

# OF CLOUDS AND RAINBOWS

*by Shlomo Katz*

**Hamaayan / The Torah Spring**  
**Edited by Shlomo Katz**  
**Contributing Editor: Daniel Dadusc**

**Vayakhel-Pekudei**

**Volume XIII, No. 22**

**25 Adar 5759**

**March 13, 1999**

---

Today's Learning:

Pe'ah 8:6-7

Orach Chaim 63:1-3

Daf Yomi: Yoma 68

Yerushalmi Sukkah 19

In this week's two parashot we read of the construction of the mishkan/Tabernacle. When it was completed, we are told, "The cloud covered the ohel mo'ed/Tent of Meeting, and the glory of Hashem filled the Tabernacle." The cloud is a reference to the fact that Hashem's presence in our world is hidden, taught R' Zvi Yehuda Kook z"l (1891-1982; rosh yeshiva of Yeshivat Merkaz Harav and mentor of Israel's National Religious Party). He expounded further:

When one sees a rainbow, he must recite a blessing. A rainbow is multicolored; so, too, G-d is revealed in the world in many different ways. [This is a play on the Hebrew word for "multicolored."] One is forbidden to diminish the greatness of G-d [i.e., his ability to reveal Himself in so many different ways], but unfortunately, this occurs both among the religious and among the heretics.

Sometimes, a brilliant flash of the Divine light occurs in the physical world. When Avraham went to the akeidah, "he saw the cloud from afar." This means that Avraham saw a manifestation of the Divine with his physical eyes. It is possible to "meet" G-d even when He appears in a cloud; indeed, in the haftarah for Parashat Pekudei we read, "Hashem has said that we should dwell in the fog." There also are clouds that lead us on the way, just as Bnei Yisrael experienced in the desert.

It is easy to sanctify G-d's Name when one is among angels. The uniqueness of the Jewish people and its very purpose is to sanctify G-d in this world, amid its earthiness and materialism. This includes, writes R' Kook, being an active participant in the State [of Israel] and its armed forces. \_This\_ ultimately demonstrates the sanctity of Torah study. This is the meaning of the Vilna Gaon's teaching that a Jew's soul belongs to the earth. Man's mission is to relate G-d's greatness in this world, with all of its complications, as we say in the Rosh Hashanah prayers, "You are revealed in thick clouds of purity." (Sichot Harav Zvi Yehuda, pp. 409-410)

\*\*\*\*\*

*"Take from yourselves a portion for Hashem, everyone whose heart motivates him shall bring it, as a gift for Hashem: gold, silver, and copper." (35:5)*

R' Meshullam Faiysh Zvi Gross z"l (20th century rabbi in Hungary and New York) observes: In Parashat Terumah the Torah states (25:2), "Let them take for Me a portion," i.e., the gift is described as being "for\_Hashem." In our parashah, in contrast, the emphasis is on "from yourselves." Why?

Parashat Terumah precedes the sin of the golden calf [which is in last week's parashah]. At that point, everything Bnei Yisrael gave was given purely for the sake of Heaven. Thus, Rashi interprets the pasuk, "Let them take for Me a portion," as meaning "for My name" i.e., with no selfish motives.

In contrast, our verse in Parashat Vayakhel follows the sin of the golden calf. Chazal teach that the building of the Tabernacle served as an atonement for the sin of idolatry; therefore the verse says, "Take from yourselves," i.e., for your betterment, in order to atone for yourselves. (Ateret Zvi, p. 202)

R' David Sperber z"l (see "Letters from Our Sages" below) writes: We are taught that the cost of the mishkan was beyond the financial resources of Bnei Yisrael. However, because of the spirit with which the Jewish people brought their donations, Hashem blessed those gifts and the builders of the mishkan were able to stretch the donations farther.

This may be alluded to in the above verse: "Take from yourselves," whether it is a large amount or a small amount, so long as "everyone whose heart motivates him," i.e., the gifts are brought with hearts that are motivated. If you do so, "shall bring it as a gift for Hashem" - the gift will bring itself, i.e., even a small donation will go farther. (Michtam Le'David, p.354)

\*\*\*\*\*

*"And from the 1,775 [talents of silver] he made hooks for the pillars . . ." (38:28)*

The midrash relates that when Moshe finished building the mishkan and attempted to account for all of the donations, he forgot what he had done with 1,775 talents of silver, and he felt bad. Later he remembered and found peace of mind.

Why did this happen to him? R' Chaim Aryeh Lerner z"l (died 1977; a leading student of R' David Sperber) explains: Chazal teach that if Moshe had not broken the first luchot, no person would ever forget the Torah that he studied. Because Moshe's actions caused forgetfulness to exist, it was appropriate that Moshe himself suffer from forgetfulness. (Although the gemara says that Hashem congratulated Moshe for breaking the luchot, Moshe nevertheless had to share in the negative consequences of his action.) (Imrei Chaim I, p.58)

\*\*\*\*\*

## **Pesach Thoughts**

We read in the Pesach Haggadah, "I might think that one should start recounting the story of the Exodus from Rosh Chodesh . . . Therefore it says (Shmot 13:8), 'Because of this' - only at a time when matzah and marror are before you."

R' Menachem Mendel Schneerson z"l (the "Lubavitcher Rebbe"; died 1994) asks: The very source for the mitzvah of retelling the story of the Exodus is the above verse, "You shall tell your son on that day, saying, 'Because of this Hashem acted on my behalf when I left Egypt'." And, as the above passage indicates, the word "this" in the verse refers to the matzah and the marror. Since the mitzvah of Haggadah is thus connected with the matzah and the marror (whose time is Pesach night), how could the author of the Haggadah entertain the possibility that the mitzvah of telling about the Exodus begins on Rosh Chodesh, fifteen days before Pesach?

He explains: We are taught that the Patriarchs observed the Torah before it was given. However, there is a difference between their Torah observance and ours. For us, there are such things as holy objects (for example, tefilin) and unholy objects (for example, a non-kosher animal). However, to the Patriarchs, such concepts did not exist. Although they could observe the laws of tefilin and the laws of kashrut, the objects themselves were not yet invested with sanctity or impurity (as the case may be) because the Torah did not yet exist in the physical world. (This, says R' Schneerson, is why Avraham did not circumcise himself before Hashem commanded him to do so. Before the mitzvah of milah was given, there was no impurity to the foreskin.)

The mitzvot of matzah and maror were first given to Moshe on Rosh Chodesh Nissan, two weeks before Pesach. It was on that day that the idea of matzah and marror as mitzvah-objects first came into being, and the author of the Haggadah thought that perhaps that was sufficient basis to begin retelling the story of the Exodus. No, the Haggadah concludes, the matzah and marror are not invested with their full holiness until it comes time to eat them, and that is when there is a mitzvah to retell the story of the Exodus. (Haggadah Shel Pesach: Admor Mi'Lubavitch)

R' Levi Yitzchak of Berditchev z"l (early chassidic rebbe; died 1809) asks: How did the Patriarchs know what was in the Torah before it was given? He answers:

Chazal teach that the number of positive and negative commandments in the Torah correspond respectively to the number of bones and sinews in the human body. Each mitzvah protects one bone or sinew, and just as a person knows instinctively how to protect himself from physical harm, so a person who reaches a sufficiently lofty spiritual level knows instinctively how to protect his body from spiritual harm. This is how the Patriarchs knew the Torah.

This, R' Levi Yitzchak continues, is the meaning of the statement in the Haggadah: "If He had brought us to Har Sinai and not given us the Torah, that would have been sufficient." What would have been the purpose of bringing us to Har Sinai and not giving us the Torah? Because when our ancestors stood at Har Sinai (before the sin of the golden calf), they had reached the level where they could know the Torah instinctively. (Kedushat Levi: Kedushah Rishonah)

\*\*\*\*\*

### **Letters from Our Sages**

The following letter was written in 1942 by R' Eliezer Hager z"l (Rosh Yeshiva in Vizhnitz, Romania and later head of the Vizhnitzer Yeshiva in Tel Aviv; died 1946) to R' David Sperber, rabbi of Brasov, Romania. We present this letter because of its relevance to Pesach. In addition, today is the 37th yahrzeit of the letter's recipient.

The letter appears in Ba'al Damesek Eliezer (p.317), a biography of R' Hager by R' Nosson Elya Roth shlita.

B"H. The fourth day of the week in which the parashah states, "There shall be no more wrath against Bnei Yisrael."

Your honor's letter reached me, and it restored by soul. My beloved, my hope is that your salvation will come soon, for I am consoled as was Rabbi Akiva in Makkot [24b], "Just as I have seen every detail of the prophet Zechariah's warnings come true, so I am confident that the prophet's promises of consolation will be fulfilled."

When I visited the baths of Borsk three years ago, I suggested the following answer to the question posed by my ancestor, the Torat Chaim, regarding the verse [Bamidbar 16:22] in which Moshe asked, "Shall one man sin and You will be angry with the entire congregation?" Why not? Aren't we taught that all Jews are responsible for each other? The answer is, however, that the Attribute of Justice cannot affect the entire Jewish people at one time. This is why Balak told Bilam [Bamidbar 23:13], "You will see its edge but you will not see it all," i.e., Bilam would not succeed in cursing the entire Jewish people at once . . .

This explains also why we say in the Haggadah: "Go and learn what Lavan the Aramean planned to

do to our father Yaakov; for Pharaoh decreed only that the male children should be put to death, but Lavan planned to uproot all." Why, on Pesach, do we appear to downplay Pharaoh's evil? In fact, we are not; rather, Lavan attempted to uproot the entire Jewish people and therefore had no chance of success. Pharaoh, on the other hand, made a decree that might have been carried out but for Hashem's kindness.

Now, when the evil men of the world arise against the entire Jewish people on every side and in every corner, G-d willing, their decree will not be fulfilled. May we merit to avenge ourselves on them and to see the consolation of Zion and Yerushalayim.

From me, who loves you forever, [Signed] Elokei Avi B'ezri [see Shmot 18:4]

*Sponsored by*

*Bobbi and Jules Meisler on the yahrzeit of Irving Meisler a"h*

*Tzivia and Sam Bramson in memory of her father Max Lewko a"h*

*Elaine & Jerry Taragin in memory of Asriel Taragin a"h*

*The family of Abraham Spector a"h on his first yahrzeit*

---

Copyright © 1998 by [Shlomo Katz](#) and Project Genesis, Inc.

---

The editors hope these brief 'snippets' will engender further study and discussion of Torah topics ("lehagdil Torah u'leha'adirah"), and your letters are appreciated. Web archives at [Project Genesis](#) start with 5758 (1997) and may be retrieved from the [Hamaayan](#) page. Text archives from 1990 through the present may be retrieved from <http://www.acoast.com/~sehc/hamaayan/>. Donations to HaMaayan are tax-deductible.

---