

CLASS 40 - TERUMAH

by Rabbi Heshy Grossman

"And I will meet with you there, and speak with you from above the Kappores, from between the two Keruvim that are on the Aron HaEidus all that I command you regarding the B'nai Yisrael." (Shemos 25:22)

The Keruvim were two cherubic gold angels, with the face of a child, emanating from the holy ark that contained the Luchos. Inside the Kodesh HaKodashim, the Aron was the focal point of all Divine service, and the foundation of all Kedushah.

As the Pasuk indicates, the function of the Keruvim was to serve as the mouthpiece for prophecy and inspiration, and it was from this point that G-d's word radiated throughout the world.

Though the physical Temple is no longer with us, the presence of G-d lingers on. In His heavenly abode, the Bais HaMikdash Shel Ma'alah remains as the basis of our relationship with Him, and through the Keruvim, His message still sounds.

Let us explain.

1

When Moshe Rabbeinu first discovers the burning bush, Hashem reveals this spot to be the basis of all Divine service - "...and this will be the sign that I have sent you, when you take the nation out of Egypt, you will serve G-d on this mountain." (Shemos 3:12)

This mountain was Har Sinai, where Klal Yisrael was destined to receive the Torah.

Why is this location referred to as the place where G-d will be served? Torah is not Divine worship, and while its study does demand sacrifice, it is a relationship to G-d of a different sort.

Yet, Moshe Rabbeinu is commanded to "...remove your shoes from your feet, for the place that you stand upon is holy land." (Shemos 3:5)

Other than entering the Bais HaMikdash, where every Jew was obliged to take off his shoes, nowhere else do we find that a prophet is bound to bare his feet.

The point is this: the Torah and Bais HaMikdash are one; Torah is the source of all Kedushah.

Holiness is often perceived as an otherworldly consciousness, witness the growing popularity of varied 'spiritual' movements, replete with mystics, Kabbalists, and faith healers.

They make one mistake.

There is no holiness other than the Torah.

The revelation of Har Sinai is the Kedushah that is subsequently revealed to all the world in the Bais HaMikdash, and for this reason Moshe Rabbeinu takes off his shoes. It is the Aron HaKodesh that is the centerpiece of the Holy of Holies, and the Luchos that lie within are the source and basis of the Temple's sanctity.

It is from this spot that G-d speaks, and from here alone. It is the message of Torah that emanates from between the Keruvim that illuminates the world in the spark of its glow.

In the absence of this Temple, the Torah still remains, and with it, the voice of G-d still resonates to those who hold it dear.

2

The Holy Ark manifested a precious miracle.

Though the Torah clearly outlines its measure, the Aron took up no space within the Kodesh HaKodashim. An earthly vessel, of worldly composition, yet, the Aron reflects a dimension beyond time and place.

The Torah carries its bearers, and as the Navi relates, the Aron miraculously flies across the Jordan river, with the Kohanim hanging on, as the B'nai Ysrael enter the promised land.

The Torah is oblivious to nature.

While certain miracles reveal a G-d who bends nature to His will, the Torah testifies to a deeper truth - a higher world impervious to the material demands of natural law.

Kedusha is defined as separate and apart, detached from the basic standards common to all physical life.

The Torah speaks G-d's word, a message from a higher domain. Rising above the cacaphony of a multiplicity of opinion, the Torah tells of a unified existence, a dimension where G-d, His word, and His people are One.

The Torah is more than a book of instructions, or G-d's gift for good and healthy living. It is our connection to Him, the glue that binds our body and soul to a world that is impossible to grasp.

Studying its words, and performing its commands does more than earn us bonus points to cash in for some future reward. It is our means of actualizing the word of G-d in physical form, integrating our mortal selves with a higher reality, so that man and the Torah coalesce into a living expression of sanctity.

This was the holiness of the Temple. The Mishkan and the Bais HaMikdash were buildings of earthly

wood and stone, but they pulsate with the vibrancy of eternal life. Their physical structures parallel precisely the celestial human being, each room and chamber corresponding to the limbs and sinews of the man created in G-d's image.

The religious Jew is the ultimate Temple. Embodying in word and deed the dictates of the Torah, he gives life and purpose to the dormant physical elements that make up our world, connecting this dimension to the One above.

"G-d said to Israel: I have sold you My Torah, and it is as if I was sold with it - as it says: 'VaYikchu Li Terumah - take Me as your offering'."

"A parable: a king with an only daughter. Along came another king and took her [in marriage], hoping to take her with him to his own land. He [the father] said to him: My daughter that I have given to you is an only child. To separate from her, I am unable; to tell you not to take her, I cannot do, for she is your wife. Rather, do me this one favor: everywhere you go, make for me one small room, so that I may dwell with you, for I am unable to abandon my daughter."

"Similarly, Hashem says to Israel: I have given you the Torah. To separate from it, I am unable. To tell you not to take it, I am unable. Rather, everywhere you go, make for me one house where I will dwell in - as it says: 'V'Assu Li Mikdash'." (Shemos Rabbah 33:1)

G-d and man dwell as one - the Torah granted to man brings G-d down to earth, his very life reflecting and revealing a higher existence.

3

The Keruvim that rested above the Aron HaKodesh served as a miniature model of this relationship. The Keruvim symbolize both G-d and Israel. When the Jewish people were at their finest, faithfully serving their Creator, the two Keruvim were miraculously locked in embrace. But, when Klal Yisrael strayed, the two Keruvim mirrored their stance, and the golden angels distanced themselves from one another.

This concept reveals a still deeper truth.

More than the actions and good deeds of Israel merely representing G-d's will, the Keruvim demonstrate that Israel themselves, their role throughout history and the experiences they endure, are the sole manifestation of G-d's presence on earth.

This is the message of the Aron, albeit in different form.

Each vessel in the Mishkan alludes to spiritual forces that define our relationship with Hashem. The Aron HaKodesh relates to the characteristic of Hashem called 'Nora'. These two words are actually the same, but in reverse order. When directed from Heaven down to earth, it takes the form of Nora. When this Kedusha is channeled by us and sent back to Heaven its physical manifestation is the Aron HaKodesh - "Nora Elokim MiMikdashcha" (Tehillim 68:36)

Today, we address G-d daily with this appreciation, but, our Sages describe a time, after the destruction of the Temple, when the prophets refused to refer to Hashem in this manner.

"Came Yirmiah and said, 'Nochrim (non-Jews) are crowing in his sanctuary, where is His Nora?'....Came the Anshei K'nesess HaGedolah and said, 'On the contrary....this is His Nora, were it not for the Nora of Hashem how can one nation's existence be maintained among the nations?' (Yoma 69b)

The non-Jewish world lives according to the predictable cycle of natural law, every nation reflecting a different aspect of the stars and constellations that direct the physical earth.

These varied peoples are aligned in one direction - together they stand to impede the revelation of G-d's throne, and to hamper the success of the nation that expresses His word.

Klal Yisrael has no place in this world, and no room for maneuver. The world and all its inhabitants, the fundamental elements of nature and nurture, stand poised to contest the continued existence of a nation that remains faithful to One G-d. Just as the Aron takes no space in the earthly Temple, the Jewish people have no home of their own in a world that denies His presence.

The enduring resistance of the Jewish people owes its success to one theme: "Nora Elokim MiMikdashcha." Klal Yisrael speaks the holiness of a different world, a place where man surrenders his body and soul to the reign of G-d's word.

Here, between the Keruvim, the sound of G-d's command still rings true.

The Bais HaMikdash is no more, but G-d still speaks, in a completely different form.

The Aron has been hidden, but the Jewish people are still alive, writing their own Sefer Torah, etched in the blood and guts of a nation that refuses to surrender.

Though the Luchos may be broken, in the Aron they remain, silently bearing witness to the Torah that gives life to its people, carrying them across the waters in their quest for an eternal home.

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