

THE FOCUS OF THE TEMPLE WAS THE **ARK** THAT
HOUSED THE **TORAH** - TEACHING THEREBY THAT
ONLY **RATIONAL** ACTIONS MUST BE FOLLOWED.

Jews following irrational actions violate Torah and must not be endorsed, but rebuked.

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Parshas Terumah

RABBI BERNARD FOX

"And they should create for me a sanctuary and I will dwell among them." (Shemot 25:8)

In this pasuk Hashem instructs Moshe to command Bnai Yisrael to construct the Mishcan. Hashem tells Bnai Yisrael that through this Mishcan, He will dwell among the people. This passage cannot be understood literally. In order to understand the difficulty presented by a literal interpretation of the pasuk, an introduction is needed. Maimonides, in his commentary on the Mishne
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The Temple

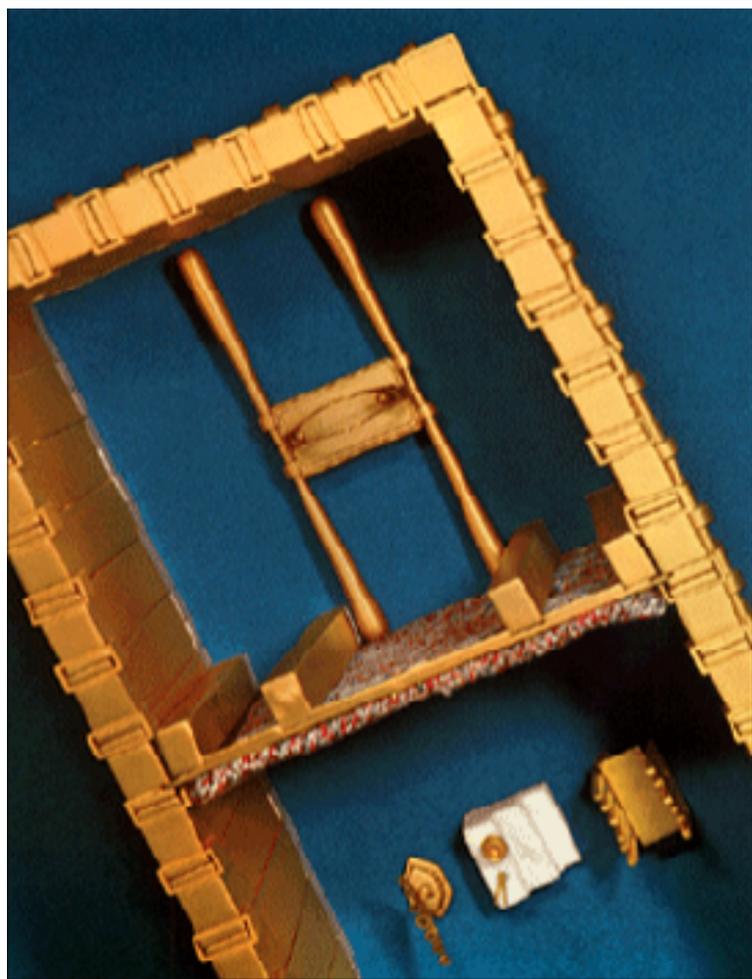
RABBI MOSHE BEN-CHAIM

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,



Overhead view of the Holy of Holies housing the Ark (top of image) separated from the Holies by the Paroches (dividing curtain) displaying the Menora on the left of the white stairs and the Table of Showbread on the right. (Images: Moshe Levine)

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.

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
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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?"

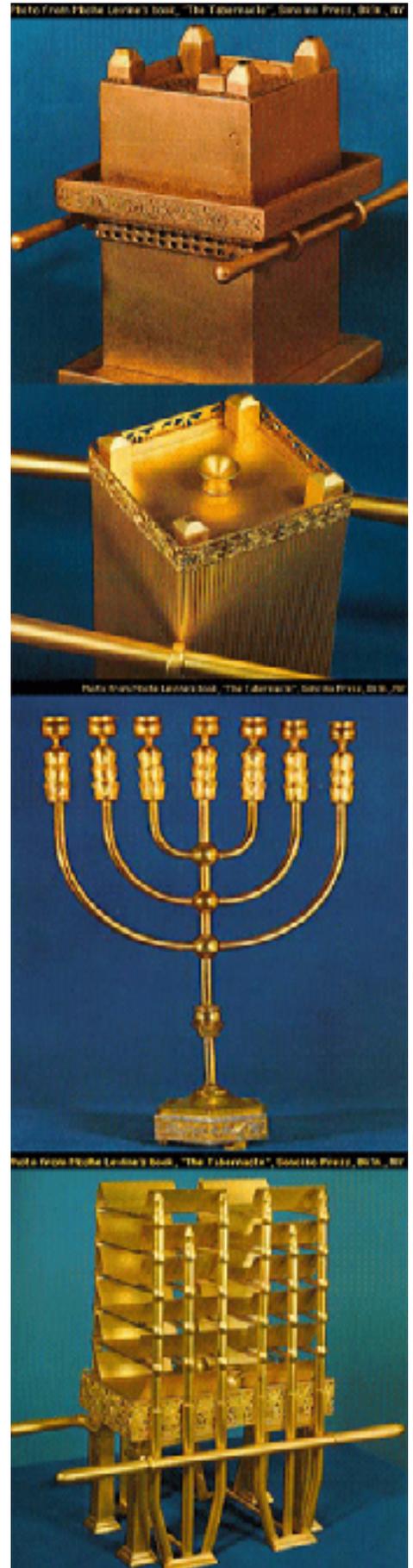
All of the articles found in the Kodesh Kodashim share a common distinction - they epitomize that which man cannot approach. In Samuel I, 1:19, a passage occurs which concurs with this idea: "And God had smote the men of Bet Shemesh because they had looked into the Ark of the Lord". The sin of these 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 Candleabrum? 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)

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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 Candleabrum 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 Candleabrum 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 Candleabrum 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 Candleabrum, 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 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.

In regards to why there is a specific arrangement to the vessels in the Kodesh, the following reason may be given: Both the Candleabrum 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 Candleabrum 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 "Tzits", 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. □

**"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.

The Arks' 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. □

Parshas Terumah

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enumerates the basic foundations of the Torah. The third of these basic principles is that the Almighty is not, in any sense, material. Maimonides discusses this principle in further detail in his Mishne Torah. He again explains that the Almighty is not material. He adds that it is also inappropriate to attribute to Hashem any of the characteristics associated with physical bodies. For example, Hashem does not have a front or back. One cannot ascribe physical actions to the Almighty. Also, one cannot ascribe a place to Hashem. This principle, identified by Maimonides, is a logical extension of the proposition that Hashem is a unity. The Torah clearly states that "Hashem is one". This statement tells us that there is only one G-d. However, our Sages understand the passage to also mean that the Almighty is a perfect unity. This means that He has no parts or aspects. He is not subject to division. He is an absolute representation of "oneness".

The principle of Hashem's unity precludes attribution of a material existence to Him. Any material entity has parts or aspects. It has a front and back or dimensions. These characteristics contradict the concept of absolute unity. Furthermore the Torah clearly states that Hashem is not material. This principle is communicated in Moshe's review of the event of Revelation. He reminds the nation that they had experienced Revelation at Sinai. In this experience the Almighty was not represented by any material image. We can now understand the difficulty presented by our passage.

If our passage is interpreted literally, it contradicts this principle. Literally understood, our passage attributes location to the Almighty. The passage states that Hashem will dwell among Bnai Yisrael! This is impossible. Hashem is not material. Therefore, it is not correct to say He dwells in any place. Unkelus is sensitive to this anthropomorphism.

In his translation of our passage, he alters the problematic phrase. In his rendering the phrase reads, "and I will cause the Divine presence to dwell among them". Unkelus' intention is to remove any attribution of place to the Almighty. According to Unkelus, the passage's refers to Hashem's Divine presence or influence. In other words, the passage describes a providential relationship. The Almighty will exercise His providence over the Mishkan and the people.

Rav Yosef Albo, in his Sefer Halkkrim, uses the same approach to explain various anthropomorphic expressions found in the Torah. A few examples will illustrate this approach. Hashem tells us, in reference to the Temple, "Mine eyes and Mine heart shall be there perpetually". Hashem does not have eyes or a heart. The intent of the passage is to communicate that a special providential influence exists over the Mikdash. The Torah states that at Revelation, "the appearance of the glory of the Lord was like a devouring fire on the top of the mountain". This passage does not intend to communicate that Hashem was present at Revelation. This would attribute a place to the Almighty. Instead, the passage is stating that the influence of the Almighty was evidenced through a physical manifestation. In this case, the manifestation was the conflagration that appeared at the top of Sinai. It should be noted that the pasuk refers to the "glory" of the Almighty. This supports this interpretation. The Almighty was not present. However, His "glory" or influence was indicated by the fire.

One anthropomorphic expression has occasioned considerable discussion among the Sages. One of the names used for the Almighty is HaMakom – the Place. This is popularly understood to mean that the Divine presence extends everywhere. However, our Sages provide a different explanation of the term. They explain that the term means that Hashem is the makom – the place – of the universe. This explanation is very difficult to understand. How can the Sages refer to Hashem as the place of the universe? Hashem is not material. He

is not a place! Rav Yitzchak Arama offers a novel interpretation of the Sages' comments. He explains that the term place can be understood as the base upon which something rests or is supported. As an example, he cites the second mishne of Tractate Avot. The mishne explains that the world stands on three pillars – Torah study, Divine service and acts of kindness. The intent of the mishne is that these three activities are essential to the existence of the world. The mishne expresses this idea by representing the world as standing on these activities. In other words, standing in a place – upon the pillars of Torah study, Divine service and acts of kindness – represents dependency.

Rav Arama explains that the name HaMakom communicates the universe's dependency upon the Almighty. He is the "place" upon which the universe stands. This means the universe only exists as a result of His continuing will. His will supports the universe's existence. Without His will, the universe would cease to exist. □

Does Poverty Invalidate Torah?

RABBI MOSHE BEN-CHAIM

Reader: Why is it that I see people who keep the Torah are suffering so much financially? This tells me that it is of no use to be observant.

Mesora: You err by thinking that all people derive "success" from financial excess. You also err in thinking that troubles are negatives.

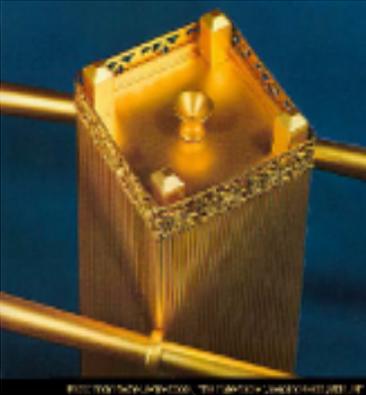
Let me explain: A perfected individual will not derive happiness from wealth as an ends. In fact, "increase of possessions increases anxiety" (Chapters of the Fathers, 2:7). The perfected person derives his enjoyment from the pursuit of wisdom - uncovering more of God's knowledge each day. Any obstacle to this goal is truly a pain to him. He cares little for possessions, fame, and large bank accounts. These material and ego satisfactions fail to satisfy man's true nature - his intellect. They

deter man from satisfying his curiosities concerning the world, justice, and knowledge of God and His Torah. Provided he is not starving or without shelter, the perfected individual pays minimal attention to the physical. He satisfies himself with life's necessities, "bread and salt he eats", and continues in his studies. He does not derive enjoyment from physical diminution, but his lack is really a result from the magnetic pull that wisdom has on his personality. He is in such a happy state when he uncovers more truths, that his hunger pains do not outweigh his interest in learning more.

This is an important distinction. Monks and the like minimize physical pleasures as an ends. Their asceticism is a focal point of their lives. They mistakenly think that such physical diminution is a perfection in itself. But without wisdom there cannot be perfection, so they miss the mark. But the truly wise and perfected individual actually has no "goal" of detracting from his physical needs. Rather, he is so attracted to, and submerged in the world of ideas, that he only pays attention to his bare necessities, without which he could not continue to study God's world. His minimalistic physical possession are not a ends, but a result of his distraction caused by wisdom's light. In fact the Torah teaches, "Torah comes from the poor." This does not mean that poor people are wiser. It means as we have said, that one involved in Torah is so preoccupied with its marvels, that he spends less time amassing wealth. But we should note that at times, the Torah does demand that man fasts. This is in order that 1) man recognize his reliance on God for his sustenance, and 2) so man may reduce his ego and reflect on his faults. But this is not a way of life, to be fasting all the time. Man must be in a state of happiness - this is how he can function best to enjoy God's Torah. In contrast, others feel guilty when they live an enjoyable existence. This is not God's goal. All creation points towards a state of man which is enjoyable.

Regarding troubles, the righteous are actually given more troubles than others. Why? Because it is through such hardship that they are forced to reflect on their natures, searching for

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The inner altar used for incense offerings

Sacrifice

RABBI MOSHE BEN-CHAIM



The outer altar used for animal offerings

There is a famous argument between Ramban and Maimonides on the purpose of sacrifice. Maimonides writes in his great work the Guide for the Perplexed, Book III, Chap. 46, that the purpose of the command for sacrifice is to eradicate false notions that certain species of animals were deities. By sacrificing to God the heathens' worshiped species, we counter the problem, as Maimonides writes:

"...In order to eradicate these false principles, the law commands us to offer sacrifices only of these three kinds: 'Ye shall bring your offering of cattle, of the herd and of the flock' (Lev. 1:2). Thus the very act which considered by the heathen as the greatest crime, is the means of approaching God, and obtaining His pardon for our sins. In this manner, evil principles, the diseases of the human soul, are cured by other principles which are diametrically opposite."

Ramban argues vehemently on Maimonides in the beginning of his commentary in the book of Leviticus (Lev. 1:9). There, Ramban lodges three salient arguments:

1) How can sacrifice be a negative, i.e., an agent countering idolatry, when it is described as a positive, "a pleasant fragrance".

2) We see that sacrifice existed in the days of Adam's son Able, and in Noah's days when idolatry of this kind did not yet exist. Therefore Maimonides cannot be correct to suggest that sacrifice is to function to remove idolatrous notions.

3) Sacrifice is really viewed as an approach to God, as shown by Bilaam's offerings, not a neutralizing procedure.

These questions certainly require responses.

But I wondered, is Ramban really suggesting that Maimonides was ignorant of the stories in every Torah, that of Able, and Noah and Bilaam? This possibility is absurd. So what exactly is Ramban saying when quoting the facts that these early individuals offered sacrifice?

We are forced to say that Maimonides knew very well that sacrifice existed prior to the command at Sinai.

Perhaps then, Maimonides' reasoning is that the Sinai command of sacrifice is that alone to which he refers which is to counter idolatry. But cases prior to the Sinai command of sacrifice were not for the eradication of idolatry.

But again, this answer is far too basic that someone like a Ramban would not consider.

I am of the opinion that Ramban considered this answer, and yet, still lodged his arguments against Maimonides.

Perhaps Ramban held that even with the sacrificial command at Sinai, sacrifice can not be altered into that which is removed from its original form.

This is what I believe to be the pivotal point of the argument between Ramban and Maimonides.

Ramban held that although a new command and Torah system was given, nonetheless, if sacrifice had

an inceptional structure, i.e., to approach God, it cannot deviate from this form. It may have incorporated additional purposes at Sinai, but it cannot be exclusively to eradicate idolatry as Maimonides holds. There is sound reasoning as to why Ramban takes this approach. When something comes into existence, its form at that moment is integral to its definition. Water was created in a moist state, and as such, it is inherently moist. Water without moisture is not water. Once dust was created, it remains eternally inherently dry. So also, sacrifice at Able's and Noah's time emerged as man's own attempt to approach God. Since this is the very inception of the institution of sacrifice, sacrifice by nature is an approach to God, and cannot be viewed as lacking this property. Sacrifice without approach to God is no longer sacrifice according to Ramban. Based on this reasoning, Ramban held that sacrifice could not be defined solely to eradicate idolatry. It must - by definition - include the integral property of an approach to God.

Maimonides however was of the opinion that although sacrifice came into existence in this form, as Ramban says, nonetheless, Sinai has the ability to redefine its structure from the ground up, and completely undermine its original nature.

This however deals only with Ramban's second argument, dealing with the structure of sacrifice. I believe his first argument to be dealing with the

goal of sacrifice. There, Ramban is of the opinion that just as the structure cannot deviate, so also the goal of approaching God must be an inherent property of sacrifice. It is for this reason that Ramban gives a few arguments, as each argument addresses an additional point of contention Ramban had with Maimonides' view.

According to Maimonides, Sinai had the ability to take an institution and completely redefine it. The new reality of "national commandments" given at Sinai are so overwhelmingly objective in their truth, so real as they emanate from God as part of His Will, that commandments go so far as to define what truth is. The Sinai Commandments redefined reality for the Jew. Sacrifice according to Maimonides for all halachik intents and purposes didn't exist prior to Sinai. Historically it did, but now as the Jews had a newly defined laws governing each part of their daily lives, previously known activities were only similar in name, and nothing else. Sacrifice prior and subsequent to Sinai were as divergent in nature as are color and weight.

This was clear to Maimonides, and he therefore had no qualms about explaining sacrifice as if it never existed before for other purposes.

Ramban was of the opinion that although Sinai redefines our actions, it only adds the nature of 'command' to a preexisting institution of sacrifice, but it does not redefine its original nature. □

Does Poverty Invalidate Torah?

RABBI MOSHE BEN-CHAIM

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a just reason for God's afflictions. This reflection will result in their detection of some flaw, whereby they can only now overcome, and perfect themselves and their ideas. The reason given by the Torah for the barren state of all the matriarchs is, "God loves the prayers of the righteous." This does not mean God needs man's prayers. This is obviously impossible. God made man, and God is perfect: The Creator cannot benefit from His creation, and the Creator is already complete without man. So my brother, don't feel that the righteous have it as bad as you think. While you pity them their troubles, they may very well be rejoicing in their free time to study, and in their punishments from God, as such trials bring out their perfection, and a more joyous life.

It is hard for an American or one living with affluence to feel satisfied with the life displayed by a Torah scholar. Many say, "who wants such a life?" But until one takes the time to search the ideas of the Torah for himself, he will remain ignorant of God's greatest gift to mankind. I personally would not want to be that man who forfeits his greatest enjoyment, all because he allows the ignorant masses to provide an argument for amassing physical wealth. It takes time to master Talmud and Torah study, but you will be thankful in the deepest way that you gave it a chance. God will certainly assist all those who wish to live the life He outlined for us.

Don't make the other mistake of judging the lives of the righteous by a momentary snapshot. For what they suffer through now, can produce a greater existence later. An event does not have significance in the framework of the moment, but in context of the entire lifespan of a person. Jacob's life was threatened by his twin Esav. He fled and ended

up creating a nation of twelve tribes. Channah suffered a barren existence for many years, only to use such a deprivation to contemplate her nature and perfect herself. She was eventually granted a child, who through her perfection, became the great prophet Samuel. □

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.

Let me first show the main point why 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.

Rambam explains, "the belief in the existence of angels is connected with the belief in the existence of G-d; and the belief in G-d and angels leads to the belief in prophecy and in the truth of the law. In order to firmly establish this creed, G-d commanded [the Israelites] to make over the ark the form of two angels. The belief in the existence of angels is thus inculcated into the minds of the people, and this belief is in importance next to the belief in G-d's Existence; it leads us to believe in prophecy and the law, and opposes idolatry. If there had been only one cherub, the people would have been misled and would have mistaken it for G-d's image, which was to be worshiped in the fashion of the heathen; or they might have assumed that the angel [represented by the figure] was also a deity and would thus have adopted a dualism. By making two cherubim and distinctly declaring that "the Lord is our G-d, the Lord is One", Moses clearly proclaimed the theory of the existence of a number of angels; he left no room for the error of considering those figures as deities, since [he declared that] G-d is One, and that He is the Creator of the angels, who are more than one". ("Guide for the Perplexed", Book III, Chap XLV. - Dover Pub. paperback edition, pp 356)

Reader: Thank you very much for researching an answer for me. But now we go back to our original point. It seems that the cherubs are true angelic forms.

Mesora: 'Truely angelic' would be proper, but not as you put it, "truly angelic forms". Angels do not have forms, as angels are non-physical forces, or simply put, laws. The fact that cherubs have wings is

to indicate perhaps "speed" of fulfilling a mission set into play by G-d. Wings imply speed of motion, or of efficiency in accomplishing a mission.

Reader: The quote you have cited blatantly states "to make over the ark the form of two angels." It seems Judaism believes that angels resemble cherubs. I would appreciate your comments on that.

Mesora: Cherubs and angels share common ideas. This is possibly why the term is interchangeable. But we do not say that cherubim "are in fact angels". They are "forms", necessary objects for man's comprehension that G-d relates to man, but it is not G-d Himself who relates to man physically. G-d Himself only relates to man via prophecy. G-d is not physical, and therefore cannot occupy space on Earth. □

The Columbia and Psalm 115

RABBI MOSHE BEN-CHAIM

Reader: Does Psalm 115 ("the heavens are God's") infer that we should not interfere with the heavens and that there is no life outside our earth? I ask this in view of what happened to Columbia.

Mesora: You mention two questions, 1) whether man may interfere, and 2) if there is life outside earth. I see no indication from this Psalm about life outside earth.

This Psalm states that man has been given domain over the earth and the heavens remain God's domain. Perhaps this teaches that the heavens are so great and vast, that man can never control them, and thus, the heavens serve the exclusive role of impressing man with God's wisdom through creation. They are an object of study, not of usage.

I also see no relevance to the shuttle explosion. But I would not understand God's statement that "the heavens are God's" as meaning we cannot attempt to understand and make use of the heavens. □

APPRAISE THYSELF!

RIVKA OLENICK

The best and most effective way to ensure spiritual growth is honest self-appraisal. It is very easy to avoid this task, especially when we can use the excuse that life now is so uncertain so "why bother." To the contrary, this is exactly why one should be involved in on going self-appraisal. The important questions a person should ask oneself is: Do I know myself? Am I living my life according to the purpose I was created for? These are the most essential questions and very often never asked. If each Jewish person understood themselves, understood that they were created for a specific purpose they would have a great sense of emotional freedom. No one would be an emotional slave, so to speak.

Most people suffer from a continuous need for approval from others. This need for approval could be diminished if one understood that this need for approval is our biggest enemy. Very few people escape this, but only because a person does not make the effort to appraise oneself. We put great effort in pursuing most everything else in life i.e. career, money, etc. but how much effort does a person invest in the self? Once a person finds the courage to do this, one begins to see their flaws, and they can make an honest attempt to change.

Many people are locked into patterns and do not believe they can change. "This is who I am!" Other people's flaws bother them terribly but their own they easily

rationalize. Even one small change in thinking can evolve into a large successful breakthrough that can continue. A person's intense desire for material gain would begin to diminish if one understood that endless material gain is really based on the need of approval from others. The more one has the more one becomes the envy of those around him. Except that this is all a trap that people spend a lifetime in. This person is truly a slave, because he lives entirely for other's approval.

The appropriate investment in the self and in God is not being made and unfortunately even missed altogether. So what is the point of life? What does the person really gain in life? In truth, the person that has much less is really more satisfied. If one honestly accepts their lot in life then he/she can really see the good in their life. A person can see that they have what they need to sustain oneself and family. One has faith and trust that God will continue to provide since God has provided for one's needs so far.

In having less a person should truly rejoice because God has given him/her the easier path - "Marbeh nichasim, marbeh daageh", "increase in possession increases anxiety." (Ethics of the Fathers). The path that provides greater peace of mind, one does not lose sleep because of overwhelming responsibility and the need to follow the crowd in false security.

Understanding this honestly is really a blessing. Think about it, how much do you really need above your basic needs? Of course, each person has to recognize this truth instead of denying it. A person has to really see it, one should force oneself to see it, instead of complaining that they are deprived, that others have so much more and why has God done this to me?

Unfortunately, we are steeped in a culture that is based on endless acquisition and pleasure. However, even this is not an excuse because if one thinks into this honestly, one realizes that the error one made is in not placing their security in God, but placing one's security in "things." The more things a person has, the more approval they will get from others and the more approval they will continue to need from others. This is really a "false" sense of security yet it can easily become a lifelong vicious cycle. This is what happens if a person misuses one's true gift of freedom. The true gift of freedom was given to each of us as the real purpose of our life. The gift is to serve the Creator, not man and not one's ego. After all, it is God Who created the world and the human being; so doesn't it make sense that God would know better how the human being should live? Hasn't God provide us with a way in which to live?

Every person should make the decision to work hard on appraising themselves in order to free themselves so that they can serve

God. "Everything is in the hands of God, except for the fear of God." (Talmud in Berachos, 33b). God allowed you to live up until this point in time and so one's future lies in God's hands and also in our own. How we decide to live our life from this point on is up to us. Meaning, that we can participate in remolding our future by using our free will and choosing a way of life that brings the greatest advantage and freedom. The freedom to serve God is the ultimate freedom. It requires no approval from others. Those who claim they can tell your future by reading your palm or your handwriting or by any other way is total nonsense. There is the path of truth and there is the path of fantasy. Do you want to live in reality, and discover the great truths that lie in God's universe or do you want to continue to live in your own little, safe fantasy world?

"Close each day with a self-examination to see if you've gone forward or backward. Don't excuse yourself in anything and tell yourself that tomorrow you will make a greater effort. Let everyone see one's own reflection in the Torah and learn from it what one should have been and how one should have acted, with one's capacities and one's resources and powers, in this and that environment, in this and that time and place."

(Samson Raphael Hirsch, from Horeb). □