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RABBI JONATHAN TAWIL

**DIRECTOR
TAL**



EIGHTEEN!

The Mishkan was an amazing edifice. It commanded awe, and Hashem's presence dwelled amongst our nation.

Alas today we are without the Mishkan and without the Bet Hamikdash. Nevertheless our Sages have taught us that there are many hints throughout our Parasha as to how we can experience the Mishkan and its deeper effect, even in our generation.

Our Parasha deals with the final building of the Mishkan. After each item of the Mishkan was constructed the Torah repeatedly states that it was done "as G-d commanded Moshe".

The Ba'al HaTurim (40:33) explains that this was a reward for Moshe. When the Jewish people had sinned at the Golden Calf, Moshe pleaded with Hashem for forgiveness. He went as far as to say to Hashem that if you do not wish to forgive them, then "please erase me from your book". Out of reward for Moshe's selflessness and heroic defence of our nation, Hashem in this week's Parasha constantly repeats Moshe's name.

The Ba'al HaTurim notes further that the phrase "as G-d commanded Moshe" appears eighteen times in this portion, corresponding to the eighteen blessings of the weekday Amidah. (The phrase, "as G-d commanded,

so they did" appears once and corresponds to the additional nineteenth blessing against heretics.)

How are these three ideas - Moshe's pleading, the Amidah, and the construction of the Mishkan - related?

The Gemara Berachot (28b) asks - what do the eighteen blessings of the Amidah correspond to? Several answers are given: Rabbi Hillel son of Rabbi Shmuel says they correspond to the eighteen times G-d's name is mentioned in Havu LaHashem B'nei Eilim (Tehilim 29). Rav Yosef says that they are in place of the eighteen times G-d's name is mentioned in the Shema and Rav Tanchum says in the name of Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi that they correspond to the eighteen vertebrae in the spine.

The Shema portrays the basis of our faith in One G-d.

Mizmor Havu LaHashem, portrays G-d's Might.

Both mention Hashem's Name 18 times, and we can understand why our Sages would wish us to replicate that in the 18 Berachot of the Amidah.

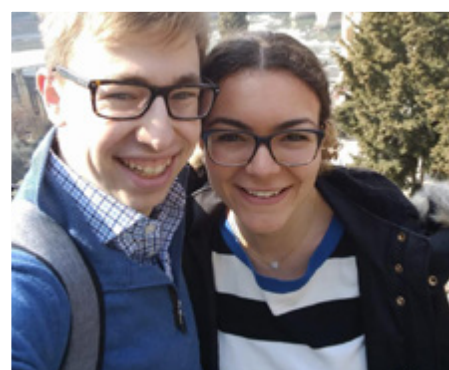
(We find a similar idea from the Chidushai HaRim who states that there were 100 Adanim used as the foundation blocks of the Mishkan. He states that these hint to the 100 Berachot that a person should say every day. Just like the Adanim were the foundation of the Mishkan, so too our Brachot are the foundation of Kedushat Yisrael.

Aden is from the Lashon of Adnut or Master, which is the way we refer to Hashem's name. Our one hundred daily Brachot serve as a reminder that Hashem is our Master. That they serve as the foundation of the Mishkan that each Jew builds for Hashem's Shechina in his heart.) ►

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DVAR TORAH

Eighteen!

RABBI JONATHAN TAWIL

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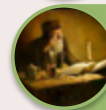


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But what is the connection between the Amidah and the spine?

The Gemara hints at the answer to this with another statement of Rav Tanchum in the name of Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi; one should bow during the Amidah to the extent that the vertebrae stick out. Rav Tanchum explains that the essence of the Amidah is subjugation to G-d's will, evidenced through bowing.

This self-nullification in the presence of G-d is what Moshe did on Har Sinai. After the sin of the Calf, Moshe was prepared to sacrifice himself in order to save the nation. The Rashbam (32:32) explains that "erase me from Your book" refers to the book of life. Moshe was prepared to give up his role in this world and the next in order to save the nation. This is the ultimate in subjugation and humility. Moshe felt that he did not deserve any merit in his own right, but that his only value was as the leader of the people. Therefore if they were to be wiped out, he would forfeit his share of both worlds.

The construction of the Mishkan involved months of skilled and difficult work. Though everyone brought

donations for the Mishkan, only a few people had the requisite skills to fashion the materials according to the Divine blueprints. Eventually, when Moshe assembled everything and the nation saw the beauty of the structure, with its gold silver and precious gems along with colourful woven tapestries, it would have been natural for those involved in the construction to take a certain satisfaction and pride in their work.

However, this would have negated everything that the Mishkan represented. How can a human being use their body, which is a gift from G-d, to fashion the materials which were created by G-d, according to a plan given by G-d - take any personal pride in their accomplishments?

This is similar to the statement in Pirkei Avot (2: 9), "If you have learnt much Torah, do not claim credit for yourself, since you were created for this very purpose".

The Hebrew word for command - Tsavot, is similar to the word Tsevet - connected, for through the commandments we connect to Hashem.

The Torah repeats the phrase, "as G-d commanded Moshe" eighteen times, to show that the Mishkan was constructed with the same selflessness which Moshe embodied. The only purpose was to fulfil the will of G-d.

That intention, together with the enthusiasm to fulfil Hashem's Will, enabled the Shechina to dwell amongst our people.

Similarly, in prayer, we show our faith in Hashem (similar to Shema), our belief in His Might (similar to Mizmor Havu) and our commitment to serving Him, selflessly as Moshe did.

Today we might not have the Mishkan or Bet Hamikdash, but Hashem has promised us Bechol Makom - in any place that we mention His Name, He will come and bless us. When we pray with the right intention, in the right manner, the Shechina will dwell with us. ■ **Shabbat Shalom**

RABBI ALEX CHAPPER - COMMUNITY RABBI BOREHAMWOOD & ELSTREE SYNAGOGUE



SPACE FOR HASHEM

The most ambitious construction project was complete and the Mishkan - the portable desert sanctuary - was established according to Hashem's instruction. So we would expect a triumphant climax to the people's efforts as the Shechinah fills Hashem's magnificent earthly abode. And yet sefer Shemot closes with what appears to be the greatest anti-climax for all those involved especially for Moshe who managed the entire project. As we read, 'And the cloud covered the Tent of Meeting, and Hashem's glory filled the Mishkan. Moshe could not enter the Tent of Meeting because the cloud rested upon it and Hashem's glory filled the Mishkan.' (Shemot 40:34-35)

Imagine having expended all that effort to create a space in this world worthy of the Shechinah and then being excluded from it. It would appear that there cannot be an earthly interface between an Infinite G-d and finite human. How deflating it must have been to have to stand at a distance admiring their combined handiwork but being unable to experience a sense of closeness with Hashem.

It is reminiscent of Moshe's earlier request, "Hashem, please show me Your glory" which was a desire to understand His ways, to answer the question of how Hashem, who is vaster than the universe, can live within the universe in a comprehensible way, not just in the form of miraculous intervention. On that occasion Hashem responds by saying, 'No living person can see My face' as we do not have the capacity to grasp the answer.

These two combined, force us to ask: What is the point? Why invest so much time and resources only to be denied

access to the end product? Why do we even attempt to create a place for Hashem in our world if ultimately we're being told that we cannot perceive Him anyway?

The key to understanding this is provided by Rashbam who explains that this all-encompassing cloud only appeared at the very moment that the Mishkan was first established in order to make known Hashem's nature. Eventually, Hashem would constrict Himself so to speak, to dwell in a defined area space.

In other words, at that specific moment, Hashem was conveying a powerful and eternal message to us that He will completely fill any space that we create for Him. Whether that is in a Mishkan, in our homes or in our hearts, wherever we make space for Hashem in our lives that is where we will most fully feel His presence.

■ **Shabbat shalom**

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OUR CHACHAMIM

RABBI YAAKOV SASPORTAS

The Gaon Rabbi Yaakov Sasportas was one of the great masters of Torah. He was a G-d fearing man that knew how to awaken and enliven the faith of Jews.

Rabbi Yaakov was born in 5370 (1610) in Oran, Algeria. Born into an illustrious family that had been expelled from Spain, he was one of the descendants of Rabbi Moshe Ben Nachman, the Ramban.

From his earliest years, Rabbi Yaakov surprised those around him by his thorough knowledge in all domains of Torah. At the age of 12, he completed the study of all the tractates of the Talmud, and already by that time had a perfect understanding of the Tur. In 5388 (1628), he became famous and recognized as one of the great rabbis of his generation, yet he was only 18 years old. He was made Dayan of the rabbinical court of the city of Tlemcen in Algeria.

Rabbi Yaakov sat on the court of Tlemcen for about eight years. At that very time, the Shabbetai Tzvi movement had spread all the way to Morocco, and many were those that believed that the false Messiah Shabbetai Tzvi had really been sent by G-d to deliver Israel from exile.

Shabbetai Tzvi had been born in 5386 (1626) in the city of Izmir, and from his earliest youth he amazed everyone by his rapid comprehension and his ingenious mind. At the age of 20, he had been initiated in all aspects of the Torah, the revealed Torah and the study of Kabbalah. He assembled around himself numerous disciples to whom he taught Kabbalah. One day, convinced that he was the Messiah sent by Heaven, he revealed his secret to those close to him, and these began to spread the news that the Messiah would not delay in revealing himself and that soon the people of Israel would be delivered. A belief in the imminent revelation of the Messiah began to profoundly take hold of the people, and everyone impatiently awaited the day of deliverance.

Finally, Shabbetai Tzvi appeared publicly in the presence of a mass of believers to ask them to prepare themselves for the great day that would no longer be delayed. He told the people that it was no longer necessary to fast on the ninth of Av, for the hour of deliverance had arrived.

One of Shabbetai Tzvi's faithful, Nathan Ashkenazi, who had proclaimed his messianism, was better known as Nathan of Gaza. His father, Rabbi Elisha Ashkenazi, was himself also an enthusiastic believer in Shabbetai Tzvi. From Germany, he ascended to the Holy Land, then traveled to Morocco accompanied by another Torah scholar from the Holy Land, Rabbi Chiya Dayan. These two rabbis spread the Shabbetai Tzvi movement in Morocco.

Rabbi Yaakov Sasportas vehemently opposed them and denounced the blind faith that claimed to make Shabbetai Tzvi the Messiah. Rabbi Aaron Hasabeoni of Fez and Rabbi Daniel Toledano of Meknes fought alongside Rabbi Yaakov against this

messianic movement, and in fact the fears of these Gaonim proved true. The numerous Jews that had been swept up by the Shabbetai Tzvi movement abstained from fasting on the ninth of Av, which caused in its wake a decline in the performance of mitzvot in general.

Rabbi Yaakov was imprisoned in 5406 (1646) by the governor of Tlemcen on a false accusation that his adversaries had brought against him. He was only released after his family paid a large ransom. He thereafter left Tlemcen and settled in Sale, Morocco.

For two years, Rabbi Yaakov sat on the rabbinate in the city of Sale. However, a famine struck the entire country, forcing Rabbi Yaakov to leave. Accompanied by his family, he traveled to Amsterdam, where he was welcomed with great honor by the Jews of the community. There he was named director of the great Etz Chaim Yeshiva. Rabbi Yaakov continued to lead an intensive fight against the Shabbetai Tzvi movement that had by this time spread throughout Europe. During this fight, he stayed in contact through correspondence with the great Rabbis of Morocco, whom he conferred with in order to find a way of stopping the spiritual epidemic that was ravaging the Jewish people.

The fight against the false messianic movement was not that easy, for the chief rabbis of the day had let themselves be entrapped and fascinated by Shabbetai Tzvi. They considered him to be the Messiah. At the cost of great effort, Rabbi Yaakov Sasportas, the head of those fighting against Shabbetai Tzvi, managed to remove the mask of the false messiah and prove to everyone that he was nothing but a charlatan and a crook.

Finally, Shabbetai Tzvi was imprisoned by the government and forced to choose between death and renouncing his religion. Shabbetai Tzvi, it comes as no great surprise, chose the second option: He converted to Islam.

Rabbi Yaakov was in contact with one of the great scholars of that era, Rabbi Menashe Ben Israel. In 5425 (1665), they embarked together for England with the goal of requesting the English King for permission to allow Jews to live in his country.

The trip was crowned with success, and numerous Jews left Holland to live in England. Rabbi Yaakov was named Rabbi of the Jewish community of London.

Rabbi Yaakov thought at that time that he could finally live in peace, but again he was forced to take up the baton of the wandering Jew. A terrible epidemic erupted in England and claimed many victims. As a result, Rabbi Yaakov left England for Hamburg, Germany, where he served as Rabbi.

In 5453 (1693), Rabbi Yaakov returned to Amsterdam, where he was named Rabbi of the city's Ashkenazi Jewish community.

In 5458 (1698), Rabbi Yaakov died at the age of 88, after having enjoyed his final years. ■



HALACHOT

RABBI ELI MANSOUR

IF THE DAY OF THE PIDYON HA'BEN FALLS ON SHABBAT, A HOLIDAY, OR A FAST DAY

If a firstborn infant's 31st day – the day when the Pidyon Ha'ben is to take place – falls on Shabbat, the Pidyon Ha'ben is delayed until after Shabbat, and is performed either on Mosa'eh Shabbat or Sunday. It is not performed on Shabbat, since transactions are forbidden on Shabbat, and thus one cannot make a payment to the Kohen for the Pidyon Ha'ben. A number of Halachic authorities (including the Terumat Ha'deshen and Maharshal) addressed the possibility of performing the Pidyon Ha'ben in such a case on Friday, giving the Kohen the money and stipulating that the transaction should take effect only on Shabbat, the 31st day. In practice, however, this is not done, and the Pidyon Ha'ben is instead delayed until Motza'eh Shabbat or Sunday.

This applies as well if the day of the Pidyon Ha'ben falls on Yom Tob. Whether it falls on the first day of Yom Tob or (in the Diaspora) on the second day of Yom Tob, the Pidyon Ha'ben is not performed on that day, and is instead performed after Yom Tob. This applies to all the Yamim Tobim – Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, Sukkot, Shemini Aseret, Pesah and Shabuot.

There is some discussion among the Poskim as to whether a Pidyon Ha'ben may be performed during Hol Ha'mo'ed. The issue revolves around the question as to whether a Pidyon Ha'ben should halachically be considered a "Simha" – a festive celebration, in which case it should not be held during Hol Ha'mo'ed, in light of the principle of "En Me'arbin Simha Be'simha" – we do not combine two Misva celebrations. The Rama (Rav Moshe Isserles of Cracow, 1530-1572) cites two opinions on this matter, and Halacha follows the view that a Pidyon Ha'ben may be performed during Hol Ha'mo'ed. The fact that the words "She'ha'simha Bi'm'ono" are not added to the Zimun service before Birkat Ha'mazon after the Pidyon Ha'ben meal proves that Halacha does not regard a Pidyon Ha'ben as a "Simha," and thus it may be held during Hol Ha'mo'ed. This applies even in the case of a Pidyon Ha'ben "She'lo Bi'zmano" – meaning, if the Pidyon Ha'ben was not performed on the 31st day, and it is already after the 31st day. Even in such a case, the Pidyon Ha'ben may be performed on Hol Ha'mo'ed. (Of course, on Hol Ha'mo'ed Sukkot, the meal must be eaten in a Sukka.)

If the day of the Pidyon Ha'ben falls on a fast day that begins in the morning (Som Gedalya, Asara Be'Tebet, Ta'anit Ester, or Shiba Asar Be'Tammuz), then the Pidyon Ha'ben is performed at night, before the fast begins. If the day falls on Tisha B'Av, when the fast begins already at sundown the previous evening, the Pidyon Ha'ben should be performed towards the end of Tisha B'Av, late in the afternoon, and the festive meal is then held at night, after the fast.

If the day of the Pidyon Ha'ben falls during the Sefira period, the Pidyon Ha'ben is performed as usual, and the child's father is permitted to shave and take a haircut in honor of the event. Music is permitted at the celebration. Likewise, if the day falls during the period of Ben Ha'mesirim (the three weeks from Shiba Asar Be'Tammuz until Tisha B'Av), the Pidyon may be performed and celebrated as usual, with music, and meat may be served, even if the event takes place during the Nine Days. However, if the Pidyon Ha'ben is held during the week of Tisha B'Av ("Shabua She'hal Bo"), only ten people should be invited to take part in the meat meal celebrating the event.

Summary: If the day of a Pidyon Ha'ben falls on Shabbat or Yom Tob, it is delayed until after Shabbat or after Yom Tob. A Pidyon Ha'ben may be held on Hol Ha'mo'ed. If the day falls on a fast day, it is held the night before the fast, and if it falls on Tisha B'Av, then the Pidyon is performed late in the afternoon of Tisha B'Av and the meal is held after the fast. During Sefira or the Three Weeks, the Pidyon Ha'ben may be held as usual, even with music, and meat may be eaten at the Pidyon Ha'ben celebration during the Nine Days. ■

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