in our paths, and make us all in our several vocations useful here, and in his own due time and way everlastingly happy. G. Washington

One felt a historical perspective of the great freedoms that we as Jews have enjoyed in the United States and have enabled us to flourish. At risk of getting a little too carried away with this American spirit, we continued on to Boston, contemplated the Holocaust Memorial and visited the colonial cemetery; home to many great people and also to the author of Mother Goose. At that point I began to reflect on the visits to cemeteries I had made during my years in Israel...

Praying at the grave of Rav Yosef Karo, the author of Shulchan Aruch, for a clarity in halacha {Jewish Law}. Praying at the grave of the Arizal for a deeper understanding of Torah. Praying at the grave of Rabi Akiva to have the strength and exuberance to be willing to start again, no matter what one's age might be. To be willing to see the good in even the darkest of moments. Those were the thoughts that were running through my mind as I stood at the grave site of Mother Goose...

We dare not confuse freedom with redemption. We dare not compare any place in the world to the Land of Israel. And I thank you, Mother Goose, for driving that point home in a very clear way. © 2011 Rabbi Y. Ciner & torah.org

### RABBI ZVI SOBOLOFSKY

## TorahWeb

The Kohen Gadol performing the avoda in the Beis Hamikdash adorned by the bigdei kehuna reaches a level of sanctity that a regular person presumably can never attain. Yet Chazal tell us that a talmid chacham has precedence over a Kohen Gadol (mishna Huriyos 3:8). The Rambam elaborates upon the distinction between a Kohen Gadol and a talmid chacham as follows: Kehuna is reserved exclusively for the descendants of Aharon, while Torah belongs to the entire Jewish People. Through Torah study anyone can be elevated spiritually and even surpass the level of the Kohen Gadol. (see Rambam Hilchos Shemitah v'Yovel 13:13).

There is one halacha concerning the Kohen Gadol that, in its broadest sense, applies to all of us and whose observance is fundamental to living a life of kedusha. The Kohen Gadol wore the tzitz, which was engraved with the words "Kodesh laHashem", on his head. Although the Torah seems to describe the Kohen Gadol as wearing the tzitz at all times-"tamid"-the Torah shebaal peh explains that "tamid" does not demand that he wear it constantly, but rather "tamid" dictates that when the Kohen Gadol wears the tzitz he must always be aware that it is on him (i.e. hesech hadaas is forbidden while wearing the tzitz.) Chazal derive from this that one who is wearing tefillin must focus on the tefillin and take care that his thoughts not stray to other matters that are inconsistent with the message of tefillin. While the tzitz has the name of Hashem engraved on it, the parshiyos of tefillin contain Hashem's name many times. As such, tefillin must be treated with even more care than the tzitz. Hesech hadass should be inconceivable when the name of Hashem is upon us.

We carry the name of Hashem with us whenever we study His Torah. The Ramban in his introduction to chumash elaborates upon how the entire Torah is the name of Hashem, i.e. Hashem's Torah is a description of Him that we can relate to in this world. Just as the Kohen Gadol cannot have hesech hadaas

from the message of the tzitz and one cannot have hesech hadaas from tefillin, so too, talmud Torah cannot be accomplished with hesech hadaas. This requirement that talmud Torah be free of hesech hadaas has a substantive halachic impact on our approach to birchas HaTorah. The rishonim question why we recite birchas HaTorah before we learn in the morning yet do not repeat it later in the day when we return to learning, given that if we interrupt the fulfillment of another mitzvah we recite a new bracha when we return. The explanation is given that talmud Torah is different because we are never allowed to have hesech hadaas from Torah. Even when we are involved in other activities, the mitzva of talmud Torah requires of us to constantly focus on returning to our learning as soon as possible, since talmud Torah is incumbent upon us tamid.

There is a question at the end of Orach Chaim whether one should rejoice on Purim Katan, i.e. the 14th day of Adar Rishon. The Rama supports such rejoicing by quoting the pasuk that states, "tov lev mishte tamid-one with a good heart is constantly rejoicing". The Rama thereby ends the section of Orach Chaim with the word "tamid". The commentaries on the Rama note that the Rama began Orach Chaim by quoting the pasuk, "shivisi Hashem l'negdi tamid-

I have placed Hashem in front of myself at all times." One who thinks of Hashem tamid is the one who is truly happy tamid. The Koehn Gadol focuses on the tzitz tamid, and tamid governs the wearing of tefillin. It is this sense of tamid, the concentration and focus on Hashem and His Torah that is our Orach Chaim, our way of life.

As we conclude the parshioys of the mishkan and bigdei kehuna and as we transition from Adar Rishon to Adar Sheni, it is time to commit ourselves to a life of tamid. May we be zoche to once again see the Kohen Gadol wearing the tzitz tamid, inspiring us to live a life of "Kodesh laHashem tamid." ©2011 Rabbi Z. Sobolofsky & The TorahWeb Foundation

### SHLOMO KATZ

## Hama'ayan

“**H**e took and placed the Testimony [i.e., the Luchot] into the Aron / Ark...” (Shmot 40:20) R' Shlomo Kluger z"l (1785-1869; rabbi of Brody, Galicia) notes that our verse contains two verbs ("took" and "placed") while the verses relating to the other implements of the mishkan have only one verb. (For example, verse 22 states: "He put the Table in the Ohel Mo'ed.") Why? R' Kluger explains: The Gemara (Kiddushin 7a) teaches that when A gives a gift to B, who is a distinguished person, and B accepts the gift, A is considered to be a recipient because he is receiving a favor from B in that B honored A by accepting the gift. This is why the Torah says earlier (Shmot 25:2), "Take a donation for Me," rather than "Give a donation to Me,"

because a person who is fortunate enough to give a gift to Hashem actually is receiving a favor from Hashem.

Similarly, it was an honor for Moshe to be able to put the Luchot into the Aron. Thus, when he "placed" them, he also "took" something for himself. (Imrei Shefer)

"The cloud covered the Ohel Mo'ed / Tent of Meeting, and the glory of Hashem filled the Tabernacle." (40:34) The cloud is a reference to the fact that Hashem's presence in our world is hidden, taught R' Zvi Yehuda Kook z"l (1891-1982; rosh yeshiva of Yeshivat Merkaz Harav and mentor of the National Religious Party). He expounded further:

When one sees a rainbow, he must recite a blessing. A rainbow is multicolored; so, too, G-d is revealed in the world in many different ways. [This is a play on the Hebrew word "gevanim" / "colors" or "aspects."] One is forbidden to diminish the greatness of G-d [i.e., His ability to reveal Himself in so many different ways], but unfortunately, this occurs both among the religious and among the heretics.

Sometimes, a brilliant flash of the Divine light occurs in the physical world. When Avraham went to the akeidah, "he saw the cloud from afar." This means that Avraham saw a manifestation of the Divine with his physical eyes. It is possible to "meet" G-d even when He appears in a cloud; indeed, in the haftarah for Parashat Pekudei [which is not read today because it also is Parashat Shekalim] we read, "Hashem has said that we should dwell in the fog." There also are clouds that lead us on the way, just as Bnei Yisrael experienced in the desert.

It is easy to sanctify G-d's Name when one is among angels. The uniqueness of the Jewish people, and its very purpose, is to sanctify G-d in this world, amid its earthiness and materialism (including, writes R' Kook, being an active participant in the State [of Israel] and its armed forces). This ultimately demonstrates the sanctity of Torah study. Such is the meaning of the Vilna Gaon's teaching that a Jew's soul belongs to the earth. Man's mission is to relate G-d's greatness in this world, with all of its complications, as we say in the Rosh Hashanah prayers, "You are revealed in thick clouds of purity." (Sichot Harav Zvi Yehuda, p. 409)

"For the cloud of Hashem would be upon the Mishkan by day, and fire would be on it at night..." (40:38) R' Yitzchak Weiss z"l Hy"d (rabbi of Verbau, Czechoslovakia; killed in the Holocaust in 1942) writes: The Mishkan, where the Luchot were housed, alludes to a Torah scholar. If a Torah scholar publicizes himself, as the day is public, Hashem will bring a cloud of obscurity over him. However, if a Torah scholar conceals himself like an object concealed at night, Hashem will spread his fame as a fire is seen from a distance. (Siach Yitzchak) © 2011 S. Katz & torah.org