THERE IS KNOWING, AND THERE IS KNOWING

by Rabbi Yisroel Ciner

This week we read the parsha of Tetzaveh. "V'atah tetzaveh {And you shall command} Bnei Yisroel to take pure olive oil (for the lighting of the Menorah). [27:20]" After beginning with the command of the lighting of the Menorah, the parsha moves on to making the holy garments worn by the kohanim {priests} when performing the avodah-the divine service performed in the Mishkan/Mikdash {Tabernacle/Temple}.

With the actual Mishkan and it's vessels having been constructed in last week's parsha and the garments of the kohanim prepared in this week's parsha, the Mishkan was ready for the avodah to be performed there. Our parsha thus moves on to the special sacrifices brought in order to sanctify and inaugurate the kohanim and the Mishkan.

With that having been done, we reach the climax of the long road that began with our father, Avrohom, one lone individual who recognized the Creator while surrounded by a world steeped in idolatry. This was passed down to each subsequent generation until a nation of G-d-fearing people had been formed. Enslavement, plagues, miraculous deliverance, Har Sinai and finally now, the Mishkan, with Hashem's constant presence and our subsequent relationship with Hashem.

"I will meet (to communicate) with Bnei Yisroel in the Mishkan and it will become sanctified through My presence resting there. [29:43]" Perfect! Just what we expected to hear.

"And I will sanctify Aharon and his sons to serve Me as the kohanim. [29:44]" The ideal choice.

"And My presence will rest amongst Bnei Yisroel and I will be their G-d. [29:45]" That's the transition. The Mishkan is sanctified, the kohanim are sanctified; the entire nation becomes sanctified by Hashem's intimate presence. Perfect. Absolutely perfect. But there's more...

"And they will know, through My presence resting amongst them, that I am Hashem their G-d who took them out of Egypt. [29:46 according to the Ramban]"

What??? Now we'll know that Hashem took us out of Mitzrayim {Egypt}? Until this point we didn't know but now we know?

We were torturously enslaved in Mitzrayim and called out to Hashem. Hashem sent Moshe to redeem us and the passuk then states: "And the nation believed that Hashem had remembered Bnei Yisroel. [4:31]" But it seems that our belief was not yet firm enough...

The Egyptians were smacked with plagues until the point that even they recognized that it was the

hand of G-d that was against them. But it seems that our belief was not yet firm enough...

As we were crossing Yam {the Sea of} Suf, we each had such a clear revelation of Hashem's presence that we were able to point our finger and say: "That is my G-d! [15:2]" But it seems that our belief was not yet firm enough...

We then stood at the foot of Har Sinai to all hear Hashem speak. What were the first words that Hashem uttered to the entire nation? "I am Hashem, your G-d, who took you out from the land of Mitzrayim, from the house of bondage. [20:2]" But, incredibly, it seems that our belief was not yet firm enough...

Now, that the Mishkan was built and Hashem's presence was tangibly felt there, now we'll know that Hashem took us out of Mitzrayim.

How can this be understood and how can we apply it to ourselves?

There is knowing and there is knowing.

We hear from a very reliable source that a good friend is in town. We believe that source and, to a certain degree, know that our friend is here. We then hear the distinct sound of that person's footsteps outside our house. The degree to which we knew before has been minimized by the greater degree of knowing that we now have. We hear his voice outside and once again, the degree of knowing that his footsteps had afforded us has been minimized by the degree of knowing gained by hearing his voice. He walks in and we see him. Once again our degree of knowing has grown, revealing to us that the degree we had before was not really knowing. Now we know...

We are familiar with the concept of t'shuvah {repentance} for misdeeds. However, it is told that Rav Hai Gaon would do t'shuvah for his mitzvos {observance of commandments}! As he would get closer to Hashem and gain a better understanding of who Hashem really is, he realized that the reverence that he previously had toward Hashem was not close to enough. He had performed the mitzvos without the necessary seriousness. He would do t'shuvah. Each day would bring a greater understanding and closeness. With that came the realization that yesterday's avodah wasn't done properly-it was actually an affront! Hence, t'shuvah was necessary for the mitzvos he had performed.

Bnei Yisroel knew. But once they had gained a clearer understanding, the degree to which they had known previously wasn't really knowing. Now they knew. And so on.

That is the avodah of the Jew. To know and to keep on growing in that knowing. To keep on looking at the events that go on around us and gain from them a clearer and deeper understanding of Hashem's presence and involvement. To never be satisfied with the level we have gained. To always thirst for more.

Perhaps you'll say that too much is being expected from us. Give us a break. Let us relax. Why can't

we be satisfied with what we have? Why minimize the gains we have already made? Let's look at how we deal with a very different situation...

You invest one thousand dollars to buy shares in an Internet start-up. A few months later you hear that you stand to make double your money. Two thousand dollars. Fantastic! One hundred percent in a few months! A bit later there is talk of a buy-out. Your stocks are now worth five times what you bought at. All of a sudden, two thousand dollars is a joke. You're making five. Then, the news arrives. They are going public! Your very own IPO. We're talking twenty five times the money you put in. Five thousand measly dollars? Don't make me sick! That's a disappointment! We're heading north of twenty-five! This just in... The stock will split at least four times and there's heavy institutional interest. They expect the price to rocket on the IPO. You start planning exactly what you'll do with between two and three hundred thousand dollars. Finally the day arrives. You only make seventy five thousand. Rough, rough day. Big disappointment...

When it comes to money we understand. Let's give Hashem at least the same consideration.

Good Shabbos,
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