

THE LIGHT OF SHABBAT

by Shlomo Katz

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**Dedicated "l'ilui nishmat"
Ilan ben Eliezer a"h, on his Shloshim**

**Sponsored by Eli, Rachel Adina and Daniel Avraham Rutstein,
in honor of the birthday of wife and mother Galit Rutstein
Elaine and Jerry Taragin, in memory of Asriel Taragin a"h**

Today's Learning:

Temurah 7:2-3

Daf Yomi (Bavli): Shevuot 36

Daf Yomi (Yerushalmi): Pesachim 63

Last week's parashah ends: "When Bnei Yisrael saw Moshe's face, that the `ohr' / skin of Moshe's face had become radiant, Moshe put the mask back on his face until he came to speak with Him."

This week's parashah then opens with the laws of Shabbat. R' Shlomo Halberstam z"l (1907-2000; the Bobover Rav) explains the connection between these two sections as follows:

Following Adam's sin of eating from the Tree of Knowledge, the Torah states (Bereishit 3:21): "Hashem G-d made for Adam and his wife garments of `ohr' / skin." Chazal say that in the Sefer Torah of the sage Rabbi Meir, this verse said -- instead of "garments of `ohr' [with an `ayin', meaning `skin']" -- "garments of `ohr' [with an `aleph', meaning `light']." Commentaries explain that this midrash refers to Rabbi Meir's ability to look beneath the coarse "garments" that hide the spirituality inherent in the world and to extract the "light." Thus, for example, the Gemara (Chagigah 15a) relates that Rabbi Meir continued to study Torah from the sage Elisha ben Avuyah after the latter became a heretic. The Gemara says of Rabbi Meir's relationship with his teacher: "He (Rabbi Meir) found a pomegranate - he ate the fruit and discarded the rind."

When Bnei Yisrael committed the sin of the Golden Calf, they fell from their lofty spiritual level, exactly as Adam had through his sin. All of the "light" that Bnei Yisrael forfeited thereby was given to Moshe, and it was that light that created the radiance seen on the skin of Moshe's face. However, we say in the Shabbat morning prayers: "Moshe rejoices in the gift of his portion, that You have called him a faithful servant." The gift in which Moshe rejoices is that radiance, but like a faithful servant, Moshe shares that radiance with his people. When? On Shabbat. This is alluded to in the opening verse of our parashah: "Moshe assembled the entire `eidah' / assembly of Bnei Yisrael." The word "eidah" reminds us of the "eid" / "jewelry" of which Bnei Yisrael were stripped after the sin of the Golden Calf (see Shmot 33:6). For Shabbat, Moshe gave that "jewelry" back to the people. (Quoted in Otzrot Tzaddikei U'geonei Ha'dorot)

"He made the parochet of turquoise, purple and scarlet wool, and linen, twisted; he made it with a woven design of cherubs." (36:35)

R' Yitzchok Isaac Halevi Herzog z"l (1889-1959; Ashkenazic Chief Rabbi of Israel) wrote the following on 10 Kislev 5708 / November 23, 1947 to a synagogue designing a parochet / covering for an aron kodesh:

"If you heed my advice, you will not place a picture of any living thing in the shul, and certainly not on the aron kodesh. Your intentions - to beautify the holy sanctuary - are good. However, the designs you propose are not permitted according to some authorities, and some of our great masters of halachah, as well as masters of kabbalah (may their merit protect us), object strenuously to such designs. Our brethren the Sephardim (may G-d protect them) are very strict about this. There is another reason for their strictness, i.e., that their Moslem neighbors view such images as absolutely prohibited. Considering that the Moslem aversion to images derived from our own, it would constitute a chillul Hashem / desecration of G-d's Name to place such decorations in our houses of prayer. If you wish to include artwork in your shul, there are many other options, including plants, the Temple implements (except the cherubs), such as a menorah, musical instruments, or images from Temple-era coins.

"[That is my advice.] However, if you want to know the letter of the law, since most early authorities, and at their head, the Rambam, permit even the form of a lion - even though this is one of the four faces on the Divine Chariot - there is no halachic concern about what you proposed. This is especially true because in this part of the world, no one worships lions. Moreover, the sketch you sent me shows only the profile of a lion. Since we have seen such images in synagogues in the diaspora, even in the most halachically meticulous congregations, I cannot say it is prohibited.

"Nevertheless, the image you sent me of a lion with wings -- that I absolutely prohibit because its roots are in ancient pagan mythology. Blessed is He who uprooted paganism from these lands. G-d forbid that we should create a memory of that paganism in our shuls. Perish even the thought! If you wish to include an image of a lion to remind yourselves to be strong like lions to do the will of your Father in Heaven, make it like the sketch you sent me - in profile, and absolutely without wings. I am too busy now to clarify the law as much as I would wish. If you desire a more developed discussion of the halachah, let me know, and I will attempt to do your desire.

"May it be His Will that the One Who chooses Torah and Zion will be with you. May it be His Will that your miniature Temple [i.e., shul] will be built speedily, and we will dedicate it gloriously amidst the joy of the atchalta de'geulah / initial stages of the redemption.

"With blessings of the Torah, Zion and Yerushalayim, Your friend, who loves you immensely,
Yitzchak Isaac Halevi Herzog, Chief Rabbi of Eretz Yisrael."

(Pesakim U'ktavim, O.C. Vol. I, No. 23)

Shabbat

"Moshe assembled the entire assembly of Bnei Yisrael and said to them: 'These are the things that Hashem commanded to do them: On six days work shall be done, but the seventh day shall be holy for you, a day of complete rest for Hashem; whoever does work on it shall be put to death. You shall not kindle fire in any of your dwellings on the Sabbath day'." (From our parashah - 35:1-2)

R' Yosef Eliyahu Henkin z"l (1891-1973) asks: Considering what follows, should not the Torah have said, "These are the things that Hashem commanded not to do them"? Also, why does the Torah use a phrase - "On six days work shall be done" - which implies that one is obligated to work?

He explains: Shabbat represents two competing concepts that man is charged with balancing: bitachon / the recognition that everything that happens is in G-d's control, and hishtadlut / man's obligation to help himself. In the Aseret Ha'dibrot in Parashat Yitro (20:11) we read that Shabbat commemorates Creation. This alludes to man's obligation of hishtadlut, for we read at the end of the Creation section (Bereishit 2:3), "G-d blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because on it He abstained from all His work, which G-d had created to do." This verse teaches that the first Shabbat was the end of G-d's regular overt involvement with the world. From that point on, man

would appear to be in charge. And, this verse conveys G-d's blessing that man will succeed when he uses G-d's creation "to do" for himself.

However, man can be led astray if he thinks that he alone is in control. Man must temper his hishtadlut with bitachon. Therefore, the Aseret Ha'dibrot in Parashat Va'etchanan (5:15) remind us that Shabbat also commemorates the Exodus. We were helpless slaves in Egypt, and only because G-d redeemed us did we become free. (This, explains R' Henkin, is why Shabbat is not one of the universal Noachide laws. Creation was an event that affected all of mankind, not only the Jews. However, without the Exodus, the message of Shabbat would be incomplete and even misleading.)

In this light, we can understand our verses. The Torah uses a phrase - "On six days work shall be done" - that implies that one is obligated to work because man is obligated to engage in some form of hishtadlut. "These are the things that Hashem commanded to do them," for if man relied on miracles alone, he would not even perform mitzvot. Instead, he would believe mistakenly that G-d's Will will be done whether he (man) lifts a finger or not.

Chazal teach that just as Shabbat is a sign of our covenant with Hashem, so are tefilin. [This is why we do not wear tefilin on Shabbat.] R' Henkin observes: The tefilin on the arm alludes to hishtadlut, for the arm is the instrument of action. The tefilin on the head alludes to bitachon, for the head is the seat of the mind, where trust in G-d develops.

(Perushei Ivra, Part II, Ma'amar No. 1)

R' Dr. Arnold Fischel z"l

Little is known about Rabbi Fischel's early life. He was born in Holland, and apparently received both his semichah and doctorate in England. Beginning in about 1856, he was the first permanent "Minister" (as Jewish spiritual leaders in America were then known) of New York's Shearith Israel Congregation. (Unlike R' Fischel, most Jewish ministers at that time were shoachim, mohalim and chazzanim, but not rabbis.) In addition to his rabbinic post, R' Fischel was the first known chronicler of American-Jewish history, and he was an occasional lecturer at the New York Historical Society.

The best known chapter of R' Fischel's life occupied one year during the Civil War. On July 22, 1861, Congress passed a law requiring every U.S. Army chaplain to be "a regular ordained minister of some Christian denomination." At that time, Michael Allen, a Jew, was the popular chaplain of the mostly Jewish 5th Pennsylvania Cavalry. When the existence of this non-Christian chaplain was publicized by the YMCA, Mr. Allen was threatened with a dishonorable discharge, and on September 23, 1861, he resigned from the Army. The regiment's leader, Col. Max Friedman, was determined to appoint another Jewish chaplain, but he needed a candidate whose credentials were so impeccable that his rejection (if he was rejected) could be attributed to no cause other than religious prejudice. On October 17, 1861, R' Fischel applied for the position, and in a letter dated six days later, the U.S.

Secretary of War himself informed R' Fischel that non-Christians were not eligible to serve as chaplains.

On December 5, 1861, the Board of Delegates of American Israelites, a civil rights group composed primarily of Orthodox congregations, named R' Fischel to supervise "the general spiritual welfare of the Israelites in the camps and military hospitals attached to the Department of the Potomac." R' Fischel left for Washington with the twofold mission of ministering to the Jews in the Army of the Potomac and lobbying for a change in the law. R' Fischel rented a room in Washington and, he wrote to a friend, ate his meals at one of Washington's kosher restaurants. He met with President Lincoln and prominent members of Congress, and, in late 1862, the law was amended to permit Jews to serve as chaplains.

R' Fischel was active in attempting to found a Jewish hospital in Washington, but he found the community to be apathetic. He observed with bitterness that American Jews were more willing to contribute to Moroccan Jewry than to their own compatriots. Disheartened, R' Fischel returned to New York, where in 1863 he was the keynote speaker at the dedication of an orphanage for the children of Jewish Civil War dead. In 1864, he returned to Europe, where he died in 1894. (Torah Lives pp. 256-268)

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