

# SEEING IS BELIEVING

*by Rabbi Pinchas Avruch*

The first fund-raising campaign in Jewish history was held in the midbar (wilderness), soon after the Torah was given to the Jewish nation, as the beginning of the effort to build the Mishkan (Tabernacle). From the donated precious metals, stones and textiles would come all of the structures, fixtures and utensils of the Mishkan, as well as the priestly garb. The first set of construction specifics were for the Holy Ark that would hold the two tablets of the Decalogue. While all of the fixtures had structures to facilitate their transportation through the midbar, the staves of the Ark were unique. "The staves shall remain in the rings of the Ark, they may not be removed from it." (Shemos/Exodus 25:15). Why?

Ralbag (acronym of Rabbi Levi ben Gershon of Provence; 1288-1344; author of a rationalistic commentary which explains the text and collects the philosophical tenets and moral lessons contained within) explains that this mitzvah (Divine command) comes to teach the completeness of the Torah that was represented by the tablets within. That is, G-d commanded to leave the Ark whole, with the staves intact, to teach us that the Torah is complete. But how could the generation of that time, which had witnessed the miracles of the Ten Plagues, the Splitting of the Sea and the Revelation at Sinai, question that the Torah, which G-d Himself had just given them, was NOT perfect? Furthermore, if someone was lacking in this belief, how would seeing the staves in the Ark turn him around?

Rabbi Alter Henach Leibowitz (Rosh Yeshiva/Dean of Yeshiva Chofetz Chaim in Kew Gardens Hills, New York) elucidates that the teaching function of the staves in the Ark was not to impart that which was not yet appreciated. Rather, they were there to instill and concretize that which the Children of Israel KNEW with a complete belief, but that some might not have FELT in the depths of their hearts. Therefore, by leaving the staves in their rings on the Ark, the Jewish people would always see the Ark as a complete unit, reinforcing the same truth of its contents.

There are many matters of faith and truth that we know absolutely, certain that they are part of our essence. But in times of crisis and challenge, when the fortitude of our trust in G-d is put to the test, how will we fare? The distance between the head and the heart can be a great one. Vigilance and visual cues will assure that the truths of Jewish faith contained in the Decalogue are etched onto the tablets of our souls, firmly embedded in the depths of our hearts.

Have a Good Shabbos!

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