

Reflections of Redemption

Essays on the Weekly Torah Reading and Moshiach,
Based on the talks of the
Lubavitcher Rebbe,
Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson

Reprinted for Parshat Vayakhel, 5782
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IN LOVING MEMORY OF
 Horav **Schneur Zalman Halevi** עי"ה
 ben Horav **Yitzchok Elchonon Halevi** הי"ד
Shagalov
 Passed away on 21 Tamuz, 5766

Reb **Dovid Asniel** ben Reb **Eliyahu** עי"ה
Ekman
 Passed away on 5 Sivan - Erev Shavuot, 5765

Mrs. **Devora Rivka** bas Reb **Yosef Eliezer** עי"ה
Marenburg
 Passed away on the second day
 of Rosh Chodesh Adar, 5766

Reb **Yitzchok Moshe** (Ian)
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Ekman (Santiago, Chile)
 Passed away on the 24th day of Shevat, 5769
 ת. נ. צ. ג. ה.

AND IN HONOR OF
 Mrs. **Esther Shaindel** bas **Fraidel Chedva** שתח'ל
Shagalov

DEDICATED BY
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Shagalov

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by
Dovid Yisroel Ber Kaufmann

Vayakhel

THE INTERNAL SANCTUARY – ARK AND ALTAR

The external structure of the Sanctuary parallels the internal structure of the Jew. The functions of the vessels parallel functions of the soul. The ‘internal ark’ is Torah study; the ‘internal altar’ is mitzvos. Learning Torah draws down G-d’s Essence; performing mitzvos invests G-d’s Essence in the lowest realm. Building our inner Sanctuary adds a brick to, and foreshadows the building of, the third Sanctuary by Moshiach.

This week’s Torah reading describes the construction of the Tabernacle and the various items – such as the altar and menorah – placed within it. One such object was the aron – the ark in which the Ten Commandments were placed. Let’s consider this in light of the well-known interpretation of the verse, “Make Me a Sanctuary, that I may dwell in them.” The command to build a Sanctuary uses the plural pronoun, “them.” Grammatically, of course, the verse should say, “Make Me a Sanctuary, that I may dwell in it.” Since G-d says He will dwell “within them,” our Sages explain that “them” refers to the Jewish people. By making the Sanctuary, the Divine Presence will dwell within each and every Jew.

Accordingly, the concept of a Sanctuary is two-fold. On the one hand, it refers to a physical structure, whether the Tabernacle in the wilderness or the Temple in Jerusalem. Here, sacrifices were brought. All the various utensils – the altar, the menorah, etc. – served to assist the process. Through the sacrifices and accompanying procedures, G-d’s presence became manifest in the Sanctuary.

On the other hand, the Sanctuary is an internal structure, the conduct and thought of the individual. Every Jew can build

a personal, inner Sanctuary; there, too, the Divine Presence will dwell. By analogy, what exists in the outer, physical Sanctuary – the building and its utensils – also exists within every Jew. Once we understand the function and purpose of a particular item in the Temple, we can discover its equivalent within ourselves.

This parallel teaches us an important lesson. We know that Moshiach will rebuild the Temple. Indeed, that, along with gathering in the exiles, identifies Moshiach with absolute certainty. Surely the lesson of our Sages extends this far: the Divine Presence dwells within the internal Sanctuary of every Jew, just as it dwells within the physical structure of the Temple. An individual's efforts to sanctify himself, to internalize the holiness of the Divine Presence, parallel the vessels and activities of the Temple, as prescribed by the Torah. What happens internally, to the individual Jew, corresponds to what happens externally, to the Temple. The Temple was destroyed and the Jewish people are in exile. In some way, our internal Sanctuary can be destroyed. But, just as the Temple in Jerusalem can and will be rebuilt, so too we can reconstruct our internal sanctuaries.

In fact, it may be said that by rebuilding our internal sanctuaries, by awakening the spark of Moshiach within us, we act as a collective catalyst for Moshiach, bringing Redemption into the open. By enabling the Divine Presence to dwell openly within us, together we cause the revelation of Moshiach and the rebuilding of the Temple.

With this in mind, let's look more closely at the function of the ark and the altar. In some ways, these are the two central vessels of the Sanctuary. The ark housed the Torah; but through the sacrifices, the Jewish people demonstrated their relationship and subservience to G-d. Sacrifice is a prototypical mitzvah. After all, "mitzvah" means both commandment and connection – and both mitzvos and sacrifices are man's initiative to become closer

and connect to G-d. Thus, through the mitzvos – exemplified by the sacrificial service – the Divine Presence came to dwell in the Temple.

We can speak of two places: first, the Sanctuary itself, the place of mitzvos – as embodied in the sacrifices – where the Divine Presence dwelled; second, the ark, the place of the Ten Commandments, where the Torah dwelled.

What is the difference between the altar and the ark, between mitzvos and Torah? Of equal importance, how do we metaphorically rebuild the ark and altar within ourselves? By reconstructing our “inner Temple,” so to speak, we prepare our part of the world for the coming of Moshiach.

Generally speaking, a Jew is united with G-d in one of two ways: through learning Torah or through performing mitzvos. When learning, once we thoroughly and completely understand the subject, we become completely and totally united with the Torah. The Jew and Torah become one entity.

On the other hand, when we do a mitzvah we perform G-d’s Will. The person becomes a “chariot” or “vehicle.” However, the individual is not united with the mitzvah. The mitzvah and the Jew remain two separate things.

The Sanctuary must contain both Torah and mitzvos – both the ark and the altar. We must remember why the Sanctuary was built – to provide a dwelling place for the Divine Presence. This dwelling, this Sanctuary – whether the physical structure in Jerusalem or the internal structure of heart, mind and action – has two aspects. First, G-dliness must be openly revealed, demonstrating the inner unity of the Divine Presence and its Sanctuary. This is the aspect of Torah. Second, the Divine Presence must dwell in the lower realm, the place of the physical. This is the aspect of mitzvos, which are clothed in material objects.

This distinction between Torah and mitzvos – between the ark and the altar – derives from their fundamental nature. As the *Zohar* declares, Torah and G-d are one. On the other hand, mitzvos are called the “limbs of the king.” The limbs of the body are subservient to the soul, but are not united with it. So when a Jew learns Torah, he becomes attached to and unified with G-dliness. When a Jew does a mitzvah, although this is G-d’s Will and he is subservient to G-d, he and G-dliness do not merge into a single existence.

We can now understand why our task requires both Torah and mitzvos. In order to make this physical world a dwelling place for G-dliness, both aspects are necessary. Obviously, with the coming of Moshiach the purpose of Creation will be realized. Just as obviously, Moshiach cannot come and build the Third Temple in Jerusalem until we have built our inner Temple. Doing so entails constructing both an ark and an altar.

In other words, in order to transform this lowest of worlds into a dwelling place for the very Essence of G-dliness, two things are necessary: Something to draw down G-d’s Essence, and something to insure that G-d’s Essence is drawn into the lowest realm.

Learning Torah draws down G-d’s Essence since G-d and Torah are one. But Torah by itself remains higher than the world; it does not enclothe G-d’s Essence within physical objects. On the other hand, mitzvos, which must be performed with something physical – leather for tefillin, parchment for a mezuzah etc. – purifies and refines the object, drawing G-dliness within the material substance.

Of course, there are times when learning Torah and doing mitzvos don’t seem very easy. Indeed, anyone can transgress a commandment, regardless of his level of learning or observance. When the soul enters the body, it faces temptations and distractions. This hazard even a great scholar encounters. What, then, can be

said of the ignorant Jew or the one steeped in transgressions? What protection – what sanctuary – does he have? With what will he build a Temple?

Our Sages tell us that every Jew is as full of mitzvos as a pomegranate is full of seeds. We must recognize that our sins and transgressions are temporary and external. A Jew's real existence is the Torah and mitzvos he or she possesses. Through our learning – and learning leads to action – we construct, brick by brick, as it were, our internal Sanctuary. And thus with every mitzvah, we add a brick to the Third Temple. When Moshiach comes, we will see our handiwork.

(Based on Likkutei Sichos 16, pp. 434-442)

IN LOVING MEMORY OF

Reb Moshe Boruch ben Reb Yakov ע"ה Fishman

Passed away on Shabbat Parshat Vayakhel-Pekudei, 27 Adar, 5777

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