

# CAN ANYTHING CONTAIN G-D?

*by Rabbi Dovid Green*

Can anything contain G-d? This is the question which strikes the reader of this week's parsha. We find G-d giving Moshe detailed instructions as to how to create a sanctuary for His divine presence to dwell. Books have been published, and models have been built depicting this incredible undertaking. In the middle of the wilderness of Sinai, Moshe mobilized the Jewish nation to contribute their physical, mental, and financial resources in fulfilling this directive of G-d. The very gratifying culmination of all of their hard work is that the Divine Presence indeed came to dwell on the work of their hands.

Nowadays we are not so fortunate to clearly see the manifest presence of G-d as the Jews did in those days. However, we shouldn't despair. We still possess the Torah which provides us with the direction we need to reach that great spiritual peak once again.

Nachmanides begins his commentary to The Book of Exodus with a preface stating that the exile in Egypt did not come to an end until the Tabernacle was built. He explains that when the divine presence descended on the Tabernacle, that was when the Jewish Nation returned to the level of the Patriarchs. The sources say that the homes of the Patriarchs had the Divine Presence tangibly dwelling in them. We see from here that the Tabernacle is really just a medium through which the Jewish nation was able to experience the favor from G-d which their forefathers had previously attained.

What goes into the foundation of a home which has the Divine Presence in it? It pays to look at the deeds of the Matriarchs to answer that question. Sarah, the wife of Avraham opened her home to anyone in need. She helped Avraham in his efforts to teach people to give up self-defeating idol worship. She protected her only son Yitzchok from negative influences, by sending Yishmael away.

Rivka, the wife of Yitzchok, was recognized by her ability to bring G-d's presence into her home. When Avraham's servant met her for the first time, he was astounded by her efforts to do kindness for a complete stranger. Her strength of character was such that she traveled back with him while still young to become part of a righteous family.

Rachel gave up Yaakov, her husband to be, to spare her sister the embarrassment of getting caught tricking him under the wedding canopy. At that point in time she could not speculate that she would still marry Yaakov as well. Even if she would, she would have to share his love with her sister. Rachel was conciliatory and foregoing when her sister Leah accused her of taking her husband's love. We

see that these homes were built on the basis of giving, kindness, and purity. Service of G-d was never compromised, and obstacles to being a faithful servant of G-d were removed and overcome.

Even the Evil Balaam who was hired to curse the Jewish People recognized the greatness of their homes. About his famous words "How good are your tents, Yaakov," the commentaries say as follows. The nation living in the wilderness made sure to face the doors of their tents away from their neighbor's doors. This way they would not in any way violate the privacy of their neighbors, and their privacy would be secured as well. They were not interested in the goings-on of everyone else. They didn't rejoice in knowing everyone's business. Can anything contain G-d? Yes! In the homes and hearts of such great and holy people G-d is proud to reside.

At one time families found it easier to impart these perspectives to their children. Now, when we are living in such an open society, children are exposed to so much more. So many parents feel undermined by the influences to which their children are exposed, that are contrary to their own ideals. We must ask ourselves, "what would our holy Patriarchs and Matriarchs have done in our situation?" They would have found a way to preserve the idealism which maintains the Divine Presence in their homes. May we all merit to have the courage and strength to bring G-d's presence into our homes.

Good Shabbos!

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