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Why Serve God?

RABBI ISRAEL CHAIT

An intelligent reader from Belgium made it clear to me that my past article warrants a sequel. We have stated that one of the premises of our faith is that God has no needs and derives no benefit whatever from our serving Him. As Nachmanides states, "all our praise is as nothing to Him." This is clear to any intelligent person. For how would God, the Creator of the universe, derive satisfaction from our praise? Would an Albert Einstein derive satisfaction from the praise of a child who says he is a great mathematician because he knows the multiplication table? Our knowledge of God is far less than that of a child's knowledge of an Einstein because a child at least knows something of Einstein while we know nothing of God other than the little we understand of His works and that He exists.

(continued on page 2)

The Temple

RABBI MOSHE BEN-CHAIM

The Tabernacle has been the center of the eye of the world both during its existence in days of the great kings, and even afterwards today, as we all await its final reconstruction.

But why? What is so important about this structure? What was God's objective for its existence? As we study it, we will find that its form is very specific in design, aiming towards some very crucial ideas.

The object of this article is to shed light on the Tabernacle's following requirements: The purpose of the two rooms (the Holy, and the Holy of Holies), the various vessels found therein, and the restriction of entering the Holy of Holies except for the high priest on the Day of Atonement, Yom Kippur.

The form of the Tabernacle is rectangular, 30 cubits long by 10 cubits wide. A cubit measuring approximately 1.5 feet. Its only entrance is on the eastern side. The first ten cubits upon entering are called the Ulam. No articles are placed in this area. In the next ten cubits are found the Candelabrum, the Table and the Inner Altar. Together the Ulam and these additional ten cubits form the Kodesh, the Holies. The remaining ten cubits are separated from the Kodesh and is called the Kodesh Kodashim, the Holy of Holies, separated by a curtain called the Paroches. In this Kodesh Kodashim is placed the Ark, which contains the Tablets of the Law (the Ten Commandments), the staff of Aaron, the canister of oil used for anointing the kings of Israel, and the jar of the Manna - the food with which God fed the Jewish people in the desert forty years.

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Photo from Moshe Levine's book, "The Tabernacle", Bencino Press, Bklyn, NY



Ask your children why the Ark was the most important object, even more than the Temple. The answer is in this issue.

Questions & Answers

E-mail us: questions@mesora.org

Reader: Dear Mesora, Frankly, your Home Page is quite pedantic and need not be. To profess to be the sole voice on these matters as you have is often viewed by even those who are sympathetic as intolerant and puerile.

You need not say that you alone decide right from wrong. Why don't you say Mesora provides a perspective that shows the relevance of the Torah and Gemara in our quotidian lives? There will always be more than one interpretation of the scriptures and each generation finds its own relevance from the richness of Judaism. Freedom to discuss, reinterpret and find new meaning and relevance in Judaism is what has

sustained us as a people for 3,000 years. It is our common story not our common beliefs that bind us together. When we pray we affirm that all of us came out of Egypt together not that we speak with one truth - in fact there are many.

Mesora: Your comments are not in line with reason, as the human mind sees something as true or false, or it admits ignorance. Our Sages exemplify this behavior. They did not subscribe to the opinion that there is plurality in truth. They in fact state emphatically their sides of arguments, many times deriding their opponent in debate. They did not say their opponent was also stating a truth.

If in fact you are true to your opinion, then you also must accept mine.

But you see that will lead you to a contradiction, thereby showing internally that both sides cannot be correct.

Why Serve God?

RABBI ISRAEL CHAIT

(continued from page 1)

Also, we consider it an imperfection if a person is in need of praise and enjoys praise and we do not ascribe imperfection to God.

All this being clear the question remains, why do we serve God, since He gains nothing from our service? Is it for ourselves? Isn't this then hedonistic? Is our religion self-seeking? Because of such questions some have maintained that the essence of religion lies in helping others. But if one's self-fulfillment is dependent upon helping others one must wish that others be in a state of need. Were everyone self-sufficient such a person would have no purpose in life. They would be like a successful General whose very success in ushering in an era of peace renders his services obsolete.

In the messianic era, we are told, no one will be in a needy state yet all will serve God. The service of God, therefore, must contain something other than helping others. There must be some other underlying good that we are helping others to attain. This underlying good is something we would necessarily occupy ourselves with even if everyone had everything attainable. It is a good we would involve ourselves with even if we were alone, as Adam the First. What is this underlying good if it is not for the benefit of God or of other people? Does the Torah provide the answer to this most important question upon which our entire worship of God depends?

The Torah states in Deuteronomy 10:12,13, "And now, o' Israel, what does the Lord your God ask of you, but to fear the Lord your God, to follow in all His ways, and to love Him, to serve the Lord your God with all your heart and all your soul, to keep the commandments of God, and His statutes, which I give you this day so that it shall be good for you?" In other words, the purpose of the entire Torah, the reason why God gave the Torah to man, is that man may benefit from it. Again in Deuteronomy 6:24 we read, "And God commanded us to do all these statutes, to fear the Lord our God, so that it will be good for us all the days, that He might preserve us alive, as it is at this day." It is clear from the Torah that the purpose of our serving God is to benefit ourselves and for no other reason. As Nachmanides states, "It is all solely for our own benefit, (Nachmanides on Deuteronomy 22:6)." But, we might ask, how does this differ

from hedonism? Does not the Torah put down the selfish and hedonistic way of life? To answer this question we must understand what is wrong with the hedonistic way of life. What is wrong with the hedonist is not that he is interested in himself, but that he is living a way of life that is not appropriate for man. The Torah wants us to be concerned about ourselves. Moses states in Deuteronomy 4:9, "Only take heed for yourselves and guard thy soul diligently..." It is incumbent upon man to be concerned for himself, but, this must be done in the proper manner. Man must choose the life which is most appropriate for him. God wants man to fulfill his potential as man and this is the purpose of the entire Torah. The hedonist has chosen a life that is destructive to man's very essence, namely his soul. Just as it is God's will that every animal live life in line with its own nature, it is His will that man live a life in line with man's nature. Man must be concerned about himself if he is to accomplish this. Since man has free will this cannot occur spontaneously as it does in the rest of the animal kingdom. Man must have Torah so that he has knowledge of what is good and what is evil and can then make proper choices.

What is the "good life" according to Torah? It is not the life of searching endlessly for material pleasure or wealth or fame. It is the life in which man pursues truth and knowledge, in which man is involved in studying and understanding the ideas of God's Torah, in experiencing the infinite beauty of Torah and God's universe, in doing kindness and helping others when they are needy. This kind of life makes man truly happy and blessed. Ironically man is happiest when he turns away from the self and is involved in something far greater than the self, i.e., pursuit of knowledge through God's Torah. The initial motivation must always be for the self. This is natural and even necessary. But when one gets involved in truly helping one's self in the manner of Torah one finds that he or she is in the face of a reality that is so awesome that the self becomes insignificant. Knowledge of Torah draws the individual into the world of God's reality, a world of beauty and awesomeness that makes man's petty concerns seem trivial and unimportant. In this world man rises to ever increasing heights as he transcends the mundane and the temporal. This can only be accomplished through a constant involvement in the knowledge of God's Torah and God's universe. as Maimonides states, "It is known and clear that the love of God cannot be bound to the heart of man unless he

toils in it constantly in the proper manner," (Laws Concerning Repentance, Chap. 10 Law 6).

God gave us a great Torah, we can involve ourselves in its study our entire lives and never exhaust its infinite knowledge. This is the ultimate good for mankind. It is what mankind will do in the messianic era when man will be provided with all his physical needs. It is what man can do when he is alone or in the company of others. The study of Torah and appreciation of the beauty of God's knowledge is the ultimate aim of human existence. It is what gives human life its human character and provides man with the kind of existence that makes his life worthwhile. It is the aim of the entire Torah and the true benefit for mankind. □

The Ark's Poles

RABBI MOSHE BEN-CHAIM

What is the purpose of haftoras Pekuday teaching that the Cherubim not only covered the Ark with their wings, but they also covered the poles of the Ark? What is derived from this? Additionally, what may be derived from the command (Exod. 25:15) that the Ark's poles are never to be removed? Lastly, what may be derived from the order of the Ark's assembly, (Exod. 40:20) "he (Moses) placed the Tablets into the Ark, he placed the poles on the Ark and he placed the Kapores (Ark cover) on the Ark"? Shouldn't the poles be last, as the Kapores should most certainly be prior, as it is more essential than the poles?

I believe the answer to all these questions is one concept, that is, that the Ark has no "destination" i.e., the Temple. The Ark outweighs the Temple in importance, as the Ark houses the Law - man's main pursuit in life. Suggesting that the Ark has found 'purpose' in something else, attributes greater import to something other than the Ark itself. This is as if to say that a higher purpose in the Ark has been realized by the Ark's arrival in the Temple. This is not so. Torah study must always claim top priority for man. To demonstrate that the Ark has not 'come to finally rest' in the Temple, the poles are never to be removed. This informs us that the Ark which houses the law must be the central focus of the Temple - counter intuitive to what we would expect of such a marvelous structure.

This is why Moses inserted the poles prior to covering the Ark, to demonstrate that the poles of all other objects are merely for transport. But the Ark's poles are integrally tied to the

Ark's purpose and designation. Moses therefore displayed the pole's essential character, giving them prominence by inserting them even prior to covering the Ark with the Kapores. This also explains the passage in the haftora that the Cherubim not only covered the Ark with their wings, but they also covered the poles. □

The Ark vs Idolatry

RABBI MOSHE BEN-CHAIM

Reader: It is written in Shemot 25:18: "Make two golden cherubim etc..." and verse 20 "The cherubim shall spread their wings upward, sheltering the cover with their wings, and the cherubim shall face one another. Their faces shall be toward the cover".

This verse is in contradiction with another passage Shemot 20:4: "You must not make for yourself any carved image, or picture of anything that is in heaven above, or on the earth below, or in the water below the earth" and also with Shemot 20:20: "Do not make [an image of anything that is] with Me, gods of silver or gods of gold you must not make for yourselves". Rabbis have received it by tradition that this verse is a command not to draw pictures of objects on high or of below; that is: "Ye shall not make anything resembling My servants that are before Me." (Shulchan Aruch 168:1). My question is: Why did G-d command to do something, what He forbade to do before? (in Shemot 20:20) What was the reason for making this exception? Wasn't there any danger of idolatry? The same question should be given regarding the golden snake that was made by Moshe Rabeinu in the desert.

Mesora: Your question is a good one, but one which Rambam already addressed in the Moreh Nevuchim.

But, there is no problem; "Idolatry" is only a reference to man's own devised modes of worship. An example would be when man decides on his own that he needs to make a physical form to use in relating to G-d. The creation and worship to such an object would constitute the prohibitions of idolatry. If however, G-d instructs us to make physical objects, this is no longer man's devised mode of worship, but it is G-d's wisdom. This is what sets apart idolatry from true worship of G-d. This is why the ark is not considered idolatry, whereas man's own creations would be. □

The Temple's Inauguration

RABBI MOSHE BEN-CHAIM

A close friend asked about the donations of the tribes' princes which we find in Numbers 7:19. Various vessels of specific weights, and species of animals in precise numbers are mentioned as part of the donation, the numerical value of each - Rashi offers interesting correlations: 930 Adam's years; 130 Adam's years when his first son was born; 620 Noah's years when his first son was born; 70 nations of the world which emanated from Noah; 1 Torah; 10 Ten Commandments; 613 mitzvos 1 Abraham 1 Isaac 1 Jacob; 1 The ram to atone for the sale of Joseph; 2 = Moses and Aaron; 3 sets of Jews: Israelites, Levites, Kohanim, also the 3 festivals; 2 sets of 5 commands per each tablet; and finally, 1 set of the Five Books of Moses

The question of course is, what the significance is of these correlatives? Additionally, what do these correlatives have to do with the inauguration of the tabernacle? If you take a moment before reading on, try to categorize the correlatives.

It is interesting that the correlatives fall into three categories: Populating Earth, Torah Transmitters, and Torah

It is then God's will that man's attention be drawn to three concepts upon the erection of the Temple which is the completion of the system of the Torah. All else was complete except for the building of the Tabernacle. Upon its completion, God willed that these three categories of importance be recognized as the primary goals of human life: 1) Man must populate the world 2) Man must follow/recognize competent transmitters of the law 3) Man must of course recognize Divine law.

The essentiality of man populating the world is self evident. The world was created by God for the sake of man to appreciate his Maker. All members of mankind therefore must admit to the good which they acquire as created beings enjoying wisdom, and bestow that very good on another human by creating new people who may also benefit. The act of procreation then is a testament by the father of his admission of the good which is: Being a created, thinking being.

The reason why only Adam and Noah are mentioned, although countless others contributed by fathering children, is due to the exclusive role both these men had, that is, commencers of population. Adam was the first father, and Noah began the world again in the post-Flood era. No other men laid claim to such a significant role of populating Earth than these two, without whom, the world would be barren.

Why are transmitters of the law essential? We can also ask why God gave the Torah to Moses in the manner He did, i.e., to pass it down man to man. Why did God not give the Torah to each man individually? Perhaps this would convey a false notion that man is inherently entitled to the Torah. This is not so. Man must toil in Torah to uncover the truths. The more he toils, the deeper the wisdom he penetrates....

"If you dig for it like silver, and search it out like a buried treasure, then you will understand the fear of G-d, and the knowledge of G-d will you find" (Proverbs, 2:4-5).

Perhaps then the very act of orchestrating a system of 'passing down' the Torah man to man, is to teach this very idea of how profound and deep the Torah is. But why is this idea so essential? Why must man know that Torah is so deep? It is because it reflects on its Creator, and teaches that God has infinite wisdom. Perhaps man's search for wisdom needs to be fueled by the idea that the Source of all Torah is infinitely wise. Only with this realization will man thrust himself into his learnings, guaranteed by this concept that his mining for wisdom will always yield precious gems of ideas.

The relevance of the 930 years lived by Adam rides on the coattails of this concept: Adam's length of days teaches us that the wealth of existing knowledge far exceeds man's lifetime. Were man to live a thousand years, he would still just be scratching the surface. By correlating Adam's years to the Tabernacle, we realize the amount of learning available far surpasses a man even of Adam's age. It adds to our appreciation of God's immense wisdom.

The Torah itself required being highlighted. Just as in the Tabernacle, the focus was the Ark which contained the broken tablets and the Torah, so also the inaugural gifts must embody this concept. In all major areas of Torah, we will find that the Torah and wisdom in general take the spotlight. (See this article: The Ark's Poles)

According to Rashi these essential and primary concepts must inhere in the inauguration. The inauguration - the final commencement of the Torah system - required a focus on these primary goals of creation. The structure of the Tabernacle was not an ends, but a means for achieving these goals, and the one method for demonstrating that it was a means was by permeating the inaugural services with these concepts.

One point remains unanswered: What is the role of the atonement for the sale of Joseph? □

The Awesome Power of Teshuva

RABBI REUVEN MANN

Many people have the notion that Jews only "care about their own." An honest study of our history shows that this is not the case. We are concerned about the welfare of all people. On Yom Kippur we read the Book of Jonah which tells of G-d's compassion for the wicked people of Ninveh. This story illustrates the awesome power of Teshuva. The most surprising element in the narrative is that the sinful people actually listened to Jonah's rebuke and repented. This is one of the most inspiring stories in Tanach. How often in history do we encounter the moral transformation of a corrupt people? Human stubbornness and the propensity for rationalization block the path of return. It is hard to believe but histories greatest villains were righteous in their own minds. They were fighting for a cause. Distorted idealism can be the worst evil. It gives rise to fanaticism and allows people to commit the worst atrocities with a clear conscience.

We face the problem today. Anti-Semitism has taken the form of primitive religious zealotry which promises paradise to those who die while destroying innocent Jews. Israel finds itself in an Aise Tzaar (time of suffering) and we must identify with the pain of our brethren. There are many things we can and must do. In addition there needs to be a fundamental change of attitude. Let us admit that we have been shaken to our very core. We had a sense of total confidence in the military and technological prowess of the Jewish state. We never believed that Israel could become so vulnerable. Statistics tell the story. Tourism has virtually come to a standstill. Many summer camps for Diaspora children had to be closed down.

The situation in Israel has great significance and demands a response. We must admit that we were wrong to believe that the security of Israel could be achieved by physical means, alone. The Torah teaches that the Jewish people are a special creation of G-d whose welfare depends on adherence to His commandments. The "blessings and curses" are clearly set forth in the Torah, reiterated by the prophets and confirmed by thousands of years of Jewish history. In recent years some "visionaries" allowed themselves to believe that a new era of enlightenment had come to the Middle East. The current violence against Israel has shattered all illusions. The "matzav" (situation) demands that we give up illusions and return to HaKadosh Baruch Hu (Holy One Blessed be He). At this time of year we must respond to the spiritual alarm that is sounded by the crisis. Let us draw inspiration from the people of Ninveh who did not harden their hearts to the words of the prophet. Let us instead seize the moment and return to Hashem with renewed determination to study Torah, obey His mitzvot and be united with Eretz Yisrael and Klal Yisrael. Then we can be confident that as in the case of Bilaam, Hashem will take the curse and turn it into a blessing because "Hashem your G-d loves you." □

Forbidden Speech: Loshon Hara II

RIVKA OLENICK

In The Book of Knowledge, the Rambam says: "There are five offenses of such a nature that he/she who commits them will always be addicted to them and will find it hard to break away from them. A person should be on his guard lest he become habituated to them, seeing that they are all exceedingly pernicious (deadly, wicked) habits. They are as follows: Tale bearing, Evil Speech, Choleric Temper (screaming), Evil Thoughts; and keeping company with a wicked person, for thus one learns his ways which become impressed on the heart". The Rambam also notes that although a person may repent from transgressing any of the above, this still does not prevent one from repeating them again and again. As the Rambam stated: "he/she who commits them will always be addicted to them."

The Rambam continues: "It is as if people are utterly blind with regard to this matter. This is the most serious

transgression that a person will frequently commit."

How "frequently" have we been "utterly blind" in the area of forbidden speech? Do we stop ourselves from speaking it, or speak out against it? Do we walk away from it? Do we find ourselves standing there smiling - and without saying a word - we still transgressed! Then we walk away without giving a second thought to what we've just participated in. Maybe we become part of the same conversation again with another person or group!

So the Rambam's statement above is absolutely accurate. Lest he become habituated to them. "He/she who commits them will always be addicted to them." We see that loshon hora is not only addictive but habitual. What is the difference? Habituated means something that becomes perpetual, frequent, as in frequent practice. Addicted means habitual. There really is no difference - that is the Rambam's point! For what is habitual and addictive will become pernicious. The Rambam descriptively tells us just how debilitating it is when one is addicted and becomes habituated to the practice of loshon hora. We can begin to see how our forbidden speech "destroys the world". "You shall not go as a peddler of

gossip among your people." (Vayikra 19:6)

Who is a peddler? A person who collects information about someone, and then looks to bring it to someone else who will listen. Like a peddler who sells pots looks for someone who cooks. "Did you hear what he/she said about you?" In every home, office, school, store, the street, in cars - did I leave any place out? I'm sure I did! We can begin to understand that this is what the Chofetz Chaim means when he says: "Loshon hora destroys the world. It destroyed the Beis HaMikdash, and can destroy our portion of the World to Come

How do we break away from the habit of speaking loshon hora? The Chofetz Chaim's sefer: A Daily Companion, is essential to read. It is for anyone interested in making a practical attempt at understanding the concepts and laws regarding "proper speech" and the pitfalls of "forbidden speech." But this attempt must be pursued and acquired - not just hoped for - with the intent of improving our conduct, and becoming more sensitive to others. This will help promote peace and unity in our lives. The Chofetz Chaim begins by saying: "One who pursues this course will receive the Heavenly assistance needed to succeed." □

The Temple

(continued from page 1)

The question is, what are all of these objects for?

There is one command with regard to the High Priest which I believe begins to shed some light. The High Priest, and certainly other priests can never enter into the Kodesh Kodashim, except for one day of the year-Yom Kippur. On this day, the Jews are forgiven for their transgressions. The High Priest only enters on this day into the Kodesh Kodashim and brings in the incense from the inner altar and places it in front of the Ark and causes it to cloud that room. He leaves and enters only one more time to remove the fire pan with its ashes. What objective is there of the command that none should enter into this room?

Interestingly, a peculiarity of this room is that God says that He causes a voice to emanate from this room from between the two cherubs which are above the ark. This implies that God is commanding us not to approach the point at which He causes this voice to project from. This I feel demonstrates the idea that one cannot approach God with one's limited understanding. As God had told Moses, "You cannot understand Me while alive". We can only "go so far". Therefore, abstaining from entering this room demonstrates that we cannot understand God in our present state.

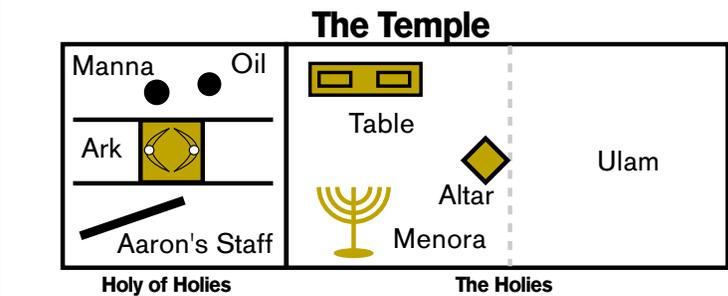
This explains the relevance of the vessels in this room.

The Ark contains the Divine Law which man could have never developed on his own, ideas which must be of Divine origin -thus belonging to God's realm. The oil was used to anoint the kings of Israel who were chosen only by God - man has no knowledge as to who will be king. When Samuel thought to select King Saul's successor, Samuel said of Eliav (David's brother), "This is God's anointed", whereby God replied to Samuel (Sam. I.XV, 1:7) "Look not on his countenance nor on the height of his stature because I have refused him". Thereby teaching Samuel that he had the flaw of assuming God's Knowledge, and therefore he had to be corrected.

The staff of Aaron was placed in this room as well. This was the staff which miraculously blossomed into almonds during the revolt of Korach. Korach was claiming the Priesthood for his family, assuming that Aaron (already chosen by God) had erred in acting as the priest. Thus, Korach was suggesting that he knew better than Divine Wisdom. This staff was also placed in this Holy of Holies, as it too testifies to God's supreme, unapproachable, and unknowable wisdom.

The Manna is also a demonstration of Divine Wisdom in that while it is a food, it does not produce any waste within the process of human digestion. Its appearance was miraculous, which the Jews wondered "what is it?"

All of the articles found in the Kodesh Kodashim share a common distinction - they epitomize that which man cannot approach. In Samuel I, 1:19, a passage occurs which concurs



with this idea: "And God had smote the men of Bet Shemesh because they had looked into the Ark of the Lord". The sin of these people was that they were acting upon the idea that they could see something (about God) by looking into the Ark. Their error was generated by a need to make God tangible somehow, which is the worst of philosophical crimes. We must - above all things - have the correct ideas concerning God. We must know that our proximity (in terms of perfection) to God is directly proportional to our understanding of His Laws, not to the proximity of physical creations. Rambam states that "proportional to our knowledge is our love of God."

Now that we have posited that the Kodesh Kodashim - the room behind the curtain - is to remind us of that which we cannot approach, we may suggest that the Kodesh deals with the concepts that are understandable to us regarding our relationship to God. We need not guess what those concepts are, for they are already familiar to us.

If we look at the prayers which we recite on the High Holidays, we see that there are 2 praises to God. 1) He is Omnipotent 2) He is Omniscient. That is, God is all-powerful and all-knowing. There are only these two categories, for all acts which God performs are understood by us to be a display of either His Power or His Knowledge. In order for us to be constantly aware of this, God commanded Moses to create the Table, upon which there was always to exist the twelve loaves of bread. Twelve signifying the twelve tribes, and bread to signify God's ability to provide sustenance. God also commanded Moses to build the inner altar. Upon the Altar the priests would offer the incense, a man-initiated relationship between us and God, demonstrating that God is aware of man's actions. The Table reminds us of God's Omnipotence, while the Altar reminds us of God's Omniscience.

What then is the purpose of the Candelabrum? If we look at the daily prayers, we begin every morning with "Blessed be the One Who spoke and the world came into being, blessed be He." In Daniel's blessing of God after God had granted his request to be informed of Nevuchadnetzar's dream and its interpretation, (Dan. II:19, 20) Daniel said "To the One Whose name is Eloka, blessed is He forever and ever". In both of these cases God is defined first, before any praise is made. This is to say that when one relates to God, it is essential that he is aware of Who he is directing his thoughts towards. Therefore, we first define to Whom we direct our praises each day. Daniel

did the same, and perhaps the Candelabrum serves this very purpose. Namely, to define (not God forbid to embody, which is impossible) that the God which we are relating to in the Tabernacle is the God Who created the world and rested on the seventh day. We are reminded of this by seeing the Candelabrum which is composed of seven branches, six branches emanating from the seventh, as there were six days of creation and a seventh of rest. The six branches pay homage to the seventh as their wicks must all be directed to the center seventh. The seventh, center branch displays the seventh day as the purpose of creation. Contrary to the popular view that creation was an ends in itself for the physical, Judaism claims that the purpose of the six days of creation was actually to result in a more real goal: A day of physical abstention, enabling man time for pondering the world of wisdom. Finally, the command to create the Candelabrum from one solid block of gold (not made through soldering segments) might serve to remind us of the concept of the Unity of this Creator.

Thus, we have three main concepts derived from the Kodesh:

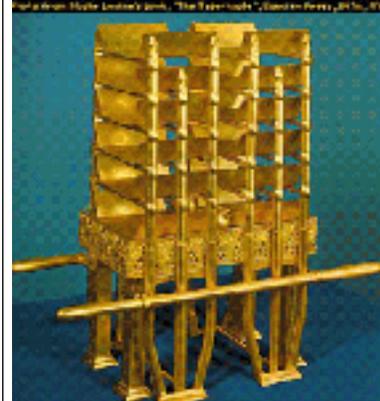
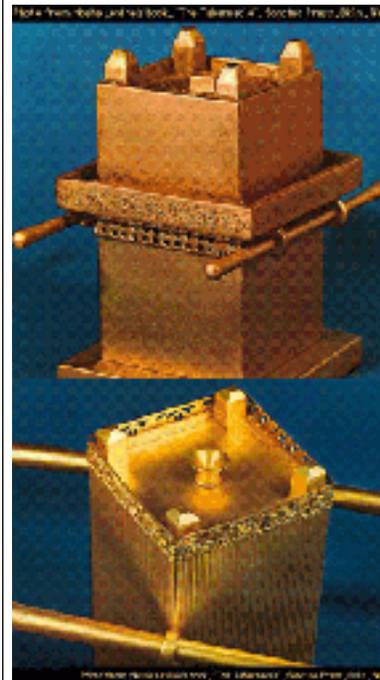
- 1) We must understand before all, that we are relating to the God who created the world in six days and rested on the seventh. We define Who we are praising. This is the Candelabrum, the Menora.
- 2) This God is Omnipotent-all powerful. This is represented by the Table.
- 3) This God is Omniscient - all knowing. This is represented by the Inner Altar. An altar only makes sense if the Recipient - God - is aware of human beings and their attempts to draw near to Him.

These are the categories of that which is knowable to man, and therefore, what we are reminded of by the objects in this room.

There is one question that one can ask: If we cannot approach God directly, how is it that the High Priest can enter the Kodesh Kodashim, the Holy of Holies, and why with incense? Why is he commanded to make it smoke-up the room (as the Torah states, Leviticus XVI:13) "that he die not", and why on Yom Kippur? The answer is that as we have said, the incense represents our approach to God. The High Priest's entrance into the Holy of Holies shows us that there is a "closer relation" to God on this day due to God's act of forgiving our sins. He therefore brings in that which represents our approach to him. That which represent our prayer (incense) is figuratively brought closer to God. The same

idea is represented with the levels of restriction upon man at Sinai: Moses alone drew to the top of the mountain, Joshua lower, and others still lower. The purpose of the priest smoking up the room is to remind him while he is there, that his understanding of God is still blocked, represented by the smoke. God knows that even a person who is on the highest level enters into the Holy of Holies, he is still in danger of forming erroneous

(continued on page 5, column 1)



(*Temple*", continued from page 4)

ideas about God. Smoking up the room physically demonstrates that there is a 'veil' between him and God,...even in this room. Similarly, when God revealed Himself to the Jews on Mount Sinai, the Torah tells us that there was "darkness, cloud, and thick darkness (fog)." This again was all done for the purpose of demonstrating that there is a constant vale between us and God.

With regard to why there is a specific arrangement to the vessels in the Kodesh, the following reason may be given: Both the Candelabrum and the Table are placed close to the dividing curtain to represent that these two concepts are closer to perfection (closer to the Holy of Holies) than is the altar. The altar, being man's approach, is not always perfect, and is thus removed further from the Paroches than are the Table which represents God's Power and the Candelabrum which defines which God** we are relating to. These two being undoubtedly perfect in that they emanate from God.

In summary, the Tabernacle is a structure which represents our limited understanding of God, but also informs us which ideas we can form. It is a vehicle for us to be aware of our constant level of relationship to God on the different days of the year, as we see differences in the sacrifices on different days. And conversely, when we witness the absence of the Tabernacle, we are made aware of a severed relationship.

Addendum:

The priest wore 8 special garments as part of his dress. Two of which point to interesting ideas: The gold headplate, the "Tzitzit", had "Holy to God" inscribed upon it. He also wore a breastplate which had 12 stones, corresponding to the 12 tribes. I believe these are to relate two aspects of a person living on the highest level: The headplate denotes that one's thoughts, his intellect, should be used primarily for understanding God. This is why it is placed on the head, the figurative location of the soul. The breastplate is placed upon the heart, demonstrating that one's heart, the seat of the emotions, should be devoted to his brethren, the 12 tribes. Thus, both aspects of man, his intellect and his emotions are subjugated to the correct areas. Perhaps our tefilin demonstrate the same.

Footnotes: "Which God" does not imply there are others. It is meant to clarify that we admit to the God of creation, and not a fantasy which is not supported by reality. A fantasy god is meant by implication. □

False Notions: "Destiny"

RABBI MOSHE BEN-CHAIM

Reader: Does each one of us have a Destiny, a goal that was preordained by

the Creator for a purpose unknown to us? Is each hair on our body counted? Is each organ counted for its function or dysfunction? When we look within ourselves and toward the Universe, we observe how little we are and that we have "control" over only a few elements around us, like survival...maybe.

If there is a Destiny, how is it explained in the Torah.

If there is no preordained Destiny, or if it changes according to our actions, inaction or involuntary events, what is your scholarly and personal opinion in this matter?

Mesora: We have free will. Please read my article of this title: Free Will

The term "destiny" indicates that we are not involved in our true purpose, which requires the use of free will. A person cannot abandon his responsibility. This term "destiny" is also often romanticized - as if to be "swept away" in life. This idea is false and silly and has nothing to do with Torah.

To many, the word "destiny" seems bigger than life itself,...all so divine and pure, a thing outside ourselves over which we have no control. Yet, all these connotations are false, and are not the Torah's view, which is the only absolute and truly objective view of what is real. To claim destiny, is to claim no responsibility for our actions, and this understanding is completely against God's system of reward and punishment. Destiny also denies the entire concept of Torah: The Torah teaches "one system for all mankind" - destiny claims each person has a unique path - contrary to Torah.

God does promise a destiny to those who live righteously and those who live poorly. But that "destiny" does not mean a binding on our actions. It refers to the next world, and does not affect our free will.

But to claim there is a destiny for each member of mankind here on Earth, is to claim that our free will which is a self evident truth,...is useless. Suggesting this view increases one's error, as we claim that God is also imperfect by giving man the apparatus of an independent will, but not allowing his utilization of it. God would then have labored in vain. This idea is alien to all that is true and rational. God is perfect, and only creates that which has need to be created, that which will realize its purpose.

The Torah leads us to the conclusion that the blind dreamers' safety net of "destiny" is a fallacy best left for Hollywood. □

The Vessels' Coverings

□

RABBI MOSHE BEN-CHAIM

Regarding the Tabernacle's vessels, we find at the end of Parshas Bamidbar, various coverings used when traveling. What is the significance of these different coverings, their colors, and the order of layering in which these coverings were commanded?

We can commence by deducing for ourselves that these coverings did not all act as "coverings". There are two reasons I say this: 1) Only one covering is needed to actually achieve the quality of the object now being covered. Additional layers do not add to the state of being 'covered'. Once something is covered, it remains so until that first layer is removed. 2) The second reason is that the word "begeg" is used in connection with the blue wool, not "kisooy", (cover) as is used with the animal skins.

So the questions which emerge are: 1) What is the purpose of having both, blue sheets and animal skins covering the vessels of the Tabernacle when traveling? 2) Why was the order of layers for the Ark; animal skin covered with a blue sheet, whereas the remaining vessels were the opposite i.e., the blue sheet was placed over the vessel first, followed by the animal skin above? 3) If one layer achieves "cover", what is the purpose of a second layer?

My suggestion is as follows, the mefarshim state that the animal skins served to protect the vessels from the elements. But protection is only one reason to cover an object. Another reason is to hide something from visibility. Perhaps, when not together forming the halachik structure of the Tabernacle, the vessels were not functioning in their true purpose. Meaning, the vessels served to compliment the essence of the Tabernacle, I mean the Ark. As I wrote in the article posted here, "The Temple and Tabernacle", the vessels (aside from the Ark) served to teach man those ideas which are within man's grasp. But this is only taught as these vessels are placed outside the Holy of Holies. It is precisely from this positioning that we derive this idea. The restriction from entering the Holy of Holies where the Ark rested, teaches man that he cannot approach complete understanding of G-d in this life. Therefore man's abstention

from entering this room demonstrates his inability to approach G-d completely. The other room, the Holies, where the Menora, Table and Altar are found, represent areas of knowledge which are available to man. Therefore, when the vessels are not in the Tabernacle, and not in proximity to the Holy of Holies, this derivation is not apparent, and perhaps even other man made ideas might be projected onto these golden vessels if seen. Therefore, an additional blue sheet is placed on these vessels, not for protection against the elements, but as an act of "concealment". Teaching that these vessels have no intrinsic value unless when contributing to the structure of the Tabernacle. This is why, (although already protected from the elements via the animal skins) we find the command to cover them with blue sheets. This extra layer is therefore not acting as a protection, but as a veil.

The Ramban says that the blue sheets are meant to remind one of the "essence of the heavens for purity". So what is to be understood by "heavens"? Heavens are euphemistically used to connote the metaphysical or spiritual realm, also the area of knowledge. Although the heavens are no less physical than the Earth, being out of man's reach, and lofty in estimation, G-d uses the heaven's aura as a metaphor for the spiritual world. So the blue of the sheets is to signify that the Ark and the other vessels partake of leading man towards the true world of knowledge. These are the goals of the vessels. But since the other vessels do not achieve this goal when not assembled in the Tabernacle, even this "spiritual" aspect is hidden, and therefore under the animal skins. The Ark however derives no compliment from the other vessels, and therefore the blue sheet is exposed, teaching that its purpose never diminishes, even when the structure is not in existence.

This concept was discussed in the article "The Ark's Poles".

Question from reader: It is a bit confusing...You say the vessels are covered first with the blue sheets and then the skins for protection. The blue heets can't be meant for a veil if they themselves can't be seen through the skins...unless there is some timeframe that the skins are not put on but only the sheets are on. A veil is usually the only thing between eyes and the object being hidden...so what is the explanation?

Mesora: You are right, the blue sheets cannot be 'functioning' as a veil, but they can have the 'purpose' of a veil in concept, to teach that the vessels "should" be covered. □