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maskil Le'David

The Mishkan and the Shechina Among Us

This *parsha* includes several commands and laws in connection with the building of the Mishkan and its service. The Alshich Hakadosh cites the verse "They shall make a Sanctuary for Me so that I may dwell among them" and writes, "It does not say 'among it' but 'among them,' implying among each one of Am Yisrael." His words are based on the Zohar Hakadosh (*Tikunei Zohar*, Introduction 13:1), "Rectifying one's body is like rectifying the Mishkan." A Jewish person's spiritual composition is formed based on the Mishkan.

The Mishkan's construction, arrangement, and special service, all of which brought the Divine Presence to rest inside it, serve as a lesson for us as to how to conduct our personal service of G-d, how to purify and sanctify ourselves and prepare ourselves to become a fitting vessel for the Divine Presence to dwell among us.

The first mitzvah in this *parsha* is the mitzvah of giving a half shekel (a specific weight of silver) to conduct a census of Am Yisrael. The sockets which held up the walls of the Mishkan were made from this silver. The Torah states, "The wealthy shall not increase and the destitute shall not decrease from half a shekel." Each person had to give exactly half a shekel, not more and not less. The reason for this instruction, the Da'at Z'keinim explains, was so that the rich should not say, "I have a greater share in the Mikdash than you." Therefore, rich and poor alike, all had to give the same amount.

In this light one can explain the reason the Torah commands to give specifically a half and not a whole coin: to remove feelings of pride and conceit from man's heart. One should always feel he is "half" — lacking perfection. As the verse says, "A heart broken and humbled, O G-d, You will not despise." Hashem desires a heart which is broken and submissive before Him, without conceit.

Additionally, the commentaries explain that the half coin teaches us that an individual alone is only a half and lacks perfection. Only by connecting to one's fellow can one achieve perfection. A Jew's perfection comes solely through unity. This is the distinctive quality of Am Yisrael over all other nations: we are one united nation.

These two ideas, submission and unity, are dependent on one another. Unity and connection between man and his fellow are not possible if one is haughty. The conceited person places himself on a pedestal, always feeling worthier than his fellow. It is beneath him to unite with someone who he feels has less value than himself.

Submission and humility, and the resultant unity, constituted the power which kept the Mishkan erect. So too, the foundation of each person's personal Mishkan is distancing himself from the trait of pride. Pride and the Divine Presence are mutually exclusive! Hashem says about pride, "I and it cannot dwell in the same space" (*Sotah* 5a). And concerning the modest and humble person we are told (*Yeshaye* 57:15), "I abide in exaltedness and holiness, but I am with the despondent and lowly of spirit."

Unity and connecting with our brethren are required for the Divine Presence to rest among us, for the Shechina does not rest where there are less than ten men. Hashem did not descend on Har Sinai until Am Yisrael fulfilled "and Israel encamped there, opposite the mountain," on which Rashi expounds, "As one man with one heart" (Rashi derives this from the word "encamped" written in Hebrew in the singular).

After the commandment of giving a half shekel for the census, the Torah instructs how to make the *Kiyor*, the copper Laver and its base where the Kohanim were required to wash their hands and feet before performing the service. The purpose of this washing was for sanctity rather than cleanliness, so they could purify themselves and prepare their bodies to serve Hashem in holiness. Every Jew is compared to a kohen who serves Hashem through his personal service and prayer. Our entire role in This World is to act like servants who serve their Master, fulfilling His Will and serving Him. Due to the importance of this role, we are obligated to guard our holiness and purity with exceptional integrity both in thought and deed, so that we be fitting to serve the King of Kings, The Holy One Blessed Be He.

There is another lesson we can derive from the *Kiyor*, which was fashioned from the copper mirrors donated by the women. When we stand in front of a mirror and face our own reflection, we are reminded that "there is a watchful Eye, an attentive Ear and all your deeds are recorded in a Book." When a person attains the level of "I have set Hashem before me always," where he pictures the Book open and the Hand writing, he will certainly guard himself carefully from any trace of sin. In this way he will merit the Divine Presence resting inside him. cont. p. 3.>>

18 Adar 5786

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Ki Tisa

Parshat Parah



Hilula

18 Adar

Rabbi Yisrael Yaakov Fisher, Av Beit Din HaEidah HaChareidit

19 Adar

Rabbi Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld, Av Beit Din of Yerushalayim

20 Adar

Rabbi Shlomo Zalman Auerbach, Rosh Yeshiva of Kol Torah

21 Adar

Rabbi Elimelech of Lizhensk, author of Noam Elimelech

22 Adar

Rabbi Elazar HaLevi Ben Tuvu

23 Adar

Rabbi Yoshiyahu Pinto zy"ta, the Rif

24 Adar

Rabbi Eliyahu HaKohen, author of Shevet Mussar





FROM THE TREASURY

Based on the teachings of Moreinu v'Rabbeinu Hagaon Hatzaddik Rabbi David Chananya Pinto, *shlita*

The Torah is Hashem's "Clothing"

"And now, desist from Me. Let My anger flare up against them and I shall annihilate them; and I shall make you a great nation" (*Shemot* 32:10).

The Gemara writes (*Berachot* 32a), "Rabbi Avahu said: 'If this verse would not have been written it would be impossible to say it.' [The words 'desist from Me'] teach that Moshe grasped hold of Hashem like someone grasps his friend's garment, and said to Him, 'Master of the World, I will not let go of You until You forgive and pardon them.'"

It is clear that this description is only a parable for us; Hashem is not physical and has no bodily form. However, we will try to understand why *Chazal* specifically used the expression of "grasping hold of His clothing," when expressing Moshe's great effort of pleading, begging, and beseeching Hashem to forgive Am Yisrael for the sin of the Golden Calf.

The role of a garment is to cover up, to hide. We know that the entire Torah is actually the Names of Hashem, which signifies that Hashem's glory and Presence are, so to speak, concealed in the Torah. The Torah is Hashem's Names, and a name always signifies the essence within.

The goal of our *avodat Hashem* is closeness to Hashem and cleaving to Him, as the verse says, "To love Hashem, your G-d, to walk in all His ways and to cleave to Him" (*Devarim* 11:22). But since one cannot connect to Hashem directly, Hashem gave us the Torah, in which His Names and glory are hidden. Through studying the Torah, we are afforded the opportunity of connecting to Hashem and cleaving to Him.

It follows that the Torah is the clothing which covers Hashem, through which we can acquire some understanding of Him and cleave to Him as much as our insignificance allows. Hashem concealed Himself in the Torah. Our entire grasp and connection with Hashem is through His dress, the holy Torah. As the Ramchal says, "A One and Only G-d... In the Five Books of the Torah which are the light of Torah, and they are Your dress, as it says, 'Covering with light as with a garment.'"

When Moshe Rabbeinu begged Hashem to forgive Am Yisrael and not wipe them out in His anger, he seized Hashem's "clothing," the holy Torah and maintained, "Behold Hashem, the Torah and the Jewish people are One. The heaven and earth were only created for the sake of the Torah and Yisrael, who are called 'first' or 'beginning' (*Rashi Bereishit* 1:1, *Midrash*), so that Yisrael should fulfil the Torah." As the *Zohar Hakadosh* says (*Shemot* 200:1), "Go and see, when the Holy One Blessed Be He created the world, He only created it so that Yisrael would come and accept the Torah." What would be the purpose of the entire creation if Yisrael are not part of it? What merit will the world have to exist without Am Yisrael whose role it is to bring the creation to its purpose, engaging in Torah and fulfilling its mitzvot?

By seizing the "clothing" of Hashem, Moshe was expressing the connection, the union, and the dependency between Hashem, the Torah and Yisrael. Moshe Rabbeinu who represented Bnei Yisrael, together with Hashem's "clothing," the Torah, and the Holy

One Blessed Be He Himself, are strongly connected and intertwined and it is impossible to separate and detach one from the other.



WORDS OF THE SAGES

What Were the Indian Villagers Excited About?

On Shabbat Ki Tisa, when we read about the sin of the Golden Calf, the Gaon Rabbi Yechiel Meir Tzucker *shlit"a* (Doresh Tov) related the following amazing story. It is about the son of a judge from the High Court, who became religious. Today he is an outstanding *talmid chacham* and he tells of the catalyst that brought him to repent:

The story began when as a young man, wishing for some change of scenery, he decided to tour India. In India it is prohibited to bring alcoholic drinks onto the beach. Anyone wishing to drink must purchase from the kiosks found on the beach. In this way, the kiosks can demand an exorbitant price for every can of beer. Anyone caught taking a can of beer out of his bag will receive a heavy fine.

Our young man decided he was not prepared to pay five dollars for a can of beer that costs half a dollar in a regular store. What did he do? He brought along a can of beer in his bag.

As soon as he took out the can from his bag, an Indian jumped up and began shouting at him in English, "Thief! Impudent fellow!"

After throwing several more curses at him, he suddenly stopped abruptly and asked him, "One second! Are you a Jew?" And when the young man replied in the positive, he began apologizing: "I am so sorry, I did not mean it. I never intended to offend a Jew..."

He quickly ran away but a few moments later returned and asked, "Can you do me a favor and come with me to my village? I have a motor-scooter; on the way to the village I will show you many interesting sites, which you will enjoy very much. Didn't you come here to have a good time? Trust me, you will enjoy this!"

The Indian kept his word. He took him to all kinds of astonishingly beautiful places, which lengthened the journey, but definitely made it worthwhile.

Eventually they arrived at his village. The villagers accorded this Indian much respect; it seemed he was the village Mukhtar. He instructed his guest to sit on a bench in the center of the village and wait. He himself rode around with his motor-scooter, instructing all the villagers to assemble near the bench where the young man sat.

After a short time, all the villagers were assembled; simple Indian villagers surrounded our Israeli friend. The Indian got off his scooter, quieted the crowd and announced:

"The man sitting here on the bench is from the Chosen Nation! He is a Jew! He is part of the nation that G-d chose!"

The villagers were electrified!

Some hurried to bring him flowers, others rushed to their homes to bring him almonds and nuts... They simply did not know what to do with themselves out of their great excitement.

"You must understand," he continued relating his personal tale, "I sat there, a completely irreligious Jew, complete with spiky hair and earrings, and asked myself, 'What is he talking about? Why are they so excited? What, in fact, is the Chosen Nation? How am I different from them?' I felt so uncomfortable about my lack of knowledge that I promised myself: first thing when I return to Israel I must find out the significance of being part of the Chosen Nation! What are they so enthused about?"

"Indeed, upon my return, I made inquiries and was directed to an Arachim seminar and thus began my journey of repentance."

The nations of the world acknowledge the superiority of the Chosen Nation. They are all aware that a Jew is "G-d's child." The problem is that we are not aware of it! We do not acknowledge our singularity! We do not walk around with the feeling that we are "G-d's Children!"



WALKING IN THEIR WAYS

Tidbits of faith and trust penned
by Moreinu v'Rabbeinu Hagaon Hatzaddik
Rabbi David Chananya Pinto, *shlita*

Tough Love

“Honored Rav,” a Jew from New Zealand addressed me, “a terrible thing happened to me! But as a result, I merited returning to my Father in Heaven.” He told his story:

“One night, I dreamed that a figure approached me and said, ‘I have come to inform you that your son died in his sleep! You have two options – to continue sleeping, or to check on him. But no matter what you choose, his condition will not change.’ Then the figure disappeared.

“I awakened immediately and ran to my son’s bed. I found him dead. After the initial shock, I understood this to be retribution for my misdeeds. Then and there, I resolved to do *teshuvah* and accept the yoke of Torah and mitzvot.”

I could not hold myself back from asking, “How did you feel upon revealing that the figure had spoken the truth and your son lay dead before you? Were you angry? Did you not wish to protest and rebel?”

“What would I have gained had I held grievances toward G-d? Hashem is the King of the universe. I cannot do a thing against His wishes!”

When I heard the words of this giant of spirit, I felt greatly inspired. Often, when a Jew is hit with troubles, he feels angry and rebellious toward Hashem. But this does not achieve the desired result. Hashem has sent him a message to draw closer to Him and reinforce his mitzvah observance, not that he should rise up in grievance against Him. Anger toward Hashem only distances a person from Him. It is the catalyst for him to receive more Heavenly signs in the form of suffering until he finally understands that his Father is calling him back – and he repents.

Isn’t it a shame that some people just don’t “get the message” the first time? They need constant reminders to repent, in the form of painful incidents. Who in their right mind would choose a life of difficulties?

One can avoid these trials and tribulations if he would only repent after the first sign. After doing teshuvah, one is beloved by Hashem and draws an abundance of blessing upon himself.

cont. from p. 1 >>>

The *parsha* continues with the commandment to make anointment oil which would be used to anoint and consecrate all the vessels of the Mishkan. The oil alludes to good deeds, as it says, “A good name is better than good oil.” It also says (*Tana D’Bei Eliyahu Rabba* 7), “Oil refers to good deeds, as it says ‘Like the scent of goodly oils, like the scent of your good deeds.’”

Man must train himself in good middot and good deeds so that his good deeds exceed his wisdom. He must gain a good reputation, to be beloved Above and pleasing below. Just as the anointment oil consecrated the Mishkan and its vessels, so too a person’s good deeds transform his body into a holy being, and then Hashem’s Shechina will rest in him.

The fourth commandment in the *parsha* is to make *ketoret*, incense. From the *ketoret* we derive the correct behavior necessary for a *talmid chacham* or anyone who desires meriting the Divine Presence. On the verse, “Thoroughly mixed, pure and holy,” Chazal expound (*Masechet Kallah* 3b), “A *talmid chacham* must act pleasantly to every person and should not be like a dish without salt.” A *talmid chacham* must be beloved to Heaven and beloved to people, to the extent that others exclaim about him, “Look at so-and-so who studies Torah. How pleasant are his deeds!” Through this he causes a sanctification of Hashem’s Name and makes the Torah beloved to others, thereby increasing Torah study in the world. When people witness the glory of Torah, how it refines and elevates man, they wish to cleave to it to acquire its qualities. And then automatically Hashem’s Name will be intensified in the world, which leads to increasing the presence of His Divine Spirit.



PARSHA PEARLS

Inspiring Reflections

Segulah of Reciting Parshat Haketoret

“Hashem said to Moshe: ‘Take yourself spices’” (*Shemot* 30:34).

In the *Zohar Hakadosh*, Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai praises the *segulah* of reciting the section of *ketoret*, the incense: “Would Bnei Yisrael realize how sublime the act of offering incense before Hashem is, they would take every word from this section and fashion it into a crown for their heads, like a golden crown. One who engages in it should contemplate the act of offering incense **and if he reads it attentively every day, he will acquire a share in This World and in the World to Come, and death will depart from him and from the entire world and he will be saved from all retribution in This World, from evil forces and the judgment of Gehinom and the judgement of other nations.**”

Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai adds that when the *ketoret* would rise in a pillar of smoke, the kohen would see the letters of Hashem’s Name flying in the air, rising upwards in that pillar of smoke. After that, several Holy Chariots would surround the pillar of smoke on all sides until it ascended in light and joy.

Prolonging the Shabbat Day Guards Us

“You shall observe the Shabbat” (*Shemot* 31:14).

This “observing,” writes the *Yalkut Meor Ha’afelah*, refers to observing Shabbat before its onset, as well as after its strict time of conclusion, as we are told, “It is proper to add from the weekday onto the holy day.”

We are stringent with twilight on Erev Shabbat and Motza’ei Shabbat; we begin observing Shabbat well before its onset and take leave of Shabbat well after dusk. These times that we “add” to Shabbat from weekday are a “fence” for Shabbat which protects us.

a NOVEL LOOK AT THE PARSHA



The Full Picture

Often we see events occur in the world without having any perception of why Hashem made them happen, and we find it hard to understand the purpose behind them. But after some time passes, maybe even many years, we might suddenly see the full picture. This gives us a tangible sense of the Divine Providence behind each event, and how each incident was necessary to bring about a certain result. Then in hindsight we understand that not a single detail was superfluous; all the events and occurrences served as some kind of preparation and preface to bring about the eventual salvation and delivery for Am Yisrael, whether on an individual or national level.

The Chatam Sofer *zy*"a says that this message is alluded to in a verse in this week's *parsha*, "You will see My Back, but My Face may not be seen." Meaning, if you wish to see Divine Providence, don't expect to see the meaning and purpose of every incident right away, since "My Face may not be seen." Only once the purpose has been achieved do we sometimes get a glimpse of how each detail was woven with perfection to create the complete picture. Retroactively we understand the purpose of whatever Hashem brought about, as hinted to with the words, "You will see My Back."

The Chafetz Chaim *zt*"l has a famous a parable which sheds light on this topic:

One Shabbat a guest was staying in a certain city and witnessed how the Gabbai was distributing the *aliyot* and honors in the *beit kneset*. It seemed to him that the way the Gabbai was choosing the honorees was very strange, to say the least. At the end of the prayers he approached the Gabbai and expressed his surprise that so-and-so was honored rather than someone else. And why was this one called up to the Torah before the other one? And in general, why does he not just call up the congregants in the order of the seating arrangement? In this way each one will know when his turn is approaching and it will prevent arguments.

This is what the Gabbai answered:

"His honor has come to join us for one Shabbat and therefore has questions. Allow us the honor of hosting you for several more Shabbatot and then you will see that so-and-so already received an *aliya* last Shabbat and this other person is celebrating a joyous occasion or *hilula* this Shabbat. Then you will realize that the considerations and yardstick of how to distribute the honors every Shabbat are much broader than you think."

This is a perfect allusion for life in This World, says the Chafetz Chaim. Sometimes it seems to us that there is "No judgement and no Judge," no order or justice. It seems, G-d forbid, as if Hashem is raising the wicked and lowering the righteous, or someone suffers a hardship and wonders why he deserves it. Where is fairness in the way the world is conducted?

But the truth is that man's life down here in This World is too short for human eyes to see that "the judgements of Hashem are true, altogether righteous." A human being's vision is too limited to be able to include all the details of Hashem's conduct and understand the depth and uprightness of Hashem's ways.

But, would Hashem lengthen a person's days and open his eyes, he would understand and tangibly see the exemplary order with which creation is governed, both in an individual's life and in public affairs. He would simply marvel in astonishment at the truthfulness of His conduct and the uprightness of His judgement. "The Rock! Perfect is His work, for all His paths are just."

Rabbi Eliezer Turk *shlit*"a, in his *sefer Otzroteihem Amaleh*, gives a wonderful piece of advice which can help increase our faith in Divine Providence. He quotes a letter written by the leaders of the Diaspora, the *gaonim* Rabbi Moshe Feinstein and Rabbi Yaakov Kaminetzky *zt*"l, as an introduction to a commentary dealing

with the subject of Divine Providence. The following is the essence of their essay:

During his life, every single person goes through many incidents where he feels he was delivered in a miraculous fashion from hardship or troubles he experienced. He comes across numerous instances of clear kindnesses that Hashem does for him, like providing something he required urgently or other similar things, and he stands astounded at the Divine Providence that he merited seeing with his own eyes.

How important and advisable it is to write down every experience of Divine Providence (*Hashgacha Pratit*) in a personal notebook to preserve the memory of these incidents so that every time he finds himself coping with a similar problem or hardship or any challenging situation, he can read through his list and thereby strengthen his faith in Hashem, particularly by recalling the personal incidents he experienced in the past. This is good advice which will serve to instill in our hearts the simple truth and clear recognition that there is None other than Him, and Hashem does not remove His Divine Providence from His people for even one moment.

"Similarly," testifies Harav Turk *shlit*"a, "I heard from the Gaon Rabbi Moshe Mordechai Shulsinger *zt*"l, author of *Mishmar HaLevi*, in the name of the Brisker Rav, 'More than a person can achieve through Mussar sefarim which engage in matters of faith and trust in Hashem, a person can attain from personal incidents that he experiences.'"

This is exactly what faith is all about. When a person establishes in his heart that everything is orchestrated and performed by the Upper Hand, difficulties do not distress him! This faith implants in him the recognition that this is part of the process he has to endure and everything is for his good. This knowledge strengthens him, instills him with hope, and enables him to endure difficulties with a lighter feeling.



"Contemplate and see that Hashem is good"

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